NEW TEACHER INDUCTION
A CASE STUDY OF TEACHERS’ PERCEPTIONS OF SUPPORT IN THE FIRST YEAR

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation was a qualitative case study that explored new teachers’ perceptions of support throughout their first year. The focus of this study was on beginning teachers of young adolescents in low-performing, secondary schools with low socioeconomic status and histories of high teacher turnover. The theoretical framework proposed that teachers’ experiences affect their development, as does the explicit teacher knowledge gained in preparation for the profession. The participants included five teachers from varied pathways into teaching including traditional and alternate certification programs. The teachers’ perceptions were gathered through in-depth interviews at the beginning, middle and end of the school year. According to the five teachers who participated in this study, school-wide systems as well as support for the new teachers’ individualized needs were necessary to effectively induct new teachers. Furthermore, as teachers began their careers, the collaborative systems that existed impacted the level of professional learning that took place.

The teachers’ perceptions highlighted a need for a more structured system of support for beginning teachers. Elements of support that teachers’ perceived as beneficial include educative mentoring as well as structures within the school day that facilitated collegial learning, and more specifically collaborative planning time with colleagues of the same content was seen as highly beneficial. The participants further acknowledged that in addition to a system of support there also needed to be a system of accountability for their professional growth and student achievement.
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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Problem

Retaining qualified teachers is increasingly challenging for schools as many leave the profession. Teacher retention is a challenge, particularly in schools with high poverty and minority populations (Stronge, 2007). This is pertinent to the schools in Hawai’i and issues surrounding teacher retention. Teachers begin their careers through varying pathways. Teachers who are recruited from the mainland, in addition to being new to the profession, lack the cultural understanding of the norms in their new communities. Additionally, Teach for America (TFA) and other alternative certification programs or emergency hire teachers lack experience and pedagogical knowledge that are critical for new teachers (Darling–Hammond, Holtzman, Gaitlan & Heilig, 2005). In addition to lack of preparation, many beginning teachers become dissatisfied with their jobs because of the overwhelming tasks they are required to manage. While they find that they do not have sufficient materials they also report lacking support from parents, administration and colleagues. Other complaints include low salaries, high pressure and limited input in decision-making (Abel & Sewell, 1999; Gonzalez, 1995). These factors make it difficult to retain quality teachers who can provide all students with the educational opportunities they deserve.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework integrated ideas that explain how teachers’ experiences affect their development, and ways the explicit teacher knowledge gained in preparation for the profession. Furthermore, as teachers begin their careers, the collaborative systems that exist impact the level of professional learning that takes place. The first theory used to situate this research is Bronfebrenner’s bioecological theory that helps explain the many factors that shaped
teachers understanding of their world and their perspectives. Secondly, I discuss Cochran-Smith and Lytle’s conceptions of learning to teach. Finally, the last theory that is important to understand is social learning theories of Vygotsky and Bandura that explain the importance of social environments on learning and efficacy. New teachers have a wealth of life experience and continue to learn from their social experiences as they begin their teaching career and gain knowledge about how to teach in effective ways.

Bioecological Theory

There are wide-ranging developmental influences that affect teachers’ experiences. A theoretical model that allows for the observation of these developments must be applied (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). Bronfenbrenner’s (2005) bioecological theory situates my research on new teachers’ experiences in their first years. Experience is defined by Bronfenbrenner (2005) as subjective feelings that emerge in early childhood and continue through life. Experiences are “emotionally and motivationally loaded” (p. 5). New teacher development is influenced by their professional preparation, their personal experiences, and their induction in their first year.

To understand new teachers’ experiences, it is important to understand the influences that perpetuate their development. Development in the bioecological theory is defined as the phenomenon of continuity and change in the biopsychological characteristics of human beings both as individuals and groups (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). In other words, development is a result of human beings’ interactions with their environment. In the bioecological theory there are five environmental systems that range from direct interaction to broad cultural systems: the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, the macrosystem, and the chronosystem. The microsystem interacts most directly with the individual, which includes the teacher’s family, education, as well as the school in which she/he teaches. In these interactions the individual is
not passive but helps construct these settings. The mesosystem is the system of relationships that exist, which may include family, teachers, team members, mentors, peers or administration. The exosystem refers to experiences, which the teacher does not have an active role in but influence their immediate experience. Factors such as students’ lives and school sanctions by both local and federal mandates affect teachers although they may not have direct influence over these issues. The macrosystem concerns the larger society and subcultures. One example for new teachers is the *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) legislation. Finally, the chronosystem surrounds all layers and refers to the patterns and events that affect interactions and experiences for the individual. For instance, poverty is pervasive in the lives of the residents of this study and is intertwined in the culture of their communities. For teachers, this can play a major role in their interactions with both students and families and how they perceive their job.

**Teacher Learning**

There are many factors that affect how new teachers learn and acclimate to their new roles as teachers, including environment, their own personal characteristics and their induction experiences. To describe how teachers learn, Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) lay out three conceptions of teacher learning which include: *knowledge for practice, knowledge in practice* and *knowledge of practice*.

The conception about teacher knowledge for practice explains that the more a professional knows about the content, practice, theory and pedagogy the higher the correlation with effective practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999). The more a teacher knows about teaching and how to teach, the more successful they will likely be in the classroom. This conception of knowledge that teaching has a “distinct knowledge base that when mastered will provide teachers with a unique fund of knowledge” (Gardner, 1989, p. ix-x in Cochran-Smith &
Lytle, 1999). Furthermore, this formal knowledge base requires explicit instruction rather than relying on common sense (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999).

The second conception is knowledge in practice. Teachers acquire this knowledge from experience in their practice as well as deliberate reflection about their practice. The focus of knowledge in practice is how teachers use their knowledge in spontaneous situations (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999). Teachers are often confronted with uncertain situations in their classroom and schools and decisions that they make reflect their knowledge in practice. Reflection is key in this component because teachers learn from thinking about their actions and the effect in their classrooms. Furthermore, teachers need to work with colleagues to discuss best practices in teaching and facilitate teacher learning throughout the school (Lieberman & Miller, 1999).

The third conception is knowledge of practice where teachers do not just take in and demonstrate their knowledge, they “play a central and critical role” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999, p. 26) by being producers of knowledge not just consumers. Teachers should look at their own practice, connect it to larger issues and critically review the work of others. This third conception is not intended to support the first two conceptions. Instead, it is quite different. The third conception requires teachers to challenge the notion of teaching as a set or norms or known knowledge. Teachers should seek to answer questions about their practice and be agents of change to continually improve their teaching as well as teaching of others.

The three conceptions of teacher learning are useful in this research about new teachers’ experiences in their first year. Specifically related to professional development, these conceptions frame the type of learning opportunities that the teachers participate in and identify how teachers learn and use their knowledge in their first year.
Social Learning Theory

In addition to the three conceptions of teacher learning (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999) and the five nested systems of the bioecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 2005) it is important to look at social theories that further impact teacher learning. In order for students to achieve high levels of success, administrators can organize schools in a way that supports teachers’ development and understanding of how to teach students in that context (DuFour, 2006; Mertens & Flowers, 2004). Continuous professional discourse about student learning, with regard to specific issues that school populations face such as motivation, developmental appropriateness, race, socio-economic status, specific learning needs, English proficiency and other challenges that exist in students’ lives are important for teacher development.

Bandura’s social learning theory (1977) explains how behaviors are learned through observation of behaviors, attitudes, and emotional reactions of others. Social learning theory focuses on the learning that occurs within a social context. People learn from one another, through observation, imitation, and modeling. Humans learn how to act and react to situations from others. When schools are organized to facilitate positive learning models, interactions promote learning and foster school wide achievement (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Lieberman & Miller, 1999; Meier, 2002).

Dependent upon one’s environment and influences, dispositions towards learning are dramatically affected. The major theme of Vygotsky's (1978) theory of social learning is that social interaction plays a fundamental role in the development of cognition. Learning occurs first through social interaction and then on an individual level. Vygotsky (1978) states that the potential for cognitive development depends upon the "zone of proximal development" (ZPD), which is the distance between the current performance level and that which may be attained with
guidance and support and of a more capable other. One’s full range of abilities can be developed with guidance or peer collaboration, exceeding what can be attained alone. The theory of social development supports collaborative learning as a means to surpassing one’s ability levels as an individual (Meloth & Deering, 1994).

Learning is both a social and cognitive process. It is crucial to understand how these factors can influence, as well as impede, one’s learning. A person’s belief of self-efficacy enhances their abilities and their attitudes. According to Bandura (1994), self-efficacy is defined as people's beliefs about their capabilities to perform or be successful at certain activities. Self-efficacy beliefs determine how people feel, think, motivate themselves and behave. In the context of teaching and learning much research has been done on teacher efficacy, defined as teachers’ confidence in their own abilities to positively affect student learning (Wolfolk-Hoy, 2000).

Teachers can be great support systems for each other; such support systems are important for all stages of their careers, but especially important for new teachers. Efficacy is a crucial factor in keeping teachers in the profession -- a belief in their ability to positively affect student achievement. Teaching efficacy correlates with the level of support received in the first year (Wolfolk-Hoy, 2000). Based on Bandura’s theory of self-efficacy, teacher efficacy is most malleable in the earlier phases of their learning. Therefore, teachers are heavily influenced by experiences in the first few years of teaching, including induction experiences and student teaching. Smith and Ingersoll (2004) found a strong correlation between participation in new teacher induction programs and higher rates of teacher retention. Such research has suggested that induction programs and continued development of effective teaching practices should be more prevalent in schools, especially ones with high turnover and low student achievement.
Collectively, Bronfenbrenner’s (2005) bioecological theory, the conceptions of teacher knowledge (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 199) and social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) comprise the theoretical framework that helps situate this research. The environmental factors that influence experiences of new teachers, their knowledge for teaching as well as the social systems that support their learning in their first year collectively impact their perceptions. This framework was used in the process of creating the research questions, the development of codes and themes from the data, and further analysis of the findings was done through the lens of this theoretical framework.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of beginning teachers in a rural island community with high levels of poverty. As new teachers are inducted into their schools and community, it is important to understand their perceptions of the impact of their induction process. The stories teachers share help illuminate both the significance and implications of the induction process based on their realities. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) emphasize perceptions as an important research phenomenon that aids in the understanding of peoples’ experiences. This research aimed to provide insights into five teachers’ first year of teaching in the Aloha District in Hawai’i’s public schools by detailing their experiences with professional support. New knowledge in this area can assist in efforts to increase teacher retention.

**Research Questions**

This study investigated beginning teachers’ of young adolescents in schools with high levels of poverty and their perceptions of their experiences in the first year of teaching. I purposively selected five beginning teachers from varying pathways into teaching including: 1)
hires from the US mainland; 2) alternatively certified Teach for America (TFA) teachers; and, 3) locally certified teachers. This research helps provide a deeper understanding of what the new teachers are feeling as they go through their first year of teaching with various levels of support. Additionally, I analyzed how the teachers perceived their preparation for their current teaching position as well as the support that they received and how they felt it impacted their first year of teaching. The research questions that guided this study were:

(1) What factors supported or hindered new teachers’ successful induction into the profession?

(2) What were the challenges in the first year of teaching and strategies for addressing them?

(3) How useful was the prior teaching preparation in the first-year?

(4) What factors impacted teachers’ career plans throughout the first year?
CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

There are many complex tasks involved in teaching. New teachers, no matter which route of preparation they take, are not fully prepared for their first day of teaching and have a lot to learn. In recent years, due to high attrition rates as well as retirement, the demand for teachers has increased. However, less than 20% of the attrition was due to retirement (Henke, Chen & Geis, 2000). Since the 1990s, teachers who have left education have outnumbered those entering the system. Even more troubling is the disproportionate number of teachers who have left high-poverty schools. Teacher turnover was 50% higher in high-poverty schools than it was in suburban schools with low poverty (Ingersoll, 2001). The shortage of qualified teachers willing to teach in these needy schools has forced many schools with high percentages of poverty and minority students to hire teachers with emergency permits and waivers, rather than full licensure and preparation (Darling-Hammond, Holtzman, Gatlin & Heilig, 2005). As teachers continually leave these schools and the education profession, many new teachers are needed, and as such, induction and mentoring have offered an avenue to prepare and retain quality teachers. Since the 1990s there has been a movement to improve new teacher induction programs around the country (Wayne, Youngs, & Fleishman, 2005). Currently, about four out of five new teachers receive some sort of support, however, induction programs range from a one-day orientation to consistent collaboration with a mentor or a coach (Fideler & Haselkorn, 1999). According to the Alliance for Excellent Education ([AAEA] 2004), only about 1% of teachers actually receive what they deem a comprehensive induction. In this dissertation study, comprehensive induction programs have been defined as new teachers’, ‘opportunities to work with other teachers in professional communities, observe colleagues’ classrooms, be observed by expert mentors, analyze their own
practice, and network with other novice teachers” (Molner-Kelley, 2004, p. 438; Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). Teachers learn about quality teaching by seeing what it looks like, talking about it and experimenting in their own classroom. Quality induction has provided teachers opportunities to be observed and reflect on their own teaching, as well as on their students’ learning.

To highlight the need for induction and mentoring programs, specifically in high poverty and minority middle schools, I reviewed extant literature on the current teacher retention issues faced by many schools across the United States and in Hawai‘i. Secondly, I defined specific teacher certification programs, licensing and preparation limitations that affect teacher preparedness for the populations they teach. Specifically, I describe the challenges new teachers face in middle schools with high percentages of students living in poverty. Finally, I review research on induction programs that have made a positive impact on teacher retention.

Teacher Retention

Most new teachers have a high level of job satisfaction compared to same-age peers in other professions (Public Education Network [PEN], 2005). Unfortunately, more than a third of beginning teachers leave the field in the first three years, and almost half leave within five years (Ingersoll, 2001; Strong & Ingersoll, 2011). This is an indication that something is missing from many schools to help new teachers establish themselves early in their careers. Lack of comprehensive induction programs that include support and mentoring of new teachers can lead to frustration and burnout (Gold, 1996). With the many complex demands teachers are faced with, a support system is necessary. According to a national study (PEN, 2005), the five most negative factors that affected teachers’ ability to teach were lack of resources, difficulty of the work, large class size, working conditions, and low salary. These are significant issues that impact teachers’ ability to teach students in meaningful ways and, thus, lead to frustration and
teacher turnover.

At a time when beginning teachers need the support and guidance of their experienced counterparts to learn the system and master their teaching techniques, they are instead left to sink or swim in many cases. Unfortunately, many teachers in the U.S. begin their careers in disadvantaged schools with high turnover and needy student populations. Often, teachers struggle without mentoring or curriculum support (Darling-Hammond, 1998). Teachers, unlike most professionals, are often inducted into the profession without a sufficient transitional period that allows them to practice their teaching skills prior to undertaking the many extra responsibilities that the job requires.

Public schools are bound by the federal mandate of NCLB which requires many schools to choose highly prescriptive curriculum reform models if they have not met the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) goals for student achievement on standardized tests determined by this legislation (Public Law 107-110; Meier & Wood, 2004). Many teachers in schools that have failed to meet the yearly goals are left with very little decision making power within their schools, and even in their classrooms. Often, in low performing schools, which are disproportionately likely to have high poverty and minority populations, morale is low and teacher turnover is dramatically high (Darling-Hammond, 1996). The rate at which teachers leave or move on from high poverty schools is 50% higher than in schools with low levels of poverty (Ingersoll, 2001). The frequency of teachers who move on from such schools makes it difficult to keep experienced and certified staff, which makes it difficult to implement and sustain systematic change (Darling-Hammond, 2003). The amount of professional development and resources that are continually needed to support these new teachers creates an enormous drain on the school. According to the Hawai‘i State Teacher Association ([HSTA], 2007) 49% of teachers are happy with the
profession and will stay in the teaching field ([HSTA], 2007). The remaining teachers surveyed were unhappy teaching and will likely leave the profession altogether, retire or move to private or mainland schools by 2010. One might think that an aging teaching force would explain the retention issues; however 55% of teaches under 35 do not plan on teaching in 5 years. Clearly this is an issue of teacher attrition, not simply retirement.

Locally, teachers noted that increased pay, benefits and improvements to the conditions and resources, as well as parental involvement would impact their decision to stay in Hawai’i Public Schools (HSTA, 2007). Many of the issues plaguing teachers were due to external factors in the macrosystem and chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 2005) that could be rectified if the governing agencies improved working conditions and made resources more readily available to teachers. According to the Superintendent’s Report (2007), the Hawai’i Department of Education has increased the number of new teachers since 2000 considerably. In 2000 there were 1,454 new hires, and in the 2004-2005 school year there were 1,698 new teachers, a 15% increase. Additionally 15% of the teachers working in 2004-2005 were new hires. Teachers leaving the profession, as well as moving to “better performing” schools per NCLB labels, account for high turnover rates in Hawai’i, especially in lower performing schools where our students need the best and most experienced teachers. The high amount of turnover in many of the schools accounts for a large number of inexperienced and under prepared teachers.

**Licensing and Preparation Limitations that Affect Teacher Preparedness**

The three main routes that most teachers use to become certified to teach in America’s public schools include traditional, extended and alternative programs (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005). Teaching certification is achieved through coursework in an accredited university including content, methodology and teaching experience. Traditional programs
prepare teachers through a bachelor’s degree program, or extended version of this included fifth year certification program or a master’s degree. Alternative certification programs circumvent college preparation programs and field experience for candidates who have bachelor’s degrees in content areas such as science, English or mathematics. Alternative certification programs have reduced standards for certification, offering shorter routes into the classroom.

Opinions of and motives for various forms of teacher certification are heavily debated among educators and politicians. “Highly Qualified Teachers,” according to NCLB (Public Law 107-110), are teachers who are certified in their content area. The law states first and foremost that teachers need content knowledge. The legislation emphasizes content knowledge and ignores the extensive pedagogical knowledge base that effective teachers possess. In stark contrast to NCLB, a strong research base has shown teacher education programs that include teaching methods courses are factors in both teacher effectiveness and retention (Darling-Hammond & Youngs, 2002; Goe, 2002, Lazcko-Kerr & Berliner, 2002). Teachers who know strategies that help students access the content can best motivate them to learn. Furthermore, teachers who have graduated from extended programs were seen as better prepared in the eyes of the administration and colleagues and were more likely to stay in teaching longer than those who had only received traditional certification in a four-year program (Andrew & Schwab, 1995).

There have been gross inequities in the preparation and experience of teachers who work with minority children compared with those who teach white children in middle to upper class schools. Poorer urban and rural schools have more teachers teaching out of their content areas and have students who are more likely to be taught by under prepared teachers (Haycock & Ames, 2000). Schools with higher minority populations have more trouble filling teaching positions and have resorted to hiring unqualified teachers to fill vacancies (National Center for
Educational Statistics [NCES], 2001). Proponents of alternative certification programs view teacher preparation programs as roadblocks for “highly qualified” candidates to become teachers (Abell Foundation, 2001; Ballou & Podugursky, 2000). This means that they advocate for alternative certification where teaching candidates can bypass preparation in both pedagogy and best educational practices, under the assumption that content knowledge is the most important component of being an effective teacher.

One example of an alternative certification program is Teach for America (TFA), which recruits college graduates from “prestigious universities” and provides summer training to prepare candidates for a two-year teaching commitment. Since retention is a key component to quality teaching and effective systems within schools (Ingersoll, 2001), it is important to note the inconsistencies of this two-year commitment as an avenue to “fix” the teacher retention problem. Consequently, research comparing fully certified, alternatively certified (including TFA) and uncertified teachers, found that fully certified teachers consistently produce stronger student achievement compared to uncertified and alternatively certified teachers, and that there is no significant difference between the performance of the latter two groups (Darling Hammond et al., 2005; Laczko-Kerr & Berliner, 2002). Darling-Hammond et al., 2005 found that over the course of a year, students of TFA teachers achieved at a rate of one half a month to three months below students taught by teachers who were certified. They further elaborate that if a student repeatedly had such teachers over the course of elementary school, kindergarten-through-sixth-grade, the student could be one to two grade levels below their peers in reading and mathematics. This is a real concern in schools that have a “revolving door” where teachers constantly come and go and administration is forced to hire alternatively certified or uncertified candidates to fill the openings. Certified teachers not only have a greater positive effect on student achievement
but they are more likely to stay in teaching. Research indicates that certified teachers’ preparation prior to teaching is strongly linked to retention (Darling Hammond et. al., 2005; Henke, Chen, Geis, & Knepper, 2000; National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future [NCTAF], 2003).

**Challenges in Schools with High Rates of Poverty**

Many schools labeled as underperforming have struggled with an inability to keep experienced and effective teachers (Molner-Kelly, 2004; Ingersoll, 2001). This vicious cycle is costly, because of the need to continue to hire and prepare new teachers, but more importantly, because of the risk of curtailing students’ educational opportunities and achievement. One reason for the high turnover is that often no programs or ineffective programs exist to induct new teachers, and they are forced to navigate solo through their first years. The result is high annual turnover of 25% or more, which can have negative effects on the schools and systems (Ingersoll, 2001). A faculty who that is constantly changing makes it difficult to sustain effective practices and policies to effect student achievement.

Schools that do not have systems in place to support students’ various needs have more failures and dropouts. The Alliance for Excellent Education [AEE] (2005) found that in the nations’ 35 largest cities the dropout rate could be as high as 50%, compared to the national average of about 30%. There are many factors that perpetuate this grim statistic including the many struggles which children of poverty face. Unfortunately, these are schools that are disproportionately likely to have high teacher turnover. AEE argued that high-poverty and high-minority schools are in need of the nation’s best and most experienced teachers in order to help students learn in spite of their many challenges, however, these students are twice as likely to have a beginning teacher (2005). Thus, our current educational system is perpetuating a gap by
under preparing teachers and students particularly in poverty schools.

**Challenges in Middle Level Schools**

A challenge in many middle level grades of five to nine is that teachers lack the specific preparation and experience for their role as a teacher of young adolescents (Jackson & Davis, 2000). Adolescents are dealing with many changes in their bodies, as well as social and emotional issues that can impede their learning if not dealt with appropriately (Van Hoose et. al., 2000). Teachers who do not have sufficient preparation to adequately organize their classroom and instruction to meet young adolescents’ unique needs are at a disadvantage as they begin their careers.

The lack of teacher support for beginning teachers affects teacher effectiveness and retention specifically for teachers of adolescents. Grades five to nine have been referred to as the weak link in America’s public schools (Cooney, 1998). Research specifically notes the drop in middle school performance and poses the problem of licensing for middle level educators (Cooney, 1998). Jackson and Davis (2000) maintain that middle level schools should be filled with expert teachers who are prepared to teach and advocate for young adolescents throughout this crucial stage in their emotional, social and academic development. In contrast, many teachers have limited knowledge of the subjects and students they teach in the middle grades. Nationally, only 20% of teachers who teach in the middle grades are specifically prepared to teach adolescents (National Forum to Accelerate Middle Grades Reform [NFAMGR], 2002). The lack of understanding of how to teach adolescents amplifies teachers’ frustrations, and students’ learning difficulties in the classroom. Although professional organizations and middle school enthusiasts argue that specialized middle school programs are needed to certify highly effective teachers (National Middle School Association [NMSA], 1991; NFAMGR, 2002), a small
percentage of teachers are actually schooled in middle level education. One of the main reasons that teachers are not certified to teach middle school is that very few states have such programs (Flowers, Mertens, & Mulhall, 2002).

Teacher impact on student achievement is linked to daily classroom activities and curricular decisions made by the classroom teacher. It is of great importance that school leaders support teacher improvement and enable school-wide structures to facilitate this. Turning Points 2000 recommends that to facilitate high levels of learning for students, professional development should focus on, “curriculum, instruction, adolescent development, classroom management, assessment, service learning, interdisciplinary teaming, and parent involvement” (Jackson & Davis, 2000, p.114). Adolescents are unique and learn best by varied curriculum and instructional strategies that take into account their social, emotional and developmental needs. New teachers are at a disadvantage if they are unfamiliar with best practices to meet the needs of adolescents.

Many new teachers, either certified in secondary or elementary, as well as alternatively certified teachers in hard to staff areas, lack pedagogical knowledge and strategies to teach adolescents. Many high performing middle schools have resorted to in-servicing their teachers on the job to circumvent the lack of preparation that occurs in pre-service programs (Cooney, 1998). Schools that are successful help teachers understand why adolescents act the way they do, and provide strategies to enable them to address their needs.

**Comprehensive New Teacher Induction Programs**

Teachers are socialized in various ways--through the observation of their previous teachers, college experiences, and especially their first on-the-job experiences. High levels of efficacy in students during college preparatory coursework are found to decline in student
teaching, which indicates optimistic views prior to teaching are being stifled by the many demands and difficulties the profession faces (Wolfolk-Hoy, 2000). For new teachers the support system is often not strong enough to help them implement the ideas and knowledge that they learn in college. From research on various teachers in a vast range of teaching assignments around the country, factors that increased efficacy included support from other teachers, resources and materials, skills and knowledge acquired in pre-service programs, autonomy in developing curriculum, and mentoring (PEN, 2005). This suggests that multiple levels of support are necessary and effective in retaining new teachers by building their self-image as a competent professional.

Johnson and Birkeland (2003) completed several in-depth interviews with 50 new teachers over their first three years of teaching. The teachers were purposively selected to represent a diverse sampling of participants in an effort to understand how they viewed their work in a variety of schools, and their perceptions of teaching as a career. The research team conducted follow-up interviews to investigate career movement and the motives behind decisions to stay or leave their school or teaching as a profession. Findings indicate that those most likely to remain in teaching were first-career teachers, female, or someone with traditional certification in contrast to mid-career entrants, men or teachers who received certification thorough an alternative route. More than demographics, however, the teachers’ decisions were based on efficacy, their belief in their ability to be successful with their students (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). The factors that affected their teaching efficacy both positively and negatively were working conditions such as classes they were assigned to teach, collegial interaction, curriculum, administration and discipline.

Smith and Ingersoll (2004) found a strong correlation between participation in new
teacher induction programs and higher rates of teacher retention. Induction programs that support teachers are a crucial step in retaining teachers. Mentoring, both educative and cultural, professional learning opportunities and structured reflection are important components in inducting new teachers, especially in schools with high turnover and low student achievement. Each will be described below.

