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Preservice Teacher Mentoring as Development for Teacher Instructional Leadership

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Preservice Teacher Mentoring as Development for Teacher Instructional Leadership

by

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Abstract

Most of the scholarly literature concerning teacher preparation focuses on preservice teachers, which overlooks the role and perceptions of cooperating teachers. This study examined the preservice teacher mentoring experience as professional development for the cooperating teacher, specifically as a form of engaging in teacher instructional leadership. A qualitative research approach was used to examine which aspects of professional growth cooperating teachers feel are influenced through their cooperating teacher activities.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate the professional development benefits of serving as a cooperating teacher from the perspective of cooperating teachers. It specifically investigated cooperating teachers' views of teacher instructional leadership and how leadership skills are facilitated through the mentorship of preservice teachers.

This study contributes to a small body of literature regarding cooperating teachers and their professional development. Results suggest that serving as cooperating teachers can have a profound impact on teachers' professional growth and instructional leadership capacity. Three main categories developed as areas in which positive growth occurred for cooperating teachers. They are: 1) Personal characteristics, 2) Pedagogical skills, and 3) Knowledge. Five major themes emerged from the data collected for this study. These themes describe the ways in which the cooperating teachers felt that their professional development was affected by serving as cooperating teachers throughout all of the knowledge, skills, and attributes (KSAs) as described by Alberta Education (1997). They are: 1) Reflection, 2) Articulation of teaching practices, 3) Collaboration and shared

problem solving, 4) New ideas/strategies, 5) Meaningful conversations. Implications of

the study and recommendations for practice are offered within the discussion.

Keywords and concepts:

Cooperating teacher, mentoring, preservice teacher, teacher instructional leadership,

professional development, partner teacher, student teacher

appreciate all of the patience, care, and loving support that you have given me throughout this journey.

To all the friends that I have missed, dismissed, and pushed aside, thank you for supporting me and allowing me to complete this journey. I'm back.

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List of Symbols, Abbreviations and Nomenclature

Symbol	Definition
ATA	Alberta Teachers' Association
KSA	Knowledge, Skills, and Attributes

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Living in a knowledge-based economy requires us to learn more effectively, both as individuals and collectively (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Societal expectations and challenges for teachers and school leaders continue to evolve, creating expanding and increasingly complex roles (Adams, 2006; Bransford, Darling-Hammond, & LePage, 2005; Crocker & Dibbon, 2008; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2000; Keedy, 1999). Teachers are now required to engage 21st century learners using technological tools, innovative practices, and to create learning environments that stimulate critical thinking and collaboration, preparing learners to compete in a global society. These expectations call for improved teacher education, professional development, and collaboration time (Darling-Hammond, 2010).

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate any professional development benefits of mentoring preservice teachers from the perspective of cooperating teachers. It specifically investigated cooperating teachers' views of teacher instructional leadership and how leadership skills might be facilitated through the mentorship of preservice teachers.

In this chapter, I provide my perspective of the issue, the background to this study, the purpose of this study, the research questions, and study definitions. This is followed by an abridged version of the methodology including limitations and delimitations that have bounded this study, the significance of this study, the theoretical framework used to guide this study, and the organisation of this dissertation.

Researcher's Perspective

My interest in examining preservice teacher mentoring as a professional development activity for the development of teacher leaders stems from my own experiences as a teacher and school-based administrator. As a novice teacher, I found it relatively easy to find professional development opportunities (often in the form of workshops, courses, or professional learning networks) that matched my professional goals. Many of my professional development priorities at this early stage of my teaching career focused on creating meaningful learning activities for students, building relationships with students, and classroom management strategies. As my career continued, I became increasingly interested in pursuing other educational roles, particularly in the areas of educational technology, guidance counseling, and school leadership. My professional goals became much more specific and highly personalised. I sought professional learning opportunities that would not only equip me with the knowledge and skills needed to fulfill new job requirements, but that would also challenge me to think and learn progressively. I became frustrated with the lack of professional opportunities available to me within my own work environment and this led me to engage in further graduate studies and to eventually pursue a doctoral degree.

According to Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey of 2005 (Statistics Canada, 2008), the educator workforce is comprised of an aging population. As the baby boomer teacher generation retires, the void will be filled by a younger, less experienced cohort of educators. These new teachers will be integrated into the education system in great numbers, requiring pedagogical and emotional support, and strong professional guidance from existing teachers both prior to, and upon entering the field (Hargreaves & Fullan,

2000). Without strong leadership from practising teachers, Hargreaves and Fullan (2000) warn of possible age segregation amongst teachers within schools "where each group excludes and devalues the contributions of the other" (p. 54). Experienced teachers must find ways to meet this call for increased instructional leadership without negatively impacting their teaching, other assigned duties, and ultimately, student achievement. For example, traditional leadership development activities such as workshops and courses increase time away from the classroom, adding to the workload of already overburdened teachers. Teachers require new and different opportunities to gain and practice instructional leadership skills and competencies. Having worked as an educator and administrator for over thirteen years, I understand the many challenges integral to school leadership and am concerned with the need to develop and facilitate leadership within schools, and to provide teachers with instructional leadership opportunities. My goal is to offer teachers a strategy that strikes a much-needed balance between leadership and instruction.

Cooperating teachers are integral to our ability to provide quality public education. As a school-based administrator, I have often been responsible for the recruitment of cooperating teachers to provide field experience placements for preservice teachers completing education degrees at partnering post-secondary institutions. Year after year, I would see the same small handful of teachers volunteer for this experience. After having the opportunity to sit on the Field Experiences Curriculum Committee at one of our partnering teacher education faculties, I realized the serious need for high quality cooperating teachers.

I have been surprised to receive reluctance from many potential cooperating teachers due to a perceived lack of personal professional benefits from the experience. My own experiences as a classroom teacher, cooperating teacher, and school-based administrator have led me to believe that formal mentoring roles provide opportunities for teachers to develop instructional leadership skills. This study was designed to address the following research questions:

1. What, if any, specific knowledge, skills, and attributes do teachers develop as a result of engaging in preservice teacher mentoring activities?

2. From the perspective of the cooperating teacher, how does mentoring preservice teachers impact one's instructional leadership capacity, if at all?

One of my central roles as a school-based administrator has been to support teachers in their professional learning and growth. Gone are the days of sizeable personal professional development funds. In a time of fiscal restraints and high accountability, schools must find new and creative ways to offer quality professional learning opportunities at a lower cost to schools. It is important to increase teachers' awareness of job-embedded professional learning opportunities and of how they may assist their development. I intend to use the findings of this study to promote the development of leadership capacity within the school community and offer teachers opportunities to engage in preservice teacher mentorship as quality learning experiences. By approaching mentorship experiences as effective professional development, I hope to support and nurture a school culture that values and supports professional learning and teachers as instructional leaders.

Background to the Study

Teacher education. Teacher education provides teachers with the necessary ideas and essential understandings of teaching and learning, creating a foundation for future teacher growth and development (Bransford, Darling-Hammond, & LePage, 2005). In many professions, including education, mentoring is part of learning and developing new skills. All current Canadian teacher education programs include some form of in-school practicum whereby preservice teachers are paired with experienced school teachers to learn professional skills and strategies in a field experiences classroom (Crocker & Dibbon, 2008). Traditionally, field experiences are used to help preservice teachers to better understand the theoretical knowledge taught in teacher education programs by linking these to authentic classroom experiences. Mentoring may also help preservice teachers decide if teaching is the right career choice, start viewing themselves as teachers, and improve their skills and attitudes towards teaching (Hixon & So, 2009; McIntyre, 1983). Darling-Hammond (Scherer, 2012) suggests "this is the ideal way to make sure beginning teachers don't just survive but also become competent and effective" (p. 18). If this is true, careful consideration must be given to selecting cooperating teachers who have the professional skills and competencies we wish to impart on incoming teachers. Furthermore, it is important to develop and support quality cooperating teachers who want to be better models for aspiring teachers.

Contemporary approaches to field experiences focus on providing examples of best practices and pairing preservice teachers with master teachers who serve as role models willing to engage in shared reflective practice (Hixon & So, 2009; Posner, 2005). Darling-Hammond argues, "being in the classroom of an effective mentor teacher for a

long period of time…has a huge impact (on new teachers)" (Scherer, 2012, p. 19).

Cooperating teachers have the ability to impact schools, districts, and the teaching

profession at social, instructional, and professional levels by teaching, guiding, and

mentoring preservice teachers into the profession. Beyond imparting pedagogical skills

and instructional strategies onto incoming teachers, cooperating teachers can also help

preservice teachers to understand the changes that are needed to strengthen teaching,

learning, and the teaching profession.

 Many researchers contend that engaging in preservice teacher mentoring is also a

form of professional development for cooperating teachers (Ediger, 1994; Feiman-

Nemser, 2001). Kajs (2002) (as cited in Liliane & Colette, 2009) reported findings of

mutual professional growth by cooperating teachers and preservice teachers when they

used the identification of teaching strengths and weaknesses to improve teaching practice

and promote students' learning. While researching induction programs, Feiman-Nemser

(2001) found that mentor teachers had regular opportunities to develop their own skills as

both teachers and mentors. Ediger (1994) reasons that there is a potential for learning

from both cooperating teachers and preservice teachers due to the differences in their

teaching and learning perspectives.

 If there are so many benefits to serving as cooperating teachers, why are post-

secondary education faculties experiencing a shortage of teachers willing to serve? Many

teachers enjoy the role of cooperating teacher, and value the added responsibilities

associated with it. Still, some teachers are reluctant to participate in placements, often

viewing the role to be an additional task, requiring increased time, effort, and energy

(Koerner, 1992; Sinclair, Dowson, & Thistleton-Martin, 2006). Indeed, mentoring

preservice teachers requires cooperating teachers to dedicate time to be supportive and to provide regular, constructive feedback based on reflection, practice, and dialogue. It is often challenging for teachers to carve out the time needed to mentor preservice teachers amidst their other professional commitments.

In the first national baseline study on teacher education in Canada, Crocker and Dibbon (2008) reaffirmed the importance of field experiences and projected a long-term trend in the direction of longer practicum placements. The need for cooperating teachers is increasing. Hargreaves and Fullan (2000) advocate for mentoring models that focus on whole school improvement and provide professional development for all partners.

The Alberta teacher education context. All post-secondary teacher education programs in Alberta are required to have a field experiences component. According to the Alberta Teachers' Association (2007) (ATA)'s Teacher Education and Certification Long-Range Policy,

> 2.A.10 The field experiences component of the bachelor of education degree program must

> 1. be the equivalent of not less than 13 weeks of full-time school-based

experience,

> 2. have objectives established jointly by the universities in consultation with the profession and in accordance with provincial certification requirements, and

> 3. require selection of cooperating teachers as defined in Association policy.

Preparing preservice teachers is a collective responsibility. While post-secondary institutions are most often recognized as having responsibility for teacher education and teacher preparation, Section 62(4) of the Alberta School Act (2013) describes this

responsibility as shared between teacher education programs and school boards. This

section reads,

> 62 (4) *A board shall, on the request of an institution* that has a program of teacher
> education authorized by the Minister, enter into an agreement with the institution
> permitting those individuals enrolled in the program of teacher education and
their
> instructors to attend a classroom of a school operated by the board while the
school
> is in session *for the purpose of observing or student teaching* [emphasis added].

Once partnerships have been built between post-secondary institutions and school boards,

Section 18 (2) (c) provides that school boards may require teachers to serve as

cooperating teachers as part of their job assignment. It reads,

> 18 (2) At any time during the period of time that a teacher is under an obligation
> to the board to provide instruction or supervision or to carry out duties assigned to
> the teacher by a principal or the board, *a teacher must, at the request of the board*,
>
> (a) participate in curriculum development and field testing of new curriculum;
>
> (b) develop, field test and mark provincial achievement tests and diploma
> examinations;
>
> (c) *supervise student teachers* [emphasis added].

These sections indicate that teachers are responsible for providing mentoring services to

preservice teachers as they are directed by their board. However, there appears to be

some disagreement as to responsibility, as although the ATA (2007) requires all teacher

education programs to contain field experience practicums (as aforementioned), it does

not describe preservice teacher mentoring as a mandatory service, but rather, as a

voluntary one. Indeed, Section 2.A.17 of the Alberta Teachers' Association (2007)

(ATA)'s Teacher Education and Certification Long-Range Policy states,

> 2.A.17 Cooperating teachers' involvement in field experience programs and
> activities must be voluntary.

This discrepancy between law and professional governing body has resulted in confusion for some teachers. As evidenced later in this study, although some teachers feel compelled to mentor preservice teachers, they are unsure as to their professional obligation. Schools and their administrators, for the most part, do not present the opportunity to mentor preservice teachers as a mandatory one to potential cooperating teachers, and the ATA (2007) supports this service as a personal choice. The profession's need for cooperating teachers is increasing. As long as there are enough cooperating teachers who are willing to meet this need, school boards can continue to accept mentors on a voluntary basis. However, the law provides the power to school boards to mandate teachers to serve as cooperating teachers, fulfilling the school board's responsibilities to the teaching profession, should the need arise.

Alberta teacher certification. In Alberta, teacher certification is governed by the Department of Education. In addition to completing a government approved Bachelor of Education degree, all applicants for professional certification must declare that they are able and committed to applying the appropriate knowledge, skills, and attributes toward student learning as described by the Teaching Quality Standard (Alberta Education, 1997). The Teaching Quality Standard (Alberta Education, 1997) applies to "teacher certification, professional development, supervision and evaluation," and is "supported by descriptors of selected knowledge, skills and attributes appropriate to teachers at different stages of their careers." There are eleven knowledge, skills, and attributes (KSAs) described in the Teaching Quality Standard (Alberta Education, 1997) and ascribed to teachers who hold an Alberta Permanent Professional Certificate (see Appendix F). In addition to certification, "teachers, staffs, supervisors and evaluators

should use the descriptors to guide professional development, supervision, evaluation and remediation strategies in order that teachers can meet the Teaching Quality Standard consistently throughout their careers" (Alberta Education, 1997).

The KSAs (Alberta Education, 1997) were used in this study to offer teachers a familiar baseline from which they could discuss teaching improvement. Although now dated, the Teaching Quality Standard (Alberta Education, 1997) is, at the time of this study, the current standard from which all Alberta teachers, and preservice teachers, are assessed. Although using the Teacher Quality Standard (Alberta Education, 1997) KSAs to frame this study may have limited the type of experiences the cooperating teachers in this study described during data collection, the ATA (2013) specifies that teacher professional development "must demonstrate a relationship to the Teaching Quality Standard" (Requirements section, para. 1). This ministerial order is specific to all teachers and preservice teachers practising in Alberta, and provided the context that participants were working in at the time of this study. Teachers teaching outside of Alberta have different governing bodies and frameworks guiding their work.

Problem Statement

The development and preparation of future teachers depends, in part, on the ability of schools to provide a learning environment for preservice teacher practicums (Manitoba Education, 2011). Preservice teacher mentoring is both an opportunity and a responsibility for cooperating teachers. Unless cooperating teachers view the mentoring experience as effective professional development, it will continue to be a struggle to find placements for preservice teachers.

Historically, the supervision process has consisted of teachers acting as models for teaching activities. The focus has now shifted towards a collaborative model of learning which includes activities such as reflection and feedback, modeling, co-planning, practical experiences, and the progressive increase of preservice teachers' responsibilities in the classroom (University of Lethbridge, 2009). The experience is one of shared investigation and exploration of teaching dimensions such as the effectiveness of particular strategies with certain students, the culture of the classroom, learning styles and outcomes, and teacher-student relationships (Adams, 2006; Glickman, 1985). The ideal placement is described as one in which expert cooperating teachers share knowledge with preservice teachers in the same teaching discipline through modeling and dialogue (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Walkington, 2005). Dialogue is essential for improving communication skills, decreasing teacher isolation, and increasing collegiality (Holm, 2004; Spencer, 2007). Adams (2006) asserts that mentoring should be reciprocal, with "both mentor and protégé assuming responsibility for the teaching and learning for the other" (p. 18).

"Teachers readily admit to benefits for themselves in serving as cooperating teachers" (Ganser, 1998, p. 106). Through the process of sharing their knowledge and experiences, cooperating teachers can reaffirm their practices (Koerner, 1992). Teachers often find it challenging to keep abreast of new and current educational practices. Preservice teachers can serve as resources for cooperating teachers to garner new ideas about instruction and student management for their own teaching practice (Bowers, 1994). Since many teachers are hesitant to try new strategies without evidence of success in their own classrooms, field experiences provides an opportunity for experimentation

using preservice teachers as models (Guskey, 2002). This model of inquiry-based learning allows teachers to "use the context of their own classroom to reflect upon and systematically inquire about the learning that is taking place" (Riel & Becker, 2008, p. 400).

Despite a growing interest in teacher education as a tool for school improvement, this remains an understudied area. Most commonly, studies of field experience programs concentrate on examining developmental outcomes of preservice teachers or program evaluation, and few studies focus on the experiences of the cooperating teacher (Giebelhaus & Bowman, 2002; Sinclair, Dowson, & Thistleton-Martin, 2006). Moreover, much of the current literature on preservice teacher education focuses on elementary education and lacks a Canadian context, with most originating from the United States, Europe, and Australia (Crocker & Dibbon, 2008).

In an Australian study, Sinclair et al. (2006) found that extrinsic rewards are high motivators for teachers to serve as cooperating teachers. These include "payment, additional teaching experience or time at the present school, additional supervisor or mentor training, and improved school situations such as more time to work with preservice teachers, release from other responsibilities, or additional school support" (Sinclair et al, 2006, p. 264). However, even greater than extrinsic rewards, Sinclair et al (2006) found that the strongest draw for cooperating teachers was their motivation to assist preservice teachers in becoming better teachers. Looking beyond the classroom, an increasing number of educators extend their sense of responsibilities to the greater profession as a whole (Becker & Riel, 1999; 2008). While many of these teachers extend their professional realm to also include the training of preservice teachers, teacher

education faculties are finding it increasingly difficult to recruit enough quality cooperating teachers to meet the quantity of preservice teacher field experience placements needed each year.