**Educative Mentoring**

Many new teachers struggle with the overwhelming number of tasks involved in teaching during their first year. There are many factors that influence how teachers feel in their first year. Moir’s phases of a first year teacher (1990) help to understand what new teachers may be experiencing. The five phases include anticipation, survival, disillusionment, rejuvenation and reflection. Prior to the first day and continuing into the beginning of the school year is when teachers experience anticipation. Soon after, they experience the survival phase, where they are barely able to manage the overwhelming responsibility of teaching. The next phase is disillusionment when many question their choice to become a teacher. Many things may not be going as they planned, and many new teachers’ self esteem can be low at this point. After winter break, many teachers experience a feeling of rejuvenation. They begin to feel better about teaching and have a better grasp on their responsibilities. The final phase, reflection, is when most teachers review the year’s ups and downs and plan for the upcoming year. This is when they begin to plan for what they will do differently and anticipate the upcoming year. There are various ways to support teachers through these difficult phases including helping them to anticipate these struggles as well as coaching them through challenging periods.

Smith and Ingersoll (2004) found that teachers, who were provided a mentor from the same content area, and support in their first year of teaching, including planning and collaboration
with other teachers, were less likely to leave the profession after their first year. Educative mentoring is described by Feiman-Nemser (2001b) as a supportive practice for new teachers, based on an explicit vision of good teaching and an understanding of teacher learning. Such mentors use inquiry-based questioning and support meaningful teaching and learning based on where the new teachers are going. The guidance of a veteran can allow new teachers to make decisions as part of an experienced team, rather than in isolation. Supportive networks that help teachers deal with classroom management as well as their content area are recommended for new teachers (PEN, 2005). It is important that new teachers have a mentor who provides support in designing lessons, implementation of effective curriculum and instruction practices, as well as reflection.

Matching a support teacher with beginning teachers may be the most powerful and cost-effective tool in induction (Villani, 2002). With retention being an issue in so many schools, it is prudent to establish systems that are designed to assist teachers and retain them in the school, rather than repeatedly inducting new teachers. Induction programs with mentoring, even when minimal, have shown to positively affect how teachers view their teaching and the profession (Huling-Austin & Murphy, 1987). In a review of research, there are four major areas where mentors can help new teachers, including providing emotional support, assisting in school norms and routines, promoting cultural fluency and engaging in cognitive coaching (Villani, 2002). Cognitive Coaching (Costa & Garmston, 1994) includes strategies that empower coaches to, “enhance another person’s perceptions, decisions and intellectual functions” (p. 2). Through various forms of discourse and questioning, coaches can mediate teachers’ thinking and help them improve their practice in reflective discussions.

To further understand how mentors go about their work and get an in-depth look at how a
successful mentor works with new teachers, Achinstein and Athanases, (2004) analyzed an expert mentor’s knowledge base in a case study of a mentor-mentee relationship. They investigated the type of professional development that was received to adequately support new teachers in the complex pedagogical and social understandings for teaching for equity in diverse classrooms. Such professional development for mentors included training with an explicit equity focus, professional reading, networking with community members, critical examination of their own practice and constructing new knowledge as part of a learning community. An effective mentor can be beneficial in helping the new teacher teach with equity for a diverse population; however the school culture is crucial in supporting those efforts in and out of the classroom. School leaders must also understand and support practices that promote cultural equity and expect high levels of learning from all students.

**Cultural Mentoring**

Findings that detail mentoring as beneficial to new teachers are abundant (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Kardos, 2004). More recently, however, cultural mentoring has emerged as a necessary component to influence how teachers view their students and develop appropriate curriculum to meet their needs (Wang & Odell, 2002). Cultural mentoring is supporting teachers in understanding the diverse cultural backgrounds that exist in their students’ communities. Although it is important to understand students’ backgrounds, most teachers report little or no preparation for the diverse classrooms that they encounter (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Teachers and students suffer when there is a lack of cultural understanding.

The demographics of teaching candidates generally lack the kind of diversity that is represented in schools. Teachers are overwhelmingly white, middle class, females and have experiences that differ from their students' (Brantlinger, 2003). To compound the lack of
diversity in the teaching force, teacher education programs lack preparation about diverse home cultures of their students. Achinstein and Athanases (2005) note that teachers tend to fall back on their own experiences and often rely on myths about the “lack of capacity” in culturally and linguistically diverse populations. In order to understand more about how new teachers perceive working with diverse families, Graue and Brown (2003) used a survey designed to assess the beliefs, memories, and proposed practices of prospective teachers. Their findings help to clarify the social and cultural preconceptions of beginning teachers. The survey results suggest that teachers’ beliefs about the family are based on their own experiences and they generally assume families support teachers. Teachers make assumptions about their work with students and families based on these assumptions, which may hinder their connection, based on false conclusions. Teacher education programs ought to infuse coursework and experiences that expand the theoretical background of prospective teachers to enhance their ability to effectively work with culturally diverse students to empower as well as promote equity and social justice.

In addition to pre-service coursework and experience, new teachers need ongoing support. Hawai’i’s schools are diverse in culture and socioeconomic status; therefore, teachers require a broad understanding of the various backgrounds of the students who are in their classrooms. Additionally, many teachers come from the mainland to teach with little or no knowledge of Hawai’i’s unique cultures. In a recent needs assessment of Hawai’i’s public schools, Johnson (2008) gathered data through interviews and surveys to understand how new teachers are supported. Participants included a purposive sampling of new teachers and administrators to get a valid representation of the state. The data revealed a need across participants for a cultural component in the teacher mentoring and induction programs in Hawai’i’s public schools. Cultural mentors can be a great support in helping new teachers work
with diverse students and family structures that differ from their own.

Rushton (2003) conducted a case study of two African-American pre-service teachers in an inner-city school. Findings were that mentor interactions increased the teacher’s self-efficacy and helped teachers overcome their negative feelings about their ability to work with youth in inner city schools. Mentors were able to help the teachers negotiate their understanding of inner city school culture to improve their personal and practical knowledge. For example, when personal experience and school culture were at odds, the mentors helped the teachers work through their role as a teacher, thus improving their efficacy.

Teacher efficacy is impacted positively and negatively by many factors and is especially significant in the first few years. Research has indicated that supporting teachers can develop their teaching efficacy. More specifically, a mentoring relationship is one example of how new teachers can be supported in understanding their role as a teacher and thus improving their efficacy in their first year.

**Administrative Support**

Administrative support has been documented as extremely important in retaining and developing new teachers (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Quinn & D’Amato Andrews, 2004). Supporting teachers in their professional growth and inducting them into a positive school environment takes courageous and collaborative leadership. Schein (1992) defines leadership as the creation and maintenance of an organization's culture in a manner that influences productivity and collegiality. Interviews with 50 teachers indicated overwhelmingly that when schools have a positive and collaborative culture they are more likely to retain their teachers (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003).

New teachers’ experiences in the workplace affect how they view their work and
influence their commitment to teaching as a career. Many schools across the country have begun to implement induction programs to influence how teachers feel about their jobs and provide support in the first year since mentoring and professional communities have been shown to retain beginning teachers (Kardos, 2004). Although induction programs have been successful in retaining teachers (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003), alone they are not as successful without administrative support which has been found to be a factor in teacher’s experiences and efficacy (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Quinn & D’Amato Andrews, 2004). Weiss (1999) used a nationally representative sample of first year teachers in the United States to study relationships between perceived workplace conditions, morale, career choice commitment, and planned retention. The researchers concluded that in schools where empowerment and collaboration were norms, teachers had higher morale and stronger commitment to teach as well as the desire to remain in teaching.

Quinn and D’Amato Andrews (2004) investigated teachers’ perceptions of the support they received from their principal. Results from the interviews indicated teachers craved more support from their principals. Roughly 38% of the participants did not feel adequately supported. In light of previous research on the importance of principal support in the retention of effective teachers (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003), these results warrant concern. Additionally, there was a correlation between teachers’ perceived support from their administration and support of their other colleagues. This suggests that principals who supported new teachers created an inclusive culture of support for all teachers, which further promotes teachers’ decisions to stay in teaching and limits mobility.

Angelle (2006) found that school culture, developed by the principal as the leader, has an effect on its teachers. Organizational cultures based on individuality rather than collaboration
leave many teachers to sink or swim. On the other hand, when teachers believed administrators were focused on student and teacher success, they felt more positive about school environment and desired to remain there. Furthermore, Angelle found that when new teachers viewed their instructional leader’s monitoring as supportive, it positively influenced their teaching practices and their decision to stay. When instructional leaders support teachers and promote a culture of continual learning by the school community, teachers enjoy their work and are more successful.

**Professional Development**

Learning to teach is a process, not a function, of a teacher preparation program or induction experiences. Huling-Austin and Murphy (1987) encourage career-long professional development that addresses the many complexities of teaching in the first year, and the years to follow. Lifelong learning is important for all stakeholders in a child’s education, and has been part of schools for many years. Traditional professional development manifests itself in the form of workshops off campus, and little connection or implementation is generally made at the school level. Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (2005) argue that professional development needs to shift from imposing knowledge and skills onto teachers, to providing opportunities for reflection on practice in order to develop their own understanding of content, pedagogy and learners. Quality teachers with experience and content knowledge exist in many schools and are often the most untapped resources. Incorporating mentoring, coaching and critical dialogue in the teacher’s day can increase students’ understanding and achievement, as well as teacher job satisfaction (Johnson, 1990; Kardos, 2004; Smith, & Ingersoll, 2004). Establishing networks of support for teachers, both novice and veteran can serve as highly effective professional development.

Professional learning communities (PLC), or teacher study and support groups operating
within the school day, can help new teachers collaboratively look at instructional practices and curriculum (DuFour, 2007). These types of structures on campus can be helpful for new teachers to receive constant support in developing their curriculum and repertoire of best teaching practices. In a time when many schools and teachers are feeling pressure from national, state and district mandates to improve test scores; many successful schools are turning to teachers and tapping into their rich knowledge base via PLCs. Such programs can be structured in ways that provide teachers with consistent and meaningful collaboration with colleagues, afford them opportunities for learning, and allow them to be learners alongside their students (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Lieberman & Miller, 1999; Meier, 2002).

Another key component of professional development is actively engaging teachers in authentic contexts (Elmore, 2002), for example, time that teachers can plan lessons with their colleagues and be empowered to make decisions to improve their own professional practice. Project Discovery (Shulman & Armitage, 2005), an urban middle school reform effort, utilized inquiry-based methods, interdisciplinary curriculum and invited teachers to take control of the learning in their classrooms. This program is a great model of professional development that yields astonishing results in both student achievement and teacher satisfaction. A significant increase was found in the number of students meeting state standards on standardized tests in mathematics and English. Additionally teachers reported an improved school climate and a sense of empowerment (Shulman & Armitage, 2005). Lessons and activities that teachers create and apply in their own classrooms, followed by more discussion and learning with their peers is an ideal form of professional development. Learning with colleagues in PLC's (DuFour, 2007) or other collaborative configurations is beneficial. In order to continue to deepen understanding and implementation, individual reflection is the next step.
Conclusion

Teacher retention is a problem in America’s public schools, especially in low income and high minority population areas (Strong, 2007). Additionally, teachers in the middle level often are ill prepared to meet the needs of young adolescents (Cooney, 1998; Jackson & Davis, 2000). The lack of preparation and support affect teachers’ beliefs in their ability to do the job they are hired for, in other words, their efficacy (Wolfolk-Hoy, 2000). The obstacles that teachers deal with in many low performing schools include limited resources, support, experience and lack of specialized preparation or knowledge. These factors affect teachers’ desire to remain in teaching and to reach to their potential as a professional educator. Quality teachers are instrumental to the success of our public education; therefore, induction and mentoring programs that meet the needs of beginning teachers in challenging circumstances are essential components for schools to improve teacher retention and effectiveness (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004).
CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

This study investigated beginning teachers’ perceptions of professional support in their first year. It is important to understand how beginning teachers make sense of their experiences if mentors and other school leaders aim to improve program to have the desired impact (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). I used a phenomenological approach to collect and analyze data. Phenomenology seeks to understand lived experiences and gain deeper understanding of the meaning of our everyday circumstances (van Manen, 1990; Patton, 2002). An assumption in phenomenological research is that there is hidden meaning in our experiences, so insight is developed through investigating and validating them (van Manen, 1990). This study examined beginning teachers’ perceptions of their experiences with the various levels of support including: professional networking; school and district level professional development; mentoring; and administrative support.

As a research method in education, the phenomenological approach aims to stay away from fixed procedures or rules that guide the research. However, van Manen (1990) offers six research activities in hermeneutic phenomenology:

(1) turning to a phenomenon which seriously interests us and commits us to the world;
(2) investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualize it;
(3) reflecting on the essential themes which characterize the phenomenon;
(4) describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting;
(5) manipulating a strong and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon;
(6) balancing the research context by considering parts and whole. (p. 30-31)
These activities are well suited to this research project. The lives and experiences of beginning teachers are of great interest to me as the researcher, and I examined their lives through in-depth interviews that detail their experiences. This study focused on one complex area. A complex is defined by a high school and its’ feeder schools. In the HIDOE, two to three complexes are supervised by a complex area superintendent (CAS), which makes a complex area. To triangulate the data collection, I used the *Aloha District Mentoring and Induction Program Plan* (2008) and year-end surveys of all teachers in the complex area to compare my participants’ perceptions with the complex goals and teachers’ survey responses. I examined the data and developed themes throughout the research process. The relationship between the various teachers’ perceptions of their first year provided valuable insight about the support systems that exist for new teachers in the schools.

Phenomenological research is about understanding lived experience, while qualitative research methods are well suited to the study of meaning and complexity of experience (Patton, 2002). Qualitative methods allow a researcher to solicit more detail and describe what happens in a natural setting. Case studies, as one example, allow for an in-depth perspective with a smaller number of participants and can help policy makers understand the intricacies of a given situation. Using qualitative methods allowed me, as the researcher, flexibility in the data collection to gather more relevant information based on findings that emerged over time (Grbich, 2007). Interviewing the participants allowed me to gather their perspectives and probe for further clarification and meaning. This constructivist approach, which allows knowledge and meaning to emerge, relies on the researcher to elicit meaning in the phenomenon being studied rather than impose one’s own beliefs. Researchers’ experiences contribute to their perceptions and biases, and must be acknowledged. As a mentor for the complex and an advocate for both
teacher development and the needs of young adolescents, I had to set aside my beliefs to accurately portray those of the participants. Grbich (2007) notes that the researcher’s personal experiences allow for multiple realities. Therefore, researcher bias was continually checked to ensure that proper attention was paid to what is actually occurring rather than what I expected to see.

**Case Study**

A case study is a process for examining phenomena in a bounded system. Case studies are bound by a context with clear limitations that allow for a focused investigation. Furthermore, a case study must be bound by specific and identifiable criteria (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 2000). Within the bounded system, the researcher’s role in a case study is to gather data and make sense of the system being examined. This case was bound by four criteria: (a) time - 2009-2010 school year; (b) location – Ali’i and Nalu Complex Area; (c) participants - five first year teachers; and, (d) phenomena - beginning teachers’ experiences in the first year.

A case study is a form of qualitative research, in which the primary interest is the case, and the methodology is selected based on the best ways to understand the case (Stake, 2000). Additionally, a case is characterized by the intricacies of the context, and is influenced by the cultural and social systems that surround it (Stake, 2000). In the Ali’i and Nalu complex there are many social and cultural factors as suggested in the bioecologocal theory (Bronfenbrenner, 2005) that affect teachers’ abilities to do their jobs in the schools. This case study aimed to capture teachers’ perspectives as they were inducted into their schools as a single phenomenon, through various perspectives of a collection of individuals (Stake, 2000). Investigating the perspectives of beginning, middle level teachers in this community lent itself to a case study methodology because it allowed for intensive description and analysis across the case (Merriam,
This methodology allowed me to develop an understanding of the case through the perspectives and interaction of the multiple participants.

A case study goes into substantial depth and can be seen to satisfy the three tenets of qualitative methodology: describing, understanding, and explaining (Tellis, 1997). Yin (1994) argues that case study is the only logical method of research in some circumstances. To deepen my understanding of new teachers’ perspectives of their first year, the case study allowed me to develop a rich understanding of the circumstances from multiple perspectives.

When conducting a case study, triangulation of sources is necessary to compare and cross check the consistency of information collected at different times and by different methods (Yin, 1994). Additionally it is crucial to cross check and compare across participants from different role groups in the context of the study (Patton, 2002). Validation of multiple sources of data adds credibility to the study and ensures that the researcher takes multiple perspectives into account in describing the case. The data collection in this research consisted of in-depth semi-structured interviews of five teachers from different entry paths into teaching in the selected schools. These interviews were supported by anonymous program evaluations conducted at the end of the school year. Finally, these data were compared across teachers, and with the district new teacher induction plan.

**Binding of the Case**

Miles and Huberman (1994) discuss many ways that researchers can bind their case including, time, setting, sampling and role. They encourage researchers to be specific and pinpoint research questions as early as possible. In the following section I describe how I selected the participants, the setting, duration of the study, and my role as the researcher.
Setting

This research took place in three secondary schools in Hawai‘i in the Ali‘i and Nalu complex area and specifically focused on teachers of young adolescents. The data were collected during the 2009-2010 school year. Participants included five, first year teachers who came to teaching with a variety of backgrounds and preparation paths.

Aloha Mentoring and Induction Program.

I investigated new teachers’ experiences and perceptions of support received in a three secondary schools within one complex area. All schools had high percentages of students living in poverty and high percentages of minority students. The Aloha District Induction and Mentoring Plan (2008) was designed for three different complex areas in the HIDOE that make up the Aloha District. Each complex hired one complex level mentor to support the school and beginning teachers. The schools were expected to assign a mentor to each new teacher. The mentor was also able to request assistance from the complex level mentors as needed. The complex level mentors were full time positions and these persons participated simultaneously in the professional development with the school level mentors (Table 1). Ali‘i High School had two full-release mentors who shared the case-load and provided support as well as arranged networking sessions for the new teachers. Ali‘i Intermediate had coaches and a vice principal who provided monthly classes, which supported new teachers at the school. Nalu Intermediate had one full-release mentor and coaches for each subject who supported the new teachers. Mentors that were selected by the administration attended eight full-day professional development sessions provided by the New Teacher Center. The workshops were funded by the district to prepare mentors and implement the Induction Program Plan. The professional development consisted of sessions on instructional mentoring, analyzing student work and
coaching and observation. The study was conducted in the second year of the program and all mentors had participated in the sessions by the conclusion of the first year.

Table 1
School Level Mentor Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Type of Mentor</th>
<th>Number of 1st year Mentees</th>
<th>Certification</th>
<th>Professional Development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ali’i Inter</td>
<td>Literacy Coach</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>English/Secondary Social Studies/Secondary</td>
<td>New Teacher Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nalu Inter</td>
<td>Full Release</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td>New Teacher Center</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Kahua, a cultural induction program, was an additional opportunity for new teachers as a partnership program between Kamehameha Schools and the HIDOE to support teachers with culturally responsive pedagogy in areas where there were high populations of Native Hawaiians. Each teacher participated in a three-day orientation about the community and the population and was paired with a cultural mentor for support throughout the year.

In addition to mentoring, some additional examples of the support received in the first year of teaching included a new teacher support class, professional learning communities, mentoring, interdisciplinary teams, school wide professional development and graduate coursework.

**Participants**

In this case study, I used purposive sampling (Stake, 2000) to select five participants who portrayed a range pathways into teaching in Hawai’i, and thus a range of experiences and (perhaps) perceptions of teaching middle level students in the selected schools.
My participants were carefully selected to characterize three main categories of teachers who were typical of new teachers in these schools: mainland certified, locally certified and alternatively certified (Table 2).

- Mainland certified teachers are college graduates who have completed a teaching certification program (participants included master’s and fifth year certification programs but no bachelor’s degree programs), and are interviewed and hired to teach in Hawai’i’s public schools. These teachers are guaranteed a position and then hired by principals with vacancies in their schools.

- Locally certified teachers attended college on Oahu and have completed student teaching in Hawai’i’s public schools. They apply and interview at schools that have openings.

- Teach for America (TFA) is an alternative certification program, which hires college graduates from “prestigious universities” to work in low performing schools across the country. They receive a six-week intensive teaching course and simultaneously work towards their master’s degree in education with teaching certification during their two-year agreement.

All participants were at intermediate and high and taught grades ranging from 7th - 10th grade. The participants selected were all general education teachers who had student loads ranging from a low of 80 students for Naomi to a high of about 120 students for Jeff and Stephanie. Their mentors varied based on program requirements and school configurations.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>New Teachers</th>
<th>Major</th>
<th>Certification</th>
<th>Student Teaching Placement</th>
<th>Teaching Placement</th>
<th>Subject(s) Teaching/Grade</th>
<th>Mentors Assigned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jeff</td>
<td>Pre Med</td>
<td>TFA</td>
<td>TFA Institute</td>
<td>Nalu Inter.</td>
<td>Science/7</td>
<td>UH Professor/ School Level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephanie</td>
<td>Comm.</td>
<td>TFA</td>
<td>TFA Institute</td>
<td>Nalu Inter.</td>
<td>Math/7</td>
<td>UH Professor/ School Level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>English Education</td>
<td>TFA</td>
<td>Mainland</td>
<td>Aliʻi Inter.</td>
<td>English Lang. Arts/8</td>
<td>Literacy Coach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naomi</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>5th year program: Secondary</td>
<td>Mainland</td>
<td>Aliʻi High</td>
<td>Social Studies/ Spanish/10</td>
<td>School Level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shane</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Master’s Degree: Secondary</td>
<td>University of Hawaiʻi Manoa</td>
<td>Aliʻi High School</td>
<td>English Lang. Arts/10</td>
<td>School Level</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Researcher Role**

This research intended foremost to widen a body of knowledge and impact the practices in induction and mentoring in the schools studied, not to make broad generalizations to the larger population. Unlike quantitative methodology, case studies aim to explain a case in context, with only very cautious inferences regarding other contexts (Stake, 2000). The intricacies of the situation make up the case and are influenced by the cultural and social system that surrounds it. To help understand the influence of these systems, Bronfenbrenner’s (2005) biocological theory was useful in analyzing the experiences of the teachers. The researcher’s role in a case study is to gather data and make sense of the system being examined. It was my goal to understand new teachers’ experiences in their first year. By using the phenomenological approach to this research, I examined the new teachers’ lived experience through in-depth study of their
perceptions.

Necessary characteristics of the qualitative researcher, according to Merriam (1998) include: tolerance, ability to handle ambiguity, sensitivity to context of data, and good communication skills. I paid attention to this as I conducted the interviews. Additionally, as they were all completed within a two week time frame of one another, my reflection became a tool in the data collecting process as I compared and contrasted participants’ experiences in each interview. I utilized reflection as a method to develop themes across participants and modify the interview protocols to fit the emergent themes as participants shared their experiences. In qualitative research, it is important to make visible the through reflective practices the “presuppositions, choices, experiences, and actions during the research process” (Mruck & Breuer, 2003, p. 3). Additional characteristics that are pertinent in my role as the researcher included my vested interest in the mentorship of new teachers, teacher development and appropriate systems and instruction for adolescents.

As the new teacher mentor for the complex during the year of the study, I had contact with the new teachers through various activities. My role in the complex is completely non-evaluative. I am a level of support for the teachers outside of their school. Due to the school structures, I have varying levels of involvement with teachers based on the teacher’s own specific needs, but I was not the primary mentor for any of the teachers in this study. Each teacher had a school level mentor and support system on campus who was considered the first line of support. As a mentor for the complex, I offered professional development classes, although they were not mandatory. Additionally, I met with teachers and conducted observations by request for specific needs.

In addition to school level mentors, teachers who volunteered to participate in the Kahua
Induction Program, which is a cultural introduction, were paired with a member from the community to serve as their cultural mentor. These mentors were volunteers, with no compensation, and they were expected to check in with teachers and try to get them involved with the community. The goal was to enrich the teachers’ understanding of the place in which they taught, and for Jeff, Naomi and Maria, where they lived as well. The teachers had the opportunity to participate in a three-day orientation and four cultural field trips throughout the year.

As the complex mentor, I participated in the Kahua Induction Program alongside the new teachers, not as an organizer or leader. Through various activities, I worked with teachers in groups and on an individual level. I developed relationships with the new teachers including the participants. Because I got to know the participants quite well, I needed to constantly check my biases and relationships. Grbich (2007) describes the need for a researcher to remove his or her own perceptions, or at least be aware of them in regard to the phenomenon being studied. As I interviewed and gathered data about new teachers’ perceptions, I was always cognizant of listening to their perceptions and making sense of their reality without imposing my own beliefs and perceptions. As I interpreted the data using the theoretical framework, it was important to separate what I thought, and my understanding of how new teachers were supposed to be supported, from what teachers were telling me about their experiences. My previous experience being mentored and mentoring teachers led me to believe that new teachers needed a variety of support. As I began this research I believed that all teachers needed mentors who would be available to help with procedural issues as well as curriculum support. I also thought that the additional time required for coursework and TFA expectations were taking away from teachers’ time to focus on their teaching and the school level mentoring should be the priority. Moreover,
I believed that school level mentors should have been utilizing the tools and strategies from the New Teacher Center professional development to effectively support beginning teachers.

**Data Collection Methods**

This research employed a qualitative case study approach, wherein methodology is selected to best understand the case (Stake, 2000). I selected participants from three schools in one complex to help understand the phenomenon being studied by looking at a larger collection of cases (Miles & Hubberman, 1994; Stake 2000). The participants were purposively selected based on their preparation for teaching and the school they were teaching in to get a range of perspectives across schools. Qualitative research is based on the assumption that interpretations of one’s social environment are situational and subjective (Gall et al, 1996). My interest in new teachers and how they perceive their environment and the support they receive led me to choose a case study approach to answer my research questions.

Studies that use only one data set are vulnerable to errors. Triangulation of sources is recommended to compare and cross check the consistency of information collected at different times and by different qualitative methods (Patton, 2002). In order to gain insight into how new teachers perceived their levels of support in their first year, I triangulated the data collection (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003) by using multiple sources, including individual interviews, anonymous surveys, as well as document analysis, such as the *Aloha District Induction and Mentoring Plan* (2008), and teacher reflections.

**Ethical Considerations**

Throughout the research, great consideration was made in regard to the participants and their confidentiality. All participants were informed of the purpose of the study verbally, and given a consent form that outlined the procedures as well as their rights (Appendix C, D).
Participants were asked to participate on a voluntary basis and had the right to withdraw from the study at any time, although none did. All participants and their information were kept confidential and all data collected were used strictly for research purposes. Caution was employed to obscure the schools and the location of this research to further ensure teachers’ anonymity. Additionally, in any reporting of the data, pseudonyms were used to maintain confidentiality of the participants and schools.

**Interview**

In-depth interviews were conducted at the beginning, middle and end of the school year. Through the semi-structured interviews I sought to understand teachers' perceptions of support they received, specifically I asked about different professional development experiences, mentoring, collegial and administrative supports, and networking opportunities. The interviews at three distinct points in the year helped pinpoint the perceptions of support received as well as the teachers' perception of its value based on the time of year. Each interview was coded and analyzed for themes to inform the subsequent semi-structured interview protocol.