Glatthorn (1995) defines teacher professional development as the growth that teachers achieve as they purposefully reflect on their teaching experiences. Many researchers include personal development aspects as well as instructional ones in their definition. Adams (2006) describes professional development as improving teaching, discipline, and knowledge while promoting interpersonal well-being. Just as preservice teachers need to be well trained with the knowledge, skills and attributes associated with expert teachers, practising teachers are required to engage in ongoing professional development. Glickman (2002) describes teachers as having "a body of knowledge, skills, and practices that must be continually tested and upgraded" (p. 4).

Professional development is a professional responsibility, yet, it is increasingly challenging for teachers to engage in meaningful learning opportunities. Instructional demands create difficulty in finding qualified substitute teachers, time away from the classroom, and limited funding. Job-embedded professional development became popular in the 1990s, bringing training opportunities on-site to schools, and incorporated into the workday. Many researchers now contend that the most effective professional development is school-based and related to the daily activities of teachers and students (Abdal-Haqq, 1996; Dufour et al, 2010; Ganser, 2000).

Preservice teacher mentoring provides tangible, shared learning experiences that cannot be achieved from conventional professional development activities such as courses or workshops (Ganser, 2006; Koerner, 1992; Spencer, 2007). It provides

opportunities for increasing pedagogical expertise and personal reflection, while allowing

for the exploration of instructional strategies (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). Considering the

potential for teacher professional growth, there appears to be a need to examine the

specific knowledge, skills and attributes in which cooperating teachers' identify

improvements and change, and to increase school-embedded opportunities for teachers to

collaborate and share best instructional practices.

Purpose

This study examined the preservice teacher mentoring experience as professional

development for the cooperating teacher, specifically as a form of engaging in teacher

instructional leadership. A qualitative research approach was used to examine which

aspects of professional growth cooperating teachers feel are influenced through their

preservice teacher mentoring activities. This study presents an Alberta educational

perspective on preservice teacher mentoring and teacher instructional leadership.

The backgrounds of teachers in this study varied in both experience and

education. Although post-secondary institutions sometimes waive requirements, as

needed, the minimum experience requirement for teachers to assume cooperating teacher

roles with all Alberta teacher education programs is three years, so novice teachers were

not included in this study. In general, some experienced teachers have had other student

services experiences in addition to their classroom experience (for example, guidance

counseling, department leadership, or administration experience) or have held other

formal leadership positions. To gain teacher certification in Alberta, teachers must have

completed a minimum of a Bachelor of Education degree that includes a government

approved teacher education program or equivalent. Some teachers have had additional

educational training including training specific to being a cooperating teacher. Training

for cooperating teachers might take the form of workshops, information sessions offered

by post-secondary institutions, or professional development courses, and graduate studies

in mentoring. This study included an examination of demographic data of the

participating teachers' past experiences in education and any prior leadership

opportunities.

The Alberta post-secondary institutions that provided preservice teachers for this

study stipulate professional qualifications for recruiting cooperating teachers. Although

teacher education programs vary by institution and therefore, have minor variances in

their requirements for cooperating teachers, the ATA's (2007) *Teacher Education and*

Certification Long-Range Policy stipulates,

> 2.A.16 Criteria for the selection of cooperating teachers for field experience
> programs should be
>
> 1. possession of a bachelor of education degree or its equivalent and a permanent
> Alberta teaching certificate;
>
> 2. three or more years of successful teaching experience;
>
> 3. ability to project a favourable image of the teaching profession;
>
> 4. ability to establish and maintain good interpersonal skills and to apply
> communication and supervisory skills effectively;
>
> 5. ability to analyze and evaluate teaching and learning skills effectively;
>
> 6. willingness to participate in meetings, consultation, seminars and other
> activities related to field experience; and
>
> 7. possession of active or associate membership in the Association.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What, if any, specific knowledge, skills, and attributes do teachers develop as a result of engaging in preservice teacher mentoring activities?

2. From the perspective of the cooperating teacher, how does mentoring preservice teachers impact one's instructional leadership capacity, if at all?

Definitions of Key Terms

Cooperating Teacher. Teacher advisor, mentor teacher, cooperating teacher, partner teacher, supervising teacher, and evaluator are all terms used to label teachers assigned to mentor preservice teachers in a field experience. Having searched through multiple sources including relevant journals, books, and E-resources such as ERIC, ProQuest, Google Scholar, and other online journals, cooperating teacher was found to be the most frequent expression used to describe the supervisory role of preservice teachers in the field experience literature. In Alberta, cooperating teachers are members of the Alberta Teachers' Association (2007) who teach in a school and who act under section 18(2)(c) of the Alberta School Act (2013) to "supervise student teachers." Supervision is commonly described as actively managing a preservice teacher's personal and professional development and self-awareness (Lofmark & Thorell-Ekstrand, 2004). The role calls for teaching, coaching, assessing, and purposefully reflecting to encourage and challenge the preservice teacher to levels of heightened understanding and knowledge (Davys & Beddoe, 2000). The cooperating teacher is the supervisor of the practicum and oversees the work of preservice teachers, observing, recording, and often evaluating. In addition, the cooperating teacher acts as a teacher educator or mentor for the preservice teacher (Clarke, 2007).

Preservice teacher. These are post-secondary students with a declared education degree route, preparing to enter the teaching profession. In the context of field experiences, the student often begins as an observer, taking on gradually increasing responsibilities in the classroom and finishes the teacher education experience as a competent novice teacher. For the purposes of this study, preservice teachers only included students who were in their final year of their education degree and had successfully completed a minimum of two field experiences.

Professional Development. As defined by the Alberta Teachers' Association (2010), these are "practices and activities teachers do individually or collectively to enrich themselves professionally. These activities provide opportunities for growth in knowledge, skills and attributes leading to improved practice." Recent literature has shown a trend in expanding professional development to include activities which promote interpersonal well-being in addition to the traditional focus on improving teaching, discipline and knowledge (Adams, 2006; Saroyan, 1996). This study accepted Saroyan's (1996) definition of teacher professional development that includes an increase in pedagogical knowledge supported by personal reflection to encourage risk-taking within the classroom in an effort to improve overall teaching effectiveness.

Teacher Instructional Leadership. Historically, responsibilities given to teachers have been limited to those directly related to the classroom. Due to the increasing demands of school administration, schools are increasingly favouring a collaborative management approach in which teachers are more involved in decision-making with respect to achieving specific instructional goals (Elmore, 2000). This study has used Riel and Becker's definition of teacher leadership, which states, "teacher leadership is more

precisely behaviour reflecting a high level of engagement with the profession of teaching and with other teachers" (2008, p. 398). When teachers take on tasks and duties that demonstrate expert knowledge of learning and teaching processes with increased responsibility, they are engaged in teacher instructional leadership.

Methodology

A qualitative approach was chosen for this study to yield data that provided depth and detail, aiding in the understanding of the perspectives of cooperating teachers on the research questions. The study was based on data gathered from document review, surveys, a focus group interview, individual interviews, and follow-up surveys. Using a purposive cluster sampling method, the participants consisted of thirteen teachers who have had a minimum of one experience as a cooperating teacher at the high school level with second year preservice teachers within the last two years. Preservice teachers in Alberta teacher education programs engage in three or four field experiences. This study focused on the final field experience, which occurs in the final year (most often year two) of the preservice teacher's program. During this field experience preservice teachers work closely with one or two cooperating teachers. The sample of teachers was selected from those currently working for a south central Alberta school board encompassing both rural and urban high schools. For the purposes of this study, high school level included grades 9-12. A detailed explanation of the procedure used in identifying participants is included in Chapter 3.

Responses from the conducted surveys, interviews, and focus group session were examined, compared, conceptualized and categorized by data. Data was analyzed using an inductive approach that identified patterns in the data through the coding of themes

and categories (Patton, 2002).

Significance of Study

Unaddressed questions in the research literature. While preservice teacher mentoring is acknowledged as a professional development activity, the limited research available does not articulate the ways in which cooperating teachers change their beliefs or practice as a result of their experience in this role. Additional research is required to determine if benefits claimed can be specifically linked to professional growth in the area of teacher instructional leadership.

It is hoped that this study has added to the body of knowledge in the growing field of preservice teacher mentoring and teacher instructional leadership. As previously noted, much of the current literature on preservice teacher education focuses on elementary education and lacks a Canadian context, with most originating from the United States, Europe, and Australia (Crocker & Dibbon, 2008). Since teacher development is an essential element of improving schools, studying how preservice teacher mentoring creates professional growth can add to a greater understanding of the school improvement process (Ganser, 1997; Landt, 2002).

Teacher professional development needs. As already discussed, professional development is a professional responsibility, yet, it is increasingly challenging for teachers to engage in meaningful learning opportunities due to limited time, funding, and a focus on school priorities. Teachers are increasingly looking at inquiry-based learning approaches, job-embedded opportunities, and collaborative practices to inform their own practice and learning. Tannehill (1989) argues that gaining a more nuanced and complex understanding of the influence of field experiences on cooperating teachers is essential to

understanding the role they play in training new generations of teachers and in becoming instructional leaders in their schools. Because cooperating teachers are usually experienced teachers, they are more likely to have greater influence on school organizations than novices. Developing teacher instructional leaders is important as the task placed on schools to improve in quality, delivery, and student achievement has significantly increased, becoming too complex for the work of administrators alone (Kennedy, Deuel, Nelson, & Slavik, 2011; Lambert, 1998). Preservice teacher mentorship is an opportunity afforded to many teachers multiple times per year. By examining how preservice teacher mentoring can be used to develop teacher instructional leadership skills, value can be given to the role that it plays as a professional development experience for the creation of future teacher-leaders.

Importance for teacher education and the teaching profession. As Cornell (2003) noted, there are challenges with reluctant participants, compensation, and teachers' levels of commitment to the preservice teacher mentoring experience. Many teachers feel stretched thin and overburdened. In addition to their regular classroom work, a large number of secondary teachers are also involved in coaching, leading, and planning extra-curricular sports and activities for students outside of the teaching timetable. Many teacher education faculties are finding particular difficulty in attracting and recruiting secondary level teachers to the cooperating teacher role and an increasing number of secondary route preservice teachers are being placed with primary level teachers to complete their field experiences. A number of problems result from this situation. First, primary school teachers are burdened with preparing preservice teachers for learning environments that are vastly different from their own. While primary teachers teach a

span of subjects and are known as generalists, secondary teachers are often referred to as curriculum or subject area specialists. In terms of pedagogy, primary grades are often more guided and differentiated, while secondary students are often expected to be more uniform in nature and self-directed, with an increase in student-driven initiatives. Class schedules and school structures also differ, with increased instructional hours at the secondary level. Student activities vary greatly from primary to secondary levels, usually with an emphasis on virtues, assemblies, and spirit days in the lower levels, and sports and activity clubs at the higher grades. Second, lack of adequate preparation may also produce long-term effects that potentially include frustrated teachers, increased teacher turnover and attrition, and eventually, lack of teaching quality and lower student achievement.

This research recognized the growing need for quality cooperating teachers at all levels and hoped to affect the ability of schools and universities to attract, recruit, and retain cooperating teachers capable of providing teacher instructional leadership. This study has ongoing implications in terms of the preparation of teachers for future generations. It is anticipated that the following stakeholders may find interest in and/or benefit from this research:

1. Teachers and school administration

2. Field experiences coordinators and other preservice teacher program leaders

3. Preservice teachers

4. Teacher professional development coordinators such as previous AISI (Alberta Initiative for School Improvement) facilitators, learning specialists, and school district human resource departments

5. Post-secondary institutions and their scholarly communities

6. Professional associations such as the ATA (The Alberta Teachers Association)
   and CASS (College of Alberta School Superintendents)

7. Educational authorities such as the Ministry of Education

Theoretical Framework

Social constructivism, as presented by Bandura (1986) and Vygotsky (1978) is the theoretical framework that guided this study. It is important to describe the wider context of constructivist thought of which social constructivism is a development and subset. Constructivists assume that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work, and develop subjective meanings of their experiences (Bandura, 1986). These meanings are formed and constantly adjusted according to our social and historical interactions, encounters, and experiences with people, things, and objects (Bandura, 1986). Our understanding of the world is thus personal and unique, and is based upon what we observe or experience in our environment. The constructivist approach focuses on individuals' meanings of events that are contextualized, therefore allowing participants to describe their stories about how they make meaning from experiences.

As described by Jean Piaget (1950), the learning process occurs when an individual creates new understandings of the world by assimilating new information into his or her existing mental schema. Through this systematic process of adding, deleting, and changing knowledge, an integration of new information and experiences are blended with existing ideas and understandings, creating movement in perception and paradigm. Both Bandura (1986) and Vygotsky (1978) describe the learning process as an internalisation of exchanges between individuals - taking place within a given social

context or environment. This internalisation occurs through the process of sharing and comparing new learning and understandings with others. Social constructivism posits that individuals' realities are thus created, not only by prior personal experiences, but also through social interactions with others (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007).

Social constructivism is a prominent learning theory and often guides pedagogical practice in the 21st century classroom (Fosnot, 2005). Indeed, school curriculum has traditionally been designed to scaffold and build upon previous knowledge and experiences at each level. Adult learners, compared to children, have a greater depth of experiences to draw from as they construct new understandings. Social constructivism encourages personal responsibility for learning. In constructivist models, teachers actively participate in their own learning through assigned duties and tasks such as teaching, assessment, observation, and reflection (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; King & Newmann, 2000). Reinforcing the notion of learning within a social environment, Palmer (1999) and Duffy (1996) suggest that professional growth and development initiatives that are collegial, collaborative and team-oriented are more likely to improve teaching effectiveness.

Using a social constructivist lens in the design of this study allowed for an examination of how teacher leadership knowledge, skills, and attributes might be influenced through the interactions between preservice teacher and cooperating teacher during the mentoring process. In a field experience setting, an expert (cooperating teacher) and a novice (preservice teacher) work together within an environment, most often a shared classroom. As preservice teachers learn to teach, their experiences in the learning environment may increase their understanding of teaching and of their role as a

teacher, moving them beyond the foundational stages of teacher professionalism. "The role of the expert is to assist the novice to move through the 'zone of proximal development' (Vygotsky, 1978) by providing effective and appropriate feedback and modelling" (Giebelhaus & Bowman, 2002, p. 249). Although his theory initially explained the learning and development of children, Vygotsky (1978) later expanded his definition of the "zone of proximal development" to be applied to adults as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p. 86). In some instances, the cooperating teacher and the preservice teacher may reverse roles, with the preservice teacher becoming the expert, and the cooperating teacher, the novice. When preservice teachers bring new ideas or areas of expertise (such as technology, or current research on instructional practices) into the classroom, the cooperating teacher may increase his or her understanding of teaching. Vygotsky (1978) emphasised the importance of dialogue in creating deeper understandings. In field experiences, the cooperating teacher and preservice teacher share ideas about the art of teaching, from preparation to practice. Constructivist learning theory assumes that learners bring experience and understanding with them to the learning arena and that new understandings are created through the integration of new knowledge to existing schemas (Vygotsky, 1978). Cooperating teachers bring a wealth of knowledge and experience about teaching to the field experience environment.

According to Vygotsky (1978), optimal learning occurs in environments that provide opportunities for all learners to participate in thoughtful reflective discourse. The

social interaction between the cooperating teacher and the preservice teacher may take several forms, including reflecting, discussing, and mentoring. Each of these interactions simultaneously influences and is being influenced by the environment, behaviours, and personal factors. As collaborators internalise the influences and changes according to their own understandings, their knowledge, skills, and attitudes are affected, creating the potential for personal growth. Patton (2002) recommends a constructivist approach whenever research aims to discover perceptions, opinions, and personal beliefs. In the social constructivist perspective, the researcher's objective is to make meaning of others' personal understandings of specific experiences (Fosnot, 2005). Since each cooperating teacher brings unique experiences and insights to his or her professional development experience, a social constructivist lens was chosen for this study.

Limitations and Delimitations

The following limitations and delimitations are acknowledged in this study:

Sample. As the study participants all live and work in the same geographical location, this limits the extent to which the findings are generalizable. Also, the process engaged in by the participants may be unique to their view of themselves in their understanding of teaching, learning, leadership, and professional development. Since the participants in this study voluntarily participated, they may not be characteristic of non-volunteers.

The study sample was purposefully delimited to secondary school teachers. The rationale for choosing secondary level teachers for this study was the departmentalized nature of high school curricula. With multiple departments, grade levels, and subject specific areas, high schools lend themselves to certain structures of teacher instructional leadership. Furthermore, the literature on professional development for secondary school

teachers is sparse in the area of preservice teacher mentoring. In addition, teacher

education faculties are having increasing difficulties in finding willing cooperating

teachers at the secondary level. This necessary delimitation does not allow any findings

to be generalized to teachers at the primary and middle school levels, whose preservice

teacher mentoring experiences may be vastly different.

The sample was further delimited to those cooperating teachers who have

mentored second year education students. During the second year of their education

program, Alberta education faculty students complete an intensive field experience

(sometimes one semester in length) in a school to engage in reflection, practical

application and integration through discussion with instructors and colleagues. This

delimitation served two purposes. First, there is a greater chance for cooperating teachers

to experience personal or professional growth over a longer period of time. Second year

preservice teachers complete a field experience that is much greater in length than first

year preservice teachers. Second, because the experiences of having first year versus

second year preservice teachers are remarkably different for cooperating teachers and the

role that they play, it was necessary to create a more homogenous group of participants to

obtain sought data.

Number of participants. An appropriate group size for a focus group is typically

described as between five and twelve participants (Bryman, 2008; Lindlof & Taylor,

2002; Keyton, 2006). The greatest difficulty that was encountered during the course of

this study was in securing an adequate number of participants for the focus group. While

thirteen teachers participated in this study, only ten were present for the focus group

session. Low participant rates can be attributed to low numbers of prospects (ie. drawing

teachers from only one school division), last minute cancellations, and the busy time of the school year for teachers at the time of data collection.