I selected five new teachers with various backgrounds and pathways into teaching. The interviews were guided by semi-structured interview protocols and conversations were audio taped with the permission of the participants. The conversations took place in the teachers’ classroom or location of their choosing to ensure comfort. According to Tashakori and Teddlie (1998), keeping all variables and events the same across groups, limits extraneous variables. In order to do this I used semi-structured interview protocols to guide each of the interviews and strengthening the data and analysis (Appendix A). To further enhance the data collection, each interview informed the following interview protocol. Additionally, member checks (Tashakori & Teddlie, 1998) were conducted at each subsequent interview with each participant to assure
that the themes I developed were accurate reflections of the teachers’ experiences.

**Survey**

In addition to the interviews, I reviewed documents from the *District Induction and Mentoring Program* (2008) for new teachers, to analyze the services that teachers perceived they were getting in comparison with what the program specifies. A preexisting survey that is used annually by the Hawai‘i Department of Education to assess the various new teacher induction programs was given to all new teachers, mentors and administrators at the end of the 2009-2010 school year. This anonymous survey is used to get a broad picture of perspectives on professional development and support that new teachers receive. This anonymous survey complemented the data from the interviews to enhance validity (Appendix B).

**Data Analysis**

I utilized the phenomenological approach in data analysis to develop understanding of the participants’ first year teaching. The subjective perceptions of participants are the essence of phenomenology, which aims to understand experiences. This approach aligns with Bronfenbrenner’s (2005) definition of experience as subjective feelings that emerge in early childhood and continue through life. I analyzed teachers’ lived experiences in respect to the environmental factors that influenced their perceptions using the five systems of the Bronfenbrenner’s (2005) bioecological theory: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. Teachers’ environmental influences (Bronfenbrenner, 2005), knowledge about and in teaching (Cohran-Smith & Lytle, 1999), and the structures that existed to support teacher learning (Bandura, 1977) were applied to teachers’ experiences in order to develop codes through the initial readings, and again, as categories were combined and refined to develop themes. Specifically, I analyzed the data as I collected it in order to continually develop
my understanding of new teachers’ perceptions of their experiences. I developed common themes by coding the interviews, and looked for both supporting and contrasting evidence between the interviews and surveys. I did this by looking for themes first within data sets, and then across data sets, for individual teachers, and then across teachers (Table 3).

Table 3  
Example of Code Development for “Mentor Roles” Theme Throughout the Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Month of Interview</th>
<th>Comparison of Mentor Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stephanie</td>
<td>September: Million and one mentors/ seek out help</td>
<td>December: Importance of trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>December: Observations and debrief sessions helped feeling of effectiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeff</td>
<td>September: Logistical issues</td>
<td>December: Frequency and credibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naomi</td>
<td>September: Student work and attitudes use to assess student achievement</td>
<td>December: Casual relationship - could call if needed anything</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>September: Very helpful in classroom and curriculum</td>
<td>December: Monthly meeting and valuable advice - credibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shane</td>
<td>September: There for support if needed</td>
<td>December: Someone on campus to go to if needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>September: Understanding Mentor Role</td>
<td>December: Mentoring Relationships</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To ensure quality data collection throughout the year, I conducted interviews with the five teachers at three different points in the year (September, December and April). I transcribed
and coded the recorded interviews immediately after they occurred and constantly looked for themes as I analyzed the interviews. As a qualitative researcher, I developed categories or themes and elicited meaning to develop an understanding of the teachers’ experiences (Patton, 2002). I continued to develop codes and categories as the interviews progressed. This process of identifying themes required creativity, tolerance for ambiguity and inductive reasoning (Patton, 2002). As I analyzed the interviews I gathered data from both the program plan and the end of the year survey to increase the validity in the collection and analysis of data (Grbich, 2007). Additionally, I analyzed the themes across all data collected by repeatedly pondering, rearranging and making meaning.

The data gathered from the varied participants increased the validity in the collection and analysis of the data (Grbich, 2007). As I conducted the interviews, and as themes emerged, I reflected on the context of the teachers’ experiences with reference to the five systems of the bioecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 2005) to draw inferences. The factors that affected teachers’ experiences ranging from direct interaction to larger social systems impacted their perception of their experience. I examined the larger context and environmental factors to situate the experiences and further compared across the participants to seek out alternative explanations. As teachers shared experiences that were contrary to my initial understanding of the phenomena or contrary to my beliefs about support for new teachers, I probed further to have them explain. This allowed me to gather rich description of the phenomena. Furthermore, I followed up with each of the participants to validate my analysis and deepen my understanding in subsequent interviews. Finally, the five teachers’ perspectives were analyzed for both consistency and inconsistencies in relationship to the other participants. Through this process I was able to understand the similarities and differences in the perceptions of the new teachers.
with varied preparation and experience.

It is important that researchers have a sufficient amount of data to provide a full picture of the case (Charmaz, 2006). In addition to the interviews, the document analysis and anonymous surveys from a larger pool of new teachers in the complex strengthened the data analysis. The anonymous data helped to validate what was found through the interviews, which were the primary source of data collection. Patton (1999) suggests that it is important to seek rival explanations, including looking for other ways of organizing the data that may lead to different conclusions. In addition to organizing the data, I checked for rival evidence and interpretations to explain the findings throughout the data analysis. Researchers can improve the validity of the research by seeking disconfirming evidence and by looking for negative exemplars through the research process (Merriam, 2002). Additionally, member checks were a critical step in my data analysis. It is important to make the findings available to others to receive feedback on their accuracy (Yin, 1998). By allowing the participants to review the themes that I had derived after each interview and provide feedback on the analysis of the findings and relationships, I improved internal validity (Tashakori & Teddlie, 1998). This process of constantly reviewing the data drove the analysis from the preliminary stages of coding through the development of conceptual categories, and then to practical recommendations (Harry, Sturges & Klinger, 2005).

**Summary of Methodology**

This case study of new teachers took place on the island of O’ahu across three secondary schools during the 2009-2010 school year. The purpose of this research was to investigate beginning teachers’ perceptions of support in their first year. The perceptions of the new teachers helps those interested in induction year to make sense of their experiences (Bogdan &
Biklen, 2003) to further understand how we can improve the support for new teachers, promote retention of effective teachers, and strengthen student achievement.

This study examined beginning teachers’ perceptions of the various levels of support including professional collaboration, support networks, school and district level professional development, mentoring and administrative support. Data collection methods included surveys, interviews and document analysis to get a thick description (Grbich, 2007) of the experiences in the first year. To ensure validity, rigorous qualitative data analysis techniques were employed. I sought rival explanations to explain the data throughout the research process (Merriam, 2002; Patton, 1999). Another important step in the analysis was member checks, which allowed colleagues to view the data collected and check for bias (Yin, 1998). I constantly compared and analyzed data from the beginning stages of coding through the development of the recommendations (Harry, Sturges & Klinger, 2005). The results add to the extant literature on how to best support new teachers by deepening the understanding of how teachers perceived the support they received in the Ali’i and Nalu secondary schools.
CHAPTER 4. FINDINGS

This chapter presents findings of five new teachers’ experiences based on interviews at the beginning, middle and end of the year, and state survey data assessing new teachers’ induction year which were compared to the central goals *Aloha District Mentoring and Induction Plan*. The purpose of this study was to understand the perspectives of the new teachers on their first year as professionals and the support that they received. This research was conducted over the 2009-2010 school year in the Ali’i and Nalu Complex on Oahu. A total of five beginning teachers from three secondary schools were selected during the initial orientation, prior to the beginning of the school year. I purposively selected the five teachers based on their general education placement, their prior preparation and location they resided in before teaching in Hawai‘i to ensure variety in the perspectives of the new teachers. Additionally, the demographics of the teachers selected closely represent a typical range of beginning teachers in Ali’i and Nalu schools. All five voluntary participants remained part of the study for its entirety.

A significant historical effect in this study is that in October of the 2009-2010 school year, mandatory furloughs were implemented for the Hawai‘i Department of Education. All public schools were closed on 17 “furlough Fridays”, which shortened the school year from 180 days to 163. Teachers reference furloughs throughout their interviews and discuss the impact they had on their teaching, student achievement and their personal and professional well-being.

Participants

To understand new teachers’ experiences, it is important to understand their background and some of the influences that have affected their development. According to Bronfenbrenner’s (2005) bioecological theory, development is defined as the, phenomenon of continuity and change in the biopsychological characteristics of human beings both as individuals and groups.
Interaction with one’s environment influences development; the microsystem is the most direct interaction with the individual, which includes the teachers’ families, their own education as well as the school in which they taught. In these interactions the individual is not passive but helps construct these settings. Teachers’ mesosystem, or system of relationships, included team members, mentors, peers or administration. Therefore, below I present the teachers’ background and describe how they became teachers in one of the Ali’i and Nalu schools.

**Jeff**

Jeff decided to join TFA as a last minute decision in his senior year of college. “I had no idea what I was going to do and a recruiter from TFA came in and started talking about the achievement gap and how you could travel so I thought I would put my name in and see what happens” (Jeff, PI, September 29, 2009). His family values influenced his views of teaching and his career goals. The women in his family were teachers because of the flexible schedule and the summers off but the sons were expected to be professionals in other fields. Jeff shared that even though he was interested in teaching, “I never wanted to be a professional teacher but I always thought it would be something really cool to do when I was young” (Jeff, PI, September 29, 2009).

Although Jeff had thought about teaching and decided to join TFA he admitted he lacked the preparation. “I will be honest; I really don’t have any teacher training. I didn’t work with students or anything like that at all before this year. Over the summer, TFA sends you to summer training. I taught summer school for 6 weeks.” (Jeff, PI, September 29, 2009). In addition to his lack of teacher preparation, his background differed greatly from his current teaching placement. Jeff (PI, September 27, 2009) shared, “I went to school in suburbia and in the inner city and things are very different than they are in this community.” Jeff was in a new
environment and was learning about teaching, his students and the culture of the schools and community.

**Maria**

Maria’s school experiences, her passions as well as her family dynamics influenced her desire to be a teacher early on. Teaching and learning were an integral part of her life from an early age. “I was observing teachers and I would help people out so that is how I decided to be a teacher. I always loved to read. I love stories” (Maria, September 24 2009). Maria, a native Spanish speaker, grew up with English as her second language and felt drawn to language being bilingual. She excelled in school without the support of parents who spoke English and shared her love of literature and keen observations of teachers and their own styles that helped or hindered students.

As Maria reflected on her own childhood she explained that, “I grew up in inner city schools and zero tolerance to everything. I grew up and worked in schools where parents were never involved only unless the kid was getting hauled off to jail” (Maria, PI, September 24, 2009). Although the socioeconomic status of students was similar in her current school to that of students in her background, the culture was different for her. She was still adapting and shared that, “I haven’t decided if I like it or not yet since I have only been here for a little while but it is different (Maria, PI, September 24, 2009). Based on Maria’s background, she perceived the parents to be heavily involved and her power limited because parents questioned her and kept updated with the students. She described the school community as being very different from schools in her own experiences both as a secondary school student and in her teaching preparation assignments.
Naomi’s middle class norms and experiences influenced her perceptions and affected how she viewed the community in which she was teaching and living. She grew up in a predominantly white, middle class neighborhood, which made her appreciate the diversity and the cultural richness of the community in which she taught, but she also saw problems that existed as she compared the two:

There were never any fights in my school, and all the kids wanted to learn. The exception was the kids who didn’t care where here is the opposite. The kids that want to learn here are the exception. I think a lot of that is the family, and the parents don’t have the same expectations for education in general, which is hard as a teacher because I love learning and I don’t understand. (Naomi, PI, September 21, 2009)

Naomi’s middle class upbringing differed from the Ali’i and Nalu complex area and made it difficult for her to understand the cultural norms and attitudes she perceived the community had about education.

Naomi’s content background and her love for kids became her impetus for teaching. Once she graduated with her teaching license and master’s degree in secondary education, she went to a career fair looking to teach somewhere on the west coast and ended up getting a job in Hawai’i by chance. “The principal interviewed me on the spot and offered me a job teaching in Hawai’i. I never thought of Hawai’i as an option, but I was open to it because it is beautiful and the more I thought about it, it just seemed like an adventure” (Naomi, PI, September 21, 2009). Moving to Hawai’i was a big transition because she moved far away from home and also because it was her first time living alone and taking on adult responsibilities. Naomi dealt with
many new experiences and had to learn a lot as she began her career teaching in the Aliʻi and Nalu complex area.

**Stephanie**

Stephanie grew up in a middle class family with a mom who was a teacher. “I grew up with my mom checking my homework every night to make sure it was done, and she was on top of everything.” Having a mom as a teacher, Stephanie always knew she would be a teacher, but she took a different route to that career path to explore different options. “I followed my interests into a communications major, but at some point I realized that the job I was doing was fun, but it isn’t what I want to do for my life. I was not passionate about it” (Stephanie, PI, September 29, 2009). Once she decided to get into teaching, she sought out programs that could get her a job quickly without having to take a year off and go back to school. She applied for TFA and was selected to be a corps member in Hawaiʻi.

As she learned a little bit about the community she was teaching in she recognized the difference in her upbringing compared to her students. “Here kids are picking up their brothers and sisters after school” (Stephanie, PI, September 29, 2009). She sees what a difference parent involvement makes but empathizes with her students and their situations. Although Stephanie knew a different world from the world her kids knew she enjoyed the community and the students for who they were and where she could help. “Most people want to stay where it is comfortable. It is a surprise to me that I love it so much that I am more anxious about teaching in an area that I grew up in” (Stephanie, PI, September 29, 2009).

**Shane**

Shane attended private school on Oahu and was very dedicated to his studies. He immediately recognized that the family expectations of his students were very different from
what he grew up with. “It is hard. My family was very involved. I think a lot of students who I work with don’t have parents who can be consistent. I talked to some kids whose parents work all the time, so it is hard” (Shane, PI, September 22, 2009). Shane’s background differs from his students, but his knowledge of how support and consistency are cornerstones for learning helped him to be those things for his students when he perceived their own parents could not.

With the influences of Shane’s mom being in education and the rest of his family in the service industry he fell easily into teaching. He went to college on the mainland and while he was tutoring he found that it was work that he was passionate about. When he came back to Hawai’i with an English degree he enrolled at UH in a graduate teaching degree program. As part of the teaching preparation, the program placed teachers in the Aloha District as he described:

I guess the idea was that most teachers are placed in the Aloha District and so they might as well train them out here. Just being out here I already had connections and that is how I got the job. I was a student teacher and they hired me. (Shane, PI, September 22, 2009)

Shane’s local preparation to be a teacher and his understanding of the schooling systems rooted in his student teaching at the same school influenced his perceptions and experiences as a new teacher.

There are a variety of backgrounds of the beginning teachers including Shane’s local upbringing, and four teachers from the mainland: Naomi, Maria and Jeff and Stephanie who were part of the TFA corps. Shane and Naomi received their master’s in education prior to teaching and Maria was certified as a secondary teacher through a fifth year program. Naomi, Shane, Jeff and Stephanie described themselves as coming from middle class families, whereas
Maria grew up with English as a second language in an immigrant family and described her family as having a lower socioeconomic status. These cases highlight different perspectives that teachers bring into the profession, rooted in their own background and preparation as well as their current placement.

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Preparation to Teach</th>
<th>Location of Teacher Education</th>
<th>Highly Qualified*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shane</td>
<td>Master’s in secondary education</td>
<td>Hawai‘i</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephanie</td>
<td>Teach for America</td>
<td>Hawai‘i (in progress)</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeff</td>
<td>Teach for America</td>
<td>Hawai‘i (in progress)</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naomi</td>
<td>Master’s in secondary Education</td>
<td>Mainland</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marie</td>
<td>Fifth year- certification in secondary education</td>
<td>Mainland</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: “Highly Qualified” is defined by the federal government as a teacher who is fully certified with at least a bachelor’s degree, and has content knowledge through college courses or professional development.

District Mentoring and Induction Plan

New teacher mentoring has been a part of the Aloha District for many years; however beginning in 2008-2009 school year, the State Induction and Mentoring Policy (HIDOE, 2008) indicated each district must create a plan to address the needs of beginning teachers. A cohesive plan for the Aloha District was created to mirror the State elements. The draft was completed at the end of the 2007-2008 school year to work with the New Teacher Center and to implement the plan in the following school years of 2008-2009 and 2009-2010. The Hawai‘i Department of Education and Aloha District plan indicated that each new teacher would be assigned a mentor who would help carry out the goals of the plan. According to the Aloha District Induction, Mentoring and Highly Qualified Teacher Program (2008) the District’s goals were to implement a mentor and highly qualified teacher program that focused assistance and support for teachers that would:
• Positively impact student achievement
• Improve teacher performance
• Increase retention of competent teachers
• Promote personal and professional well being of the new teacher
• Enable teachers to become highly qualified in their instructional areas
• Instill a basis for continued personal and professional growth

There was one district mentor that oversaw the program throughout the district, two complex mentors and school level mentors as well. All of the mentors worked with new teachers, but also supported each other. The *Aloha District Induction, Mentoring and Highly Qualified Teacher Program Plan* (2008) stated that mentors should, “keep in regular contact with new teachers and offer personal and professional support and guidance” (p.7). This was further described as classroom observations and debriefing, social gatherings, encouragement and professional support. The current research focused on one of the complex areas that is part of the Aloha District. Furthermore, the beginning teachers were selected from the three secondary schools in this complex.
Figure 1: Individual Complex Flow Chart of the Aloha District Induction, Mentoring and Highly Qualified Teacher Program (Aloha District Induction, Mentoring and Highly Qualified Teacher Program, 2008)

New Teacher Survey

The New Teacher Survey (2009; Appendix B) was administered to all new teachers in the state at the end of each year; these teachers were given the opportunity to participate and provide feedback to the complex and the state. The survey solicited teachers’ perceptions about the support that they received on a scale and in open-ended items. The survey was anonymous and voluntary, yet participation was highly encouraged by administrators in the complex and state.

Interviews

Interviews were used as the primary data source in this study to understand new teachers’ perceptions of the support that they received in their first year of teaching. All data gathered from these interviews was based on what participants shared and reported from their perspectives. I conducted interviews with each of the five teachers at three specified points in the year. The same semi-structured interview questions were used to guide the interviews with
all five participants to ensure data gathered was similar. However, due to participants’ own experiences and perceptions, the nature of the interviews differed.

The first interview was conducted in the last week of September, 2009, between the 8th and 9th week of the school year. The initial interview sought to glean information about the participants’ background, preparation and perceptions of their placements including support and the community in which they taught. The second interview took place in December, the end of the teachers’ second quarter and followed up on the perceptions and feeling of the teachers discussed in their initial interviews. The third interview took place in April, during the 4th quarter after teachers had returned from spring break and this last interview followed up on previous perceptions and collected data regarding new highlights and challenges. The final statewide survey was given to new teachers after the year was over and asked them to reflect on the year in its entirety. A total of 22 beginning teaches completed the end of the year survey in comparison to five participants that participated in the in-depth interviews.

In the following section, new teachers’ perceptions of the support they received were aligned with the Aloha District’s induction program goals. Although the plan had six main goals, preparing teachers to become highly qualified did not emerge from the data as a major theme to discuss in the findings. Therefore, five of the six program goals were represented in this section. The induction program intended to offer support to: 1) Positively impact student achievement, 2) Improve teacher performance, 3) Increase retention of competent teachers, 4) Promote personal and professional well being of new teachers and 5) Instill a basis of personal and professional development. The data from the new teacher survey is organized by each goal and followed by the perceptions of the five teachers who were interviewed.
Positively Impact Student Achievement

Positively impacting student achievement is one of the main program goals for the Aloha District. Teachers’ perceptions of the support they received to help them in improving student achievement were gathered through interviews in the beginning, middle and end of the year. The following section details how teachers felt about the support that was provided to improve student achievement. The survey results that pertained to student achievement were also analyzed to triangulate the interview responses while looking for both contradicting and common themes.

New Teacher Survey Findings

The complex survey had three items that specifically pertained to increasing student achievement. The first item indicated that almost half of the teachers felt that they received ample support in differentiating instruction whereas the other half received some to none at all. The second item showed that six of teachers surveyed reported that a mentor assisted them in analyzing student work and developing assessments on a regular basis. The remaining 16 teachers had little to no support in this area. The final item related to student achievement, focused on mentors providing strategies to help teachers maintain a positive environment. Half of the teachers’ affirmed that their mentors had been supportive in this area. The other half indicated some to no support in this area.
Table 5

New Teacher Survey: Mentor Support Focused on Student Achievement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Prompts</th>
<th>A great deal</th>
<th>Quite a bit</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>Hardly</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>Does not apply</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My mentor helps me differentiate instruction and provide and meet accommodation to meet diverse learners/ needs</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My mentor assists me in analyzing student work and developing student assessments</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My mentor helps me develop a positive learning environment and strategies for managing student behavior</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Teacher Interviews

Throughout the year, teachers discussed student achievement; however the conversations related to student achievement changed as the year progressed. At the beginning of the year, only three of the teachers discussed student achievement when talking about the support that they received. The teachers alluded to wanting to help students to be successful but not really knowing how to make that happen. Teachers used data at differing levels to understand their students’ needs. In December, the conversations about student achievement were focused on the Hawai‘i State Assessment (HSA). Teachers also discussed different types of motivation that they felt were important for students to achieve as well as classroom instruction that affected student achievement. At the end of the year, teachers’ heightened awareness of the impact of their teaching strategies and classroom systems on student achievement was evident. Targeting students and addressing specific needs was also common among teachers by the end of the year. The teachers’ focus on student achievement changed throughout the year as teachers became more aware of their students’ needs as well as how their own teaching affected their students learning.
Beginning of the year.

Early in the year, only three of the five teachers interviewed made reference to any type of data that they used to determine student achievement. The use of data to determine the level of students’ achievement ranged among the teachers. The following three examples highlight the differences. One teacher deliberately did not use data to analyze student achievement. Another teacher used both student work and behavior to assess their leaning and readiness to move on. The third teacher, Jeff, aligned teaching to his assessments and used targeted data to determine levels of student achievement.

Maria was not sure what her kids had learned. She said she did not utilize sufficient data to determine the achievement of her students. Rather, she was concerned with the room remaining in control.

I don’t know if I have taught them anything. I know they read and understood the book. Mostly, I have just been trying to keep them under control and keep the class from going into complete chaos. We got the book read, we got assignments turned in but I don’t know if they learned anything. (Maria, PI, September 24, 2009)

Maria reported being unable to judge whether or not her students mastered the determined objectives.

Naomi did not feel that she was as effective as she wanted to be. She used some data points such as student work and behavior to make judgments about what her students learned. Although she continued to struggle to meet their needs in social studies, which was she was not prepared to teach, she maintained the belief that she could impact student achievement positively.
I really want to be effective but I think there are things that I should be doing differently…In the beginning of the school year I focused on lots of information and higher level thinking but it was too advanced. I came out of grad schools and thought those were the questions to be asking, but I have kids at second grade level that couldn’t read the books that I was assigning. I am learning their strengths and weaknesses and trying to adapt to them. (Naomi, PI September 21, 2009)

Naomi felt that she had a solid foundation and utilized her repertoire of strategies to figure out how to meet her students’ needs. Maria and Naomi both lacked confidence that their students were achieving. However, Naomi felt that she understood why her students were unsuccessful, which led her to believe that she had control over student achievement and is working to improve it.

Assessment data were a key factor that confirmed Jeff’s feeling of effectiveness. He sought to teach specific objectives, and his data indicated to him that the students did learn what he taught them. This concrete data had a strong impact on Jeff’s assessment of student achievement.

With TFA, they make us give a final test and the test has to be approved so we don’t lower the standards for them. We want to give a very difficult test but want them to be successful. The goal is to have students achieve 80% of the benchmarks. My kids aced the test. They did amazing. I came into the second quarter with a swagger. I am feeling pretty confident. (Jeff, PI, September 27, 2009)

Jeff utilized assessment data at the end of the quarter to determine what his students learned and was elated with the results.
Only three of the teachers interviewed alluded to using data to analyze student achievement in the first interview. Maria explained that she did not analyze any data to examine what students had learned. In Naomi’s classroom, behavior and student work was reviewed to assess readiness to move on and determine what was learned. Jeff demonstrated how aligning his teaching to his assessments helped him to determine the effectiveness of his teaching based on what his students learned.

**Middle of the year.**

Although teachers were motivated to have students achieve at high levels, the majority felt their classes lacked challenging curriculum. There were a variety of reasons that teachers gave including: special needs populations, not setting high enough expectations, and intentionally making it easy so kids pass. Only one of the five teachers felt that his class was challenging for his students.

Naomi and Stephanie both had high population of special needs students and struggled to differentiate instruction, “It is way too easy but we had to do that because we have a special population. I think it is way too easy for certain kids but we have to meet the level of the majority” (Naomi, PI, December 14, 2009). The diverse population and special needs students in their classes were a factor in designing the curriculum. Both teachers resorted to teaching at lower levels and the covering the basics, which admittedly did not meet the needs of all the students.

Two of the teachers acknowledged giving a sufficient amount of work but not necessarily higher-level activities. Shane felt that, “in terms of workload, I think it could be more rigorous. I want to go deeper. I ask them to do a sufficient amount of work and I think my expectations are ok but I could make them higher” (Shane, PI, December 15, 2009). Maria also felt that she
taught at a very basic level. Her insecurities about her teaching spurred her to grade easily.

Additionally, her preparation was in high school pedagogy and because she taught middle school, she felt it was necessary to “water down” the activities she learned when she was student teaching. With the exception of a common assessment that was regulated by the department, Maria reported that she did not challenge her students.

I try to make it as easy as possible. I try not to be very rigorous at all. I don’t grade very hard. Our literary letters were hard grading because I went according to the rubric and the rubric was hard. But usually I don’t grade that hard. I try to give them some leeway because I probably didn’t explain things well and that is probably why they made certain mistakes. (Maria, PI, December 9, 2009)

Both Shane and Maria acknowledged that it was likely the amount of work that made their classes challenging rather than an expectation of quality or depth of thinking.

Only one of the five teachers believed that he promoted high levels of student achievement. Jeff linked his assessment of the rigor in his classroom to the common subject assessments that the TFA teachers give to all their students to measure progress. “They are doing really well. In TFA we have tests we have to give, and my kids did really well” (Jeff, PI, December 11, 2009).

Jeff cited high levels of student achievement in his class and supported it with data from common assessments. However, overall, the teachers discussed low-level instruction in their classes. This was attributed to student abilities and lack of teacher expectations for high level, quality work. The teachers were aware of their low expectations but seemed to lack the knowledge and motivation to increase the level of work in their classes to improve student achievement.
End of the year.

There was a noticeable difference in the conversations with teachers about student achievement in the end of the year interviews. The teachers were much more specific in regard to the students’ needs, and strategies implemented to impact student learning by engaging students, creating better systems and motivating learners. The teachers seemed to have a deeper understanding of how their teaching strategies and classroom systems impacted student behavior and achievement. Finally, teachers began targeting specific students based on their weak areas to impact student achievement.

The teachers reported adjusting their classroom instruction to increase student engagement. They reflected on their instruction and students’ needs to make instruction more relevant. For example, Naomi noticed that her students were not being challenged and decided to give them more work to do independently. “I told them that since they are more capable I was going to have them do more on their own” (Naomi, PI, March 22, 2010). Shane worked on making his assignments more relevant. He shared that he was assigning, “More work for a purpose, not just piling it on to make them stress. (Shane, PI, March 22, 2010)”. Lastly, Stephanie had been working on increasing the amount of group work and doing more hands on activities. Her instruction seemed to be meeting the students’ needs and keeping them engaged. She received, “A lot of positive feedback. They seem to be enjoying it” (Stephanie, PI, March 22, 2010). The previous examples from the beginning teachers’ classrooms highlighted their emerging awareness of relevant and engaging instruction. The teachers changed their classroom instruction to meet their students’ needs. Some strategies included challenging students’ thinking, aligning work to real life tasks, creating more labs and having students work together.

One significant improvement was in developing systems for make-up work that plagued
the teachers in the previous interviews both in the beginning and middle of the year. The teachers were faced with attendance problems, and as a result, they needed to keep track of what work students were missing to hold them accountable for getting the work completed and turned in. Both Maria and Naomi made a commitment to helping their students by calling parents, staying later, and helping students manage their assignments. The systems that were put in place, helped students take ownership of their missing work, and Naomi found that “It is easier for me to do and the work gets done and it is more meaningful rather than cramming it all at the end” (Naomi, PI, March 22, 2010).

Another way that teachers focused on student achievement was by tailoring instruction to students’ specific needs. At two schools, a school-wide system was created that helped teachers target failing students. For example, Maria pulled kids together in small groups to improve their skills. Naomi’s team targeted students who were at risk for failing and made sure they had an adult who was in charge of monitoring their progress. She had been working with her kids and appreciated that the administration targeted the students because, “I know who they are so I can at least be aware and focus on them. So I have been really trying to help those kids this quarter. They all passed! I know these kids’ levels and I can push them up so it is really helpful” (Naomi, PI, March 22, 2010). Both of these teachers targeted students in need, on the basis of a larger system where formal data had been collected.

Students were targeted by the teachers as well as the administration. For example, Stephanie’s three-question quiz allowed her to determine who understood the objective and who did not. She asked those who struggled to come to tutoring. This system worked for her and allowed students who needed extra help to receive it. However, in another setting, Naomi struggled to find a way to get her students the extra time they needed to grasp the concepts,
It is hard because not all the kids can do it on their own so I have to really help them but I am by myself this semester. I don’t have any help. I don’t think I expected the kids to need that extra one on one time that I can’t give to them.

(Naomi, PI, March 22, 2010)

Many students needed interventions and extra time to understand difficult material. Various approaches were discussed to target students in need, which were beneficial but some teachers still struggled to find the time to meet all students’ needs. Students were targeted in both school and classroom systems. These systems, when in place helped teachers to identify students and target students’ weak areas.

Towards the end of the school year, teachers were more deliberate about what strategies they were using and what effect it had on their students’ achievement. Teachers discussed making their classroom instruction more engaging. They also noted systems that they put in place to keep the classroom running smoothly and aid students in keeping up with the assignments. Additionally, teachers paid attention to motivation as a key factor in increasing student achievement.

**Summary of Student Achievement**

Throughout the year, new teachers’ attention to increasing student achievement changed. The teacher interviews indicated that at the beginning of the year there was varied use of data across teachers. In the middle of the year, teachers began to focus on the HSA. Systemic pressure was a prominent theme. Some teachers felt very little pressure, and others were overwhelmed by it. Teachers were personally motivated to have their students to achieve at high levels. On the other hand, the classroom instruction did not always match the teachers’ expectations of high achievement. Towards the end of the year, teachers shared examples of
being more aware of strategies and systems that affected student achievement. They targeted students via school-wide systems as well as in their classes and shared heightened understanding of strategies to motivate and engage their students.

**Improve Teacher Performance**

Improving teacher performance was another program goal for the Aloha District. In order to determine the teachers’ perceptions of the support they received, interviews from the beginning, middle and end of the year were analyzed. The following section details how teachers felt about the support that was provided to improve teacher performance. The survey results that pertained to teacher performance were analyzed as well to cross-reference the interviewed teachers’ responses and to identify commonalities as well as outliers.

**New Teacher Survey Findings**

In the state’s end of the year survey, teachers in the Ali’i and Nalu schools indicated that they did have mentors, and these ranged from a teacher on campus with no release time to a full-release complex mentor (Table 6). Teachers also stated in the same survey that the amount of time in both duration and frequency varied greatly. Some teachers met weekly with their mentors while some had only monthly contact. Additionally, the amount of time spent with mentors in these sessions varied, but the majority stated that they usually spent less than 30 minutes per session (State Survey, 2010).
Table 6
New Teacher Survey: Frequency of New Teachers’ Contact with Their Mentor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency Of contact</th>
<th>Number of teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;1 x per month</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 x</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 x</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 x</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 x or more</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the 22 teachers who responded to the state survey (2010), 14 indicated that the amount of time their mentor spent observing and providing feedback was sufficient (Table 7). Six teachers felt that the time they were observed and given feedback was too little. Although it is not clear from the survey what is meant by “sufficient” and how that might affect teacher’s practice, it presents a general picture regarding teachers in the Nalu and Ali‘i complex area.

Table 7
New Teacher Survey: Perception of Time Spent with Mentor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perception of Time with Mentor</th>
<th>Number of Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sufficient</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too little</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too much</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not apply</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Teacher Interviews

Individualized mentor support, observing veteran teachers and learning with colleagues in small learning communities were perceived as the most effective practices for new teacher support throughout the year. The amount of support each teacher received and the type of activities they were involved in varied across teachers and schools. All of the teachers shared a desire for more support than they received and suggested that more accountability be placed on
the teachers and the mentors for a more structured mentoring program.

**Beginning of the year.**

The support new teachers received included working with experienced colleagues from school level, the complex and district and included non Department of Education (DOE) support as well. Some teachers felt they had little to no support at the school level while others perceived the school support staff to be very helpful. Although the support varied, all teachers still desired more than they received.

**Mentor Role.** Mentors were assigned to teachers by schools, the district, TFA and their University programs. Stephanie described herself as having a “million and one” mentors. The various support agencies that Stephanie was affiliated with (UH, DOE, TFA) all had a person who was assigned to support her as a new teacher, but Stephanie was not quite sure how each of the roles fit together or how these assigned mentors were intended to help her since she felt like she was getting what she needed.

Most of these people are there if I need them but they haven’t reached out, which is fine because I am holding my own but I would love the feedback and ideas because I am doing my thing and I am getting by but I feel like I could be doing a lot more. Now that I am hitting my stride and holding my own I am ready to step it up. I feel like my [mentor] should be someone where there is no pressure or evaluation someone who is just there to help me be a better teacher and tell me I am doing great and give me ideas to do better. (Stephanie, PI, September 29, 2009)

It appeared that Stephanie was craving this direction and although she had at least five mentors, the amount of support devoted to giving her feedback and helping her improve her instruction
was not sufficient for her.

In addition to the mentoring assignments, the types of support ranged from school level to district wide and included off campus support as well. Some teachers felt they had little to no support at the school level where others perceived the school support staff to be very helpful. Although the range of support varied, all teachers still desired more than they received. On one end of the spectrum, Jeff (PI, September 27, 2009) explained that, “I haven’t had that [curriculum] kind of oversight at my school. I was put in a classroom and that’s it. They didn’t give me any direction. I could be teaching social studies in here and nobody would notice.” Although he had a mentor on campus, he saw the mentor as someone who focuses more on logistical things, not teaching practices. Shane seemed to view his mentor similarly to Jeff and elaborated more on how the support worked in his school, “Mentors are just for supporting and feedback and they help feeling like you have someone on campus” (Shane, PI, September, 22, 2009). In these cases, the mentor’s focus was managerial, and they helped new teachers to adjust to the new school.

At another school, Maria described her mentor as, “very helpful.” She further elaborated about the kind of support she provided.

She is an awesome resource, and she is the kind of person that will get in and get her hands dirty, help you grade, help you get things turned in, come into your classroom and actually help you with your kids instead of just telling you what you should be doing. (Maria, PI, September 24, 2009)

Maria felt that having her mentor guide her through the curriculum with hands-on support was extremely beneficial as she learned to navigate through her first year and learn both how and what to teach. Teachers reported a difference from no support to hands-on curriculum guidance
that varied depending on the school and the programs that teachers were affiliated with.

Another component that was helpful for improving teacher performance was dialogue between the mentor and mentee regarding the teachers’ instruction. It was important but often very difficult to carve out time to make sure that the debriefing conversation happened in a timely and effective manner. Stephanie described a common feeling of the teachers who had been observed, “one of my UH instructors has observed me three times and usually our debrief is during lunch or a break and I have too much stuff going on and I have trouble remembering yesterday (Stephanie, PI, September 29, 2009).

**Observing experienced teachers.** In addition to being observed and debriefing with a mentor, new teachers often benefit from seeing experienced teachers in their classrooms. Stephanie reflected on her debriefing sessions and how she had been given suggestions and even tried them but continued to revert to her old ways when things did not work out. She struggled to understand what her mentor was describing and wanted to see examples, “I think the best thing would be to see veteran teachers--the way they speak, what they say, how they explain it. I have literally only observed one 1 hour class in my whole life other than when I was in school” (Stephanie, PI, September 29, 2009). She felt that models of teaching were influential in her teaching and desired more dynamic examples.

Shane had an opportunity to visit another school in the complex through his participation in the STAR Learning Walks, a specific protocol that was used to focus on “powerful teaching and learning” during observations of other teachers with the sole purpose of reflecting on one’s own use of the specific strategies in their own classroom (Retrieved from www.bercgroup.com on October 29, 2010).

It was kind of helpful looking at other teachers’ teaching. The observation makes
me focus on things that I should be doing better but it doesn’t necessarily give me specific ideas. (Shane, PI, September 22, 2009)

Shane appreciated the opportunity to observe. Although it is not clear what quality of teaching he saw in his observations, he did acknowledge that he needed to improve but he is struggling with what exactly the change might look like in his classroom.

Teachers had a range of support including school level mentors, district support as well as off campus mentors and courses. Depending on the school, teachers’ opinions of the support received varied. Some teachers felt they had little to no support while others were satisfied. All teachers, however, felt that they could have used more targeted support to improve their teaching practices.

Middle of the year.

The teachers had gained a wealth of knowledge from their experiences in the first half of the year. They also seemed to be more aware of their responsibilities, which caused them to be overwhelmed by what was expected of them. As they became more aware of their surroundings they acknowledged that the amount of supervision dictated what got accomplished and when it was not present teachers noted that they were often not in compliance with their professional responsibilities. Teachers who did not feel like there was a system of oversight expressed a desire to be held accountable. In addition to school wide responsibilities, as teachers worked with their mentors trusting relationships were highlighted as necessary. Furthermore, observing experienced teachers and support that was specific to the teacher’s curriculum was highly desired.

Impact of experience. At the end of first semester, the teachers made a range of comments about teaching and learning that included key phrases such as “improving” and
“getting better” “starting to understand,” yet the area of growth that was discussed depended on the teacher and their specific subject areas. The teachers discussed a sense of improved performance that stemmed from their experiences in their first four months managing their own classroom. The beginning teachers started to get a handle on many things including curriculum, developing relationships with students, systems, pedagogy, expectations, grading and discipline.

Three of the teachers discussed improving both pedagogy and relationships with students and as a result Naomi said second quarter was, “much better compared to first quarter. So much improved! Still a lot of work but I am starting to get the hang of the structure” (Naomi, December 14, 2009). Naomi had a challenging first quarter but was hopeful based on her experiences and growth so far.

I felt so lost and hopeless and helpless and I questioned my teaching and even though it is hard sometimes with behavior, I am getting better. I feel like I have improved in my relationships with those students and it is more relaxed. I am comfortable with them and the content. I definitely found more strategies that work second quarter with my class, too. It is much better and I am hoping it will go in the same pattern. (Naomi, PI, December 14, 2009).

She was looking forward to the upcoming semester because of the improved relationships and effective strategies to teach students she had been gained as a result of a semester of experience.

Another focus was on effective classroom management strategies for young adolescents. Maria shared that, “I have been trying a lot of different management strategies. That is where most of my improvement has come in and now I can control the class when I need to and maybe my curriculum will come next semester” (PI, December 9, 2009). The confidence that Maria gained when she realized she had the ability to manage her classroom helped her to feel
confident in her own teaching and set goals for the future. Overall, teachers learned a considerable amount in the first semester about teaching, and they reported improving their curriculum, developing relationships with students, and using classroom management systems including expectations, grading and discipline.

**Improving teacher performance through accountability.** A regular system of accountability was not evident from the perspectives of the beginning teachers interviewed. Teachers reported not attending department meetings, lacking confidence in curricular decisions, and being non-compliant with school level initiatives and said their behaviors were due to lack of consistent support and guidance. Three of the teachers interviewed perceived a lack of oversight as typified by Naomi’s statement:

> To be a good teacher you have to want to be and put a lot of effort into it because nobody ever checks. Nobody gave me a curriculum. They were like, “Here is your book. Teach it.” It is really hard because I didn’t know what I needed to get through and how far to go, how much to go in depth, and objectives I had to meet. I have complete freedom. It is almost scary because nobody ever checks.

(Naomi, PI, December 14, 2009)

Naomi, Stephanie, and Jeff lacked experience and in-depth knowledge of their content, which kept them second guessing decisions about what to teach. To further compound Naomi’s inadequate knowledge about what to teach she did not attend the department meetings. It was unclear whether or not the meetings addressed the curriculum and could have provided her with the support she needed.

The teachers gave examples of not implementing school initiatives due to lack of clarity and follow through. One in particular came from Stephanie, who indicated that she had not
complied with the directive to use thinking maps, a program that provides a common visual language for learning within and across disciplines, due to uncertainty of how to execute them in her class as well as a perceived lack of follow through on the part of the administration.

They brought [thinking maps] up and asked if we have done it and gave us posters, which I haven’t put up. I just haven’t made it a priority. I don’t feel comfortable really. But there is no one checking on us. The VP mentioned that the trainer was going to come back sometime in January but it was all very vague and last minute. I don’t feel the pressure to do it. (Stephanie, PI, December 7, 2009)

The attitude that Stephanie expressed regarding new initiatives was based on her inadequate understanding of what she was expected to implement. Her perception of inadequate training was further compounded by the lack of follow through and accountability for implementation by the school leaders.

Jeff provided an example that countered the other teachers’ perceptions of accountability that he felt positively affected his teaching. Although Jeff did not feel like his school staff held him accountable, TFA mandated a quarterly plan and assessment data to measure his effectiveness. Jeff illuminated the difference between his school and TFA in efforts to improve teacher performance.

I feel very accountable to TFA because they give me a test every quarter that measures [the kids] knowledge and they have to score 80%. I am constantly trying to get my kids to do well because if their tests are poor every quarter it is going to be a terrible reflection on me as a teacher. That is not good! TFA is where the accountability comes in. (Jeff, PI, December 7, 2009)
Jeff was clear about what he is being held accountable for. He sees his assessments as a direct indicator of what students are learning.

Throughout the interviews, teachers shared a desire to be held accountable in hope that it would help them manage their myriad of professional responsibilities. Maria summarized the teachers’ collective sentiment about supervision when she was asked if she felt like the administration should be stricter with her in order for her to complete assigned tasks. She stated, “well, probably yeah I guess so. Kind of sad to admit that but I guess it is not on top of my priority list so it gets lost in the chaos” (PI, December 9, 2009). Stephanie expressed sentiments similar to the other participants about lack of accountability and further suggested that school leaders implement more structure within departments and teams to hold teachers accountable for what they are teaching and what students are learning. Shane’s department began to implement some measures of accountability, and he was in favor of the direction they were going. Shane explained that, “being held accountable is good. I try to stay consistent, but I fall off the wagon so the accountability will help keep me on track” (Shane, PI, December 15, 2009).

The teachers overall shared a desire to be held accountable and acknowledged that accountability demands, when made, helped them to make sure they were keeping up with their professional responsibilities. When teachers were not held accountable they agreed that they did not live up to the expectations of them. The leniency of supervisors kept teachers from making certain tasks a priority or attending meetings. School level accountability was generally perceived as low; however specific examples of accountability highlighted how to help teachers focus on their teaching and students’ learning.

**Mentoring Relationships.** Mentors were described as instrumental in impacting teacher performance through supportive relationships. When no relationship or bond was developed
teachers did not seem to benefit from having a mentor. Mentors who consistently observed instruction and provided new teachers with relevant and manageable strategies to affect their teaching positively were seen as trustworthy. Observations of experienced teachers were also seen as valuable support. Furthermore, when mentoring support was specific to the teachers’ curriculum they perceived the support as effective in improving their teaching performance.

When there was no relationship it was difficult to learn from the mentor. Stephanie reflectively discussed having difficulty with one of her mentors coming to observe her, “I figured it out that I don’t have a relationship with this woman and I don’t trust her to come into my room and observe me and really get what is going on because she hasn’t been around” (PI, December 7, 2009). Stephanie felt vulnerable being observed and receiving feedback by someone who she did not trust had her best interests in mind. Relationships that were built by developing trust between the teacher and the mentor and were maintained by consistent interactions, and valuable feedback the teachers saw as beneficial.

The mentor support varied from casual to formal depending on the circumstances and relationships. Naomi’s example was more casual in nature. She felt like her mentor was someone she could call with any problem, and she would be right there to help. A more structured form of support existed at Maria’s school where the vice principal held monthly sessions to share strategies and facilitate discussions on emerging issues “She has a lot of good ideas and things that you can actually take into your class and actually do. She gives you simple things that you can start doing that actually work so I have learned to trust her (Maria, PI, December 9, 2009). Maria’s vice principal provided resources that proved to be valuable which helped built trust, and the teachers saw her as credible. Timely and specific feedback and resources were highly valued by the teachers. They helped to establish trust and build the
relationship.

**Supportive versus evaluative observations.** Halfway through the year, three of the five teachers I interviewed, those who were fully certified to teach, mentioned having limited to no observations of their teaching that was either supportive or evaluative. Both Jeff and Stephanie were TFA teachers, who were simultaneously enrolled in a teacher education program as they were in their first year of teaching. They both had evaluative and supportive observations frequently from the UH and TFA. The frequency of the observations, and the person who was observing were more important than the actual nature of the observation. They were both more hesitant about infrequent visits and receiving criticism that they perceived showed lack of understanding the big picture in their classroom. Jeff further elaborated on the difference between his university professor and his school administration.

> Where my professor comes in a bunch of different time he has a good sense of what is going on in my classroom so if admin came in on going once a month or every couple of weeks and gave me constant feedback I would be fine with it and love it. If my principal came in now it would be the first time I ever saw him in here and if he didn’t like it I would take it personal. (Jeff, PI, December 11, 2009)

The relationship with the observer and consistency were perceived as the most important not whether the observation was evaluative or supportive. When the relationship was developed, teachers who regularly had people in their classes felt supported by this observation and debriefing protocol.

**Observing experienced teachers.** Observing other experienced teachers is another key strategy that the teachers discussed as being useful to improve their instruction. As they
approached the midpoint in the year, teachers were looking outside of their classroom and starting to be curious about other ways to deliver content. Four of the five teachers had been in other classrooms and two of them valued the experience as the best professional development they had received.

Jeff learned about new classroom procedures and instructional techniques while observing other teachers. Moreover, Maria, a licensed teacher, began observing her colleagues teach on her own accord and "learned how to structure things and make things clear for the kids. I think the kids liked it too because my management problems went out the door. They should require observations!" (Maria, PI, December 9, 2009). Observing other teachers helped both Maria and Jeff glean ideas about content and pedagogy by seeing someone else teach.

The previous teachers’ learning experiences in their schools were isolated events, unlike those at Ali’i High School, which had a systematic observation process. They used the STAR protocol, which was an observation tool that measured the degree to which 15 indicators in the areas of skills, knowledge, thinking, application, and relationships were present during any given period of observation time in a classroom. The school met weekly in their specified groups to conduct observations and discuss implications in the teachers’ own classrooms. Naomi explained, “the observations help me to see how they manage their classrooms and how they pull off higher level thinking” (Naomi, PI, December 14, 2009).

Unlike the other participants, Stephanie had not had the opportunity to see any other teachers since she became a teacher. The only other teacher that she had seen teach was a teacher whom she observed at the beginning of the summer before she began teaching the class herself. With limited teaching knowledge and experience, Stephanie craved models of teaching; her number one need was to see other math teachers teaching, “I know that there is that magical
algebra class out there and I want to see that class in action” (PI, December 7, 2009).

**Curriculum support.** Having a mentor who was familiar with the content was seen as valuable but the approaches the mentor took to supporting the new teachers made a difference when it came to real effects on the teachers’ instruction. Maria felt like her vice principal could identify with her since she was an English teacher herself, and she understood Maria’s curriculum and some of the difficulties she encountered. “She has a lot of solutions and ideas and I think she understands which is why she doesn’t tear me apart every time I do something stupid which is often but she is really good” (Maria, December 9, 2009).

Stephanie had a variety of mentors, and she viewed some as more helpful than others. One of her mentors came and observed but Stephanie did not feel that she benefitted from their interactions. She was frustrated by the mentor’s lack of understanding and realized that she was a science teacher who did not understand her classroom. This differed from another one of her mentors, who was from the local district that helped her with curriculum, who would “come in and give me very specific things, which is what we need. Pinpointing and saying that our students tend to do poorly in probability and there are a lot of questions on probability on the HSA” (Stephanie, PI, December 7, 2009). The difference in Stephanie’s perceptions between her two mentors highlighted the importance of curriculum guidance from a knowledgeable mentor.

**Use of data to inform instruction.** The extent to which the data gathered was utilized to inform and assess instruction varied across the teachers. A formalized data collection process helped to ensure the data were used and impacted teacher performance. Data helped validate Jeff’s teaching when the students scored well. However, Maria was confronted with difficult data when her department gave an assessment and used a common rubric. “Their literary letter
[assignment] didn’t turn out so good. I went by a rubric that they gave us based on the standards. So going by that rubric they didn’t do so hot.” (PI, December 9, 2009). The collaboration in Maria’s department meeting helped her to see that her students were not mastering the standards.

Across the schools studied, an abundance of data were collected but the systems to analyze and inform teaching practices did not seem to be fully established. Stephanie and Shane discussed giving assessments but not analyzing the data. Stephanie recalled the quarterly assessment that she gave, “at the beginning of the year and we never got the data. We just gave the mid-year assessment so no, I don’t have the data, which is a problem” (Stephanie, December 7, 2009). Shane stated that in his department they were able to see which benchmarks and questions students struggled with, but there was no action taken beyond that. There seemed to be various tests given and ample data to review but halfway through the year, some data had been looked at and other data still had not been analyzed.

There were several factors that affected new teachers’ performance by the middle of the year including, learning from their own experiences over the course of the first half of the year. The extent to which teachers were held accountable impacted their compliance with professional obligations that were tied to teacher performance. Additionally, support that was perceived to specifically guide or improve teachers’ performance was most effective particularly when there was an established rapport and trusting relationship between the mentor and the new teacher. Mentors’ observation and targeted debriefing with the teachers, observations of experienced teachers, and curriculum specific support were valuable to teachers.

End of the year.

The teachers highlighted factors that affected their confidence such as mentor feedback and improving their teaching due to new learning. The mentors that worked with them provided
an array of services by providing guidance in logistical issues as well as targeted feedback to improve their teaching. Observing experienced teachers was highlighted again as a valuable support practice. Finally, in retrospect, teachers shared desired supports that they wished they had had.

**Support that builds confidence.** Teacher’s perceptions of the support they received highlighted the role that confidence played in their desire to become innovative practitioners. Stephanie felt she needed more of the helpful mentoring, not the critiquing. Stephanie expressed how she had become more receptive to mentoring as the year progressed due to the relationship with her UH supervisor/mentor, and she perceived this as her best support throughout the year. “He gives me a ton of positive feedback to the point that I am more and more open and honest about what I am doing and seeking feedback. So it has given me the confidence to try new things” (Stephanie, PI, March 25, 2010). Stephanie’s mentor helped her feel secure about her teaching which enabled her to experiment to continue to improve her instruction.

Maria felt “nitpicked” and unsupported, which kept her from being receptive to one of her team members. The lack of support made her feel insecure and unwilling to listen to their ideas. Furthermore, Maria felt that the constant barrage of criticism from her curriculum coach, “gets to be a little much and it can really kill your confidence” (Maria, PI, March 23, 2010). The criticism made Maria feel inadequate because she was not teaching the way others thought she should.

**Observing experienced teachers.** Similar to the two previous interviews, teachers unanimously felt that observing experienced teachers was a worthwhile way for them to improve their own teaching. They viewed the observations as helpful because of the new ideas, seeing the classroom from a different perspective, and the conversations that observations
prompted the teachers to have.

Stephanie shared that during the observation she took notes on very specific things, such as what is up in the room or procedures or ways of dealing with things. Seeing a different classroom and examples of how to teach was a valuable learning experience that she felt impacted her practice. In another example, the observations stimulated conversations about what teachers were doing in their classrooms. This dialogue prompted the new teachers to reflect on their practice. Jeff explained that the observations were great, “but the conversation that came out of it was really good and it was cool” (Jeff, PI, March 29, 2010). Observing classrooms with a team of teachers allowed Jeff to learn from experienced teachers as they discussed what was occurring in their school. Observing experienced teachers was seen as a valuable form of professional development that promoted teacher learning. Teachers got specific ideas from their observations and implemented them immediately. They also gained valuable insight from the conversations that resulted when they saw experienced teachers’ teach.

**Supportive mentor roles.** There were two roles of mentors described by the teachers and both were perceived as helpful. The first type of mentor was someone who helped meet the teacher’s basic needs such as getting forms completed, classroom supplies and being available for immediate assistance. The second type of mentor focused support on improving the teacher’s practice.