Location. As this study included only one school division and was limited to Alberta post-secondary education programs, the findings cannot be generalized to other populations. The results from this study may provide valuable information for the participating schools, school division, and post-secondary institutions, but may be limited in its usefulness to other settings.

Timeline. Scheduling a focus group date that suited all participants was challenging. Distances between schools varied and securing a location for the study that was convenient for all participants was also problematic. This limited the number of participants who were able to contribute to the study. Solicitation for this study occurred over a period of one month, and continued until a minimum of ten eligible teachers had agreed to participate.

Summary and Organisation of the Study

This dissertation is organised into five chapters. Chapter One provided a statement of the problem and described the contextual background for the study. An abbreviated view of the proposed qualitative methods study was presented with a discussion of the significance of the study and theoretical framework. Chapter Two examines the research literature related to teacher instructional leadership, adult learning, and teacher professional development. Chapter Three focuses on the methodology that this study utilized to examine the preservice teacher mentoring experience as professional development for the cooperating teacher, specifically as a form of engaging in teacher instructional leadership. Chapter Four analyses the information obtained in Chapter

Three and presents the findings. Chapter Five presents implications of the study and

offers recommendations for future consideration. It is hoped that this study has

contributed to the literature gap on cooperating teachers and to the knowledge of how the

profession might attract more teachers to this important role.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this study was to examine the preservice teacher mentoring experience as professional development for the cooperating teacher, specifically as a form of engaging in teacher instructional leadership. This chapter presents an examination of the literature regarding teacher instructional leadership, adult learning, and teacher professional development. In describing teacher professional development, sub-categorizations of learning activities such as peer coaching, mentoring, the cooperating teacher role and experience, and reflective practice are examined.

Teacher Instructional Leadership

Traditionally, instructional leadership has centered on the principal as the predominant decision maker for all aspects of the school, particularly in relation to designing and establishing effective teaching and learning that positively influences student-learning outcomes (Kennedy, Deuel, Nelson, & Slavik, 2011). This time of increasingly advanced digital and virtual technologies has significantly increased the need for greater information sharing between all educators, and collective decision-making. Researchers now acknowledge and support models of distributed leadership whereby responsibilities are shared across educational stakeholders (Hallinger, 2003; Kennedy, Deuel, Nelson, & Slavik; King, 2002; Lambert, 1998). The relationships between teachers and principals are changing. School leadership continues to shift from one of authority to one of identifying levels of expertise in an environment where there are shared goals (Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbech, 1999).

Teacher leadership models explore the potential teachers have to improve student learning through strong professional engagement. Hallinger (2003) argues that

organizations learn and function at high levels when there is shared leadership among administrators and teachers due to greater commitment and professionalism. Sharing expertise in a structured leadership model creates a collective responsibility for improving student learning (Kennedy, Deuel, Nelson & Slavit, 2011).

"We define teacher leadership as behaviour reflecting a high level of engagement with the profession of teaching and with other teachers who constitute a teacher's professional colleagues" (Riel & Becker, 2008, p. 398). Teachers become instructional leaders when there is collaboration and a shared vision (Kurtz, 2009). Beachum and Dentith (2004) describe models of teacher leadership whereby teachers expand their responsibilities and decision-making to outside the classroom. Often, these include conducting or supporting instructional value to other educators within the school or school district. These models assume that schools have determined, intelligent, and capable teachers who are committed to student success and that administrators are able to identify these strengths within their staff (Keedy, 1999).

A key dimension of teacher instructional leadership is the promotion of a positive school climate and creation of a collegial school culture (King, 2002). Fullan (1991) describes the importance of increasing collegial interaction to produce an environment in which group relationships, open communication, support, and job satisfaction can co-exist to strengthen teaching and learning. Positive school climates include professional development opportunities that focus on mastery of instruction, and a greater awareness of teacher motivation for learning, resulting in the "development of high standards and expectations and a culture of continuous improvement" (Hallinger, 2003, p. 332). These

professional development opportunities reinforce best practices and allow teachers to focus on specific challenges to student achievement.

Teacher leadership is increasingly being explored as teachers are encouraged to take on additional roles in the educational setting (Dufour, 2002; King, 2002; Lambert, 1998). Much of this literature focuses on the roles and responsibilities of teacher leaders within their own classrooms. Teachers are leaders in their classrooms, acting as facilitators, analysts, problem-solvers, action researchers, and as instructional designers for developing students as individual learners (Keedy, 1999). Other more formalized teacher instructional leadership roles take the form of learning leaders, department heads, instructional specialists, resource providers, curriculum specialists, or committee chairs (Harrison & Killion, 2007). Kurtz (2009) describes teacher instructional leaders as those who promote innovative practices, are striving and motivating others to be master teachers, and assist others in solving problems. Teacher leadership contributes to successful school improvement in part because teachers experience growth in role performance. Taylor et al (2011) report that teachers who invest in leadership professional development opportunities are able to avoid career stagnation because they continue to improve in their teaching practice and leadership skills. According to Fidler (1997), this form of capacity building benefits the school and also prepares teachers for future formal leadership opportunities.

The influence of teacher instructional leaders on school culture and change is great. Kurtz (2009) reasons that changes are more attainable when teachers participate in decisions for school improvement. By developing their leadership capacity, teachers can influence each other to explore new and improved pedagogical practices. Teacher

leaders strive to not only develop themselves, but also those with whom they work. "They see their role as trying to help other teachers be more successful and to influence how teaching occurs in other places" (Riel & Becker, 2008, p. 399). Accordingly, if schools foster a greater sense of professionalism; teachers will believe that they are responsible for improving collegial learning about instructional practice, and student learning.

Adult Learning

Many of the most effective forms of teacher professional development are based on adult learning principles. Although there is little consensus on adult learning theories, Knowles (1980) is credited with laying the foundation for the concept of andragogy. Originally defined by Knowles (1980) as "the art and science of helping adults learn" (p. 43), he later conceded that andragogy is "less a theory of adult learning than a model of assumptions about learning or a conceptual framework that serves as a basis for an emergent theory" (1989, p. 112). Knowles (1989) offers several assumptions of the adult learner. Since adults are capable of managing other aspects of their lives, Knowles (1989) reasons that they must also be able to manage their own learning (Merriam, 2001). In an educational setting, teachers are empowered to evaluate their learning needs, and plan and direct their own professional development. Teachers can target aspects of their practice that they want to develop or strengthen. Speck (1996) notes that teachers want to have control of their learning and may feel that their competence and abilities are undermined when their professional learning is too directed.

Adult learners use their life experiences as a reference base in which to compare new ideas and information for their learning (Knowles, 1989). Although this theory

applies to all learners at every life stage, adult learners have more experiences and knowledge to draw from, than children. Because learners have unique personal experiences that influence their interpretation of new events and experiences, Mezirow (1985) believes that "understanding of the historical, cultural and biographical reasons for one's needs, wants and interests" is a prerequisite for learning (p. 27).

Adult learners are goal-oriented and problem-centered (Knowles, 1980). Teachers show greater commitment to professional development activities that share goals and objectives that they perceive as realistic and relevant to them (Speck, 1996). Professional development activities should be constructed around solving problems and issues encountered in their teaching practice. Gregson and Sturko (2007) suggest that professional development needs to create a respectful environment that supports active participation through collaboration, reflection, and inquiry. By involving teachers in the planning of their professional development, experiences may become collaborative, yet considers personal interests and passions at the same time.

The way in which one learns and the situation or environment in which it is learned is part of the entire learning experience, affecting what is learned and retained (Putnam & Borko, 2000; Vygotsky, 1978). It is important for teacher professional development to occur as authentic activities in the classroom and on school sites whenever possible. Although researchers acknowledge that learning in different settings is also important to ensure that existing notions are not simply reinforced, the broad contention is that teachers' learning should be intertwined with their ongoing practice, to increase likeliness that the learning will influence and support their teaching practice in meaningful ways (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Putnam & Borko, 2000). They suggest that

offering a variety of training will help teachers to reach different goals and support different learning needs (Putnam & Borko, 2000).

Knowles (1980) describes adult learners as highly motivated by internal factors. Learning encompasses more than knowledge acquisition when learners engage in critical reflection and act or change as a result of new learning. Learners increase their ability to validate prior knowledge through critical and reflective practice and then use their previous experiences as a base to reflect and critique their new experiences which "results in the elaboration, creation, or transformation of learning schemes" (Mezirow, 1985, p. 7).

Brookfield (1995) (as cited in Franz, 2007) believes that adult learners have the capacity to challenge their beliefs through critical reflection, exploring alternatives to current assumptions. He emphasizes the importance of collective action and a community of peers to support critical reflection, challenging each other to think critically about underlying assumptions in teaching and learning (Brookfield, 1995). By learning with colleagues, teachers have the opportunity to share, reflect and generalize learning experiences (Franz, 2007; Brookfield, 1995; Speck, 1996).

Hussain (2013) suggests that mentors of adult learners should "be equipped with certain professional skills and competencies to help adults learn" (p. 123). He reasons that since adults are intellectually and socially mature individuals with rich contexts for learning based on prior experiences, mentors must be able to consider their traits and development needs to create successful professional learning relationships (Hussain, 2013).

Knowles' (1990) work has contributed to the general knowledge of learning situations and characteristics of adult learners. Originally used in the design and development of adult learning programs in post-secondary institutions and by continuing education faculties, the principles of adult learning theory and andragogy are now often considered when planning educational professional development activities.

Professional Development

Research on school improvement consistently recognizes that professional development plays a significant hand in the retention of educators, in building capacity to address and solve issues in education, and in the overall improvement of schools (Pritchard & Marshall, 2002). Day (1999) describes teacher professional development as the way "teachers review, renew, and extend their commitment as change agents to the moral purposes of teaching, and by which they acquire and develop critically the knowledge, skills, planning and practice…" (p. 4). There is growing acceptance that professional development should focus on teachers in a holistic sense, affording them greater autonomy in determining their learning path (Adams, 2006; Amundsen 1992; Saroyan, 1996). Amundsen (1992) suggests that professional development should include reflective teaching processes supported by non-judgemental peer discussion. Saroyan (1996) supports this by viewing the impetus for educators to change as stemming from reflection on practice that results in increased knowledge and pedagogical expertise. This suggests that reflection has become widely accepted as necessary for professional growth. Reflective practice (Schön, 1984) will be examined more closely later in this chapter.

Professional development is an investment into becoming a quality educator. Cole (2004, p. 3) states, "the purpose of teacher professional development is to improve the quality and consistency of teaching so that student learning is improved." Most teachers report that they engage in professional development because they want "to expand their knowledge and skills, contribute to their growth, and enhance their effectiveness with students" (Guskey, 2002, p. 382). For some, professional development offers the only opportunity for job growth or role expansion in an otherwise lateral profession (Fullan, 1993).

Professional development is a professional obligation required by certification for most educators. North American school boards support professional development as a process of continuous improvement for everyone in their employ. Many jurisdictions assign time in the school calendar for professional development. Although this allocated time is divided between divisional, school-based, and personally directed professional learning, Alberta teachers receive up to ten days of paid professional development per year. The teachers working for these school boards are bound by the Alberta School Act (2000) and the Teaching Quality Standard (Alberta Education, 1997). These documents are components in the determination of application for teacher certification, professional development, supervision and evaluation, and are supported by descriptors of selected knowledge, skills, and attributes appropriate to teachers at different stages of their careers (Alberta Education, 1997).

The Teaching Quality Standard (Alberta Education, 1997) requires teachers to be career-long learners and mandates that they should engage in ongoing professional development to enhance their understanding of, and ability to analyse, the context of

teaching; their ability to make reasoned judgements and decisions; and pedagogical knowledge and abilities. Teachers are also required to recognise their own professional needs by developing an annual personal professional growth plan, working with others to meet those needs, and sharing their professional expertise for the benefit of others (Alberta Education, 1997). The Teaching Quality Standard specifies eleven knowledge, skills, and attributes (KSAs) that permanently certificated teachers must attain and maintain throughout their teaching careers (Alberta Education, 1997). Since professional development is often referred to as cultivating the knowledge, skills, and attributes (KSAs) of teachers, it is important to continue to research the ways in which these KSAs are developed through various experiences including mentoring preservice teachers. The expectation that teachers share their professional expertise with others implies that sharing of knowledge should also extend to preservice teachers.

Effective professional development practices and processes

The literature on effective professional development presents successful professional development outcomes as those that challenge and motivate teachers' current thinking, enhances their classroom and instructional skills and knowledge, leads to improvements in their classroom practice, and strengthens their commitment and contribution to their programs and schools (Corcoran, 1995; Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 1999; Killian, 1999). Teachers are precise in what they wish to gain from professional development. They look for specific, concrete, and applicable knowledge and ideas that can be incorporated into their daily work as teachers (Fullan & Miles, 1992).

Since learning takes place most successfully when it is focused on very specific school and instructional priorities, it is important that educators take time to evaluate their

overall instructional, cultural, and procedural needs and align them with the professional development model that best meets those needs (Smith & Gillespie, 2007). Professional development "should be oriented towards practice and address fundamental issues of curriculum and instruction" (Pritchard & Marshall, 2002, p. 117). Traditional forms of professional development such as workshops, courses and conferences alone cannot create the contextual learning environment needed to motivate teachers to take risks in the classroom. Teachers need time to see new strategies modeled with opportunities to apply new skills in developing and implementing learning activities (Resnick & Glennan Jr., 2002).

Dufour (2001) argues that professional development is most effective when opportunities are created for "staff to work together, engage in collective inquiry, and learn from one another" within a positive school context (p. 1). He describes a positive school context as one in which "opportunities for learning and growth are structured into routine practices," and supports job-embedded professional development (Dufour, 2001, p.1). More efforts must be made to create opportunities for school-embedded professional learning activities that do not encroach on regular classroom work. Sharing knowledge and classroom practices between colleagues in the same school is one way of learning on site. Shifting from an individual model of learning to a highly collegial one supports Bandura's (1986) theory of learning within social contexts and affords teachers opportunities for shared discussion and reflection. Conferring with others can help teachers to develop greater understandings of teaching and learning, leading to higher levels of teacher confidence (Smith & Gillespie, 2007). As confidence grows, teachers

become more involved in their teaching practice, renewing energy and interest in advancing their skills in teaching and learning.

The three major goals of professional development programs, according to Guskey (2002), are "change in the classroom practices of teachers, change in their attitudes and beliefs, and change in the learning outcomes of students" (p. 283). Southworth (2002) suggests that increased group and partnered activities in which participants can share and develop key ideas and insights from the work they presently do may be just as beneficial as engaging in professional learning activities outside the building. Sharing knowledge with others also allows educators to become engaged in their learning. As engaged learners, teachers take responsibility and control for their own learning, increasing the transferability of the learned skills to their classrooms for implementation with students.

Peer Coaching

Joyce and Showers (1980) observed that "modeling, practice under simulated conditions, and practice in the classroom, combined with feedback" (p. 384) was a highly effective form of teacher professional development. They proposed peer coaching as an opportunity for school-embedded learning and explored its use as a tool to increase transferability of new learnings into the classroom (Joyce & Showers, 1980). Huston and Weaver (2008) define peer coaching as "a process whereby two faculty members voluntarily work together to improve or expand their approaches to teaching" (p.6). In this approach, colleagues observe and reflect upon one another's practice, serving as teaching coaches for each other. Peer coaches ask questions and offer suggestions to

encourage partners to try out new strategies, reflect on how successful the implementation has been, and make decisions about new methods and strategies.

"When a teacher receives positive and constructive feedback from a respected peer, there is greater potential for enhanced goal setting, motivation to take risks, and implementation of challenging teaching strategies" (Bruce & Ross, 2008, p. 348). The feedback mechanism employed in peer coaching is uncommon; unlike conventional mentorship models, whereby the observer learns from the teacher instructing in the classroom, peer coaching allows for a variation in roles. Joyce and Showers (1996) have since updated their original definition of peer coaching to include the process of pre-conference/observation/post-conference and have revamped the meaning of "coach" to be the person who is modeling the behaviour as opposed to being the observed or "coached." This unique learning scenario may be applicable to preservice teacher mentoring experiences. When cooperating teachers are observing preservice teachers in the classroom, they may be able to learn about new teaching strategies or management techniques being taught in teacher education programs. Peer coaching allows participants to determine areas of focus and to personalise issues (Huston & Weaver, 2008). Discussion of possible alternative strategies or modifications can then ensue, specific to individual teaching and learning needs.

Because the role of the coach is to provide a supportive, objective point of view while remaining non-judgmental and non-evaluative, peer coaching is different from mentoring. The mentoring process usually involves a novice and a veteran sharing expertise, while peer coaching involves two or more professionals of similar positions.

Not all aspects of peer coaching can thus be applied to the field experiences model. A further look at the mentoring process will be pursued later in this chapter.

Both peer coaching and mentoring focus on collaborative development, refinement, and sharing of professional knowledge and skills. The shared learning environment encourages teachers to learn from one another, reducing isolation. This can help to support and assist novice teachers, and can also benefit master teachers as they enhance their learning through meaningful discussions and planning, observing others, being observed, and receiving practical feedback (Joyce & Showers, 1996). Additionally, experienced educators are able to offer unique experiential perspectives on teaching and learning issues (Huston & Weaver, 2008).

Peer coaching is most effective when there is a climate of trust and collegiality. Cosh (1999) argues that shared goals and self-reflection can occur only with high amounts of trust and an emphasis on the development of good practice. Confidentiality is developed within the collegial relationships of peer coaching partners, allowing for free exploration of issues and ideas. Assumptions inherent to the process of teaching and learning can be challenged within the safe environment of a peer coaching relationship, allowing for constructive conversations and creative resolutions (Huston & Weaver, 2008). Hsui-Lien (2009) cautions that trust relationships may be difficult to forge in a field experiences environment as the preservice teacher is still undergoing evaluation in which cooperating teachers often play a role. Moreover, high trust relationships often take more time to develop than preservice teacher field experiences allow.