The teachers recognized that mentors could help with logistical issues that enabled them to keep track of important documents and make sure they had the appropriate resources. Shane recalled that his mentor would, “check in and more so make sure paper work is taken care of. She has been real helpful with that” (Shane, PI, March 29, 2009). Similarly, Naomi had a mentor on campus, who was easily accessible. “I can call her about anything and she always is
right on it and helps me find out where to go” (Naomi, PI, March 2010).

One-to-one mentoring that was focused on individual teachers’ goals and that helped teachers improve their practice was another way that experienced teachers supported novices. Maria observed that some people were more helpful than others. Two people supported her: “…my district mentor and my vice principal help me go over things and think about what I can do better. It helps me refocus on what my big goals are” (Maria, PI, March 23, 2010). Mentors also helped teachers pinpoint where they may be having problems and help to improve practice. Jeff turned to his mentor when he was having problems with his class, and Stephanie further specified how her mentor helped her through observations and further debriefing the lesson.

We have an honest, productive conversation afterwards about what he saw, what are the positives that we both saw and then he goes through areas that I could try and improve and I could ask him for ideas about what I can do. Because he is here often enough I don’t feel as much pressure. There is a trust that has been built, big time. (Stephanie, PI, March 22, 2010).

Maria, Jeff, and Stephanie’s examples highlight how mentors can work with teachers to improve their practice.

Desire for targeted instructional support. In general the five participating new teachers felt like they had enough support, and their perceptions were similar to the other new teachers in the district, according to the results of the district survey. However, when pushed further about specific support on campus to improve their teaching practices, most of them admitted to having very little support in those areas. As the year progressed, Jeff began to have management problems in his class. He sought support from his university professors because he felt that on the school campus he was on his own due to the lack of support. Likewise, Naomi had a
challenging group of students; although she had a mentor on campus, she did not feel like she was able to go to her mentor for help with teaching strategies or targeted support focused on her needs as a new teacher.

I need suggestions, but I feel like I have tried before and even though she is wonderful she hasn’t had the best advice in that kind of thing. She helps me with any kind of, ‘ Who do I go to?’ or questions on paperwork and things like that. But as far as my actual lessons, I don’t know that she is the best person to talk to. So I don’t really have that support I guess. (Naomi, PI, March 22, 2010)

The teachers felt supported in a lot of ways in their schools but when they struggled to improve their teaching performance, they believed that they lacked targeted assistance for their individual needs.

Mentoring roles varied across schools and organizations. The type of mentoring that teachers received had both negative and positive effects based on the relationship that existed. The beginning teachers’ confidence had an impact on their teaching practices as well. Their growing confidence stemmed from new professional learning and improved systems as well as mentoring. These factors contributed to new teachers’ perceptions of their teaching performance, as well as the support that was targeted to improve it.

**Summary of Improving Teacher Performance**

The majority of teachers in the Ali’i and Nalu schools had numerous mentors that ranged from off campus mentors, school curriculum coaches, and teachers on campus to a full time complex mentor. According to the end of year survey, the duration and frequency of contact with mentors varied greatly. Additionally, some teachers felt they had little to no instructional support to improve their teaching, while others were satisfied. All teachers, however, felt that
they could have used more personalized support in areas new teachers felt they needed to improve their teaching practices. In the middle of the year, teachers were starting to understand their roles and became overwhelmed by their responsibilities. Teachers perceived a lack of demand for teacher accountability in some schools and, therefore, they did not always do what was expected of them. Still, they desired a system where they were held responsible. Throughout the year one-to-one mentor support, trusting relationships, observing veteran teachers and learning with colleagues in small learning communities proved to have the biggest perceived impact on teachers’ performance.

**Increase Retention of Competent Teachers**

It was a priority of the district to improve teacher performance and effectively retain the competent teachers who they had invested time and resources. The New Teacher Survey, 2009 responses that indicated teachers career plans was analyzed to determine how the program impacted retention. Furthermore, the teachers’ interviews were analyzed looking for both contradicting and common themes to help understand the issues that impacted teachers’ decisions to go into teaching as a career, the reasons that kept them in their schools and in the profession as well as factors that prompted teachers to leave their school or the field entirely.

**New Teacher Survey Findings**

The Ali‘i and Nalu Complexes had some of the highest rates of non-licensed teachers in the state. Out of the 22 teachers surveyed, eight were licensed in the state of Hawai‘i at the end of their first year and the remaining 16 had completed their teacher education program but had not completed the requirements to become licensed. The remaining five were uncertified, which included four who were enrolled in a teacher education program. In the complex, ten of 22 teachers surveyed had moved to Hawai‘i within the past two years and only one indicated that
they would not return the following year due to necessity because of family obligation to a military rotation (Table 8).

Table 8  
*New Teacher Survey: Teacher Certification*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching Certification</th>
<th>Number of Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Licensed in Hawai‘i</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher-training program completed</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently in teacher training program</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No teacher training</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another that affected teachers’ desire to stay in their current school was support. One teacher stated in the open-ended response section that, “my first year was challenging. At times I thought about leaving the profession, but my mentor has changed my mind about that. She provided a good mix of content/curriculum and emotional/personal support” (New Teacher Survey, 2010). The teachers who were part of this study elaborated more on the support that they received that impacted their decision to continue teaching. Furthermore, they elaborated on other issues that further impacted their decision that went beyond the scope of the state survey.

**Teacher Interviews**

The teachers’ initial plans at the beginning of the year were to stay at their current school for at least two years, with one planning on staying five years before reevaluating her/his circumstances. As the year progressed, teachers began to reconsider their plans based on work conditions, salary, graduate school and location. By the end of the year, the teachers all planned on staying in their current positions, but long term plans ranged from staying in education for as long as possible, to leaving after the second year.
Beginning of the year.

At the first interview teachers were fairly hesitant to make a long-range commitment to education. Although most wanted to stay in education, they were all planning on reassessing their current positions within two to five years. Efforts of the complex to promote retention and teacher effectiveness included a comprehensive orientation targeted to address both cultural and academic needs of teachers. The teachers perceived the orientation as helpful.

Career Goals. The teachers had personal and career goals that affected the length of time they planned on teaching in their current positions. For example, Jeff was not exactly sure what he wanted to do in the long run and considered staying in education in another capacity aside from a classroom teacher or entering other, more prestigious professional fields.

So, I think teaching is going to be a short-term thing for me. Between two to five years and I don’t even know what I want to go into next to be honest. The plan was to go to med school, but I kind of don’t want to do that anymore, maybe grad school, maybe dental school. I don’t know. I want to be able to have another career when I am 30 so that means I have to go back to school before then. (Jeff, PI, September 27, 2009)

Jeff was the most unsure about his future plans of the five teachers. The others were pretty sure about maintaining a career in education for the long term, but they were open to various positions aside from a public school teacher such as administration, teaching at a university, or a teacher leadership position.

Stephanie was not sure about her career plans before she began teaching. However, once she had her own classroom and was enjoying it she planned on teaching forever.

When I started I didn’t know what I was getting myself into. With TFA it is a
two-year commitment and when I finish I will have my teaching license and my Master’s and it kind of gave me the ok to go into this and not have a life commitment. It is a scary thing to say this is what I am doing but now that I am doing it I love it so much. I really could picture myself doing this as my career.

(Stephanie, PI, September 29, 2009)

Maria also wanted to make a career in education but she was anxious about “burning out” and was hoping to avoid that since she would like to teach for a long time. “I want to teach for at least ten years and then I might move into another area of education. Hopefully, if I am not too burned out I can keep going” (PI, September 24, 2009).

Both Stephanie and Naomi agreed that teaching in Hawai‘i was great for them in the short term. Living in Hawai‘i and teaching was working out well early in their careers and their lives, yet the issue of returning to the mainland and being closer to family was brought up by both of the young women. Naomi felt strongly about staying for two years, but was going to reassess her situation after that time.

I will stay least two years because I think that it looks bad to just have one, and I think that year two will be easier. It is hard to be so far away from family is the main reason that I would leave. I will stay at least two and maybe more. I really enjoy working in Nalu. I like the school, and I like the community. (Naomi, PI, September 21, 2009)

Stephanie concurred that her primary reason that she would eventually consider leaving would be for family on the mainland but she would still want to teach. Both Stephanie and Naomi have expressed that they feel extremely comfortable with the community and enjoy their schools, which are big influences in them wanting to stay in Hawai‘i but ultimately proximity to family
may become the priority: Maria was not as sure about her future location. Staying in Hawai‘i was part of her plan, but she was also open to other options.

Orientation. One of the induction program components in the Ali‘i and Nalu complex area was an orientation for all new teachers to the complex. The Ali‘i and Nalu complex area held a new teacher orientation in conjunction with the Kahua program, a partnership with Kamehameha Schools. The Kahua program goals were to promote both cultural awareness and academic support in order to impact student achievement through place-based and culturally relevant instruction as well as to impact retention by educating teachers on the community and the population. The orientation took place prior to the beginning of school and included a tour of important places in the community as well as an introduction to the schools where the teachers had been hired. The teachers expressed gratitude for the orientation and used the information they learned.

Maria found the cultural induction sessions to be very helpful, and she enjoyed learning about the culture of her students. She shared that it was, “really helpful because it gave me an understanding of the culture. I can follow conversations a lot easier because of some of the things we learned. That was really helpful and fun” (Maria, PI, September 24, 2009). Although Maria was satisfied with the cultural induction, her needs were more school-based. She expressed interest in having an orientation that was geared towards her school and her responsibilities as a new teacher.
I think when you come into a school that is in restructuring and has all these things going on there needs to be some training and how that affects my day-to-day. Like what we are expected to get done has changed my schedule so many times that it just comes out of left field and throws me off completely. (Maria, PI, September 24, 2009)

Naomi also felt uneasy starting the school year, and her feelings were not assuaged by the activities in the orientation. One complaint was the perceived lack of strategies for dealing with challenging behaviors commonly encountered in the schools. Naomi felt that the induction program that she attended prior to the beginning of the year was great, but it focused on all of the positives of the community. She recommended that the program give them a more realistic picture of the students and provide strategies to help teachers be successful.

They should not try and scare us but tell us the truth. I had to hear about the bad reputation from all these other people who don’t actually know the kids and I would rather them [mentors] give us strategies about how to address behavior and how to cope with it because that was a big shocker for me. I really wish I had some support in how to deal with behavior. (Naomi, PI, September 21, 2009)

Naomi was seeking support to help her understand the students and get them to be successful in addition to learning information about their background. She believed that strategies that other successful teachers used would have greatly benefitted her as she learned the culture of both her students and the school.
All of the teachers planned on staying for at least two years and some as long as five years before they began to consider other career options. For most they were options within the education profession. Also, the cultural and academic orientation offered by the complex was viewed positively by the teachers and helped them transition into the year smoothly in some ways. Still, the teachers shared a desire for more specific strategies that would help them to understand their specific schools and student behavior, including the likely problems they would encounter.

**Middle of the year.**

In the middle of the year, teachers were asked about their career plans again. As they began to experience what it was like being a teacher in the Ali’i and Nalu complex, they became more in tune with the lifestyle they could afford as a teacher. They became invested in school programs and were hopeful about seeing continual progress. Their experiences shaped their plans to stay or leave their current positions.

Naomi, who planned on teaching forever in the beginning of the year, explained that she could not keep it up in her current circumstances. Jeff, who was on the fence about his career goals, said he was certain he would not teach for much longer after experiencing how little he earned.

Definitely, now since they just cut our pay with the furloughs. Teaching will definitely be short time when I am young and broke. This is the first time living on my own and handling my own money and bills and being like an adult and I am seeing the value of a well paying job. (Jeff, PI, December 11, 2009)
Shane’s decision to stay at his school was based on the follow through of school initiatives. If the school followed through with current initiatives, which he felt were positive, he would stay.

Definitely, a couple more years. I told myself I would reevaluate after three years of teaching. Probably more than that so we’ll see. It kind of depends on how the school goes. I think we are going in a good direction, but you never know”

(Shane, PI, December 15, 2009)

The new teachers in the Ali’i and Nalu complex area schools gained a broader perspective in their first semester of teaching. They discussed workload, pay, school, climate, and follow through as factors that affected their intent to stay in their current schools.

End of the year.

The teachers’ perspectives highlighted a range of plans. These included staying in education for the duration of their careers, plans to reassess after five years, and, finally, looking to pursue another profession that was more conducive to his personal goals. In addition to career plans, teachers noted instances that affected their desire to remain teaching at their current school, including teaching lines they were prepared to teach as well as opportunity to advance and learn new things. The challenges for some of the teachers in their current schools included being too far away from family, lack of preparation to teach young adolescents, and high turnover of faculty.

Shane was less confident in a lifetime career as a teacher. He set incremental goals and planned to revisit his career decisions after five years. Keeping in mind his
other passions and goals he felt like,

After five years will be a good time to reassess where I am and look at my goals. I want to go back to school and take classes to do more talking about literature. That is one of the things that I am really passionate about. But I want to give teaching at least five years and who knows five may turn into 15. (Shane, PI, March 22, 2010)

Unlike Shane, Jeff had not planned on staying in education at the beginning of the year. However, after teaching for almost one year, he reconsidered his initial plan to teach for three years (one year longer than his expected TFA commitment). He started to feel like two years would be more realistic. He began to look ahead and took into account the steps that he would need to take in order to change professions.

My biggest thing after teaching a whole year is that I don’t know if this is what I want to be my profession. I would easily do this until I was 30 (8 more years) but it doesn’t work that way. If I want to switch careers I have to start now and work towards it so I feel like after two years I want to start working towards where I want to be in ten years. (Jeff, PI, March 29, 2010)

The teachers’ perspectives depict three different scenarios of early educators’ decisions whether or not to continue teaching. These teachers shared a range of plans for the future--from planning on staying in education for the duration of a career, to indecision and reassessment after five years and finally, to viewing teaching as a short term job before selecting another profession.

Factors that affect retention. Teachers shared specific reasons that motivated
them to seek another school: lack of preparation to teach young adolescents; high turnover; and the desire to be closer to family. Not being prepared to teach young adolescents was a problem, particularly for Maria. She was used to older students and did not have the experience or strategies to effectively teach young adolescents.

They way they think and act and talk, they just change so much. I am just used to older kids. I treat and expect things from them that I would expect from an older kid. I think my place is in high school and I will probably do that in the future.

Maria, PI, March 24, 2010)

Maria noted another disincentive to stay in the same school--the lack of experienced teachers on campus. She saw herself as a novice in her first year and knew that she still had much to learn. With the high turnover at her school she explained that teachers in their second year were sometimes seen as the experienced teachers. The realization that the experienced teachers had only been teaching one year longer than she had made Maria nervous about being considered a veteran teacher while she still had so much to learn.

An obstacle for filling positions in Hawai’i schools with qualified teachers has historically been the geographic isolation of the islands. Teachers who come from the mainland may not consider Hawai’i a place that is feasible long term because of the distance from their families. Naomi moved here after college and felt like she would eventually move back to the mainland and be closer to family. She admitted that she, “never thought of Hawai’i as permanent. I just thought it would be something fun for a few years. But I am not ready to leave yet” (Naomi, PI, March 22, 2010). Naomi
anticipated continuing her career in education but said she would likely leave Hawai`i to be closer to family.

In contrast to teachers’ plans to leave their current placement, there were two factors that stood out from the teachers’ interviews as reasons to stay in their current school. Teachers noted that they had increased motivation when they were acknowledged for their efforts and given opportunities to learn new things and excel. Additionally, placing teachers in their appropriate lines, in areas that they were prepared to teach, proved to be a factor in teachers’ willingness to stay in their current schools.

Shane was offered an opportunity to be part of a new team that was being created on campus that aligned with his own teaching philosophy. He had just found out about his new position, and it was keeping him motivated through the end of the year.

I just got a position for next year that is all project-based. We are doing training and that is fun. I am looking forward to it. It is a nice injection at the end of the year. Looking forward to next year and getting ready”

(Shane, PI, March 25, 2010).

Shane’s opportunity increased his desire to continue teaching and learning as he prepared to teach on a new team.

Naomi was also looking forward to the following year. After conversations with her school administration, it seemed that she was going to be able to teach only one line that she was prepared for rather than her split line with a content that she was not licensed to teach. Naomi was excited at the prospect of teaching only classes that she was prepared to teach as well as only having to prepare one lesson plan daily as opposed to
two. She thought this would save her a substantial amount of her personal time that she had previously used for planning and preparing.

The teachers’ perspectives highlighted a range of plans from staying in education for the duration of a career, to reassessing after five years and finally, to looking to pursue another avenue more conducive to his personal goals. In addition to teachers’ career plans, teachers noted instances that affected their desire to remain teaching at their current school—including being provided teaching lines they were prepared to teach as well as opportunities to advance and learn new things. Furthermore, challenges teachers faced related to remaining in current schools included being too far away from family, lacking preparation to teach young adolescents, and sensing a loss of leadership and collegiality due to the high turnover of faculty.

**Summary of Retaining Competent Teachers**

In the beginning of the year all of the teachers planned on staying for at least two years and some as long as five years before they began to consider other options. In the middle of the year, teachers were asked about their career plans. As they began to experience what it was like being a teacher in the Ali‘i and Nalu complex, their experiences shaped their plans to stay or leave their current positions. The survey indicated that only one teacher planned on leaving his current school; however, the interviewed teachers’ plans varied from staying in education for as long as possible, to leaving after two years.

**Promote Personal and Professional Well Being of the New Teacher**

In order to retain competent teachers and impact student achievement, the
personal and professional well being of the teacher is important. This section highlights the responses from the state survey that help explain how the supports put in place by the district induction plan were perceived by the new teachers. Furthermore, interviews of the five new teachers in the current study elaborated on the support they received and how it impacted their personal and professional well-being at the beginning, middle, and end of the year.

New Teacher Survey Findings

The majority of open-ended responses on the complex survey pertained to the personal and professional well-being of teachers. Teacher comments from the open-ended response items indicated that group meetings and discussions as well as mentors helped address concerns and questions throughout the year. Moreover, responses to the survey prompts indicated that 14 of the participants felt that their mentor helped them handle job stress and provided emotional support quite a bit or a great deal and 4 other participants felt that their mentors helped them handle job stress and provided at least some emotional support.

Table 9
New Teacher Survey: Mentor Support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Prompt</th>
<th>A great Deal</th>
<th>Quite a bit</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>Hardly</th>
<th>Not at All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My mentor helps me handle job stress and provide emotional support</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additionally, teachers’ survey results supported that 15 of the surveyed teachers felt that mentors helped them feel effective (Table 10).
Table 10  
**New Teacher Survey: Overall Effectiveness of Mentor**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Prompt</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Does Not Apply</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall my work with my mentor has helped me feel effective in my teaching.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Teacher Interviews**

Throughout the year, mentors were described as helpful in aiding teachers in both handling job stress and providing emotional support. Teachers also handled difficult situations by utilizing humor, reflecting on their practice and maintaining positive attitudes early in the year. In the middle of the year, teachers were having difficulty with their teaching matching their vision of how they wanted to teach. Despite this disconnect, teachers remained hopeful about the future. At the end of the year, teachers’ frustrations grew as they prepared for the HSA. The teachers also discussed lack of time, low pay and insufficient resources as sources of discontent.

**Beginning of the year.**

The teachers utilized strategies that promoted both personal and professional well-being. Teachers used humor to help maintain a positive attitude, which was helpful when they became overwhelmed. Reflection on their practice was a key tool to help teachers determine what was successful in their classroom and was a source of frustration when it was absent.

Maria who moved from the mainland shared that she was feeling homesick, but she tried to maintain a positive attitude and have fun with her kids to maintain her
personal well-being. Focusing on the students helped her overcome other frustrations that she encountered moving to a new state and beginning her teaching career at the same time.

Contrarily, Stephanie enjoyed teaching in Hawai’i and did not long to be home. She seemed to be in a good place with a sense of balance; focusing on the positive experiences and enjoying her students were helpful strategies to combat her bad days. “I love being a teacher so much even when I have a bad day I just start laughing at the different kids and their personalities and it is so much fun and it is manageable enough in my life. (Stephanie, PI, September 29, 2009). Stephanie tried to find the humor in her students’ behavior and the difficulties that she encountered.

Another strategy that the teachers used to cope with the pitfalls in their first quarter was reflection. Stephanie exemplified how this strategy helped teachers deal with difficulties their first year.

I definitely have moments in class and days where I am like what is happening? How do I get control of these kids? But it doesn’t happen very often and when it does I think I have the tools to get back on track. I reflect and remember when things do work and make sure to do that again. (Stephanie, PI, September 29, 2009)

While Maria, Jeff, and Stephanie were able to see past the challenges and felt successful about their experiences in the first quarter, Naomi was still struggling to find a balance and achieve the success that she yearned for with her difficult group of kids. Although she felt like she was beginning to make some progress, she was still struggling
on a daily basis.

I am feeling like we are starting to get the hang of it and I am just now –
even though it is so hard and I dread it every day…I am like oh it is fourth
hour I just want to leave and I really do dread it because it is so
emotionally exhausting to work with them. (Naomi, PI, September 21,
2009)

She was continually working to improve her practice, but it did not appear that reflection
about her teaching was a strategy that she used as she acknowledged with a tear in her
eye, “This interview helped me reflect. I just have to laugh at my situation sometimes
otherwise I might not make it” (Naomi, PI, September 21, 2009). Naomi experienced
reflection as a coping strategy.

Shane saw the benefit of reflection but said that one of his frustratio
ns in the first
quarter had been that there was, “No time to reflect, I am still working on how I want to
do grading and teaching” (PI, September 22, 2009). Shane further elaborated that his
vision of what he wanted his classroom to look and feel like is not the reality, “I had a
vision in the beginning, and I kind of got it but I haven’t done a lot of changes along the
way” (Shane, PI, September, 22, 2009). Reflection seemed to be absent from his daily
routine and likely contributed to his inability to make his classroom mimic his vision.
Shane’s inability to create the classroom he desired created frustration.

The five beginning teachers encountered a variety of encouraging and difficult
situations in their first quarter of teaching. They further expressed feelings ranging from
joy to exhaustion that affected their well-being. Strategies such as focusing on the
positive, reflecting on their practice, and seeking out support networks to keep a positive outlook were helpful as they navigated their way through their first quarter.

**Middle of the year.**

Factors that affected the teachers’ well being half way through the year differed from the beginning of the year. It was common among the teachers to have a mismatch in the way they wanted to teach and their actual practice, which was frustrating. However, hopefulness about the future and support networks had developed that helped teachers thrive.

**Disconnect between teachers’ practice and how they wanted to teach.** In the beginning of the year only Shane felt that there was disconnect in how he wanted to teach and his actual practice. However, in the middle of the year, it was a common source of frustration in the conversations with teachers. The teachers shared a variety of challenges they experienced in the second quarter when they aimed to teach as effectively as they wanted.

Some of the challenges that a beginning teacher struggled with included learning how to teach in their specific lines. For example, Maria was assigned to a line with a co-teacher and she was struggling to learn to teach and co-teach simultaneously. “We are learning and neither of us have a set style that we use or management that we are sure about. There has been a lot of frustration and confusion with that whole thing” (Maria, PI, December, 9, 2009). Naomi struggled transferring the theoretical knowledge of teaching to her classroom and adjusting for her students’ special needs as well as motivating under achieving students. She felt that she had a solid knowledge base of
pedagogy and content but when she got her own classroom and began to implement what she knew, “a lot of stuff really bombed, but I want to be effective. I have read the research. I have done a lot of reflecting. Now this is where I learn how to do it being in the classroom” (Naomi, PI, December 22, 2009). Teaching challenges made it difficult for teachers’ to enact their visions of their ideal classrooms.

Finally, finding time to plan and lack of resources overwhelmed the new teachers. Shane struggled to find the time he needed to plan the way that he wanted. Challenging his students was a goal, but due to lack of time he did not plan the way he wanted. Stephanie and Jeff both shared frustrations due to lack of inadequate resources they perceived as necessary to engage students in the curriculum. When Jeff networked with other teachers around the island he felt he had fewer resources than most teachers.

I just think how much better my class would be if I had a projector.

Showing a video or putting handouts on the board so kids could see.

There are so many little things that a projector would be helpful for.

[These are] basic resources that I feel most teachers have everywhere else.

(Jeff, PI, December 11, 2009)

**Hopeful outlook.** Despite the challenges that the teachers faced, with a semester of experience behind them, a positive outlook permeated the conversations during the middle of the year interviews. Regardless of their current reality, the beginning teachers were hopeful about the future. They looked forward to implementing new ideas and continuing to improve their teaching practices.

For instance, as Naomi reflected on the first half of the year she was upbeat and
attributed her positive attitude to teaching getting better as the year progressed. Shane shared similar thoughts and added that he felt like there was, “a lot of positive thinking and looking forward. I am in a good place right now” (Shane, PI, December 15, 2009). Stephanie was amazed at how fast the first semester went and felt really good about what her students understood. “I can’t believe that my first semester of teaching is already done. I am halfway through my first year. I am going to make it without any major breakdowns” (Stephanie, PI, December 7, 2009).

In general the teachers’ positive outlook about the future allowed them to begin thinking about how to implement new strategies and structures in their classrooms. Some examples include more projects and integrated curriculum. With Naomi’s background knowledge about good teaching and learning, she knew her students would benefit from differentiated instruction, a goal of hers in the future.

I want to make different assignments for different levels but that is a lot of work for me and I am willing to do it in the future but not right now. I want to differentiate for my kids now that I know the levels but I have to get a hold of teaching in general first” (Naomi, PI, December 14, 2009).

Support networks. Teachers had more developed systems of support by this time of the year and relied on them for both personal and professional well being. Systems of support differed in the three schools and for each of the teachers. Colleagues were an important piece of the support systems that teachers discussed. They felt supported by having relationships with people on campus with whom they could collaborate. District and university mentors also provided support as well as networking opportunities with
other new teachers across the state.

One school had both school level mentors and administrators who were visible and the teachers interviewed felt supported by the accessibility on campus of support available at a moments’ notice. Shane and Naomi’s support system included a combination of vice principal, the school level mentor, co-teachers and other small learning communities. The characteristics that they highlighted as helpful were being available, reliable and emotionally supportive. Naomi remarked that various networks helped her in different ways but collectively led her to feel supported overall.

I feel very comfortable talking to our [Vice Principal]. He is very busy but he always makes time to talk to us and is very helpful with making changes that we need and I have new teacher mentor who is very helpful. If I need anything I just call her on my cell phone and she comes right over. My co-teacher has been a great support emotionally and I can talk to her about a lesson or idea that I have. I feel very much like I have a good support system. (Naomi, PI, December 14, 2009)

Stephanie felt that the combination of her own personal networks, graduate classes, and school level support led her to feel adequately supported. She had people to support her, but she credited most of that to her perseverance in seeking out support rather than waiting for it. “Here and there between everybody I feel like I have what I need (Stephanie, PI, March 25, 2009). The teachers indicated that they have various levels of support including administration, mentors from school and outside agencies, as well as professional and personal networks. These levels of support helped teachers feel
like they were not alone and people were available to support them.

There were three main factors that affected the teachers’ well being personally and professionally. The first was the contradiction in their desired teaching ability and their understanding of their actual practice. The second factor was the teachers’ positive attitudes. All the teachers were hopeful about the future and improving as teachers. The third factor was the support networks that teachers relied on to help them cope with the stress of being a teacher as well as learn how to improve.

**End of the year.**

Overall the teachers felt overwhelmed and at their lowest point during the end of the year of interviews. The teachers shared examples of pressure to prepare students for the imminent HSA, lack of resources, and not enough personal time as factors that affected their well-being. Although teachers were experiencing difficulty, their colleagues provided valuable support networks to help them face challenges.

The sentiment of the final interview was distinctly different than the middle of the year. The teachers appeared melancholy and fatigued. Jeff felt like, “Third quarter actually went horrible, by far the most difficult quarter. At the end of third quarter my confidence was at an all time low. Real low.” (Jeff PI, March 29, 2010). Similarly, Maria shared that nothing seemed to be working, and Naomi was feeling nauseous and tired. The teachers were interviewed after spring break and each was more worn down than during any of the previous encounters. Shane was able to explain the exhaustion that he and his colleagues were feeling as characteristic of this specific time period after spring break. He was always tired and down. “It is just the way the year progresses and
you see the end but you aren’t there yet and you already want to make changes for next year but you can’t really do them for this year” (Shane PI, March 22, 2010).

**Factors that caused stress.** Towards the end of the school year teachers felt overwhelmed, and lack of personal time. Some examples the teachers shared were pressure to teach everything before the HSA, lack of resources and supports to help struggling students and lacking personal time because of playing catch up with their professional responsibilities.

Maria felt pressured to keep her students on track with the curriculum as well as prepare them for the HSA. Her personal problems compounded her stress level, which prevented her from relaxing during her spring break.

It was the race to the finish with the poems and then during spring break my car broke down. It was just too short and the whole time I was worried because I wasn’t clear on what we were doing when we got back.

So the whole time I was stressed out wondering what I was going to teach” (Maria, PI, March 24, 2010).

Jeff agreed that there was an overwhelming amount of responsibility and time commitments and stated that the only thing that he was seeking at this point in the year was personal time. Naomi also felt overwhelmed by the amount of work that she was faced with and frustrated at how this work seemed to take away from her personal time, “This whole year I have been making up lessons as I go so next year I hope to be a lot more prepared and less stressed out (Naomi, PI, March 22, 2010). The end of the year was near and teachers found that they were feeling pressured to cram in the entire
curriculum before the test and end of the year, personal time for rejuvenation was lacking and overall, the teachers were spread thin.

Support systems. At a difficult time of the year, support systems emerged again as a safety net for teachers both personally and professionally. Teachers relied on their co-teachers to help them meet the diverse needs of their students, other colleagues to help them navigate professional challenges and responsibilities. In addition to support systems on campus, off campus mentors were beneficial resources for teachers and helped maintain both their personal and professional well-being.

After a difficult beginning, Maria and her co-teacher had developed a working relationship that they believed benefitted the students as well as themselves.

Sometimes I get jumbled up and can’t explain myself and I know there are [special education] kids and [special education] kids freak me out because I am not explaining the way I should be and I see their blank stare and she just picks up for me and finishes what I was saying so that has been going really well” (Maria, PI, March 22, 2010).

This type of support helped all of the teachers to feel like they were not alone and helped all students access the curriculum. Experienced colleagues were also instrumental in answering questions and providing support for new teachers.

In addition to on campus colleagues, another support system for teachers was their off campus mentors. Stephanie felt that her mentor’s support helped her gain confidence, “Having someone say you are doing certain things well, allows you to take that leap of faith” (Stephanie, PI, March 25, 2010). Jeff also shared that his off campus
mentor was very supportive. Even though he always tried to solve issues on his own first, when he needed help he would rely on his mentor for advice. Both Jeff and Stephanie recalled the daily reflections that they did for UH classes. Although time consuming, they concluded that they benefited from this practice and appreciated the recognition and constructive criticism, “Our professor gives direct feedback. Pretty much all positive, or if I have a questions I put it in there, but for the most part it is just positive reinforcement” (Stephanie, PI, March 25, 2010).

Teachers’ comments and their general well being indicated third quarter was a challenging time in the year for them. They were fatigued due to pressure to cover the curriculum before the HSA; they lacked appropriate resources as well as personal time to recuperate. Support networks became a safety net for the teachers and helped them maneuver through their struggles at the end of the year.

**Summary of Promoting Personal and Professional Well Being**

Mentors helped teachers feel effective as well as helped them handle job stress and provided emotional support. Humor and reflection were tools that helped teachers keep positive attitudes in the beginning of the year. Although teachers experienced a disconnect between their vision of how they wanted to teach and their actual classrooms in the middle of the year, they were hopeful about the future. By the end of the year, teachers were overwhelmed by pressure to prepare students for the imminent HSA. They were also frustrated due to lack of resources and personal time. Throughout the year, support networks proved to be valuable resources that helped maintain teachers’ sense of well being.
Instill a Basis for Continued Personal and Professional Growth

Continued personal and professional growth was an important goal of the Aloha District’s induction and mentoring program. One of the main indicators of working toward this goal was time to plan and collaborate with other colleagues. The survey indicated that there was a range of perceptions of time to collaborate. The in-depth interviews further detailed teachers’ perceptions of the time spent collaborating with colleagues as well as the value of that time. Other important components were the time and frequency of individual mentoring in which each teacher had the opportunity to engage. The survey indicated a wide range of responses and further insight was gained by the teacher interviews throughout the year.

New Teacher Survey Findings

According to the survey, teachers were divided in their opinions of the amount of time they had to plan and collaborate with colleagues. About half of the new teachers felt that they had adequate time while the other half disagreed (Table 11).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey prompt</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have adequate planning time or opportunity to meet and collaborate with colleagues</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Similar to the surveyed teachers’ perceptions of planning time, their perceptions of the frequency of interactions with their mentors varied as well. There was a range of responses from one meeting per month to more than four meetings a month across the
new teachers in the complex.

Table 12  
*Complex survey results for average monthly meeting frequency with mentor*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average monthly contact with mentor</th>
<th>Number of Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&gt;1 x per month</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 x per month</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2x per month</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3x per month</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4x or more per month</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Time with mentors was important to teachers in their first year; however, the actual time spent with mentors, according to the survey, over the course of the year and during each session varied greatly across teachers (Table 13).

Table 13  
*Complex survey results for length of meeting time with mentor*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Duration of visits with mentor</th>
<th>Number of Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Mentor</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 15 minutes</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 to 30 minutes</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 to 60 minutes</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 hour</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 hours</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 hours</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;2 hours</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Teachers’ open-ended survey comments further indicated that they wanted more structured collaboration and accountability. One teacher suggested that the schools,
“provide more training at the beginning of the year for new teachers, monthly meetings [and] more classroom observations.” Another teacher stated that individual schools should have, “collaboration days with those at the same school, in place of whole group seminars” (New Teacher Survey, 2010). Further recommendations from the teacher survey included more contact time with mentors observing and coaching teachers as well as more mentor visibility and accountability.

**Teacher Interviews**

There were ample professional development opportunities for the new teachers but varied opinions on it. Professional development that fostered collaboration had the biggest perceived impact on teachers. This was especially true when it was included as part of the school day. Small learning communities, teams, and even informal conversations fostered both personal and professional learning for new teachers, which enhanced teachers’ learning applicable to their teaching. There were also examples of professional development that was ineffective, such as whole school professional development and meetings, which led to frustration and were not seen as applicable to the new teachers’ needs. Even though the teachers highlighted frustrations with some of the professional development, overall, the small learning communities were seen as highly beneficial when teachers learned from their colleagues. Furthermore, there were learning opportunities provided by the district as well as professional and social networking opportunities, but few teachers took advantage of them. Lastly, teachers expressed a desire to be held more accountable throughout their first year.
Beginning of the year.

There were various professional development structures that helped teachers focus on instruction and guide teacher decisions. The teachers in this study discussed venues from informal conversations to highly developed and organized professional learning communities. Although each school had structured meeting time on certain days of the week, what actually occurred during these meetings varied considerably across the schools.

School level professional development. At each of the three schools in this study, school level professional development was occurring on a regular basis. These opportunities included faculty meetings, whole complex presentations and school level professional development based on school needs. Although the teachers were seeking support, the general feeling about the school level professional development was that it did not meet their needs.

Instead of the curriculum support Naomi craved, she was inundated with meetings focused on school wide changes when she had little or no background knowledge of the history of the school or what needed to change. As new teachers, their main focus was on their classroom and what was within their immediate control. New teachers did not perceive the meetings and focus on school wide initiatives as relevant to their immediate needs.

Another frustration was feeling overwhelmed by the amount of information being shared in meetings and school level professional development that teachers attended. They struggled to grasp what was happening.
I just sat there and things were flying over my head I wasn’t catching much. It was all brand new to me so I didn’t know where to fit that all in my head. The first couple of meetings were kind of a blur. (Maria, PI, September 24, 2009)

Shane had a more relaxed feeling about the staff development. He described the waiver days, which were built into the school year as professional development days, “as kind of nice to take a day off and talk through things and talk about school” (Shane, September 22, 2009). He enjoyed having time to “talk story,” which is a local expression for an informal conversation with others. However, in terms of his own learning he further elaborated on the existing gap between where he currently was in his teaching and where he wanted to be but not knowing how to get there. “The waiver days you get a lot of ideas but I don’t know how to implement them” (Shane, PI, September 22, 2009). Shane has participated in school wide professional development and can see that there are good ideas being shared but has gas in his knowledge of how to implement them. Other teachers noted similar feeling about the staff professional development. Maria commented that it was, “just presenting and sharing with no follow up” (Maria, PI, September 24 2009). The amount of professional development seemed to have an adverse affect on the teachers. They ended up feeling overwhelmed by the new ideas without a firm grasp of how to implement them in their classroom.

**Student focused meetings.** The teachers described student issues being the majority of the topics during their meeting time. Jeff and Stephanie met regularly to discuss students’ concerns with their interdisciplinary teams. They agreed that it helped
deal with student behaviors but in terms of improving teaching, it was not worthwhile.

We meet every other Thursday. We can talk about specific students, like
who is having trouble with whom and it also feels good to have someone
to relate to but in terms of teaching that doesn’t help at all. I am on my
own. (Stephanie, PI, September 29, 2009)

The type of meeting that Jeff and Stephanie described was beneficial for helping identify
student needs and negotiating team issues but as new teachers expressed they wanted
curriculum guidance as well.

**Content specific support.** The new teachers desired content specific support; it
was not prevalent in the majority of the meetings that they attended. Although when it
occurred, the beginning teachers shared how useful professional it was to learn and
collaborate with their peers on content specific ideas and strategies.

One example of professional collaboration focused on instructional decisions to
help teachers make informed decisions about what to teach. Maria described how
conversations about curriculum helped her understand what she was expected to teach
and learn appropriate instructional strategies. “I started asking a lot more questions
because now that I understand things that are going on I can make sense of it and ask
questions about it. Lately it has been really helpful. (Maria, PI, September 24, 2009).
Maria realized that she needed to ask questions and utilize the meeting time to find out
what was expected of her.

The teachers appreciated content and grade level specific support and felt that
more of this type of professional development would have been beneficial. Stephanie
summarized this need.

    I could definitely use more [professional development]. I am holding my own but I could use content specific things I could use or that could be easily adapted for my class. Like activities like ways of structuring- I don’t do any group work and that is partially due to my lack of confidence. I need things that help me teach. (Stephanie, PI, September 29, 2009)

Stephanie, along with the other new teachers, was looking for content specific, pedagogical strategies and guidance from an experienced teacher to help her with content specific activities to assist her students in reaching the math benchmarks.

    Only one of the five teachers had a curriculum guide and resources that she was given the beginning of the year. The other four teachers who were not given a curriculum to follow often planned day to day without a clear understanding of their end goal. Shane’s shared insecurity that was similar to the other teachers, “What am I supposed to teach and will I do it the right ways? I think that is always a fear. I don’t know if that really goes away” (PI, September 22, 2009).

    Due to the lack of curriculum support it was suggested that the kind of support that would have been beneficial would have been more specific guidance surrounding materials and pacing before the year began. Naomi described feeling left alone to figure everything out on her own as well. She relied on her preparation to plan lessons and felt fortunate for her year long, intensive teaching preparation and master’s degree program, but a big frustration for her in her first
year was the lack of curriculum support.

There is no curriculum so I am planning everything. None of the professional development focuses on curriculum. Planning for two lines. Making all the materials. I am spending 14 hours a day lesson planning and grading. Luckily, my program focused a lot on standards so I know how to plan lesson and address them but the school has not helped me with it. (Naomi, PI, September 21, 2009)

The absence of a formal process for teachers to plan and share ideas about curriculum, data and instructional strategies, left some of the new teachers feeling isolated and frustrated.

Although Shane did not feel he had structured support in his content area, he exuded more confidence, possibly due to his student teaching at the same school the previous year and thus having a working understanding of the curriculum and relationships that he had built to depend on for support. Shane described his approach to lesson planning and learning from his colleagues in informal ways. He was comfortable talking to other teachers and seeking their input on his ideas. “In general, it is nice just to have other people around for support but we teach different things so we don’t plan together. It is more of a talk story about general things but not specific plans” (Shane, PI, September 22, 2009). Shane seemed to be confident in his teaching and the informal conversations with his peers, rather than specific curriculum support, was sufficient for him.

The new teachers had opportunities to collaborate with their colleagues in small
professional learning communities that consisted of department, interdisciplinary team and other configurations based on non-teaching periods early in the year. The value of these collaborations varied depending on the content and the facilitation of the meeting. Furthermore, the teachers stated that school-wide professional development was overwhelming and teachers had difficulty understanding the larger school-wide issues and did not find these sessions helpful for their immediate classroom.

**Middle of the year.**

Teachers shared a range of professional learning experiences in which they were engaged. These included observations of other teachers, mentoring, team and department meetings but when they discussed school wide professional development activities they struggled to make the connection to specific instances that made an impact on them. Teachers shared highlights as well as frustrations from their professional learning opportunities.

**School wide professional development.** The teachers still did not see much value in the school level professional development that they had attended by the middle of the year. They seemed unable to apply professional development activities within their classrooms.

When Maria was asked about professional development at her school, she commented that she had not been involved in much professional development. Stephanie argued that she “can’t think of anything that has been real effective, honestly” (Stephanie, PI, December 7, 2009). When teachers recalled whole-school professional development activities they were not able to see the value in the experience and lacked the ability to
change their practice as a result of new learning. All teachers mentioned one specific example of a mandatory complex wide professional development day they all attended. A guest speaker made a presentation about charismatic teaching. Shane summed it up best when he commented that, “[The speaker] was really entertaining and he had a couple of good ideas. I don’t know if it needed to be the whole day” (Shane, PI, December 15, 2009). Jeff attempted to use some of the activities from the presentation and remarked that, “I tried to take some strategies and it didn’t really work out” (Jeff, PI, December 11, 2009).

Similarly, Stephanie attended a school waiver day presentation on thinking maps but had yet to use anything she learned because she did not feel confident in teaching it. “I was given the materials, but I haven’t done it yet and I don’t feel that I was given enough examples of how it applies to my content” (Stephanie, PI, December 7, 2009). Her example highlighted the insufficient guidance that she felt she received, which prevented her from using the new resources from the professional development session.

Although the teachers acknowledged attending school wide professional development over the course of the first semester, the teachers did not feel that they gained new insight from these experiences. Consequently, they did not feel that it affected their teaching. Teachers either did not make the connection to what they were learning or lacked the confidence in their ability to implement ideas presented.

**Small learning communities.** The sharing of experiences helped build camaraderie and simultaneously kept teachers from feeling like they were alone. Teachers gave examples of sharing at department meetings, and teachers providing
resources that were seen as helpful. Another example of sharing teaching strategies occurred through reviewing lesson plans and providing constructive feedback in small groups. Shane exemplified the type of examples that teachers provided from this type of collaboration. Weekly, he met with a group that was assigned a common non-teaching period.

We take lesson plans and look at them and try and figure out how they could be deeper and more meaningful. I like it. We take it back and see how it applies to ourselves and then we talk about being consistent as a school. (Shane, PI, December 15, 2009)

The application of the new learning started small with the teachers and then they connected it to the overall school goals. The teachers agreed that this impacted their teaching.

Reviewing student work was another way that teachers gained insight into effective practices. They learned what quality work looked like in specific content areas through the collaboration of their small learning communities. Shane and Maria worked with department members to make sure they were on track. In Maria’s department teachers had meetings where they shared student writing. “Teachers commented on why they would grade a certain way and that was interesting and that cleared things up for me” (Maria, PI, December 9, 2009). Collaborating with colleagues about how to grade work was beneficial for beginning teachers.

There was a noticeable difference in the teachers’ use of data in their learning communities to inform their instruction. Stephanie and Jeff often referenced data on
student learning, as such data became an integral part of their conversations throughout the year. Shane’s department, on the other hand, had just started to look at data to see how their students were achieving specific benchmarks. As a team they began “looking at interventions. We are starting to latch onto more and more ideas” (Shane, PI, December 15, 2009). It seemed that this process, driving planning of lessons by examining evidence of student learning, was very new to his department and still vague to him. Furthermore, the absence of gathering and analyzing various data about students’ achievement and progress was noticeable in conversation with both Naomi and Maria.

**Frustrations of small learning communities.** Teacher collaboration can be a valuable form of professional development; however, the teachers shared frustration that stemmed from ineffective professional learning communities. Time was essential to the new teachers and they communicated that when they did not feel like the time was being used wisely it was frustrating. Naomi’s feelings summarized the general consensus of the teachers regarding school level meetings: “A lot of times I feel overwhelmed when I have to go to PD because I could be using the time for other things. I don’t really get much from it.” (Naomi, PI, December 14, 2009). Shane seconded that his department meeting time was not as effective as it could have been either. “It is hard. We only meet once a week for like 45 minutes. We get some stuff done. I think we scratch the surface, but I think we could go deeper because we are talking about frustrations” (Shane, PI, December 15, 2009). He was aware that there was more meaningful work they could have been doing rather than venting frustrations.
Teachers struggled to apply what was being discussed in their small learning communities to their classrooms. When there was a gap between the theoretical concepts that the teachers were learning about and their ability to implement concepts in their classrooms, new teachers found it challenging.

The theoretical stuff makes you think and check yourself. It makes you knowledgeable about the field of education, which is important but when I am on survival mode, I don’t really care about that stuff. I need to know what I am teaching tomorrow and what a better way of explaining it is.

(Stephanie, PI, December 7, 2009)

As a new teacher, without any prior experience, Stephanie’s basic needs were to have effective lessons to teach her students. She did not feel that she could focus on the theory when she is not clear what she was doing in class the next day. She wanted examples and lessons that could scaffold the theoretical ideas and show her how to teach her students in creative ways.

The teachers in this study found small collaborative learning communities to be useful as they learned about quality student work and effective teaching practices. On one hand, successful examples of small learning communities fostered collaboration and led to teachers feeling like part of the team. Teachers shared examples that affected their teaching as a result of work with other teachers. However, small learning communities became a burden and ineffective when there was not a sense of community in the group and meetings were not facilitated in a way that led to specific outcomes, when what they learned was not easily applicable to their classroom. Furthermore, teachers
acknowledged feeling isolated when they did not share the same values as their group, which affected their willingness to participate. Overall, in spite of challenges experienced, learning communities were seen as highly beneficial in cases when teachers learned from their colleagues.

**End of the year.**

At the end of the year, small learning communities seemed to have had the most impact on teachers. The greatest benefit was when teachers were able to collaborate with their colleagues about teaching practices and target specific instructional needs. The array of services provided from the district was seen as useful but few teachers took advantage of the available opportunities. The highest priority was placed on school level activities that tied directly into what they were teaching. At this point in the year, teachers continued to want support in terms of their school responsibilities and curriculum. They wanted to be held accountable for their professional responsibilities.

**Small learning communities.** All of the teachers participated in a variety of small learning communities. Generally, the teachers shared learning and networking in these meetings and perceived them as valuable; however, they gave examples of ineffective learning communities when teachers did not feel like the time was used productively, similar to the comments made in middle of the year interviews. In addition to reviewing student work, lesson planning and providing support, two more structures of small learning communities were identified: new teachers’ support groups and content specific vertical articulation meetings.

A new teacher support group for one of the schools was held monthly after school
and created a safe place for teachers to share successes and struggles, “We just go over what we are frustrated about and what we think we did well and different questions we have” (Maria, PI, March 24, 2010). This small learning community was a place for teachers to network in a non-threatening environment.

Another form of small learning communities focused on aligning the curriculum vertically, which helped Jeff to see the big picture and prioritize what to teach. As a new teacher Jeff saw this as “a day that was helpful in thinking about next year and helped me plan things that I want to do” (Jeff, March 29, 2010). Creating time for vertical articulation allowed the departments to plan out goals and align benchmarks.

**District support.** There were a variety of initiatives that the district provided for teachers to participate in throughout the year including Kahua, a cultural induction and mentoring program, a new teacher professional development class and other social events. Few of the teachers took advantage of these opportunities, and the teachers shed some light on why they opted not to participate.

The Kahua orientation was attended by the majority of the teachers in the complex and all of the teachers in this study. Furthermore, it was highly regarded by the participants, “The cultural stuff was great. It surprisingly legitimized me in here. Sometimes I know more about the community than [students] do” (Stephanie, PI, March 25, 2010). Although the teachers benefitted from this initial orientation, they did not continue on with the year commitment of three compensated Saturday seminars and a final day of sharing, which was called “Ho’ike”. Jeff explained succinctly why the teachers did not complete the Kahua program.
When I went I was glad I went. But getting there and making the effort was hard. $250 for three full days wasn’t worth it. If the pay was better I may have gone. It was too much of a commitment that if I had anything else going on it was going to get dropped. (Jeff, PI, March 29, 2010).

The teachers interviewed opted out of the cultural mentoring and induction program despite their perception of these programs being worthwhile due to three factors: use personal time, a low level of compensation for their time, and problems of scheduling.

As much as the teachers needed support from personal and professional networks, there were barriers that prevented them from taking advantage of available opportunities. The complex offered a professional development class for new teachers. Both Shane and Maria started but never finished the class. One reason for not completing the course that Maria shared was the lack of time to fit everything in. “There were a couple of days when there was too much going on and I couldn’t make it. Right after school there are a lot of things going on” (Maria, PI, March 24, 2010). Shane had a different perspective about the class and acknowledged that he would have preferred something that was on his campus and more specific to his school:

I think if more people from my school were there [I would have gone]. It is a nice networking opportunity but I would prioritize it more if I could build a network that could be immediately recognizable. Far away off campus makes it less desirable. (Shane, PI, March 22, 2010)

The district also created opportunities for teachers to network socially off campus, but none of the teachers interviewed participated in any of those off campus socials.
There were a variety of reasons including no desire to create additional social networks and feeling timid about going alone.

As a new teacher with TFA, Jeff had a social network in place with his cohort and wanted to keep his social life separate from his professional life, “I already have a social network and I want to do that in my comfort zone not around staff members or my bosses” (Jeff, PI, March 29, 2010). In contrast, Naomi and Maria moved to Hawai’i independent of any network and envied the support that TFA had in place. Although they were aware of the district social events and wanted to network, they opted out of going feeling nervous about not knowing anyone. However, Naomi did attend school level luncheons for new teachers and, “enjoyed that, getting to know teachers here. I didn’t really know the other teachers. I am always just doing my own thing in my classroom” (Naomi, PI, March 22, 2010). There were opportunities for teachers to network socially off campus but the teachers in this study chose not to participate due to existing social networks, preferring to keep social life separate and feeling awkward not knowing others who might attend.

**Desired systems and needs of new teacher support.** Teachers saw the value of regular meetings and organized support; however, they did not make time for these occasions unless they were held accountable. Maria felt like teachers should be mandated to attend new teacher classes and likened it to “broccoli- you don’t like it but its good for you” (Maria, PI, March 24, 2010). Shane had trouble making time as a new teacher.

It seems like there are so many things available but if they aren’t
mandatory it is easy to say I am not going to do that because there are so many other things that you need to do. Although you know it may be valuable. (Shane, PI, March 22, 2010)

When asked about what they would design for a system of support if they had the opportunity Jeff offered some specific suggestions that would benefit new teachers.

I think we should be forced to meet every two weeks. Have a mentor come in and talk about what is going on and even if you don’t think you have a problem. A system that forces you to reflect and communicate about it so that you can get feedback. A system that doesn’t let you slip and get to where things are out of hand. (Jeff, PI, March 29, 2010)

The teachers could see how a structured system of support would benefit them in their first year. The teachers further suggested that a system where teachers were expected to have regular meetings with mentors to discuss their practice should occur and be mandated to hold them accountable.

At the beginning of the year teachers were inundated with information and had trouble keeping up with what was expected of them. Maria desired a class before school started to become familiar with the expectations. Another need was to have professional development for the specific school and teaching line. The schools had their own curriculum and initiatives that teachers were not always prepared for. Shane felt like “A lot of training is missing. It would be great to have training for team teaching and project-based learning. I think it would be great to do those things but we shouldn’t be thrown into it” (Shane, PI, March 29, 2010). Teachers were willing to participate in
activities that provided them with information or professional development that would prepare them to be successful with their students and new career.

Although teachers found working with mentors to be one of the key factors in their success throughout the year, they lacked the time to dedicate to this work. Mentors observed but often had to squeeze debriefing sessions in during a 30-minute lunch break or other periods in between other meetings and classes. It was too much sometimes: “We discuss great ideas but we debrief during my lunch and I am hungry and need to go to the bathroom before the bell rings” (Stephanie, PI, March 25, 2010). The mentors and new teachers struggled to find time to work on the new teachers’ professional needs and often sacrificed their personal needs in the meantime.

Variations of small learning communities seemed to be the most beneficial for teachers. More specifically, they were most beneficial sessions were relevant to their students and curriculum and embedded into their school day. There were learning opportunities provided by the district as well as professional and social networking opportunities but few teachers took advantage of them. Teachers noted that time and the option not to participate discouraged them from going even though they saw the benefit. Professional learning that was on campus and specific to their school was seen as the most useful type of professional development. New teachers highlighted the desire to be held accountable and to have more consistent contact with their mentors throughout their first year.