The success of peer coaching is strongly determined by the strength of communication skills between partners. Perkins (1998, as cited in Bruce & Ross, 2008)

found that "some peer coaching teachers rarely asked open-ended questions of peers, did not paraphrase to check for common understanding and made limited use of helpful probes" (p. 351). Some of these issues are addressed in the mentoring model. "Because preservice teachers ask naïve questions about teaching and learning, they challenge practicing teachers to give reason for what they do" (Miller & Silvernail, 1994, p. 41). Peer coaching and mentoring alike, offer experienced teachers contextualised opportunities to reflect on teaching and learning (Huston & Weaver, 2008).

Mentoring

In the field of education, the formal pairing of an expert teacher with a novice teacher whereby the experienced teacher is used as a knowledgeable and skilled resource for the novice is known as mentoring (Campbell & Brummett, 2007). This professional development approach is a form of coaching that tends to be short-term and geared towards supporting and guiding beginning teachers or those new to a school or school system.

Although there has been a growing interest in mentoring as teacher professional development, and many basic mentoring skills are now embedded in teachers' everyday work, much of the literature on mentorship focuses on dimensions of beginning teacher induction programs (Ballantyne & Hansford, 1995; Feiman-Nemser & Parker, 1993; Glickman, 1991; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2000; Robbins, 1999). There is a need to further examine mentoring as professional development for all participants involved.

It is well documented that "during initial training and in their first few years in the classroom, many teachers, perhaps even the majority, experience difficulties in learning to teach" (Calderhead & Shorrock, 1997, p. 8). In an effort to address competency issues

of new teachers, mentoring has become a widely popular response to meeting these needs and can appeal to the learning needs of both mentors and mentees (Ballantyne & Hansford, 1995; Blank & Sindelar, 1992; Hamel & Jaasko-Fisher, 2011).

Darling-Hammond posits, "it's really important for beginners to have systematic, intense mentoring in the first year" (Scherer, 2012). Engaging in the mentoring process can help novices to prepare themselves for teaching, developing a wide range of teaching and classroom management skills and gaining knowledge of students' learning processes (Glickman, 1991). Experienced teachers can also gain pedagogically through mentorship experiences. Mentor teachers frequently acknowledge working with beginning teachers as a source of new ideas about curriculum and teaching (Ganser, 1997). Mentor teachers can develop and improve their teaching by acquiring an inquiring stance and engaging in dialogue about teaching, validating their experiences as teachers (Feiman-Nemser & Parker, 1993). Inquiry becomes personal as well as collegial, and professional relations are transformed.

Many successful mentoring programs delineate specific roles and responsibilities of mentor teachers (Ballantyne & Hansford, 1995; Ganser, 1997; Tomlinson, 1995). Lambert (2003) suggests that mentoring new teachers is an activity that can foster teacher leadership. Mentors are most often master teachers who are able to offer constructive criticism to assist new teachers to understand school policies and practices while offering advice for solving immediate problems (Ballantyne & Hansford, 1995; Feiman-Nemser & Parker, 1993). While they are professional resources for knowledge and procedure, they may also act as role models, counsellors and coaches, encouraging and engaging in reflection with the mentee (Blank & Sindelar, 1992). In order to help other teachers

effectively, mentors must be thoughtful practitioners, continuously reflecting on self-practice and professional knowledge (Blank & Sindelar, 1992).

Mentoring can be challenging and requires a significant investment of time and energy from both partners. Master teachers sometimes struggle with articulating the specifics of their actions and practices for comprehension by novices. Some research shows that mentoring can sometimes reinforce traditional norms and practices rather than promote best professional practices (Feiman-Nemser & Parker, 1993). In addition, Feiman-Nemser (2001) warns, "mentors may withhold assistance due to the enduring belief that teaching is a highly personalized practice of finding one's own style" (p. 1033). For this reason, mentors must be carefully chosen and provided with support and guidance throughout the mentoring process. Mentors who receive some form of mentoring training are more effective in their roles. Training should include opportunities for teachers to gain skills in observing, reflecting, and dialoguing about teaching in non-judgemental ways, while providing models of effective mentoring (Blank & Sindelar, 1992; Hussein, 2013). Engaging in mentoring training and the process of becoming an effective mentor is an additional professional development opportunity for teachers.

Because the success of mentorships depends largely on the quality of the relationship between participants, it is important that mentors and mentees be matched up professionally (Blank & Sindelar, 1992). Mentors must have an understanding of the adult learning process and be aware of the needs and developmental stage of the mentees so that they can fully support their growth and professional development (Crasborn et al., 2009; Hussein, 2013).

Mentoring helps teachers to develop the capacity to identify, analyse and evaluate their own actions and practices to improve upon students' learning (Glickman, 1991). As novices establish themselves as teachers and gain confidence in their practices and professionalism, they gradually decrease their need for mentorship. The benefits of mentoring, however, do not cease to exist when the mentoring experience ends. In fact, Coffey (2010) describes mentoring experiences as "relationships that multiply learning opportunities" because "after successful mentoring experiences, many share their knowledge and expertise with others" (p. 189). Mentoring is thus a powerful tool for engaging school staff in continuous professional development.

Preservice Teacher Mentoring (Cooperating Teaching)

Preservice teacher mentoring is a type of structured mentorship model that pairs experienced teachers with preservice teachers for short periods of time within a teacher education program. These pairings are known as field experiences. "In cooperating teaching, there are three major players: the preservice teachers, the post-secondary faculty members in the teacher education program who provide the foundational knowledge, and the practising teachers who serve as cooperating teachers" (Campbell & Brummett, 2007, p. 50). Edwards and Dendler (2007) describe each player with separate and distinct roles that collaborate together to create a learning environment supportive of preservice teacher development. Cooperating teachers guide and nurture preservice teachers through the field experience, customizing each teaching and learning component, while the post-secondary faculty supervisor assists in matching preservice and cooperating teachers, and acts as a liaison between them (Edwards & Dendler, 2007). Hamel and Jaasko-Fischer (2011) posit cooperating teaching as valuable for all

participants as it offers universities access to classrooms and mentorships, while also giving schools additional resources in the form of "inexpensive professional labour" (p. 435). When recognised as part of a greater professional development process, there is potential for shared learning and professional growth for all involved (Maltas & McCarty-Clair, 2006).

Mentoring experiences at the preservice stage are important because they help preservice teachers to become accustomed to working in classrooms and schools, allowing them to face professional challenges in a safe and supported environment (Coffey, 2010). However, because preservice teachers are still learning to teach, there is often an evaluation component embedded in the cooperating teaching model that is not present in other forms of mentoring. This may deter some experienced teachers to become involved in cooperating teaching as "mentors want to be peer coaches and not evaluators" (Blank & Sindelar, 1992, p. 25).

Cooperating teachers fill a critical role in teacher education because the bulk of the knowledge and skills that they transfer to preservice teachers is experiential (Blank & Sindelar, 1992). Cooperating teachers assist preservice teachers to integrate acquired theoretical knowledge into a successful classroom setting and develop positive attitudes towards teaching and the teaching profession (Ediger, 2009). Through coaching, teaching, debriefing, assessing, and challenging preservice teachers, cooperating teachers guide and support their personal and professional development (Barber & Norman, 1987; Löfmark & Thorell-Ekstrand, 2004).

Spencer (2007) found that "the cooperating teacher role has responsibilities, benefits, and challenges that lead to an individual's professional growth" (p. 214).

Experienced teachers can use preservice teacher mentoring as an opportunity to explore a new role while continuing to be a classroom teacher (Feiman-Nemser & Parker, 1993). As an opportunity for renewal and regeneration, it is an active approach to curbing stagnation in the professional lives of experienced teachers. Huston and Weaver (2008) describe this renewal as a chance for teachers to provide valuable service to their colleagues and educational community.

Serving as a cooperating teacher also reaps emotional benefits such as raised self-esteem due to recognition of expertise and enhanced status amongst colleagues (Blank & Sindelar, 1992). When used as an opportunity to connect with newer teachers, the mentorship experience can help to keep the cooperating teacher abreast of new teaching initiatives, current pedagogical innovations, and changes in curriculum (Portelance, 2005). "They also develop professionally as they are in a position to thoughtfully analyse and reexamine their practice, thus confirming strategies that work and adjusting techniques and exploring innovations in instruction" (Blank & Sindelar, 1992, p. 25).

Indeed, "perhaps the most important benefits reported by cooperating teachers are those that emerge out of self-reflection on their work as teachers" (Koskela & Ganser, 1998, p. 107). Ganser (1997) found that teachers recognise preservice teacher mentoring as one of the most effective forms of professional development because it is an embedded opportunity that allows them to be introspective about their own teaching and reflect on their own behaviours. In alignment with constructivist (Vygotsky, 1978) learning theories, professional development models that focus on developing reflective practitioners encourage teachers to seek out "innovation and inquiry-based forms of continuing professional development" (Campbell & Brummett, 2007, p. 51). These

models further prepare teachers to investigate and make informed decisions when dealing with complex issues that occur in the classroom (Spalding & Wilson, 2002; Syrjala, 1996).

The presence of preservice teachers can change school climate, affecting and influencing both teachers and students. Preservice teacher mentoring can help to create a collaborative environment with an emphasis on shared inquiry and cooperation since many of the activities inherent in the experience support collegial work such as joint meetings, sharing resources, and critically examining teaching practices (Campbell & Brummett, 2007). This can lead to reduced feelings of isolation and an overall improvement in communication skills (Spencer, 2007).

Research in the area of field experiences shows that there is a need for increased feedback processes and support for cooperating teachers (Clarke, 2007). While Clarke (2007) has found no formal process in place for providing direct and specific feedback to cooperating teachers on their role as mentors, many field experience programs are now addressing this issue by introducing mentor training components for experienced teachers. Duffield (2006) suggests that cooperating teachers be carefully and specifically selected. She argues that cooperating teachers need training and support to ensure that they are guiding and modelling the behaviours necessary for successful teaching (Duffield, 2006). If we wish to improve teacher quality, attention must be paid to supporting those who work most closely with future teachers to ensure effective professional development for all participants.

Cooperating teachers must be able to adjust their communication style to meet the needs of the preservice teacher for greater understanding of shared knowledge and

problem solving. They must be knowledgeable of how teachers learn to teach and should be flexible in adapting their approaches and strategies to guide the preservice teacher through their development (Campbell & Brummett, 2007; Crasborn et al., 2009). Killian and Wilkins (2009) found that the greatest common factor amongst the most effective cooperating teachers was the completion of graduate-level studies in mentoring and leadership. This reaffirms that leadership and mentoring skills can be learned and should be valued as a means to develop quality cooperating teachers and build leadership capacity within schools.

Reflective Practice

Reflective practice, expressed by Boud (2009) as a process of changing experience into learning, has increased as an approach to teacher education. Schön's (1983) concept of reflective practice was developed in response to a belief in teaching as a process of transmitting, rather than transforming, knowledge to students. He defines it as "thoughtfully considering one's own experiences in applying knowledge to practice" (Schön, 1983, p. 69). Schön (1983; 1987) asserts that teachers must think about actions that affect learning while they are engaged in those actions. By being aware of what they are doing, educators can adapt and modify their practices, allowing more opportunities for professional growth. As a constructivist, Schön (1983; 1987) assumes that personal prior experiences and frameworks of understanding create the foundation from which new learning is compared and assimilated into. In education, when connections are drawn between new and existing knowledge, traditional models of teaching are questioned, challenged and affirmed (Boud, 2009).

Boud (2009) argues that engaging in reflective practice "involves feelings, emotions and decision-making" (p. 14). There is an assumption that as professionals, teachers have the best interests of students in mind while engaging in reflective practice and that they will focus on those aspects which will be of most benefit in the classroom. "Learners clarify their understandings when they are able to reflect on their learning and to analyze the ways they construct knowledge and meaning" (Lambert, 2003, p. 60). While reflection can help teachers to identify areas of self-improvement, Zeichner (1990) cautions that unless reflective practice is structured with a clear focus about what should be reflected upon, and how this reflection should occur, it may unintentionally encourage teachers to reinforce existing beliefs and practices.

Dewey (1933) viewed professional actions as a form of research and experimentation, suggesting that individuals would reflect on their actions and consequences together. Being conscious of this process affects the extent to which learners become actively involved, allowing individuals to develop, change, and learn. Studies have found that teachers who engage in professional development programs designed to promote reflection on their practices develop complex views of teaching beliefs and practices, positively impacting their teaching (Clarke, 1995; Robinson, 1999). By critically examining personal and professional values, teachers develop a strong understanding of self, taking time to think, analyse and question assumptions and behaviours (Leitch & Day, 2000; Zeichner, 1982). When teachers are aware of how and why decisions are made regarding daily processes, they can identify assumptions behind these decisions and can choose to act from a new perspective (Boud, 2009).

Ross (2002) asserts, "many highly experienced teachers are novices at reflective practice. Initial attempts at reflection are generally little more than descriptions of classroom practice" (p. 682). Reflective practitioners need support and often, training, to become effective and proficient at using reflection. As Ross (2002) relays, "reflection can be emotionally painful as teachers confront issues and weaknesses in their practice" (p. 682). The personal exploration component that reflection involves requires a high sense of trust and a relatively protected environment that is not necessarily present in many school cultures (Boud, 2009). A collaborative culture in which all learners feel respected, valued, and heard is necessary to foster effective work and learning. Syrjala (1996) reasons that while it is possible to engage in reflective practice in isolation from others, doing so often leads to a reinforcement of existing views and perceptions. Collaborating with others can begin to transform perspectives and challenge traditional notions of learning (Boud, 2009).

Coaching and mentoring are two strategies associated with reflective practice. Uzat (1998) describes coaching as a way to improve teaching practice through a process of systematic reflection on teaching strategies. "A skilled reflective practitioner can mentor a novice by modeling strategies, sharing writings, and providing emotional support and encouragement" (Ross, 2002, p. 682). They provide opportunities to share knowledge and investigate problems, lessoning isolation, and finding viable solutions to issues.

Reflective practice is increasingly being recognized as essential to good teaching and a skill of highly effective teachers. Leitch and Day (2000) posit that reflective teachers improve their self-awareness, develop new knowledge about professional

practice and expand their broader understandings of the problems that confront them in their daily work. Schön (1987) suggests that the capacity to engage in a process of reflection and continuous learning is one of the defining characteristics of professional practice. Reflective practice allows teachers to involve themselves in independent and collaborative explorations of decision-making processes, forge constructive relationships with colleagues, and explore specific issues related to their everyday work.

Summary

This review of literature has examined the background of work in the areas of adult learning, teacher instructional leadership and professional development. It has further explored those professional development models specific to this study: peer coaching, mentoring, preservice teacher mentoring, and reflective practice. As the above review indicates, leadership in schools is undergoing a structural change. As the call for teachers to become instructional leaders within the school increases, so must the number of professional development opportunities provided to teachers to develop instructional leadership skills. This study explored the professional development opportunities created by serving as cooperating teachers, from the perspective of those serving. The next chapter offers a detailed description of the methodology employed in this study.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This chapter is an outline of the method decisions made to conduct the study as they related to the research questions.

Restatement of the Problem

The research literature in the field of preservice teacher mentoring as a professional development activity is limited. Although there are studies published concerning the administration of preservice teacher mentoring, and the relationship between preservice teachers and their cooperating teachers during practica, few focus on learning about the cooperating teachers and any benefits occurring to them as a result of the practicum experience. There appears to be a need to examine the specific knowledge, skills and attributes in which cooperating teachers' identify improvements and change, and to increase school-embedded opportunities for teachers to collaborate and share best instructional practices.

Purpose of the Study

This study examined the benefits of mentoring preservice teachers as a form of professional development for the cooperating teacher, specifically in the area of teacher instructional leadership, from the perspective of the cooperating teacher.

Research Method and Design

Traditionally, qualitative research methods have been used in educational research to explore and investigate social phenomena as it applies to individuals or groups. Qualitative research can provide data that provides depth and detail to create understanding of phenomena and lived experiences (Patton, 2002). The research questions developed on the topic of professional development for cooperating teachers in

the area of instructional leadership guided this study towards qualitative research

methods and this approach was chosen to investigate the experiences of cooperating

teachers. In this study, qualitative data was collected through document review, self-

surveys, a focus group interview, individual semi-structured interviews, and follow-up

surveys. Table 3.1 displays the research questions and the corresponding data sources

that were used in answering each research question.

Table 3.1 Research Questions and Related Data Sources

Research Question	Data Sources
1. What, if any, specific knowledge, skills, and attributes do teachers develop as a result of engaging in preservice teacher mentoring activities?	• Documents – post-secondary cooperating teacher role descriptions • Teacher surveys • Focus group interview • Follow-up surveys and individual interviews
2. From the perspective of the cooperating teacher, how does serving as a cooperating teacher impact one's instructional leadership capacity, if at all?	• Teacher surveys • Focus group interview • Follow-up surveys and individual interviews

Qualitative research seeks to understand a problem or topic from the perspective

of the local population, in this case, cooperating teachers. Researchers often use

qualitative research methods to explore what people think or feel about an issue,

obtaining information about the values, opinions, behaviours and social contexts of a

group of people (Creswell, 2008). Patton (1980) defines qualitative research as,

"…detailed descriptions of situations, events, people, interaction and observed

behaviours; direct quotations from people about their experiences, attitudes, beliefs, and

thoughts…" (p. 22). A qualitative research method allows the researcher to investigate

how or why these meanings are constructed (Mertler & Charles, 2005). The research

tools used in this study for data collection consisted of an examination of documents from

three major Alberta post-secondary faculties of education programs regarding

descriptions of the cooperating teacher role, self-surveys administered to all participants,

a one-time focus group session, individual interviews, and follow-up surveys.