Summary of Personal and Professional Development

All of the teachers had participated in professional development; however, the
range of activities varied greatly according to the purpose and the facilitation of the meetings. Successful examples of professional learning opportunities fostered collaboration and led to teachers feeling like part of the team. Teachers shared examples in which of work with other teachers affected their teaching. Structures that were imbedded into the school day such as small learning communities, teams, and even informal conversations fostered both personal and professional learning for new teachers. These structures furthered educators’ understanding of what they were teaching. Small learning communities became a burden and ineffective when there was not a sense of community in the group and meetings were not facilitated in a way that led to specific outcomes or learning that was not easily applicable to their classroom. Furthermore, teachers expressed feeling isolated when they did not share the same values as their group, which affected their willingness to participate. Overall, in spite of challenges experienced, learning communities were seen as highly beneficial when teachers learned from their colleagues. There were learning opportunities provided by the district as well as professional and social networking opportunities, but few teachers took advantage of them. They wanted to be accountable and to have more consistent contact with their mentors throughout their first year.

**Summary of Findings**

The purpose of this study was to understand the new teacher’s perspectives of their first year and the support that they received. This research was conducted over the 2009-2010 school year in the Ali’i and Nalu Complex on Oahu. Five teachers in their first year were selected to participate in this study. All three secondary schools from the
Aliʻi and Nalu complexes were represented. The teachers were selected during the initial orientation, prior to the beginning of the school year. The participants were purposively selected to ensure variety in the perspectives of the new teachers. All five voluntary participants remained part of the study for its entirety.

This study used the *Aloha District’s Mentoring and Induction Plan* (2008) as a basis to frame the new teachers’ perspectives about the support they received in their first year. Data from the anonymous new teacher survey administered by the state provided information about a broad range of new teachers perspectives. Furthermore, the in depth interviews provided insight into five teachers’ first year and the support that they received.

Improving student achievement was the first induction program goal that was discussed. The teacher interviews indicated that at the beginning of the year there was limited use of data or deliberate focus on student achievement. By the middle of the year, teachers were beginning to focus on HSA. Teachers were personally motivated for students to achieve at high levels. They also felt pressure from school administrators. The classroom instruction did not always match the teachers’ stated expectations of high achievement. Towards the end of the year, teachers were more purposeful about the use of strategies and systems in order to affect student achievement. Overall, the teachers shared a heightened understanding of strategies to motivate and engage their students. Yet, at year’s end, they were discouraged.

Another major program goal was improving teacher performance. All teachers in the Aliʻi and Nalu schools had mentors assigned to them who ranged from off campus
mentors, to school curriculum coaches, to teachers on campus with a full time complex mentor; however, the duration and frequency of contact with their mentor varied greatly. In the beginning of the year teachers’ perceptions of the support they received to improve teacher performance varied yet they all felt that they could have used more targeted support to improve their teaching practices. In the middle of the year, teachers were starting to understand their roles but they became overwhelmed by their responsibilities. The teachers expressed difficulty keeping up with their professional responsibilities and desired a system where they were held more accountable. Throughout the year one-to-one mentor support, observing veteran teachers, and learning with colleagues in small learning communities proved to have the most substantial impact on teachers’ performance.

Retaining competent teachers was the third goal of the induction plan in the first year. The survey indicated that only one teacher planned on leaving his current school; however, the interviewed teachers’ plans varied from staying in education for as long as possible, to leaving after two years. As the teachers began their careers they planned on staying between two to five years before considering other options. As they began to experience what it was like being a teacher in the Ali’i and Nalu schools, their experiences shaped their plans to stay or leave their current positions.

In order to retain competent teachers, personal and professional well-being of teachers had to be maintained. Mentors were key supports and helped teachers feel effective as well as helped them handle stress. Teachers shared that they maintained positive outlooks through humor and reflection. Although teachers seemed to have
difficulty realizing their vision of how they wanted to teach in their actual classrooms in the middle of the year, they were hopeful about the future. Teachers were overwhelmed by pressure to perform on the HSA towards the end of the year and were also frustrated because they lacked resources and personal time. Throughout the year, support networks proved to be valuable resources that helped maintain teachers well being.

Finally, the last induction program goal was to instill a basis for personal and professional growth in order to develop teacher knowledge, increase student achievement and retain competent teachers. Successful examples of professional learning opportunities fostered collaboration and led to teachers feeling like part of the team. Teachers shared examples of ways work with other teachers affected their classrooms. Structures that were imbedded into the school day such as small learning communities, teams, and even informal conversations fostered both personal and professional learning for new teachers. These structures furthered educators’ understanding of what they were teaching and the practices for their students and had the potential to yield valuable learning. Professional development was frustrating when the activities were not facilitated in a way that led to applications in their classroom. Overall, in spite of challenges experienced, learning communities were seen as highly beneficial when teachers learned from their colleagues. Teachers overall wanted to be held more accountable and to have more consistent contact with their mentors throughout their first year.
CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION

The intent of this phenomenological case study was to understand how a purposeful sample of new teachers perceived the induction support they received in their first year of teaching. Understanding new teachers’ perceptions of their district mentoring and induction program is vital to understanding how to recruit, develop and retain effective teachers in this community.

This research can contribute to new teacher induction by clarifying specific needs and perceptions of those who begin teaching in challenging circumstances in a particular context. In order to understand the experiences of the selected participants, I employed a qualitative case study approach, where in-depth phenomenological interviews were used to understand the teachers’ perceptions of support in the first year including challenges and strategies for addressing them. Supportive documents including the Aloha District Induction Mentoring and Highly Qualified Plan (HIDOE, 2008) as well as the New Teacher Survey (HIDOE, 2010) were used for comparison to triangulate the data collected from the interviews. The five first year teachers who participated in this research were selected to represent a variety of pathways into teaching in a rural island community. The varied preparation included a Master of Education in Teaching from a local university, mainland recruitment of teachers who had completed a state approved program, and TFA, an alternative certification program. Furthermore, I specifically focused on teachers of young adolescents in one region with high poverty, chronically underperforming schools and high turnover of the staff.

This chapter presents the theoretical implications of this research along with
discussion and interpretation of the findings as they relate to the research questions. As a result of the four major findings, implications for practice are addressed for all stakeholders to improve induction of new teachers. Finally, recommendations for further research and limitations of this study are included.

**Theoretical Implications**

In order to analyze teachers’ experiences, I used Bronfenbrenner’s (2005) bioecological theory, which describes the influences that affect biopsychological development in individuals and groups. Bronfenbrenner’s Bioecological Theory explains that development is a result of individuals’ interactions with their environment. There were numerous factors that influenced how the participants developed as teachers both leading up to and during their first year. Bandura’s (1977) social learning theory and the concept of collaborative learning to improve teacher knowledge (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999) were applied to the participants’ experiences. These aided in analyzing the support that existed and how it affected the teachers in their first year. The teachers’ preparation, induction experiences and the challenges they encountered were influential in how they perceived the support throughout the year. Additionally, the larger social context of education and the community further impacted their experiences. These factors affected how teachers felt about their own teaching, the profession, and future career plans.

Bronfenbrenner’s (2005) five environmental systems range from direct interaction to broad cultural systems, and these both individually and collectively impacted the beginning teachers’ development in this study (Figure 2). The microsystem is comprised of experiences that the teachers had direct interaction with and participated in
constructing. Some examples include the teachers’ families, their own education, and teacher preparation as well as the school that they taught in. The mesosystem is the system of relationships that existed. Teachers had a variety of networks such as team members, mentors, colleagues from across the district/state and administration. The third layer, the exosystem, referred to experiences in which the teachers did not have an active role, but which influenced their immediate experience. The exosystem was comprised of students’ lives, their developmental needs, and school sanctions by both local and federal mandates that affected teachers—realities that they did not have the ability to change. The macrosystem, or larger society and subcultures, also impacted teachers, most notably through the legislation, *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) that has permeated education and affected how schools function. As a result of this law there has been a push to have content-qualified teachers, commonly referred to as *highly qualified* teachers, in all classrooms. In addition, issues surrounding teacher preparation programs, alternative certification programs such as TFA, and the HIDOE teacher induction program are factors in the larger societal context of learning to teach that impacted the participants.

The chronosystem surrounded all layers and refers to the patterns and events that affected teachers’ interactions and experiences. In this study, poverty was also intertwined in the lives of the students. Moreover, the culture of Hawai’i and the unique community dynamics play a role in the school atmosphere. In addition to the local systems, the developmental stages of the adolescent students factored into how teachers taught. The interactions with both students and families in the context of the chronosystem greatly impacted how teachers perceived their ability to do their job.
This following section includes a discussion and interpretation of each of the four
areas of findings of this study: 1) factors that supported or hindered new teachers’
successful induction into the profession, 2) challenges in the first year and strategies for
addressing them, 3) utility of teacher preparation in the first year and 4) experiences that
affected career plans.

Factors that Support or Hinder Successful Induction of New Teachers

The first research question was designed to elicit teachers’ perceptions of support.
Specifically, it aimed to clarify the support that teachers felt was instrumental in
addressing their needs. It also highlighted support that was either missing, or provided,
but not viewed as beneficial. Throughout the year, the participants’ perceptions of
support were influenced by various factors with support were.

Factors that both supported and hindered the participants’ success in their first
year were dependent on the existence and utility of fundamental, intended supports that
were collectively considered comprehensive induction (Berry, Hopkins-Thompson, &
Hoke, 2002; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). These included mentoring, new teacher
professional development, release time and opportunities to learn from observing other
teachers (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Glazerman, Isenberg, Dolfin, Bleeker, Johnson, Grider,
& Jacobus, 2010; Molner-Kelly, 2004). In this study, teachers received varied
combinations as well as intensity of these supports depending on their school and teacher
preparation programs. Some teachers indicated they had few or no systems of support,
whereas others felt they had a strong induction program. These perceptions highlighted
the difference in teachers’ support networks within their mesosystem (Bronfenbrenner,
2005; Figure 2). However, all participants indicated that they desired more support than
they received, which can be identified as a problem in the chronosystem. New teachers throughout this study detailed inconsistent induction practices and support. The participants’ perceptions corroborated the findings of a mentoring and induction needs assessment commissioned by the HIDOE, which highlighted a history of induction efforts that lacked systemic implementation across the state (Johnson, 2009). Although there were program elements to guide induction programs, a widespread difference in implementation exists in the schools where the new teachers in this study were inducted.

**Mentoring.**

Although this research did not focus on student achievement directly, that is the ultimate goal as stated in the Hawai‘i Department of Education Strategic Plan (HIDOE, 2011). Rockoff (2008) established a mentoring-achievement link, noting that more hours of mentoring yielded higher student achievement for these teachers compared with others who spent less time with a mentor. Therefore, it was important to examine teachers’ perceptions of the amount of mentoring that they received and the level of which they found it to be effective.

The main goals of providing mentors as part of the induction program in the Ali‘i and Nalu Complexes were to increase retention of competent teachers, and positively impacting student achievement (HIDOE, 2008). The teachers in this study each had a mentor assigned to them as part of the Aloha District Induction, Mentoring and Highly Qualified Program (HIDOE, 2008), and in some cases, there were multiple mentors based on concurrent enrollment in teacher education programs and the organization of the school’s specific induction program. The findings, however, indicated that the
participants’ interactions and time spent with their mentors differed greatly, which impacted their perception of the effectiveness of this support. All of the participants felt that their basic needs were met at the school level, which included having a person on campus whom they could rely on, someone to make sure they had necessary paperwork completed as well to advocate for them in a time of need. Beyond these basic supports, however, the participants desired more targeted support to improve their teaching practices.

When the novices in this study struggled throughout the year, they believed that they lacked guidance to improve their instructional practices, similar to Kauffman, Johnson, Kardos, Liu, and Peske’s (2002) findings also reporting that a majority of new teachers felt they lacked sufficient guidance. The participants in the current study collectively suggested that a mentor on campus who focused on their teaching would have been beneficial. Teachers in this study described a lack of educative mentoring, or guiding teachers as they begin developing or adapting curriculum (Feiman-Nemser, 2003; Kardos, 2004). Some teachers like Stephanie had multiple mentors whom she could seek out if needed and one in particular who provided support to improve her teaching. Others like Shane and Naomi had mentors who focused more on logistical issues and provided “buddy” support. The teachers in this study who received support from an experienced colleague or mentor who was familiar with their content appreciated the knowledge and insights that they were able to garner, consistent with much prior research (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Ingersol 2004; Molner-Kelley, 2004; Villani, 2002). The instructional support to implement the desired curriculum was believed to be most useful by the
participants; in other words, incorporating mentoring, coaching and critical dialogue in the workday increased teachers’ understanding of their content and instructional strategies (Kordos, 2004, Smith & Ingersol, 2004).

This study supports the importance of creating trusting relationships as a prerequisite for quality mentoring. The participants highlighted the importance of receiving specific feedback about their practice from a knowledgeable and experienced mentor whom they trusted. Although the teachers in this study were eager for feedback, it is important to note that the participants were more likely to be open to constructive criticism if there was an existing relationship built by a consistency of exchanges. Current research has suggested that when mentors are not available to meet with their mentees on a regular basis and sufficient time is not provided for this work, the mentoring relationship is often unsuccessful in supporting the new teacher (Everston & Smithey, 2000; Moir, 2005). In this study, when mentor visits were infrequent, the participants feared not being understood and receiving feedback or criticism from someone who lacked a holistic picture of their practice. When there was no relationship, or when a relationship was not sustained by frequent visits and targeted feedback, the teachers in this study did not perceive the interactions with mentors as worthwhile.

Stephanie and Jeff, who had both evaluative and supportive observations throughout the year, perceived the nature of the observation to be insignificant. As TFA and graduate students, these teachers had professors mentor them but they also had to evaluate their performance for their classes. TFA program directors (PD) also conducted observations that were intended to support the teachers in their practice and were not
evaluative in nature. In both cases, the relationships varied and in spite of the professor’s observations being evaluative, the teachers perceived these to be more beneficial as a result of the relationship and the trust that existed. The feedback that was perceived to be most beneficial was due to consistent observations that impacted the teachers’ practice. This desire for feedback was congruent with current research on Generation Y, those born between 1977 and 1995, suggesting that the new generation of teachers desires more feedback from principals, mentors and peers than did their veteran colleagues (Coggshall, Ott, Behrstock, & Lasagna, 2010). Mentors who filled this need to improve teachers’ practice had built a strong relationship and mutual trust and as a result the feedback was well received.

The TFA teachers who had mentors assigned to them through their Master’s program felt that the structure provided them ample interaction with their mentor. They also benefited from the guided reflection and time to connect with other new teachers who were experiencing similar challenges, similar to Grossman and Thompson’s (2004) findings. Although this support was mandatory for unlicensed teachers, the traditionally prepared teachers felt they could have benefited from the systems of support provided for their TFA colleagues.

Regardless of external support systems, all of the participants felt that they lacked sufficient one-to-one mentoring at the school level. To begin with, four of the five teachers felt their school level mentors lacked critical attributes such as experience coaching and facilitating, keen observation skills, a wealth of experience working with diverse student populations, enthusiasm and love for learning, as well as a commitment to
collaboration (Everston & Smithey, 2000; Moir, 2005). Moreover, the lack of sanctioned mentoring time made it difficult for participants to delve into the work at the necessary level to impact teacher practices. Existing research has previously documented the need to devote more time for new teacher induction in both Hawai’i and across the country (Johnson, 2009; Norman & Feiman-Nemser, 2005). Finally, when mentoring was not mandated, the participants acknowledged that other professional responsibilities often took precedence. Unmandated mentoring led to infrequent interactions, which has been documented by Ingersol and Strong (2011) as a factor of subpar mentoring.

**Professional Development.**

Understanding the curriculum and building knowledge of appropriate instructional strategies were the highest priorities for most of the teachers interviewed. Through the Kahua Induction Program, Master’s course and teacher preparation, the new teachers were at least cognizant of culturally responsive pedagogy promoted by multicultural educators (e.g. Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994). These teachers understood at some level the need to teach rigorous and relevant lessons and provide scaffolds that support students to achieve at such levels. This is one viable explanation for why classroom management, which is typically thought of as one of the biggest challenges for new teachers (e.g. Farkas, Johnson, Foleno, Duffett, & Foley, 2000), was rarely discussed as an issue by teachers in this study. Instead of focusing on how to discipline students, the teachers reflected upon how their teaching affected students’ behavior and sought guidance to implement effective pedagogy to engage the learners rather than “manage a classroom.” The discrepancy, however, was that although the
teachers understood what they needed to do to improve their classroom instruction, they lacked guidance in implementing improved instruction in their classrooms, which often added to their frustration. They felt they lacked the conceptual knowledge to apply the ideas and became discouraged. New teachers needed to go beyond reading and talking about new pedagogical ideas and be guided through the implementation (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Feiman-Nemser, 2003).

The teachers’ perceptions of their professional development sessions indicated overwhelmingly that that whole group meetings and activities were less helpful in addressing their needs as first year teachers. Learning that was embedded in the school day and applicable to the teachers’ specific areas of need had the highest impact on the participants’ teaching, which has also been documented by Ganser (2002), DuFour (2007) and Watkins (2005). All of the teachers in this study overwhelmingly highlighted observing experienced teachers as one of the most influential professional development activities throughout the whole year, which is consistent with existing research (e.g., Bubb, et al, 2002; PEN, 2005; Wong, 2003).

There was a range of meetings and informal interactions that afforded the participants opportunities to learn from peers. Consistent and meaningful collaboration provided valuable opportunities for learning about curriculum and instructional strategies with colleagues, consistent with prior research (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Lieberman & Miller, 1999; Meier, 2002). The professional development activities that the participants perceived as useful included sharing teaching strategies and resources, providing support for one another and reviewing student work. Unfortunately, the
participants noted that these opportunities were not as focused or as frequent as desired. This finding is important, as collaborating with colleagues to employ best teaching practices was found to be among the strongest factors supporting teacher retention in prior studies (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Ingersoll & Smith, 2004).

The contradictions in participants’ perceptions of professional development warrants further discussion. Although the teachers in this study wanted more time to collaborate with colleagues, they also contradicted that claim by not attending department meetings, and opting not to participate in new teacher professional development courses or the cultural induction program. One explanation of this contradictory behavior was proposed by Wolcott (1987), who has explained that people’s views often reflect how they believe things should be, but not necessarily how they are. It appeared that these teachers thought they should be spending more time collaborating with colleagues, but when they were given a choice they did not make it a priority, as they were already overwhelmed with the demands of their new job.

The majority of the participants had time within the day to meet with colleagues but the productivity and utility of the meetings varied by the facilitator and purpose. Teachers learned by practicing and reflecting on what they learned, collaborating with other teachers and analyzing student work (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001). Consequently, one of the main downfalls that existed across the schools in this study was the lack of opportunities to use student achievement and learning data to inform practice, which was described by Strahan and Ponder (2005) as instrumental in professional growth. Without data to guide instruction, the majority of the participants were often unsure of their
effectiveness and next steps throughout the year.

Finally, as the participants reflected at the end of the year, they identified supports that they felt would have been beneficial prior to the beginning of the school year. Overall, they desired a more detailed orientation to their schools and the systems that they were going to be responsible for implementing. They also felt they would have benefited from specific strategies for the unique socioeconomic and cultural population they were teaching, similar to recommendations of Achinstein and Athanases (2006). Additionally, more information pertaining to school level logistics, as well as professional development for school curriculum were seen as necessary prior to the beginning of the school year, as suggested by other researchers (e.g., Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Wong 2005).

**Challenges in the First Year and Strategies for Addressing Them**

The second finding is linked to the first; the support that either existed or was desired in the participants’ first year impacted their experiences positively and negatively. Challenges that teachers faced are described followed by strategies they used in their first year. Finally, teacher efficacy is discussed in relation to how the participants’ challenges and struggles affected their belief in their ability to impact student achievement since perceptions of effectiveness have been shown to be a factor in teachers’ likelihood of staying in the profession (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003).

The harsh realities of teaching became increasingly apparent to the beginning teachers as the year progressed. They struggled to teach in ways that they envisioned prior to entering the field, similar to the findings of Wolfolk-Hoy (2000), and this became
a barrier to their perception of effectiveness. Other struggles the teachers in this study shared included lack of time and resources to plan and execute effective lessons (PEN, 2005). Challenges for these teachers throughout the year included meeting the needs of all learners through rigorous engaging lessons. Four of the five participants felt they were teaching at low levels due to lack of content knowledge and pedagogy. Therefore facilitating collaboration time to learn and utilize effective teaching practices was imperative, as noted by numerous researchers (Laczko-Kerr & Berliner, 2002; Darling Hammond et. al., 2005).

New teachers’ acquisition of the skills necessary to develop and carry out high level learning experiences was crucial since the amount of time that students were engaged in appropriate learning activities consequently affected achievement (Weinstein & Mignano, 2007; Wolfolk-Hoy, 2010). The new teachers in this study felt they received inadequate guidance about deciding how and what to teach, yet numerous researchers have documented the importance of collaborating with experienced colleagues to make informed decisions about how to teach and what students are learning (e.g., Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 2005; Thornton, 2004).

Jeff’s sense of euphoria at the beginning of the year to cynicism by the end of the year illustrates an important finding about the teaching role. This sentiment was further supported by the overall feeling of disenchantment in the third interview from all of the participants. The interviews were conducted in April after spring break and prior to the administration of the HSA, the state high stakes test. Pressure existed in the exosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 2005) that teachers did not have control over but which affected their
teaching. Examples included pressure to have students perform, insufficient time to plan effectively, and lack of personal time. The teachers became overwhelmed due to the high demands placed on them. The intensification of the teacher’s role has been argued as a major factor in teachers’ early exit from the field (Apple, 1986; Valli & Buese, 2007).

In spite of the challenges, the participants displayed academic optimism, an overall sense of hope about the future and their ability to be successful teachers (Beard, Hoy, & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2010). The teachers found a variety of support systems including colleagues, teams and personal networks, which proved to help them combat their struggles as first year teachers, which existing research has documented as crucial to teachers’ success (Grossman & Thompson, 2004, Kardos, 2004, Kauffman et. al., 2002). Throughout the year, teachers cited mentors as instrumental in providing support, personally and professionally, especially when the mentors were experienced in the teacher’s content and provided frequent support, thus establishing relationships and trust. This finding is consistent with an existing body of research on the benefits of mentors for new teachers (Kardos, 2004; Smith & Ingersol, 2004, Villani, 2002). As a result of their own experiences, participants sought opportunities to improve their teaching knowledge and implemented strategies as well as interdisciplinary activities to develop students’ knowledge. By the end of the year, teachers in this study began to see curriculum that was engaging and relevant as an important factor in raising student achievement, similar to the findings of Banks, Cochran-Smith, Moll, Richert, Zeichner, LePage, Darling-Hammond, Duffy and McDonald (2005).

Another key factor in the participants’ success included learning to use data to
understand students’ needs, based on both informal and formal measures. By the end of the year all of the participants had become more comfortable with the content and assessing student learning, however, only two utilized formative and summative assessment tools in collaboration with their peers. As a result, these two both felt their teaching became more tightly organized and aligned to specific and measurable goals, which was highlighted as essential for improving student achievement (DuFour, 2007; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001).

Teacher efficacy, confidence in one’s own abilities to positively affect student learning (Tschannen-Moran et. al., 1998; Wolfolk-Hoy, 2000), was impacted in this study by the opportunity to participate in organized collection and analysis of data. The data analysis and the discussion that followed affected the confidence levels of the participants, their attitude towards trying out new strategies, and their motivation to seek new ways to improve student achievement, similar to the findings of Tschannen-Moran, et. al., (1998).

**Utility of Prior Teaching Preparation**

The three types of preparation that the teachers in this study had prior to teaching included: 1) Stephanie and Jeff chose alternative certification through TFA; 2) Maria completed a fifth year licensing program; and 3) Shane and Naomi earned a Master’s degree in education. These avenues provided teachers with different learning opportunities that influenced their knowledge for teaching (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999). Each program required varied amounts of methods courses, content preparation and student teaching experience. The microsystem included teacher preparation affected
the participants’ abilities to plan lessons with an understanding of pedagogy and appropriate teaching methods for their content, their curriculum readiness when the school year began, and their understanding of the demographics of the students they were teaching (Darling Hammond et. al. 2005; Laczko-Kerr & Berliner, 2002; Wellinsky, 2002).

**Preparation to Teach.**

The teachers’ preparation affected their approach to designing their curriculum. Programs that provided ample time for the pre-service teachers to interact with students and gain experience in the field helped to build teachers’ confidence and repertoire of strategies (Darling-Hammond, 2002; Goe, 2002, Lazcko-Kerr & Berliner, 2002). On the other hand, teachers with limited experience relied more on support to help provide resources as they were learning about teaching practices. In spite of their preparation, most of the teachers lacked sufficient knowledge of appropriate pedagogy for the population they were teaching. All of the teachers, regardless of their preparation, required guidance as they transitioned into their role as a classroom teacher, whereas they felt that they had little to no guidance in what to teach, similar to the findings of Kauffman, et. al., (2002).

As extant research has supported, beginning teachers can be most effective when they learn about their students’ interests and backgrounds, assess knowledge and skills as well as develop and adapt curriculum, which requires guidance (Hammerness, et. al., 2005; Feiman-Nemser, 2003). When analyzing the prior preparation of the TFA members and the traditionally prepared teachers, neither of these approaches was
sufficient for the teachers as they began their careers in the Ali’i and Nalu schools. The teachers who completed pre-service preparation programs gained critical knowledge and skills for teaching (Darling-Hammond, 2002; Goe, 2002, Lazcko-Kerr & Berliner, 2002); however, the teachers in this study found that there were many job related skills that they found overwhelming once they had their own classroom. In contrast, TFA participants acknowledged they lacked the pedagogical knowledge to meet the needs of the students at the beginning of the year. However, to help transition the TFA teachers, a unit plan and assessments had been created with a mentor to track student progress as part of their master’s program requirements.

Preparation for the Demographics.

Another finding was related to teacher preparation to understand the community and student demographics. None of the participants was prepared specifically to teach young adolescents, and only one of the five was prepared to teach in the unique cultural climate, which is typical of many schools with underserved populations (Nieto, 2003). Furthermore, two of the five teachers had no teaching license. Although the participants were willing to teach any grade 7-12, they did not share any specific knowledge or preparation in the unique needs of young adolescents. No or low preparation for middle school has been a problem in many middle level schools across the country (Jackson & Davis, 2000). In spite of their lack of preparation, four of the five teachers found that they really enjoyed teaching young adolescents, and being able to reach students at a critical point in their lives.