Document Review. The role of the cooperating teacher is guided by the specific

descriptions and expectations of each post-secondary faculty of education field

experiences program. Although generally similar in description, the specific expectations

for this role may differ by institution. Since the participants used in this study may have

experience in serving as a cooperating teacher for any of the three major Alberta post-

secondary institutions with faculty of education field experience programs, it was

important to review the documentation regarding their role at each of these faculties.

These documents helped to inform the participants' knowledge, expectations, and ideas

of mentoring and the cooperating teacher role.

Self-surveys. Surveys are forms (often written) that ask exact questions of all individuals

in a sample group and allow participants to respond at their own convenience (Mertler &

Charles, 2005). Surveys are effective tools for standardizing questions and providing

comparability measures (Axinn & Pearce, 2007). Self-surveys were used twice in this

study. First, a self-survey was distributed to gather personal and professional information

about the participants. Survey data collected from participants before the focus group

session were tabulated and presented as aggregate data to the focus group participants.

This data was then used to direct the discussion questions in the focus group interview.

Second, a different self-survey using open-ended questions was used to gather follow-up

information regarding the preservice teacher mentoring experience and teacher instructional leadership after the focus group interview.

Focus Group Interview. Axinn and Pearce (2007) describe focus groups as a means to gather data while allowing respondents to engage and interact with one another. First developed as an alternative to traditional interviewing, they allow researchers to "see reality from the client's point of view" (Krueger, 1994, p. 9). Social constructivism posits that learning does not take place individually, but rather through communication with others. Thus, the interaction between participants in focus groups may yield data that is "more ecologically valid" than methods that focus on individuals (Albrecht, Johnson, & Walther, 1993, p. 54). Using focus groups is an effective way to get in-depth responses, accessing private, unconscious feelings and emotions. Being in a group setting may give respondents more confidence to offer comments and discuss issues (Axinn & Pearce, 2007). Conversely, some individuals may feel shy or intimidated by others and may be hesitant to share information (Axinn & Pearce, 2007). A properly constructed and administered focus group can draw out motivational factors behind opinions and allow researchers to focus on understanding attitudes rather than simply measuring them (Kitzinger, 1994). Using focus groups in this study allowed participants to corroborate or challenge each other, bringing about new topics for discussion or exploration. Merton (1987) suggests that group interaction helps to widen the range of responses by activating forgotten details of experiences. Participants were able to guide one another to issues through a small number of questions aimed at exploring their perceptions, behaviours, explanations, and ideas about preservice teacher mentoring and teacher instructional leadership. "Focus group data reflect collective notions of

understandings of the topic, which are shared and negotiated by group participants, as opposed to interview data, which reflect views, and opinions of an individual" (Smit & Cilliers, 2006, p. 306). The focus group interview was used to gather and stimulate ideas, while the follow-up interviews and surveys allowed individuals to further explore or enhance their responses. In traditional focus group research, multiple focus group interviews are used in data collection. However, this study held a single focus group, and gathered data through additional sources, namely document review, surveys, and interviews.

Follow-up Surveys and Individual Interviews. Constructivist learning theory describes learning as personal and each individual's experience with phenomena is experienced differently. It is therefore necessary to capture both collective and individual responses when researching a particular topic. Providing a follow-up survey either to the focus group participants only, or to a wider population based on questions or feedback from the focus group session can help to minimize group influence on individual responses (Nicklin, 1996; Wheeler, 1996). In this study, participants were offered the choice between receiving a semi-structured interview, or a follow-up emailed survey (questions were based on focus group discussions). These follow-up questions allowed individuals to further explore or enhance their responses discussed at the focus group session. Using open-ended questions allowed participants to provide their own thoughts, words, and insights.

In addition, any participants who were interested in contributing to the study, but were unable to attend the focus group session were also invited to participate in semi-structured interviews or to respond to the follow-up survey. Individual interviews are

able to provide data that is far more personal than data retrieved from surveys as the interviewer (in this case, also the researcher) works directly with the respondent. A semi-structured interview format was chosen as it allowed me to guide the discussion through the use of key questions, yet provided opportunities for probing or follow-up questions as the discussion ensued.

Participants

Using a purposive cluster sampling method, teachers who met the following criteria were invited to participate in this study: teachers who have had a minimum of one experience as a cooperating teacher at the high school level with second year preservice teachers in 2010, 2011, or 2012. The sample was purposive as teachers were selected from those currently working for the same school division, owing to their availability. This south central Alberta school division encompassed both rural and urban high schools and for the purposes of this study, high school level included grades 9-12. The rationale for choosing high school level teachers for this study was three-fold. First, there was the departmentalized nature of high school curricula. With multiple departments, grade levels, and subject specific areas, high schools lend themselves to certain structures of teacher instructional leadership. Second, the literature on professional development for high school teachers is sparse in the area of preservice teacher mentoring. Third, teacher education faculties are seeing a steep decline in the voluntary participation of cooperating teachers at the high school level.

For the purposes of this study, preservice teachers were defined as those post-secondary education students who have completed at least one year of their education degree and have successfully completed a minimum of two field experiences. Preservice

teachers in Alberta teacher education programs engage in three or four field experiences. This study focused on the final field experience that occurs in the final year (most often year two) of the preservice teacher's education program. During the final year of their education program, Alberta post-secondary education faculty students complete an intensive field experience (sometimes one semester in length) in a school to engage in reflection, practical application and integration through discussion with instructors and colleagues. During this field experience preservice teachers work closely with one or two cooperating teachers. Only cooperating teachers partnered with second year students were included in this study. This criterion served two purposes. First, there is a greater chance for cooperating teachers to experience personal or professional growth over a longer period of time. Second year preservice teachers complete a field experience that is much greater in length than first year education students. Second, because the experiences of having first year versus second year preservice teachers are remarkably different for cooperating teachers and the role that they play, it was necessary to create a more homogenous group of participants to obtain sought data.

Participants were self-selected as teachers chose whether or not to contact the researcher and participate in the research study. An appropriate group size for a focus group is typically described as between five and twelve participants (Bryman, 2008; Lindlof & Taylor, 2002; Keyton, 2006). Smaller numbers allow for a more in-depth discussion with more time for each participant to respond to each question. Larger group sizes are recommended when involvement with the topic is anticipated to be low, or when multiple brief opinions are sought. The greatest difficulty that was encountered during the course of this study was in securing an adequate number of participants for the

focus group. Low participant rates can be attributed to low numbers of prospects (ie. drawing teachers from only one school division), last minute cancellations, and the busy time of the school year for teachers at the time of data collection. The incentive of simply sharing one's expertise and knowledge appeared to entice a low number of teachers to participate. In addition, scheduling a focus group date that suited all participants was challenging. Distances between schools varied and securing a location for the study that was convenient for all participants was also problematic. Solicitation for this study occurred over a period of one month, and continued until a minimum of ten eligible teachers had agreed to participate. The actual rate of participation was less than what I had originally expected. However, low numbers allowed for a more in-depth discussion of the topic via follow-up questions and further discussions with participants. Those who did participate were open about their experiences and provided a great deal of valuable information. The findings reported below are based on individual surveys, one focus group interview, follow-up surveys, and individual semi-structured interviews with high school teachers who have served as cooperating teachers (thirteen participants in total).

In accordance with University of Calgary Human Subject Research Ethics Policy (University of Calgary, 2008), an application to conduct research involving human subjects was submitted prior to collecting all research data. A copy of the approved application is included in Appendix A of this dissertation.

Data Collection, Processing, and Analysis

Initially, contact was made with high school administrators to aid the process of recruitment. Principals and assistant principals were asked to identify eligible

participants for the study. An email was then sent to the eligible teachers outlining the

research study. Ongoing communication between the participants and myself was

developed as soon as contact details were received. Each participant was sent a brief

description of the study and its intent. Consent forms, surveys, and information regarding

the focus group session were distributed through email, in person, and by telephone. All

participants were invited to a scheduled, one-time focus group session in a predetermined

accessible location and refreshments were made available to teachers during the focus

group discussion to create a comfortable and social environment. Individual surveys

were administered one week prior to the focus group session (see Appendix B). These

surveys included demographics questions that served to acquire information about the

participants' overall background and experience as a way to supplement the focus group

interview. Additionally, the surveys were used to gather aggregate data regarding general

perspectives of the effects of preservice teacher mentoring on each of the eleven

knowledge, skills, and attributes (KSAs) as outlined by the Teaching Quality Standard

(Alberta Education, 1997). Leithwood (1992) offers a theoretical model that identifies

three dimensions of the growth of teachers, from the onset of their teaching career to their

maturation as teacher instructional leaders. In this model, he presents a six-stage

sequence of competencies that teachers achieve as they become teacher leaders and

describes a "mature teacher" as "one who plays a formal or informal leadership role, in a

variety of contexts both inside and outside the classroom and school" (Leithwood, 1992,

p. 90). This model was adapted (with permission, see Appendix C) to correspond with

each of the eleven KSAs as defined by the Teacher Quality Standard (Alberta Education,

1997). In the pre-focus group survey, teachers were asked to self-report on their personal

teacher development in relation to serving as cooperating teachers using Leithwood's (1992) model. This aggregate data was then used to guide the focus group discussion.

Reminders were given prior to the focus group session to those that had made plans to attend. Although eleven participants initially agreed to attend the focus group session, only ten participants were available on the date of the discussion. The focus group session was conducted using the following format: a) I, as the researcher/focus group moderator introduced myself, b) the participants were reminded of the audio-recording and their ability to withdraw from the study at any time without repercussions, c) the participants were informed of their pseudonyms and the process of taking turns in answering questions. Once the recording device was started, I asked the participants to refer to the printed copy of aggregate survey data that they were each provided (see Tables 4.3, 4.4, 4.5). Moving through the survey questions, participants were asked to comment as to how or why preservice teacher mentoring affects each of the Teacher Quality Standard KSAs (Alberta Education, 1997). These KSAs (Alberta Education, 1997) were read aloud but not explained or interpreted. The participants therefore brought forth their own perceptions, interpretations, and understandings of the KSAs (Alberta Education, 1997) as developed through their personal teaching practices.

All participants were also provided with a blank notepad and writing utensil. They were asked to use these to capture any additional information that they wished to add to questions that had already been covered, or any comments that they preferred to share with me, the researcher, but not to share with the group. I also kept notes during the focus group discussion to provide further information on the session. Although some follow-up questions emerged from the discussion, participants were very focused on

moving through each KSA (Alberta Education, 1997) as presented to them on the pre-focus group survey. Once the eleven KSAs (Alberta Education, 1997) had been addressed, participants were asked questions pertaining to teacher instructional leadership, and how preservice teacher mentoring might have affected their own leadership activities (see Appendix D). The data was transcribed from the focus group session verbatim, and these transcripts were sent back with permission to the participants for approval and verification. Although participants did not identify any changes to be made, Stake (2005) asserts the importance of allowing participants to see how they are being represented and analysed. Since participants own their perceptions, verification of their representation is essential and ethical.

Participants had originally been informed that follow-up interviews would be conducted by telephone. Several of the participants requested that these interviews be conducted through an emailed self-survey to accommodate time constraints, and also to allow participants to reflect on the questions before responding. All participants from the focus group, as well as four participants who had initially expressed interest in contributing to the study, but were unable to attend the focus group session, were provided with a copy of the follow-up interview questions.   The response rate for the follow-up self-survey was 90% amongst those participants who had attended the focus group session.

Using a self-survey also had disadvantages as participants were free to leave any number of questions blank, and there was a time commitment required to complete them. Interestingly, those participants who chose not to respond to the full set of follow-up survey questions overwhelmingly chose to respond to the same types of questions. Two

types of questions produced the least number of responses. First, those questions that looked more closely at teacher leadership versus the preservice teacher mentoring experience were often not answered. Second, those questions that required more detail, specific examples, or more personal responses were overwhelmingly skipped. For this reason, five of the participants, including three participants who could not attend the focus group interview, were selected for semi-structured interviews. These interviews were conducted in a face-to-face format at the school in which the teacher was working. Notes were taken throughout the interview, and quotes were written verbatim whenever possible. At the end of the interview, participants were asked to review the notes and quotations to ensure that data was documented correctly and that their voice was accurately represented. The purpose of these interviews was to gather new information from those who could not attend the focus group session, extract any additional information from participants, and to clarify responses that were obtained through the focus group interview or the follow-up self-surveys.

All data collected through the surveys, focus group session, and personal interviews was analyzed by hand. Responses were examined, compared, conceptualized and categorized by data. Transcripts were first studied as a whole, with interpretive thoughts noted in the margins. This annotating-the-scripts analysis approach is recommended by Gordon and Langmaid (1988) to allow the researcher to re-experience the group, body language, and tone of the discussion rather than simply viewing sets of discrete responses. The transcriptions were then coded for information that was considered pertinent. Patton (2002) refers to this as inductive analysis, in which "findings emerge out of the data, through the analyst's interactions with the data" (p.

453). In order to provide the most complete answers to the research questions,

information was separated into sections based on each KSA (Alberta Education, 1997).

Data was organised into categories and themes were identified and clustered. Content

was analyzed by looking for emerging patterns or categories regarding individual and

shared professional growth through preservice teacher mentoring that eventually formed

into themes. Patton (2002) differentiates between patterns as "descriptive findings" and

themes as more "categorical or topic form" (p. 453). Categories and themes were

identified through the use of colour coding themes, key words, and recurring words in the

focus group transcripts and surveys. Data was analyzed throughout the collection stage

so patterns and themes that emerged during data collection could be recognized and

captured in a timely manner.

The demographics information provided by participants was also analyzed to

provide insight into the composition of the group and how their backgrounds might have

impacted their opinions and perspectives about preservice teacher mentoring.

Methodological Limitations and Delimitations

By using a qualitative method research design, I was able to draw upon the

perspectives and perceptions of the participants as cooperating teachers. However,

resource restrictions limited the comprehensiveness of this research. Because this study

included only one school division and was limited to Alberta post-secondary education

programs, the results from this study may provide valuable information for the

participating schools, school division, and post-secondary institutions, but may be limited

in its usefulness to other settings. By providing detailed descriptions of the settings and

participant roles, I have strived to assist readers of the final report in determining if the

results may be applicable to other settings. As the literature in the area of preservice

teacher mentoring is scarce, it may be difficult to compare information and results from

other studies, limiting interpretation. Although some similar studies have been

conducted, most of these are contextualized in other geographical regions such as the

United States, Australia, and Europe.

Another limitation of this study is the use of a purposive sample. The study

participants all live and work in the same geographical location. This limits the extent to

which the findings are generalizable. Also, the process engaged in by the participants

may be unique to their view of themselves in their understanding of teaching, mentoring,

learning, leadership, and professional development. Furthermore, since the participants

in this study voluntarily participated, they may not be characteristic of non-volunteers.

The sample was purposefully delimited to secondary school teachers who have

served as cooperating teachers for second year preservice teachers studying in an Alberta

post-secondary education program. As previously explained, the rationale for choosing

secondary level teachers for this study was the departmentalized nature of high school

curricula. The literature on professional development for high school teachers is sparse

in the area of preservice teacher mentoring, and Alberta post-secondary teacher education

faculties are having increasing difficulties in finding willing cooperating teachers at the

secondary level. Only cooperating teachers who have mentored second year preservice

teachers were allowed to participate in this study. This delimitation served two purposes.

First, there is a greater chance for cooperating teachers to experience personal or

professional growth over a longer period of time. Second year preservice teachers

complete a field experience that is much greater in length than those completed by first

year preservice teachers. Second, because the experiences of having first year versus second year preservice teachers are remarkably different for cooperating teachers and the role that they play, it was necessary to create a more homogenous group of participants to obtain sought data.

The number of participants and timeline also limited this study. An appropriate group size for a focus group is typically described to be between five and twelve participants (Bryman, 2008; Lindlof & Taylor, 2002; Keyton, 2006). The greatest difficulty that was encountered during the course of this study was in securing an adequate number of participants. Solicitation for this study occurred over a period of one month, and continued until a minimum of ten eligible teachers had agreed to participate in the focus group. A total of thirteen teachers contributed to this study through the completion of self-surveys, attending a focus group session, or participating in a semi-structured interview. The data was reliant upon the participants' willingness to respond accurately and honestly and was based on perceptions reported by teachers, thereby allowing for subjectivity and possible bias. By providing detailed descriptions of the participants' demographic data, readers can determine if the findings are applicable to other cooperating teacher populations.

The social constructivist paradigm posits that all researchers hold personal interpretations and preconceptions of the research problem (Patton, 1999). While my own background as a teacher, cooperating teacher, and administrator certainly shapes my own perception of preservice teacher mentoring, teacher professional development, and teacher instructional leadership, it was my responsibility to be non-judgmental of the schools, teachers, school district, and post-secondary institutions involved in this study.

My goal and responsibility has been to accurately describe the experiences of cooperating teachers. To this end, I have tried to keep an open mind to participant responses regardless of any personal expectations. During the focus group interview, I refrained from participating in the conversation as an experienced cooperating teacher, and instead prioritized my role as a researcher and focus group moderator. As many quotes as possible were used in the reporting of this study to indicate the use of participants' original words in an effort to honour their participation and voice, creating a more transparent analysis. In addition, participants were invited to review the research analysis during the writing process to ensure that their voice was accurately represented.

Ethical Assurances

All participants contributed to this study on a voluntary basis and were informed in the invitation letter, on the consent form, and orally that they could exit the project at any time without repercussions. Appropriate consent was obtained from the school division (see Appendix F), schools, and individual participants. All participants were assigned pseudonyms for the data collection, processing, and the written report. All data has been secured and will not be made available to other parties for any use.

Summary

This chapter discussed the research process that guided this study. It is hoped that this study has contributed to the literature gap on cooperating teachers. Specific study objectives were to analyse responses of study participants: 1) to identify professional development elements that participants associate with the role of cooperating teachers and 2) to suggest themes in the responses regarding perceptions the participants have related to their role as cooperating teachers and to their own professional development

particularly in the area of teacher instructional leadership. Chapter 4 will discuss data

and analysis in further detail.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the findings from the document review, pre-focus group surveys, focus group interview, follow-up surveys, and semi-structured interviews, and identifies categories, topics, and themes that emerged during the data collection process. To begin this chapter, findings from the document review are discussed. In the subsequent sections, each KSA (Alberta Education, 1997) is discussed independently, followed by an overall discussion on leadership themes as identified by the study participants.

Document Review

As cooperating teacher roles are defined, shaped, and influenced by post-secondary education programs' organisational documentation, it was important to review these role descriptions and expectations. Through this process, I was able to sift through existing information provided to cooperating teachers and gain insights into the variety of roles that they are given when mentoring preservice teachers. The reviewed documents supplemented survey, focus group, and interview data by providing a descriptive basis from which to draw an understanding of the cooperating teacher role. Post-secondary program expectations for cooperating teachers are shown in Table 4.1. The documents reviewed were collected from the three major post-secondary institutions in Alberta, the same province from which all participants were currently working at the time of this study.

Table 4.1 – Cooperating Teacher Role Descriptors at Major Alberta Post-Secondary Education Field Experience Programs

Alberta Post-Secondary Institutions	Cooperating Teacher Role Descriptors
University A (University A, 2012)	The partner teacher is the classroom teacher who works closely with a specific student teacher, opens his/her professional life to the student, and very gradually increases the student teacher's involvement in classroom curriculum, learning, and activities. The partner teacher should: • become familiar with the Field Curriculum and the Bachelor of Education program. • introduce the student teacher to the classroom, students, established routines, school culture, school administration, school policies and school improvement plans. • ensure that the student teacher has a space in which to work and has access to necessary teaching documents and resources. • provide student teacher with preparation time to plan and reflect during the school day, including time to collaborate with other student teachers in the school • provide mentorship for learning to teach through sharing resources and ideas, discussing individual learner needs, helping student teachers interpret curriculum objectives, and discussing and modeling teaching strategies and ideas on managing classrooms. • assign instructional tasks on a gradually increasing basis of difficulty. • provide regular oral and written feedback to the student teacher as the semester progresses on the student's teaching engagements and reflections. • meet regularly with the field instructor to monitor progress and address any concerns with the student teacher. • engage in ongoing formative evaluation to

	facilitate student teacher growth.
	• work with the field instructor to enhance performance of marginal students.
	• write a final narrative assessment for the student teacher.
University B (University B, 2012)	Mentor Teachers are classroom teachers who volunteer to share their knowledge, skills and experiences by mentoring a Student Teacher. The Mentor Teacher: • models planning techniques, sharing daily and long range planning strategies. • shares resources and materials used frequently for planning, including unit plans. • assists the Student Teacher in selecting a unit (from the Program of Studies) that is relevant to the class and year plan. • provides opportunity for involvement in a School Project. • provides opportunities for the Student Teacher to observe instruction in areas where they may have less content expertise or where there are management challenges. • provides opportunities for observing other teachers in the school. • allows the Student Teacher opportunities to observe a variety of student needs and how instruction may be differentiated. • observes the Student Teacher teaching and schedules time daily to debrief lessons and provide instructional insight so that they may experience growth and success. • provides written feedback at least once every week • encourages the Student Teacher to engage in reflective practice for professional growth • reviews the Student Teachers' written professional reflections on a weekly basis, providing comments or feedback as needed • models reflective practice in your conversations with the Student Teacher • provides verbal feedback and a written comment on mid-term and final evaluations. • discusses Student Teacher progress with University Facilitator weekly; addresses concerns and determines strategies for

	seeking support.
University C (University C, 2009)	The Teacher Mentor is a certificated professional whose proven knowledge, skills, and attributes contribute to enhancement of the repertoire of teaching strategies and competencies of the Intern Teacher. The Teacher Mentor: • helps and supports the Intern Teacher in understanding and fulfilling professional obligations during the transition to becoming a beginning teacher. • meets with Interns prior to and throughout the period of internship to collaboratively decide the responsibilities each will assume. • will observe the Intern Teacher teach. • communicates with the Intern Teacher with regard to teaching and related professional responsibilities. • initiates and develops ongoing means of communication with the Intern Teacher. • offers help and support to the Intern Teacher in developing a professional portfolio and final report. • communicates as needed with the University Consultant concerning general expectations and progress of the internship. • serves as a role model of professional lifelong learning through active engagement in professional development.

Although the terminology used to label the role of cooperating teacher varied between post-secondary institutions (ie. Mentor Teacher, Partner Teacher), similarities can be found in the description of roles and responsibilities. Because these documents have all been created for the same audience and purpose, it was expected that a number of similar responsibilities and themes would emerge. A review of the documents yielded the identification of several themes, as displayed in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2 Document Review Themes by Post-Secondary Institution

Theme	University A	University B	University C

assistance	X	X	X
collaboration	X	X	X
modeling	X	X	X
feedback	X	X	
mentorship	X		X
observation		X	X
reflection	X	X	
evaluation	X		

Assistance, collaboration, and modeling were roles and responsibilities of cooperating teachers that were described and listed in each of the post-secondary institution documents that were studied. All of the post-secondary institutions required cooperating teachers to assist preservice teachers in becoming familiar with school policies, teaching resources, and professional obligations. University C specifically requires cooperating teachers to assist preservice teachers with the development of a professional portfolio. Collaboration with preservice teachers was listed as a responsibility of cooperating teachers at all post-secondary institutions, and at two institutions, ensuring the opportunity to collaborate with other colleagues was also required.

Mentoring was listed in two of the post-secondary institutions' descriptions of cooperating teachers. Although University B did not list mentoring as a specific responsibility, cooperating teachers at this institution are termed "mentor teachers" which implies that mentoring should occur throughout the field experience.

Two of the post-secondary institutions included providing feedback to preservice teachers on their progress as a responsibility of cooperating teachers. Only one program required cooperating teachers to provide a formal evaluation of the preservice teachers. Although the third post-secondary institution did not use the term "feedback" similar responsibilities were described, as they required cooperating teachers to "communicate" with preservice teachers regarding teaching and professional responsibilities.

Two of the post-secondary institutions implicitly stated that cooperating teachers must observe their preservice teachers teach. Curiously, the only post-secondary institution that requires cooperating teachers to provide an independent formal evaluation for preservice teachers does not list observing preservice teachers teach as a responsibility of cooperating teachers. The post-secondary institutions that do not specify providing an independent formal evaluation for preservice teachers as a responsibility of cooperating teachers do require cooperating teachers to provide input to program faculty members in regards to evaluation.

The modeling and encouragement of reflective practice was described in two of the post-secondary institutions' documents several times, indicating that reflective discourse is a mandatory skill and practice for cooperating teachers themselves. In both of these documents, cooperating teachers were required to provide time for reflection, engage in reflection with preservice teachers, and provide feedback to preservice teachers on their own reflections. While University C does not specify reflective practice as a cooperating teacher responsibility in their role description documentation, it refers to reflective practice as a required skill for potential cooperating teachers.

While Universities A and B listed many responsibilities that would serve to assist preservice teachers in the areas of curriculum and student needs, many of the responsibilities and duties listed in University C's documents emphasized assisting preservice teachers in professional duties, professional development, and transitioning to becoming a beginning teacher. It is also the only program that lists the professional development of cooperating teachers as a responsibility, requiring cooperating teachers to model active engagement in professional development for preservice teachers. At University C, the cooperating teacher role was described as a supportive function to preservice teachers, rather than that of an experienced resource and guide. This may be explained by the extended field experience term that preservice teachers at this post-secondary institution must complete in their final year of the education program.

It is possible that not all expectations and responsibilities of cooperating teachers were listed in the reviewed documents. While the documents inform cooperating teachers of their role expectations, participants in this study felt that they offered limited guidelines as to how these expectations should be met. Moreover, many participants viewed the limited guidelines as vague and wished for greater support from post-secondary institutions in clarifying their role and expectations. An example of a comment made by participants during the focus group interview:

"I would like a clearer idea of the objectives of the educational program and better timed visits by education observers, that is, be sure to be present at the most appropriate times for the preservice teacher." [Simon]

Pre-focus Group Self-Survey

Surveys including demographics questions were distributed to all participants one week prior to the focus group session (see Appendix B). This data was collected to identify the range of teaching experience and academic background of participants, as this may have influenced their knowledge and understanding of the Teaching Quality Standard KSAs (Alberta Education, 1997), and their concepts of teacher professional development and teacher instructional leadership. Based on the surveys received from participants, the group appeared to be well balanced. Within the thirteen participants who completed the self-survey, eight different curriculum areas were represented, and there were seven female and six male participants. To be eligible to serve as a cooperating teacher in Alberta, teachers must have a minimum of three years of successful teaching experience. Two participants had between five and six years of teaching experience, two participants had seven to eight years of experience, one participant had nine to ten years of experience, another three participants had between eleven and twelve years of experience, and the remaining five participants had over twelve years of teaching experience. One participant held one Bachelors degree, six participants held two Bachelors degrees, five participants had completed Masters degrees, and one participant held a Doctorate degree. Ten of the thirteen teachers that participated in the pre-focus group survey had previously held or was holding at the time of the study, a formal leadership role in their school, as a Learning Leader, Department Head, Curriculum Leader, or School-based Administrator. Table 4.3 displays the collected demographics data.

Table 4.3 Participants' Demographics Data

	Pre-focus Group Survey	Focus Group Interview	Follow-up Survey/Interviews
Number of Participants	13	10	11
Male Participants	6	4	4
Female Participants	7	6	7
Teaching Experience: 5-6 years	2	2	1
Teaching Experience: 7-8 years	2	1	1
Teaching Experience: 9-10 years	1	1	1
Teaching Experience: 11-12 years	3	2	3
Teaching Experience: >12 years	5	4	5
Bachelors Degree	1	1	2
>1 Bachelors Degree	6	5	2
Masters Degree	5	3	6
Doctorate Degree	1	1	1
Formal Leadership Role	10	8	9

Following the demographics questions, teachers were asked to self-report on their personal teacher development. Using the six-stage model (see Appendix C) for teacher development adapted from Leithwood (1992), teachers indicated the stage at which they felt they were at in their teaching practice at the time of the study, for each of the eleven KSAs (Alberta Education, 1997). According to the model, teacher instructional leaders are described as those who have reached stage six in their teaching practice. None of the participants self-reported as being in stage two or less for any of the KSAs (Alberta

Education, 1997). A breakdown of responses per KSA (Alberta Education, 1997) is presented in Table 4.4. The data suggests that even teachers who currently hold formal leadership positions feel that they are not consistently operating at the teacher instructional leader level in their everyday teaching practice. One participant offered an explanation for self-rating at a level five for many of the KSAs (Alberta Education, 1997):

> *"Although I am often operating at a level six for most of these (KSAs), I only gave myself a five because I have down days and I also feel that there is always room for improvement."* [Stacey]

Table 4.4 Number of Participants in Each Stage of Teacher Development by KSA

KSA	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5	Stage 6
Teachers' application of pedagogical knowledge, skills and attributes is based in their ongoing analysis of contextual variables.	0	1	4	8
Teachers understand the legislated, moral and ethical frameworks within which they work.	0	1	3	9
Teachers understand the subject disciplines they teach.	0	1	2	10
Teachers know there are many approaches to teaching and learning.	0	1	5	7
Teachers engage in a range of planning activities.	0	3	5	5
Teachers create and maintain environments that are conducive to student learning.	0	1	3	9
Teachers translate curriculum content and objectives into meaningful learning activities.	0	2	5	6
Teachers apply a variety of technologies to meet students' learning needs.	1	3	6	3
Teachers gather and use information about students' learning needs and progress.	0	1	7	5
Teachers establish and maintain partnerships among school, home and community, and within their own schools.	0	2	6	5

Teachers are career-long learners.	0	1	3	9

Participants were then asked to select which KSAs (Alberta Education, 1997) they felt were affected by serving as a cooperating teacher. They were asked to consider the adapted Leithwood (1992) chart while responding, as a baseline for improvement. This data is presented in Table 4.5. Participant responses were further explored during the focus group interview, described below.

Table 4.5 Participants' Indication of KSAs Affected by Cooperating Teaching

KSA	Yes	No
1. Teachers' application of pedagogical knowledge, skills and attributes is based in their ongoing analysis of contextual variables.	12	1
2. Teachers understand the legislated, moral and ethical frameworks within which they work.	9	4
3. Teachers understand the subject disciplines they teach.	9	4
4. Teachers know there are many approaches to teaching and learning.	12	1
5. Teachers engage in a range of planning activities.	12	1
6. Teachers create and maintain environments that are conducive to student learning.	11	2
7. Teachers translate curriculum content and objectives into meaningful learning activities.	11	2
8. Teachers apply a variety of technologies to meet students' learning needs.	10	3
9. Teachers gather and use information about students' learning needs and progress.	10	3
10. Teachers establish and maintain partnerships among school, home and community, and within their own schools.	9	4
11. Teachers are career-long learners.	12	1

Participants were instructed to respond to all questions based on their overall experiences as cooperating teachers. However, many participants initially responded

based on their most recent experiences with preservice teachers. As a result, these teachers sometimes shifted or changed their responses mid-way to reflect both their most recent experiences, and their overall perspective. One participant explained why the answers that she provided in the pre-focus group survey varied from her focus group discussion responses.

> *"I answered these questions very specific to my last experience student teaching which was this time…traditionally I would have answered very similarly to the colleagues that are around the table…"* [Penny]

This participant also described differences between preservice teachers with academic curriculum areas compared to those who were training to teach trades subjects. In her experience, those preservice teachers preparing for vocational teaching often had very different experiential knowledge coming into the practicum and therefore had unique skills and knowledge that influenced the mentoring partnership. She explained,

> *"We need to be able to meet the preservice teacher where they are to engage them in meaningful, learning experiences. Sometimes that means taking a step back and giving ourselves time to learn about their needs, and the level at which they are learning. Each practicum experience is unique as the learning and mentoring needs of each preservice teacher differs, depending on their personalities, past experiences, and knowledge of teaching and learning. As a cooperating teacher, you need to be able to identify those needs and adjust your mentoring style to match those needs."* [Penny]

Many participants explained either during the focus group interview or individual interviews that each individual mentoring experience had the ability to affect their overall

beliefs, ideas, and perspectives about preservice teacher mentoring differently. The

greatest factor identified by participants in changing these experiences was the preservice

teacher, what they brought into the experience, their strengths, weaknesses, and

personalities. However, participants acknowledged that the dynamics of particular sets of

students and their needs, as well as their own personal stage and professional

development needs also impacted the creation of unique mentoring experiences. One

participant expressed,

> *"It is a real crap shoot! I have had great preservice teachers who have saved me*
>
> *piles of work, and I have had other preservice teachers who have been horrible*
>
> *and have even criticized my own teaching practice. When you have a good*
>
> *preservice teacher there is a lot of potential for personal learning and growth, but*
>
> *if you get a preservice teacher who should not be in the profession, or needs a*
>
> *pile of work and guidance, then it just becomes an incredible burden for the*
>
> *teacher!"* [George]

Focus Group Interview

This section will first report on the findings in association with the first research

question, the development of knowledge, skills, and attributes in cooperating teachers,

through the mentoring of preservice teachers. Findings regarding the second research

question, preservice teacher mentoring's effect on teacher instructional leadership

development, will follow. Ten participants engaged in a 110-minute focus group

discussion in which they first addressed the effects of preservice teacher mentoring on the

KSAs (Alberta Education, 1997), and then shared their opinions regarding preservice

teacher mentoring and teacher instructional leadership. The Teaching Quality Standard

(Alberta Education, 1997) applies to "teacher certification, professional development, supervision and evaluation," and is "supported by descriptors of selected knowledge, skills and attributes appropriate to teachers at different stages of their careers." There are eleven knowledge, skills, and attributes (KSAs) described in the Teaching Quality Standard (Alberta Education, 1997) and ascribed to teachers who hold an Alberta Permanent Professional Certificate. Participants were asked to comment as to how or why they feel that mentoring preservice teachers affects their own development in each of the Teaching Quality Standard KSAs (Alberta Education, 1997), if at all. The responses gathered helped to address the research question: What, if any, specific knowledge, skills, and attributes (KSAs) do teachers develop as a result of engaging in preservice teacher mentoring activities?

Although there has been a recent emphasis on collaboration amongst teachers through the use of communities of practice, professional learning communities, and other forms of collegial work groups, teachers are not often engaged in focus group settings for research purposes. I had prepared name placeholders using the pseudonyms that participants had chosen for themselves prior to their arrival. As participants entered the room, they were instructed to find their pseudonym and take a seat. Although not intentional, this helped to break the ice as they joked and laughed with each other about some of the chosen pseudonyms. Several of the participants were familiar with each other, having taught together in the same schools, or worked together on professional committees. The initial dialogue was direct, focused, and many of the participants were slow to respond. Responses appeared to be deliberate and cautious. However, within a few minutes of the focus group session, the dialogue was quick to flow into an engaging

conversation, often with multiple participants wishing to speak at the same time. As the focus group interview progressed, a synergized conversation ensued amongst the participants as a result of their interaction. Participants appeared to speak freely and shared openly with one another.

Although focus groups are neither fully confidential nor anonymous, participants did not appear to be inhibited in their discussion. It appeared easy for them to relate to each other through a common professional language, with familiar teaching protocols, abbreviations, and stereotypes. Their common experiences allowed them to share similar successes and challenges with a familiar understanding. While the participants responded to the discussion topics seriously, there was a lot of laughter throughout the conversation as participants related to each other's stories and anecdotes about having preservice teachers in the classroom. This helped to keep the conversation light, comfortable, and engaging. The exchanged gestures, jokes, and glances amongst participants signaled empathy and understanding for and towards each other and the role that they have shared. Although participants were comfortable in discussing and sharing about their preservice teacher mentoring experiences, many found it challenging to reflect upon the impact that preservice teachers have had on their classroom and personal professional development. Penny explained,

"The role is and always has been viewed as a service that we offer to preservice teachers, so when we think about it and talk about it, it is easier to relate how we serve or help them to prepare for the teacher role. Although there are benefits for ourselves as well, those are rarely acknowledged or spoken of." [Penny]

Although those teachers with more teaching experience were able to draw from more preservice teacher mentoring experiences and hence had more examples to share, all teachers participated in the discussion and offered insightful comments and perspectives. All teachers articulated a love for teaching and a clear sense of their own personal and professional purposes. They displayed a strong sense of pride for their work with students.