Bronfenbrenner’s (2005; Figure 2) chronosystem surrounds all layers of an
individual and involves that patterns that are so ingrained in a community that they become part of the culture. Overall, the teachers were ill prepared for the socioeconomic, cultural and developmental demographics of their classrooms, similar to many other beginning teachers in underperforming schools (Hammerness et al., 2005; Feiman-Nemser, 2003). McCarthy and Guiney, (2004) found that teachers who feel under prepared were more likely to leave their positions, while those with a more accurate perception of the school and the demographics were more likely to remain in their positions with higher job satisfaction. This further exacerbates the need for a cultural induction program that is imbedded in the teachers’ professional development and mentors who can further support the teachers’ understanding of the cultural systems that affect the beginning teachers (Bronfenbrenner, 2005).

Three of the teachers were drawn to teach in these schools because they realized the need for teachers in low-performing schools and were not surprised by, but still underprepared for, the challenges they faced. Shane, the teacher who was the most at ease, was prepared through the local university in a program specifically designed for teachers who would work in the Ali’i and Nalu complex. Furthermore, his experience from student teaching in the same school gave him an understanding of the school dynamics and helped him to feel more at ease when the year began. Conversely, two participants who moved to Hawai’i and began teaching in their schools because of job availability, experienced greater challenges in understanding the demographics and needs of their students. This phenomenon was further corroborated in Johnson’s (2008) needs assessment of the HIDOE induction and mentoring programs.
Many teachers lack knowledge of their students’ backgrounds (Wang & Odell, 2002), which was the premise for the Kahua Induction Program. The teachers in this study reported that they gained valuable insight and liked the cultural induction sessions that provided awareness of the events and patterns that made up the chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Figure 2). However, after the initial orientation the teachers did not attend the subsequent seminars nor keep in frequent contact with their cultural mentors. Reasons given included a lack of time and not enough compensation to give up their weekends to attend seminars. The lack of attendance is an issue that is important for policy makers. Consideration of new teachers’ intensified job responsibilities and need for personal time should be addressed. Professional development should be offered as part of the teachers’ workday and beginning teachers should be held accountable for participating in the provided professional development. Johnson, Goldrick and Lasagna (2010) suggest that the state increase participation in learning opportunities by linking job embedded induction to licensure. This preliminary step will ensure that new teachers are expected to participate in the induction program, including professional development opportunities that are prepared to help them be successful.

Career Goals of Beginning Teachers

The personal and career goals of the teachers interviewed affected the length of time they planned on teaching in their current positions. All teachers intended to stay for at least two years, but none saw themselves in their current school longer than five years without revisiting their career plans. Teacher retention is an issue in the chronosystem of beginning teacher induction as prior research indicates. The participants in the current
study had similar career trajectories to their teaching counterparts across the country, as 40-50% of new teachers leave within the first five years (Ingersoll, 2003), and teachers have had a much higher turnover than other professions such as lawyers, engineers, architects, and nurses (Ingersoll & Perda 2010).

Given these grim statistics for new teacher retention, there are factors that the participants elaborated on throughout the interviews that they felt impacted their plans to stay or leave either their school or the profession all together. Overall excitement about their jobs helped to increase the participants’ desire to stay in their current schools. Some factors that motivated them were opportunities to learn and grow as professionals as well as upward mobility, findings consistent with other research (Meier, 2002; Sweetland & Hoy, 2000). Teachers in the current study who were able to teach subject area classes that they were licensed for felt they experienced more success as a result of their preparation, which has been further substantiated by the research of Darling–Hammond, et. al., (2005). Weiss’ (1999) research further corroborates findings that participants who had developed relationships with their students and their colleagues had higher morale and commitment to teaching, which resulted in an increased desire to stay in their schools.

There were a variety of factors that prompted teachers in this study to think about another school or career or suggest a redesign in teacher education to include induction throughout the beginning of a teacher’ career. Participants’ challenges to meet their students’ needs required ample time and energy and were further exacerbated by their insufficient preparation. Moreover, due to high turnover in the schools studied, there was
a lack of systemic continuity, which made it difficult to know what to expect or have teacher and curriculum models to guide the new teacher participants (Darling-Hammond, 1996; Johnson ET. al., 2003). Two of the teachers felt that eventually they would move to be closer to family on the mainland, which has been common for teachers who have relocated to teach in Hawai‘i; few have perceived the move as permanent (Johnson, 2009). The final consideration for changing careers was in reference to teacher salary and job status. As a young, single professional who was expecting to be able to provide for a family later in life, Jeff could not see a teacher’s salary as being sufficient, and therefore he was certain he would need to find another profession, a movement that has been highlighted in previous research (PEN, 2005).

**Implications for Practice**

As a result of the four major findings related to the research questions for this study, the following conclusions identify the needs of new teachers in the Ali‘i and Nalu Complex. Although these teachers began teaching with diverse backgrounds, teacher preparation and career goals, they had much in common that would likely impact the effectiveness and retention of new teachers. By understanding these teachers’ experiences, administrators, mentors, universities and policy-makers and can glean ideas about how to further improve support for new teachers through mentoring and induction programs. The support that new teachers received indicated that induction and mentoring were at a developing level in the complex. There was evidence of alignment to best practices in the *Induction, Mentoring and Highly Qualified Plan* (HIDOE, 2008); the study also showed, however, areas of need.
Policy makers

Policy that guarantees new teachers in all of Hawai‘i’s public schools will begin their career with a mentoring and induction program would benefit new teachers and students across the state. A comprehensive induction policy (Ingersol & Smith, 2004) would direct state and school efforts towards implementation of effective practices. A policy that harnesses all of the current programs and helps to consolidate resources would be cost saving and streamline implementation.

A policy to mandate comprehensive induction and mentoring should include school level orientation, and ongoing professional development in both cultural support and instructional best practices (Caskey & Anfara, 2007; Haycock & Ames, 2000; Hobson et. al., 2009) that support teachers and address the factors that influence their development (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). Furthermore, the policy should allow for teachers to have time and resources to engage in collegial learning and educative mentoring that is embedded into the teachers’ workday. New teachers would further benefit from programs that include observing instruction, analyzing student learning and debriefing instruction on a regular basis.

In addition to systems that support the induction of new teachers to improve retention and effectiveness, efforts to empower these educators would further impact retention (Hirsch, 2006; Hirsch & Emerick, 2007). Some examples include reconfiguring teacher leader positions such as coaches and mentors to include professional licensing as another avenue that teachers may pursue. Another option is to create hybrid roles that allow for teachers to be in the classroom part time and engage in leadership roles in the
other half their work-day. Redefining the roles of teachers as leaders where the work is job embedded rather than additional responsibilities that lead to overload and burn out (Hirsch, 2006; Hirsch & Emerick, 2007) would likely increase empowerment and retention of teachers. These roles would allow teachers opportunities for upward mobility and continuous learning that they desired to stay in their current jobs.

**Universities**

The current teacher preparation programs that exist for beginning teacher candidates in Hawai‘i are either elementary or secondary preparation programs, which leaves the majority of teachers in the middle grades ill-prepared to meet the diverse need of young adolescents. There is a need in the state of Hawai‘i for a program that prepares teachers specifically to work with middle level students (NFAMGE, 2002; Flowers, Mertens, & Mulhall, 2002). Universities should create a pre-service program to effectively prepare teachers of young adolescents and serve as a model of practices that are most effective for this specific demographic. In addition, the university programs need to continue the work of preparing teachers for the realities of the classrooms they will be teaching in, which includes student teaching in underperforming schools across the islands. Some of these partnerships have already begun but there are opportunities for developing these collaborations to model and promote best practices consistently throughout Hawai‘i’s schools.

It is important for pre-service teachers to have more experiences where they can learn from highly effective classroom teachers. Such classrooms would likely require collaboration between university professors and HIDOE teachers and administrators.
With these partnerships, it is necessary to create model classrooms where teachers can observe the application of the theoretical concepts that they are learning about in their methodology courses (Bubb et al, 2002; PEN, 2005; Wong, 2003). Experiences that range from observations, team teaching and teaching classes independently in exemplary classes would set up new teachers for success. These experiences will help to develop teaching candidates’ knowledge and skills in order to impact effectiveness and retention.

Furthermore, to capitalize on the partnerships, it would behoove universities to garner the experiences of exemplary classroom teachers and have them teach courses for the pre-service teachers and strengthen reciprocity between the institutions.

Finally, the university should continue to empower teachers to utilize culturally relevant, best practices that promote equity with a deep understanding of the realities of the classroom teacher and their expectations at the school level. Preparing novices with practical tools and solutions to combat the struggles they will likely encounter as beginning teachers due to NCLB and the intensification of the teachers’ role (Apple, 1986) would empower teachers to take a stand against what they believe is best for students. Teachers need support in making the link between their knowledge about teaching and implementing that knowledge in the classroom (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999). The results of TFA teachers’ experiences with their university mentors, indicate the utilizing university professors as mentors would be an ideal bridge for new teachers in the beginning of their career. University professors who have the theoretical knowledge base as well as the pedagogical knowledge would be ideal to continue to support teachers at the beginning of their career. A partnership between the university and the schools or
districts could create high quality mentoring programs, keep universities in touch with
current issues in the public schools, and help teachers implement the best practices that
they learned in their preparation programs.

**School Level Administrators**

One major recommendation is to create time for teachers of the same subject to
continuously plan, analyze and reflect on student learning. This continuous cycle will
support new teachers’ developing understanding of the curriculum and how to teach it at
a rigorous and effective level (Joyce & Showers, 2002; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty,
2005).

Administrators must also establish norms for how new teachers get inducted in
the school. These norms should include educative mentoring for each new teacher that
are separate from existing school wide curriculum coaching practices, support systems
and specific professional development for new teachers. Observing beginning teachers,
needs to be a priority of administrators in order to understand their needs. New teachers
should be expected to show growth in their teaching and be supported by structures that
include in-depth conversations, reflection, and analysis of their teaching and learning.

New teachers’ needs are varied and do not always align with school wide goals.
Principals need to be deliberate about professional development and meeting time. New
teachers may not always benefit from school wide professional development or meeting
time and would be better served by small focused sessions that can help them to
understand the basics of what they are supposed to do. It is beneficial for administrators
to hold meetings for new teachers to prepare them for upcoming events such as report
cards, parent-teacher conferences and protocols, including safety policies and discipline procedures, to better enable them to meet the expectations placed on them (Hobson, Ashby, Malderez, & Tomlinson, 2009).

Administrators need to select mentors who are well suited for the role. Mentors should be good observers and coaches. They should have a genuine love of learning and want to help new teachers to be successful. Ideally, mentors should be experienced in the same content and grade level to provide valuable support for the new teachers (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). Furthermore, mentors need to be prepared for their role and provided appropriate professional development to learn about best practices. Administrators must also provide resources including time, money or professional development credit to enable mentors and teachers to make the work a priority and hold everyone accountable for doing so.

**Mentors**

New teachers need a confidante and someone they can rely on in a mentor. They also need someone to help them learn how to be an effective teacher with the specific demographics they are teaching. In addition to curriculum, instruction and procedural issues, cultural mentors are important to help teachers understand the broader context and environmental factors that impact the teachers’ effectiveness in the classroom (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). Mentors may need to vary their role depending on the circumstance or be able to direct teachers to more appropriately suited colleagues to address their needs.

In order to develop a sense of trust, the mentor should be reliable and demonstrate
that they are an effective practitioner as well as mentor (Everston & Smithey, 2000; Hobson et. al., 2009; Moir, 2005). Informal experiences are also important for building relationships but the mentoring partnership must go beyond buddy mentoring and consist of educative mentoring that hones in on the best practices of teaching. Effective mentors meet with teachers to discuss the new teacher’s practice on regular basis rather than waiting for teachers to express a need (Kardos, 2004; Portner, 2002). In addition, new teachers should set goals based on teacher standards and follow up on them throughout the year. Effective mentors can help to facilitate the goal setting process to assist teachers with what they want to improve upon. Furthermore, providing opportunities for the mentee to observe other experienced teachers is an excellent form of professional development and can be highly effective in helping teachers form their vision of how to teach. Finally, mentors can impact beginning teachers by observing them as they teach and giving concrete, objective feedback about their classroom instruction. After observations, mentors should debrief and discuss what happened followed by a plan for next steps.

Mentors should approach their role as a learning experience and be open to what there is to gain from mentoring new teachers. Mentors must also continue to learn and utilize strategies that promote teacher growth. It is important for mentors to seek out professional development and support networks to improve in their work with new teachers and stay abreast of current best practices.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

As a result of this research, there are many directions for further examination of
the support that new teachers receive. This research was focused purposefully in the Ali‘i and Nalu complex because of the high turnover and high percentage of new teachers who enter these schools yearly. To further understand the needs of new teachers it is necessary to fully understand the existing patterns, professional development and the structures of how they are inducted into their schools. It would be worthwhile to interview mentors and administrators as well as observe the professional learning structures within the schools. By expanding the data collection to include observations of new teachers, mentoring sessions and professional learning communities, one could further understand the context in which teachers are inducted.

A larger, randomized sample of beginning teachers could be studied to gain a broader perspective of the support that exists in the Ali‘i and Nalu schools and could be further expanded to other complex areas across the state. It would be useful to determine similarities and differences in the needs across the state. To further expand this research it would be worthwhile to examine the teachers’ perceptions of support and compare them to new teachers’ student achievement as well as new teachers’ retention in their schools or the profession. It is important to explore the support that teachers receive and its impact on student achievement and retention as well.

**Limitations of the Study**

The limitations of this research are similar to most case study approaches; although this research allowed for in-depth understanding of a case, the findings are not to be generalized because of the small sample of participants (Stake, 2000). The research is also not indicative of all Ali‘i and Nalu schools. It only focused on the secondary
schools in the complex area and on teachers of young adolescents. Moreover, due to the nature of perceptions, experiences are influenced by many factors outside of the school structures and the support provided, so these must also be taken into consideration. Furthermore, the teachers were not formally observed for this study and data were solely based on teachers’ perceptions through interviews at three times throughout the year. Perceptions are not fixed and can easily be influenced by circumstances (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007); data gathered from the interviews with teachers were a factor of the timing and emotional state of the participants. However, the perceptions were still indicative of teachers’ first year experiences. The ups and downs that exist in the teachers’ first year include both personal and professional factors. These perceptions are an important aspect of determining the effectiveness of the existing supports systems for beginning teachers.

Another factor that could be seen as a limitation is that in addition to being the researcher, I was also a mentor in the complex area who worked with the school level mentors. As I was not the primary mentor of any of the teachers being studied, I did have contact with them and had developed a relationship. Due to the familiarity, the participants were forthright about the support that existed in the schools and the district from the beginning. The existing relationship facilitated an open and honest conversation, which was instrumental in the data collection. However, it was important that I continually checked my analysis and ensured that findings documented their perceptions of what existed, not necessarily what I believed to be true as a mentor or an outsider from the district office (Grbich, 2007; Patton, 2002).
Summary of the Study

This qualitative case study explored the perceptions of support for new teachers. The teachers who were the focus of this study began their careers as teachers of young adolescents in low performing, secondary schools with low socioeconomic status and histories of high teacher turnover. The theoretical framework proposed that teachers’ experiences affect their development, as does the explicit teacher knowledge gained in preparation for the profession. Furthermore, as teachers begin their careers, the collaborative systems that exist impact the level of professional learning that takes place. According to the five teachers who participated in this study, school-wide systems as well as support for the new teachers’ individualized needs are necessary to effectively induct new teachers.

Although experiences varied by individual context and prior preparation for teaching, the teachers’ perceptions created a broad picture of the support that existed for the five participants. The conclusions drawn from this study are that teachers need a system of support. Induction and mentoring should be mandatory and include educative mentoring (Hirsch, et al., 2009). Structures that facilitate collegial learning, collaborative planning time with colleagues of the same content are highly beneficial for new teachers (Joyce & Showers, 2002; Marzano et. al., 2005). Finally, administrators should set high expectations for their beginning teachers and mentors and hold them accountable for their professional growth and student achievement (Cotton, 2003; Joyce & Showers, 2002; Reeves, 2004).
Appendix A: Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Beginning of the year (Anticipation/Survival Phase):

- How did you decide to become a teacher?
- How did you feel as a new teacher on campus?
- What contributed to you wanting to become a teacher?
- How did you end up teaching your subject, grade?
- Tell me about how you ended up teaching in Hawai’i?
- How prepared do you feel to teach your grade, subject?
- What were your first impressions of your school?
- What were some of your expectations of your first year of teaching?
- What were some of your fears?
- How long do you see yourself teaching? Why?
- What have been some of the highlights of teaching so far?
- What are some frustrations that you have experienced?
- What types of professional development activities have you been involved in as a new teacher?
- What support systems exist for you?
- What type of support do you wish you would have had starting the year?
- How effective do you think you are with your students?
- How confident do you feel as a teacher?
- Did you feel like you were successful in having your students learn?
Middle of the year (Disillusionment):

- How confident do you feel teaching your grade, subject? What has contributed to this?
- What support systems exist for you?
- What have been some of the highlights of teaching so far?
- What are some frustrations that you have experienced?
- What types of professional development activities have you been involved in as a new teacher?
- What support do you wish you had?
- How long do you see yourself teaching? Why?
- How effective do you think you are with your students?
- How confident do you feel as a teacher?
- Did you feel like you were successful in having your students learn?

End of the year (Rejuvenation/ Reflection):

- How confident do you feel teaching your grade, subject? What has contributed to this?
- What support systems exist for you?
- What have been some of the highlights of teaching so far?
- What are some frustrations that you have experienced?
- What types of professional development activities have you been involved

in as a new teacher?

- What support do you wish you had?
- How long do you see yourself teaching? Why?
- How effective you think you are with your students?
- How confident do you feel as a teacher?
- Did your first year match your expectations?
- How are you feeling about teaching next year?
- Do you plan on coming back next year?
- Did you feel like you were successful in having your students learn?
Appendix B: New Teacher Survey

1. Years teaching in Hawaii Department of Education (HIDOE)

2. Total years teaching

3. Have you moved to Hawaii in the last 2 years?

4. What is the current status of your Hawaii teaching license?

5. What is your current teaching assignment?

6. Are you assigned to the grade level and subject area for which you were trained?

7. If teaching Special Education, are you assigned to the grade level and area of disability for which you were trained?

8. Do you plan to remain in the Hawaii DOE next year? If no, check one main reason for leaving.

9. My Mentor is:
   - Full Release
   - Part-time Mentor
   - School-based Mentor, no release time
   - School-based Mentor, 1 or more period/class release time
   - Don't Know

10. Length of time working with mentor
    - No Mentor
    - <4 months
    - 4-6 months
    - 7-10 months
    - 10-12 months
    - 13-18 months
    - 19-24 months
    - >2 years

11. Average monthly contact time with mentor over the course of this school year
    - <1 x per month
    - 1 x
    - 2 x
    - 3 x
    - 4 x or more
12. Average amount of time my mentor spends with me per session

- No mentor
- <15 minutes
- 15 to 30 minutes
- 31 to 60 minutes
- 1 hour
- 1.5 hours
- 2 hours
- >2 hours

13. My mentor helps me differentiate instruction and provide accommodation to meet diverse learners/needs:

- A great deal
- Quite a bit
- Some
- Hardly
- Not at all
- Does not apply
- Don't know

14. My mentor provides me with data/feedback following classroom observations

- A great deal
- Quite a bit
- Some
- Hardly
- Not at all
- Does not apply
- Don't know

15. My mentor provides me with resources and materials

- A great deal
- Quite a bit
- Some
- Hardly
- Not at all
- Does not apply
- Don't know

16. My mentor assists me in developing standards-based lesson plans assists me in analyzing student work and developing student assessments
• A great deal
• Quite a bit
• Some
• Hardly
• Not at all
• Does not apply
• Don't know

17. My mentor helps me develop a positive learning environment and strategies for managing student behavior
• A great deal
• Quite a bit
• Some
• Hardly
• Not at all
• Does not apply
• Don't know

18. My mentor assists me in my teaching practices
• A great deal
• Quite a bit
• Some
• Hardly
• Not at all
• Does not apply
• Don't know

19. My mentor helps me to address federal law (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, IDEA) for special needs students
• A great deal
• Quite a bit
• Some
• Hardly
• Not at all
• Does not apply
• Don't know

20. My mentor helps me handle job stress and provides emotional support
• A great deal
• Quite a bit
• Some
• Hardly
21. My mentor assists me in setting professional goals, reflecting on practices, and planning next steps
   • A great deal
   • Quite a bit
   • Some
   • Hardly
   • Not at all
   • Does not apply
   • Don't know

22. My mentor assists me with making progress towards Hawaii licensure and/or Highly Qualified (HQ) status
   • A great deal
   • Quite a bit
   • Some
   • Hardly
   • Not at all
   • Does not apply
   • Don't know

23. My mentor helps me to prepare for the PEP-T evaluation
   • A great deal
   • Quite a bit
   • Some
   • Hardly
   • Not at all
   • Does not apply
   • Don't know

24. I have adequate resources (technology and support personnel) to work with students with special needs.
   • Strongly agree
   • Agree
   • Disagree
   • Strongly disagree
   • Does not apply
25. I feel I have adequate knowledge about working with students with special needs.
   - A great deal
   - Quite a bit
   - Some
   - Hardly
   - Not at all
   - Does not apply
   - Don't know

26. I have adequate planning time or opportunity to meet and collaborate with colleagues
   - A great deal
   - Quite a bit
   - Some
   - Hardly
   - Not at all
   - Does not apply
   - Don't know

27. My administrator has observed my teaching practice
   - A great deal
   - Quite a bit
   - Some
   - Hardly
   - Not at all
   - Does not apply
   - Don't know

28. My administrator has provided supportive feedback to help me improve my teaching practices
   - A great deal
   - Quite a bit
   - Some
   - Hardly
   - Not at all
   - Does not apply
   - Don't know

29. My School has provided adequate orientation to school policies and procedures
   - A great deal
• Quite a bit
• Some
• Hardly
• Not at all
• Does not apply
• Don't know

30. My administrator has provided adequate support in dealing with highly challenging student behaviors and crisis situations.
   • A great deal
   • Quite a bit
   • Some
   • Hardly
   • Not at all
   • Does not apply
   • Don't know

31. Overall my mentor meets my needs
   • Strongly agree
   • Agree
   • Disagree
   • Strongly disagree
   • Does not apply

32. Overall my work with my mentor has helped me feel effective in my teaching.
   • Strongly agree
   • Agree
   • Disagree
   • Strongly disagree
   • Does not apply

33. Overall my mentor's support has contributed to my decision to remain in the teaching profession.
   • Strongly agree
   • Agree
   • Disagree
   • Strongly disagree
   • Does not apply
34. Overall I am satisfied with the mentor support program for the new teachers
   • Strongly agree
   • Agree
   • Disagree
   • Strongly disagree
   • Does not apply

35. What were the most beneficial aspects of the new teacher/mentor support program?

36. What recommendations do you have regarding the new teacher/mentor support program?

37. Enter any additional comments
Appendix C: Consent Form For New Teachers

IRB No. ED0112

Examining New Teachers’ Perspectives: A Qualitative Case Study

Dear

You are invited to participate in the study on the experiences of new teachers. This study is a qualitative case study. The purpose of this study is to explore new teachers’ perspectives on the support that they receive in their first year of teaching. It is hoped that this study will add to the research literature in the domain of new teacher induction and improve the retention of highly effective teachers in the schools. You are invited because your experiences and perspectives can provide the first-hand data, which are the fundamental building blocks of this study. In this study you will be interviewed three times during the school year. The data collected from you will be analyzed qualitatively and then provide insight into the support you receive. The findings will illuminate the needs for new teacher induction. Your participation and contribution to this study is highly appreciated.

The duration of this study will take place throughout the 2009-10 school-year. The interviews will be solely for research, and all participants will remain anonymous. The information you provide is confidential, and all the names of the participants in data will be coded in pseudonyms. All interviews will be recorded and transcribed to ensure accuracy. Additionally, the participants will be able to review the transcripts to verify accuracy. The researcher in this study is Katie Martin, a doctoral student in College of Education at University of Hawai’i, Manoa. The research advisor is Dr. Paul D. Deering
in the College of Education. The contacts of the research-related persons are provided below.

Your participation in this study is highly valued and voluntary. You may withdraw your participation any time during the process of this study by notifying the researcher.

Your signature on this form will confirm that you, having read and understood the information presented, decide to participate and contribute in this study. Thank you very much. If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may call the UH Committee on Human Studies at 956-5007, or write to 2540 Maile Way, 253, Honolulu, HI 96822 (email: uhirb@Hawai‘i.edu)."

Name of Participant______________________

Signature of Participant_____________________      Date____________________

Researcher Contact:

Katie Martin

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Waianae, Hawai‘i 96792                       Email: ktmartin06@yahoo.com
Appendix D: Consent Form for Principals

IRB No. ED0112

Examining New Teachers’ Perspectives: A Qualitative Case Study

Dear

You are invited to participate in the study on the experiences of new teachers. This study is a qualitative case study. The purpose of this study is to explore new teachers’ perspectives of the support that they receive in their first year of teaching. It is hoped that this study will add to the research literature in the domain of new teacher induction and improve the retention of highly effective teachers. Your school has been selected because of your involvement in the new teacher program and the availability of secondary new teachers. Your teachers’ experiences and perspectives are the first hand data, which are the fundamental building blocks of this study. In this study your teachers will be interviewed three times throughout the year. The data collected from them will be analyzed qualitatively and then provide insight into the support you receive. The findings will illuminate the needs for new teacher induction. Your participation and contribution to this study is highly appreciated.

The duration of this study will take place throughout the 09-10 school-year. The interviews will be solely for research and all participants will remain anonymous. The information you provide is confidential, and all the names of the participants in data will be coded in pseudonyms. All interviews will be recorded and transcribed to ensure accuracy. Additionally, the participants will be able to review the transcripts to verify accuracy. The researcher in this study is Katie Martin, a doctoral student in College of
Education at University of Hawai‘i, Manoa. The research advisor is Dr. Paul D. Deering in College of Education. The contacts of the research-related persons are provided below.

Your participation in this study is highly valued and voluntary. You may withdraw your participation any time during the process of this study by notifying the researcher.

Your signature on this form will confirm that you, having read and understood the information presented, decide to participate and contribute in this study. Thank you very much. If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may call the UH Committee on Human Studies at 956-5007, or write to 2540 Maile Way, 253, Honolulu, HI 96822 (email: uhirb@Hawai‘i.edu).

Name of Participant____________________________

Signature of Participant_________________________    Date____________________

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