A comprehensive overview of categories and topics that were drawn from the focus group data for each KSA (Alberta Education, 1997) is presented in Table 4.6. Each category represents a group of conceptually related topics, and each topic represents a specific idea addressed by the participants in the study. These categories and topics in turn helped to explore and identify participants' understandings of the KSAs (Alberta Education, 1997) and how they are affected by serving as cooperating teachers. The next section presents and elaborates on each category and briefly explains each distinct topic in it.

Table 4.6 KSA Descriptors and Participant Response Topics

KSA	Category	Topic
1. Teachers' application of pedagogical knowledge, skills and attributes is based in their ongoing analysis of contextual variables.	Personal Characteristics Pedagogical Skills Knowledge	• Reflection, problem solving skills • Observe new challenges, meaningful conversations, reflect/re-evaluate own teaching, learn to articulate the art of teaching • New strategies
2. Teachers understand the legislated, moral and ethical frameworks within which they work.	Personal Characteristics Pedagogical Skills	• Reflection • Reviewing/reflecting on/reiterating unspoken rules, reviewing expectations, teaching boundaries, reflection on teacher professionalism, modeling

	Knowledge	•	professional behaviour Reviewing expectations
3. Teachers understand the subject disciplines they teach.	Personal Characteristics Pedagogical Skills Knowledge	• • •	New perspective, renewal of interest/energy/enthusiasm, initiative to try new things Trial run/training ground, verbalization and explanation of pedagogical choices/behaviours, modeling/teaching New ideas, new content, review of knowledge/expectations/curriculum, understanding of post-secondary education programs
4. Teachers know there are many approaches to teaching and learning.	Personal Characteristics Pedagogical Skills Knowledge	• • •	Collaboration skills, cooperation skills, willingness to take risks, new insights/perspectives, observation skills, self-reflection, renew energy/enthusiasm Re-evaluate own teaching, mentoring skills, reflect on best practices, renew teaching practices, modeling/mentoring, increase student engagement New ideas, problem-solving techniques
5. Teachers engage in a range of planning activities.	Personal Characteristics Pedagogical Skills Knowledge	• • •	Develop patience, decision-making skills, willingness to share, skills in prioritizing Review of steps of planning and best practices/key understandings/big ideas, reflect on teaching perspective/approaches, discuss making activities meaningful Review and solidify knowledge of the planning process
6. Teachers create and maintain environments that are conducive to student learning.	Personal Characteristics Pedagogical Skills Knowledge	• •	Relationship building skills, observation skills, new perspective, reflection skills, reminder of personal teaching strengths Mentoring, meaningful conversations, reflect and teach about motivating students
7. Teachers translate curriculum content and objectives into meaningful learning activities.	Personal Characteristics Pedagogical Skills	• •	Problem solving, evaluate risks Learning how to articulate the art of teaching, meaningful conversations, observe growth in other teachers,

	Knowledge	articulating how to "take the temperature", practicing how to make connections between real life and curriculum/life lessons • New techniques, new ideas
8. Teachers apply a variety of technologies to meet students' learning needs.	Personal Characteristics Pedagogical Skills Knowledge	• Collaboration skills • Observation skills, modeling/teaching, decision-making skills • New applications/hardware, new ways of using familiar technology
9. Teachers gather and use information about students' learning needs and progress.	Personal Characteristics Pedagogical Skills Knowledge	• New perspectives • Self-assessment of teaching methods, identify strengths and weaknesses in teaching practices, discuss and communicate student needs/supports/accommodations • Insight on students and their needs
10. Teachers establish and maintain partnerships among school, home and community, and within their own schools.	Personal Characteristics Pedagogical Skills Knowledge	• Reflection, collaboration • Greater accountability for teaching practices, collaboration with colleagues • New community connections, new resources, new ideas
11. Teachers are career-long learners.	Personal Characteristics Pedagogical Skills Knowledge	• Personal understanding about self, fulfills desire to give back, increases confidence as a teacher, reflection • Re-evaluate and reflect on teaching practice, meaningful conversations, fulfill professional responsibilities, reaffirms career choice, personal understanding about teaching • New ideas, new practices, new techniques

Responses to KSA (Alberta Education, 1997) Questions According to Category

KSA #1: Teachers' application of pedagogical knowledge, skills and attributes is based in their ongoing analysis of contextual variables

Many participants interpreted this KSA (Alberta Education, 1997) as the overall ability to teach. They viewed this KSA (Alberta Education, 1997) as an overarching description of the art of teaching itself and felt that many of the other KSAs (Alberta Education, 1997) could fall under, or contribute to this description. Alix described her understanding of this KSA (Alberta Education, 1997) as follows:

> *"...that's the art of teaching, you go from the program of studies and what you've been taught in class, and planning, and make it actually function in a classroom based on what's going on at any given moment, and that's really hard to do..."*
>
> [Alix]

Penny explained:

> *"...we can take a temperature check just by walking in the room because we've been doing it for so long. How do you articulate to a student teacher how to take that temperature check...like we're constantly reevaluating, reassessing, taking a look, looking in the eyes, seeing what they're doing..."* [Penny]

Personal Characteristics

Mentoring preservice teachers can serve as reminders for teachers that teaching is a highly demanding, complex task. Cooperating teachers have to recall, explain, and identify contextual variables in the classroom and in their own teaching practices for preservice teachers. For this particular KSA (Alberta Education, 1997), participants emphasized the opportunity for personal reflection while having meaningful

conversations with preservice teachers about the entire teaching experience. By likening the art of teaching to taking the temperature of a classroom, teachers acknowledge all of the contextual variables used to determine the needs of students. They are then tasked with determining the teaching strategies to employ to best meet those needs.

Teachers in this study felt that having to explain each contextual variable to preservice teachers and train them to observe multiple variables at once increased their own reflection and problem solving skills. For some participants, articulating their practice was challenging and caused them to further reflect on themselves as teachers. Cooperating teachers found it challenging to give reasons for what they do. Penny discussed using reflection and the constant questioning from preservice teachers as a means to identify limitations in her own teaching practice and ability to communicate.

> *"How do I make what we are discussing meaningful? And how do you put that all in, like that's sometimes something I struggle with, 'cause there are things that I cannot articulate…maybe it's my limitation."* [Penny]

Pedagogical Skills

By having direct, meaningful conversations about each contextual variable and the teaching practice itself, participants were forced to reflect upon and re-evaluate their own teaching practice, often having to explain the reasons behind their actions and decisions. For many participants, the largest benefit was being given time to reflect on what was happening in the classroom. Alix shared:

> *"I think for me everytime I had a student teacher, um, you know, I just had more opportunities to talk about and think about those things (contextual variables) as well."* [Alix]

Others developed a personal awareness of the construction of their professional knowledge as they reflected about their skills and decisions with preservice teachers. Trisha explained:

"I think even being able to articulate those variables, as a cooperating teacher is actually a really good thing as well…asking the whys of you, that's probably the best part. With the student teachers, it's making me constantly re-evaluate what's the context, what's what, it's a constant why do you do that that way? All of those kinds of things um, I think makes me a much better teacher. Also, we know that when a student has to teach a particular content that their knowledge of the material becomes much more concrete. It's the same with teaching a preservice or beginning teacher. The more I teach, the better the teaching and learning becomes." [Trisha]

Serving as a cooperating teacher is one way to model the process of inquiry and learning to new teachers, colleagues, and students. In addition to creating awareness and understanding, Karen emphasized the need to show and model best practices for preservice teachers.

"I am more aware of methodology, assessment, planning, even speech – because I feel like I have to model and explain and show." [Karen]

Knowledge

Because the student classroom environment inevitably changes when preservice teachers are present, participants agreed that they were provided with opportunities to observe new challenges and to gain new insights, perspectives, and try new teaching strategies in the classroom. Geoff explained:

"...if you were kinda the same person for most of your career, a lot of the

situations that you're gonna have are probably going to be repeats to some

extent. Having somebody new there, I don't know, forces you into situations you

might not have ever dealt with before." [Geoff]

Rico elaborated:

"When you struggle, feel challenged, or observe others with challenges, you have

to reflect on how to solve these issues when you might otherwise not have."

[Rico]

Experienced teachers often rely on classroom strategies and teaching techniques

that have produced successful results in the past. The participants agreed that

opportunities to handle new challenges in different ways was beneficial to their practice,

challenging them to seek out new and better ways to teach.

"...it also helps you because you come up with new strategies and there's new

challenges." [Alix]

Karen suggested that beyond developing new strategies, she enjoyed the opportunity to

vary her application of specific skills.

"... it's also um, the experience and the skill, and the application of that skill and

the chance to do it and maybe try it differently…" [Karen]

KSA #2: Teachers understand the legislated, moral and ethical frameworks within which they work

Personal Characteristics

Constructing a professional identity is a complex, ongoing process. Much of the focus group discussion about this KSA (Alberta Education, 1997) centered around the topic of teacher-student relationships, how they should be fostered, and how to help preservice teachers negotiate the paths of friendships versus mentorships with students. Participants felt that this was particularly an issue at the high school level, whereby the age gap between preservice teachers and high school students is often fairly small. They also expressed that discussing ethical professional boundaries with preservice teachers sometimes evoked a moral reflection within themselves. When preservice teachers question or need guidance regarding the legislated, moral, and ethical frameworks of the teaching profession, teachers are forced to think about and articulate the boundaries. For some teachers, modeling professional behaviours requires them to become more vigilant, and transparent in their choices. Penny explained:

> *"I have found that student teachers really, really struggle with this*
>
> *(professionalism) and it's either or. Either they're all in the friends zone or*
>
> *they're all in this really wanting to maintain a professional front, and particularly*
>
> *with high school student teachers because some student teachers coming into a*
>
> *high school are quite young… How do you take a risk when you're concerned*
>
> *with your professionalism? Because we also have to be personable, and let*
>
> *ourselves go a little bit. It's a big risk and there are ethical, moral frameworks*
>
> *that we have to absolutely draw a line in the sand around. When I have a*

preservice teacher, I make my actions and decisions more transparent, with

intention and practice so that they can be used for modeling. " [Penny]

<u>Pedagogical Skills</u>

Participants acknowledged the challenges that teachers at various experience levels have with this KSA (Alberta Education, 1997). Most expressed that personal teacher professionalism takes time to develop, requiring experiential knowledge. While preservice teachers are exposed to a variety of documentation including codes of conduct and guiding principles of professional and ethical conduct within their post-secondary education programs, there are additional routines and guidelines to navigate within in a school. Because each school develops its own unique culture, there are many unspoken rules, some of which include the involvement and connection of and to students. Teachers felt that it was of great benefit to them to review, discuss, and model teaching professional standards, boundaries, and professional behaviour for preservice teachers, and that meaningful conversations about expectations were relevant in their own understanding of teacher professionalism. For some, it invoked a greater awareness and understanding of how their school operated as a culture:

"...they (preservice teachers) didn't really understand how a school worked

necessarily with um, things that they did, needed to do with their coworkers,

things that were expected, just um, what we call at our school, the givens..."

[Krissy]

Alix added:

"...learning how to navigate that environment at a professional way to choose

your own path in terms of how you're gonna behave, can be tricky...I mean, that's

hard for all teachers I think, but I've had some interesting conversations with

student teachers about how to process your own feelings. I tried to model what I

felt was good practice in terms of professional behaviour and talked to them

about why I chose to do it the way I did. I think the issues of professionalism,

that's a really important piece of cooperating teaching." [Alix]

Beyond school policies, many participants indicated that their own understanding of teacher professionalism included their motivation to serve as cooperating teachers. Participants recognized the value and importance that mentoring preservice teachers has to not only themselves, but also to the profession. Many participants echoed Karen's sentiments of responsibility:

"I serve as a cooperating teacher because I feel it is my professional

obligation…" [Karen]

George concurred:

"I also felt a sense of obligation to the profession in that this was the 'right thing

to do'." [George]

Knowledge

It is important for cooperating teachers to be familiar with provincial, divisional, and school-based policies and procedures. While participants did not express that a lot of new knowledge was gained regarding this KSA (Alberta Education, 1997), they did suggest that their knowledge of professional boundaries and rules was reviewed and strengthened while responding to questions that preservice teachers have around professional practice. Rico reflected:

"I tell my student teachers that having that relationship with students is

important, but it's also very important to have that ethical line as a teacher that

you're not crossing for whatever means. There are so many unspoken rules to

remember and it's important to talk about how to make those ethical decisions."

[Rico]

Krissy added:

"...just going over all the expectations myself, like making sure you're not

showing up at 5 to 9 when school starts at 9, that's not okay, or um, you know,

like we have certain rules it's not okay to let them slide and all those little

things…" [Krissy]

In the follow-up surveys, one participant shared that his experience as a

cooperating teacher has led him to take on other leadership roles, one of which is serving

as an Alberta Teachers' Association representative. Through mentoring preservice

teachers, he realized that his knowledge of teacher professional rights was limited, hence

fueling his interest to learn more. He indicated that his new role has increased his

knowledge of the legal, moral, and ethical rights and responsibilities of teachers within

Alberta, which he then shares with his preservice teachers and colleagues.

KSA #3: Teachers understand the subject disciplines they teach

This KSA (Alberta Education, 1997) is of particular importance to high school

teachers as they are often hired for and work in very specialized curriculum subject-

specific departments. Although curriculum areas are updated and the sequencing of

objectives often changes, high school teachers generally teach within the same, or similar, subject disciplines throughout their careers.

Personal Characteristics

Participants with varying teaching experience agreed that working as cooperating teachers can help to re-motivate, and renew interest and enthusiasm for subject matter. This enthusiasm and creative energy often lasts longer than the field experience placement. By having the opportunity to observe preservice teachers and work with them in planning for the classroom, participants indicated that they were often able to view subject disciplines with a new perspective. Greystroke described how preservice teachers have impacted his energy and enthusiasm for teaching:

> *"...as you teach more and more sometimes you get, uh, as they say, established patterns and you get sort of a bit jaded and tired, and having a younger teacher coming in, it's like having, uh, a puppy getting with an old dog, and uh, what happens is you get that energy coming back and it makes you want to teach more and learn new things...you get into a position where you get excited about doing new things because they bring new things in with you...they sort of give you a quick poke and then you go bouncing to try new ideas."* [Greystroke]

Pedagogical Skills

Teachers appreciated having a preservice teacher to discuss ideas, curriculum, and lessons with, prior to implementing them in the classroom. They acknowledged the benefits of having meaningful conversations about the material and how it could best be taught to engage students. They expressed that verbalizing explanations or instructional plans with preservice teachers helped to solidify their own key pedagogical choices,

understandings, and behaviours. By then either observing the preservice teacher teach, or modeling lessons for the preservice teacher, participants felt that they could use the preservice teacher as a sounding board or training ground for pedagogical practices. Alix described how having a preservice teacher has helped her to work through unfamiliar curriculum:

"...sometimes to some of the curricular areas, you know, you're not necessarily an expert, um, it's great to explain it to them (preservice teachers), work through problems, um, it can be a great source of sort of trial, kind of getting down the content before delivering it and sometimes they bring up things you haven't thought of before, which is great, and sometimes they have new ideas." [Alix]

Having experienced a recent update to the curriculum area she teaches, Stacey reiterated:

"I think too, um, teaching something where the curriculum is still relatively newer, uh, and you're still kinda figuring out the kinks yourself it kinda helps to explain it…what is expected…to be able to speak to the preservice teacher first, before the students, that's really helpful because you start to get into your own sort of pattern of how you assess, so when you have somebody sort of questioning it, it's good for you." [Stacey]

Penny shared how discussing mentoring practices with colleagues gave her new ideas in viewing the preservice teacher practicum experience. By varying their approach to mentoring preservice teachers, teachers can ensure that they are also benefitting from the experience.

"I have always tried to find out the preservice teachers' strengths and then let them teach those areas so they could build upon what they already know and

could shine through them. But I had a colleague that would assign preservice

teachers curriculum units in which she was the least comfortable teaching, so she

could learn from them. She wanted to capitalise on the preservice teachers'

energy and effort into creating 'perfect' lessons. It was an approach completely

opposite to my own." [Penny]

<u>Knowledge</u>

Teachers expressed that they gained new knowledge from working with preservice teachers in the area of curriculum subject content in various ways, by seeing new ideas brought into the classroom. Although teachers can gain new ideas from many other resources such as workshops, lectures, research books and articles, and other teachers, preservice teachers implement new ideas in the classroom, allowing cooperating teachers to observe their effectiveness first-hand.

"...they'll (preservice teachers) come in with different perspectives, um, and

pieces of content that I maybe had not thought about. It makes my program better

and it's better for the students in the long run." [Trisha]

Reviewing curriculum objectives and expectations was also viewed as extremely useful for cooperating teachers. Simon was particularly appreciative of being able to reflect collaboratively.

"I have gained new and different perspectives on my subject area through having

someone to discuss and share with." [Simon]

In some cases, the process of shifting preservice teachers' subject-matter knowledge into contextual curriculum knowledge itself was a challenge for cooperating teachers. Preservice teachers are often strong in their content area, but are unfamiliar

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with curriculum and schools. Cooperating teachers help preservice teachers to make connections between knowledge and teaching. Rico explained:

> *"...they've (preservice teachers) brought new ideas of course like projects and stuff, so in math I traditionally wouldn't have done much for that, but they've brought in some good ideas for that...but I've also had student teachers come in, and I was surprised how curricularly bad they were, and you know, I had to kinda work through that with them so, that helped me a little bit too. Even if they excelled at math themselves, they didn't necessarily know how to teach it. That's where my role came in."* [Rico]

Penny also noted that she was able to gain more knowledge and understanding about post-secondary programs, specifically education programs, as well as the curriculum subject area that she taught.

> *"It was useful for me to learn what apprentices need to know and then look at teaching that. This was very different for me. It's neat to see what's happening at like post-secondary institutions of the world."* [Penny]

KSA #4: Teachers know there are many approaches to teaching and learning

Personal Characteristics

Participants revealed personal characteristics as the most affected by preservice teacher mentoring for this particular KSA (Alberta Education, 1997). Beyond gaining new perspectives and insights, teachers felt that they increased their collaboration and cooperation skills and were more apt to take risks in the classroom after working with preservice teachers. Mentoring preservice teachers helped to decrease teacher isolation

and they reported a sense of renewed energy and enthusiasm for the classroom and teaching as a result of this experience. Participants found that sharing their practice with preservice teachers motivated them to open up and share with other colleagues as well, allowing them to forge new partnerships within the school. Greystroke shared:

"Quite often in teaching we become quite insular, and uh, we're in our rooms by ourselves and we don't sorta step up because we're so absorbed with what we're doing. When you have a student teacher coming into the classroom that sort of makes you more of a cooperating person. You take the time to learn and to work with other people and you start sharing ideas more so…the working together attitude makes you a better teacher…and I would interact more outside of the classroom as well as to share things with other teachers. Once you share with student teachers, it makes it easier to not say this is mine only and I don't want to share with people. We learn how to be more cooperative. That's why we're cooperating teachers." [Greystroke]

Simon described his development of personal awareness through reflection and observation,

"I feel I am now more confident in my own practice and having the opportunity to observe students responding or not responding to a student teacher has given me a new perspective and new ideas about how to adjust my own approach." [Simon]

Trisha related the impact of working collaboratively to student learning in the classroom.

"Having that other set of eyes and brain in the classroom, can and does increase student learning." [Trisha]

Although teachers are often encouraged by educational research and school administrators to take intellectual risks in the classroom, they are often constrained by time and pressure by parents and the educational community to use "tried-and-true" strategies to obtain successful student achievement results. Bringing preservice teachers into the classroom offers teachers opportunities to observe, try, and test new research-based practices to expand their pedagogical repertoires. After describing a very specific example of a lesson created and implemented by a preservice teacher, Karen explained the impact on her own teaching and learning.

> "...it (preservice teacher lesson) worked really well and it reminded me about taking risks that sometimes they, student teachers, don't know enough not to take the risk. And we know too much to dare to take the risk anymore..." [Karen]

Some participants expressed their learned appreciation for other educators and their approaches to teaching and learning as a result of serving as cooperating teachers. Rico shared how his judgement as to who can teach and who can lead has expanded.

> "It (cooperating teaching) has shown me that teachers come to the job with a variety of skill sets, and that most of them will be successful as long as they want what is best for the students, treat them with respect, care for them, and if they know what their strengths are as a teacher." [Rico]

In further discussion with this particpant, he relayed that prior to serving as a cooperating teacher, his view of teaching and perspective of other teachers was based solely on his own feelings and experiences of teaching. When colleagues sometimes shared their teaching challenges during staff meetings or to others, he often could not relate because he had not seen or experienced the same challenges. Observing preservice teachers in the

classroom helped to broaden his view of teachers and teaching as he had the opportunity to observe and discuss a variety of teaching methods, approaches, strategies, and challenges.

> *"I didn't realise what some teachers struggle with until I saw it. It made me stop and think about what I do and why I do it."* [Rico]

Cooperating teachers recognize that preservice teachers need to develop their own ways of teaching and their own unique styles. By exposing preservice teachers to new influences, cooperating teachers can increase their learning opportunities and display a respect for the practice of their peers. Alix explained that this appreciation for other educators may also lead to new or renewed relationships with other teachers within the same school:

> *"I think we always encouraged our students to go out and you know, we said oh this person's really good, or you should go see this, or maybe this will be good, 'cause you know there's just a huge range and some of it just has to do with personalities and helping them find an approach. And also, I know that for myself I've picked up things from other teachers like they would come back and say oh you know, so I saw this from so and so…and I would be interested in finding out more and going to talk to that colleague myself."* [Alix]

Pedagogical Skills

Serving as cooperating teachers offered participants opportunities for self-reflection. They indicated a growth in pedagogical skills due to the need to re-evaluate their own teaching practices and to reflect on best practices with preservice teachers. Penny related:

"...the by-product of having a student teacher is you do re-evaluate your own methods 'cause there are times when I'm presenting and I think, hmm, was that best practice? And now you have another body and you want to be a good mentor, we all want to be great cooperating teachers...and it's a nice way to rejuvenate what you're doing." [Penny]

When teachers are able to act as observers, they have an opportunity to experience their own classrooms from a new perspective while thinking about teaching and learning. The space that teachers are given to step-back and observe their classrooms, teaching practices, students and their learning, allows them to question and investigate ideas and engage in pedagogical conversations around work and practice. Karen explained,

"I think something I slip into when I'm watching a student teacher is not thinking about what the student teacher's doing, but how, I would do that, and not oh I would do that better, but thinking, just reflecting on my own practice, not judgemental in any way. It's hard not to reflect on your own practice. I'm also interested in how the students in my class respond to a different teacher, particularly a novice, and especially how they are willing to cooperate and provide support." [Karen]

Participants also discussed having the opportunity to enhance their mentoring skills through meaningful conversations, modeling best practices, and sharing strategies to increase student engagement. Participants shared ways in which they are personally challenged and how their learning is affected by observing and sharing teaching strategies and approaches with preservice teachers.

"Seeing how differing styles of approach affects the effectiveness of a lesson informs my own approach." [Simon]

Krissy added,

"I am more conscious of questioning and using differentiated instruction because of serving as a cooperating teacher." [Krissy]

As teachers progress through their careers, they often fall into practices that are comfortable, but not always "best practice". Some of these habits are positively affected when we strive to become role models for others.

"...I think having a student teacher in there there's not just the opportunity to up your game again, but maybe with them and their perspective, your maximum teaching potential can be increased." [Geoff]

Knowledge

Participants found working with preservice teachers to be a source of new teaching and learning ideas and strategies, particularly when needing to problem solve in the classroom.

"I find that generating new ideas that they came with A, and I would come with B, and then C would be the thing that evolved out of it and I found that really invigorating. Very, uh, worthwhile." [Simon]

They also appreciated the chance to learn about current practices and research, as preservice teachers integrated their practical experience with their post-secondary education program coursework. Teachers often lack exposure to current research practices because they are so entrenched in the day to day work that they are doing in the classroom. Penny explained:

> *"We don't have enough time to talk about current research when we're*
>
> *teaching."* [Penny]

Trisha added:

> *"It (cooperating teaching) allows me to remain current in research as well as*
>
> *requires me to articulate the reasons why I do what I do."* [Trisha]

Many participants were interested in mentoring preservice teachers from a variety of post-secondary programs to learn about teaching from different approaches. Krissy shared:

> *"I've had different student teachers from different universities and they come with*
>
> *such a variety of backgrounds on knowing what to plan and so, even looking back*
>
> *at what I'm doing to remember what I have to do to teach them and reflect on*
>
> *how my teaching approach has changed over the years. It is interesting to see the*
>
> *different schools and how that works too with their (preservice teachers)*
>
> *planning."* [Krissy]

KSA #5: Teachers engage in a range of planning activities

Personal Characteristics

The sharing of classrooms between cooperating teachers and preservice teachers requires negotiated relationships in which there is trust and mutual respect for each other, students, and learning. For some mentoring pairs, the practicum experience is one of personality clashes and challenges. Stacey described teaching her preservice teacher to plan as a place of tension and stress. Through the process of reviewing big picture questions and focusing on outcomes based approaches, this teacher gave an example of

developing patience and understanding for her preservice teacher and their mutual learning.

> *"...this is where um, there was a lot of tension between my student teacher and I...it was just, leave me alone and let me, let me go...so I would throw in the what ifs or the whys, trying to get that outcomes based approach...she wasn't impressed with me, but at the same time, by the end of everything I got a thank you because it clicked. It was a very frustrating but a very good experience on both sides in the end."* [Stacey]

Although they may have theoretical knowledge as a teacher, until the practicum experience, preservice teachers have only experienced the classroom as a student. Trisha offered insight as to how personal perspective may be affected:

> *"We have to really teach them how to plan and how to think like a teacher and not think like a student, so shifting your own perspective as you model it as well."*
> [Trisha]

Pedagogical Skills

Participants agreed that planning, whether it be daily lesson plans, unit plans, or year-long plans, was an essential aspect of teaching and key to a successful classroom practice. Participants identified specific areas of planning with preservice teachers such as establishing clear and concrete goals for curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Planning for experienced teachers often looks very different than planning for beginning teachers. Working with preservice teachers gives veteran teachers an opportunity to revisit the fundamentals of teaching.

Karen related:

"With a student teacher you have to teach them how to plan…and accept and reassure them that the plan might not work out but you still have to have a plan. So it's like going through all those steps right from the very beginning, right from the key understandings and the essential questions…all of those things that we, that, the more you practice, the less you pay attention to that." [Karen]

In recent years, many schools have shifted their planning framework to focus on the "big ideas" rather than on content standards alone. Participants described having preservice teachers as sometimes beneficial to their own planning because they are only in the classroom for a short period of time. Preservice teachers are subsequently responsible for short unit or daily plans, but are subjected to "fitting in" with the cooperating teacher's yearly plans. As a result, cooperating teachers still have control over setting many of the "big picture" goals. Cooperating teachers' interests and passion are not compromised and preservice teacher planning can thus support school-based and teacher initiatives. This benefits the cooperating teacher and students, as long term goals remain consistent, yet new perspectives and strategies are injected into meeting those goals.

"They're parachuted into us for a very short period of time so we actually have already done that planning, what does it look like for an entire semester, and then they're in for three weeks or six weeks or whatever and it's like here's your little block." [Trisha]

Greystroke shared that his own planning skills were challenged when he had to share the classroom with preservice teachers.

"Having a student teacher helps me work on my own timing – long range, unit, and lesson plans. I have to plan everything for my own teaching and then also have to incorporate the student teacher into these plans." [Greystroke]

Knowledge

Participants also increased their awareness of various planning styles. Those participants who have had preservice teachers from a variety of universities had the benefit of being exposed to a variety of planning approaches (as directed by the teacher education programs).

"It (having a preservice teacher) brings to your attention that planning is also a personal thing and that there's a lot of personal style that goes into it. It's a great way as well to communicate with your colleagues and to think about things like that, that you maybe wouldn't normally do." [Alix]

Having a preservice teacher helped some participants to better understand the learning and planning process. Because beginning teachers require step-by-step planning, it also serves as a reminder and review of curriculum goals for cooperating teachers. Penny explained:

"It's really challenging for somebody who is not familiar with the teaching arena to sort out what's important, what's not important, so it's been one thing that I've found interesting and helpful too." [Penny]

KSA #6: Teachers create and maintain environments that are conducive to student learning

<u>Personal Characteristics</u>

The focus group discussion for this KSA (Alberta Education, 1997) seemed to be heavily focused around teaching preservice teachers to build strong relationships with students in the classroom, to set the tone for student learning. Cooperating teachers often learn a lot about themselves as teachers while in the mentor role. As they consider their own traits as teachers and reflect on the personal qualities that they bring to the classroom, cooperating teachers may also consider their own suitability for the profession. Through personal reflection and having meaningful discussions with preservice teachers, several participants learned valuable insights about themselves. Participants agreed that personal growth included recognizing their own strengths as much as recognizing areas of concern. Stacey shared:

> *"This experience lead to a lot of meaningful conversations and it was actually good for me 'cause it helped remind me that that's where my strength is (relationship building), myself…these conversations were very powerful for both of us, I think."* [Stacey]

<u>Pedagogical Skills</u>

In particular, many participants distinguished between teaching academic versus non-academic classes of students and teaching preservice teachers about the types of learning environments and teaching approaches that are more conducive to student learning for various types of students. Alix articulated:

"...I shared with them (preservice teachers) so that they could teach some of my non-academic kids and so I could help mentor them and so we had huge conversations around, um, relationships, 'cause that's, I mean, that's the key piece with that group. So I had great conversations and had lots of opportunities to talk about ways to work with those kids and build relationships. I think the conversation piece is huge and there's lots of challenges. So it's a great opportunity for you too, because sometimes you'll see something (student behaviour) come out with this student teacher that you have not seen when you were by yourself, so it's a good opportunity to build those skills and again, think about how to get those guys going. For me that was a great opportunity to yeah, talk about and think about those kinds of things." [Alix]

Greystroke described how his perspective has changed from observing preservice teachers teach non-academic students.

"My perspective on teaching and learning has always been fluid. My perspective on 'how to teach' has been changed with the -2 (non-academic) classes, especially with numbers of assignments and packing of lessons, after watching some preservice teachers trying to be too academic or too simplistic."

[Greystroke]

Knowledge

Participants did not identify any specific claims to increased knowledge about creating and maintaining successful learning environments as a result of serving as cooperating teachers. However, Krissy offered that her learning varied depending on the

specific preservice teachers, their strengths, weaknesses, and the depth of discussions that she had with them.

> *"My last student teacher was strong with the non-academic kids and not so much with the academic ones, so I felt for myself that I personally didn't pick up anything, with that type of relationship building or anything like that, probably 'cause it is my strength and I didn't feel like I gained anything from it other than to try to make sure that he understood how the academic classes would work too. But I have had other student teachers where my own learning was affected, so it just depends on the particular student teacher and where his or her strengths and weaknesses are."* [Krissy]

KSA #7: Teachers translate curriculum content and objectives into meaningful learning activities

Personal Characteristics

For many participants, developing enough trust to allow preservice teachers to take intellectual risks in their classrooms was challenging. However, teachers acknowledged that taking risks themselves and allowing preservice teachers opportunities to take risks allowed for a greater exploration of ideas, the potential to deepen their own understanding of ideas, and make further connections with students both inside and outside of the classroom. Cooperating teachers need to be able to use their perception to determine when preservice teachers require more intensive involvement and when it is appropriate to give them more freedom to develop confidence and responsibility in their

own teaching practices (Manitoba Education, 2011). Greystroke shared how he learned to become more flexible and "let them go."

> *"As you've said we have some (preservice teachers) who don't want to take risks, but sometimes you as a cooperating teacher can judge the student teachers too, and say this person is ready for a risk. And sometimes you also have to let them go, put their feet into it, and just learn."* [Greystroke]

<u>Pedagogical Skills</u>

Students learn in different ways and effective teachers must be able to design rich learning experiences to engage students in their learning. Participants identified meaningful conversations with preservice teachers as those conversations that are pedagogy driven with a focus on personal teaching practice. Cooperating teachers observed and then gave pedagogy-based feedback to preservice teachers, with deeper insights leading to improved classroom practice. Karen explained:

> *"...it's the application of that skill and the chance to get to do it, uh, the chance to be able to do it again and maybe try it differently with different classes and seeing the differences that occur and the different contexts of that...what approach would you take with a novel for this class as opposed to this class. But it's just the whole thing of the program of studies and how that determines what happens and also the information that's available in the teacher support texts."* [Karen]

The data gathered in this study indicated that cooperating teachers value teaching preservice teachers to understand the diverse, cultural, and family circumstances that students come from, as much as pedagogical knowledge such as curriculum and planning. Many of the examples and experiences that they shared spoke of teaching preservice

teachers to have the emotional capacity to empathize with diverse groups of students and parents. In most cases, modeling empathy and understanding was described as an effective way to share with preservice teachers. The effect of this behaviour went beyond the scope of teaching preservice teachers, and resulted in stronger relationships being built with their own students in the classroom.

Penny described the challenge that cooperating teachers have in teaching preservice teachers to create meaningful learning activities:

> *"...and of the things that I think is helping student teachers, okay, so now we've learnt the program of studies, okay, we're looking at all this stuff, how do we put in that relationship piece. How do we hit kids where they live? We all know that we teach students and not the curriculum..."* [Penny]

Participants also learned from observing and discussing teaching practices with preservice teachers and increased their use of modeling successful ways of connecting with students in the classroom.

Alix elucidated:

> *"This whole idea of engaging students and making things meaningful...you can have this beautiful math lesson all prepared, content perfect, you know, to you it makes total sense, you know, it's beautiful on the board, it's like you've got it all figured out and then it's a total bomb. The kids hate it, they're not interested, they don't understand it, you know you get a bunch of hands up, and I think, you know, for every teacher that happens of course, but for new teachers, I mean, maybe they don't think it happens to you, but it's good to articulate to them that it does as well. It's good to have those experiences and then to work with that and*

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say okay well here's the difference between theory and what in your mind is

gonna work, and I think every teacher struggles with that all the time, because

even as you are more experienced, that still happens for whatever reason with

some lessons and I think the trick is to over time try to replace those things with

what works better. And that's an ongoing process. And you can watch the

student teacher progress which is really fun and exciting as well because they

start out not really knowing and over time you get to watch them get better and

better and see how rapport affects things in their own decisions which I think is

fun and it's good, and it's good for yourself as well as you observe these plans,

help problem solve new things, and observe their growth." [Alix]

Rico added the importance of holding meaningful conversations with preservice
teachers about context and experiential knowledge:

"You can have really good conversations with them (preservice teachers)…like

talk about taking the temperature…and you know what, sometimes content who

cares, talk to the kids you know, tell, in math, I mean you can't make things real

life situations, most of that's crap, I mean, logarithms, it's not real. Talk about

something, say what happened to you last night, you know, and then the kids say

oh, that's cool, I do that too. And over time you listen to the kids, you talk to

them, you coach." [Rico]

Stacey described how she teaches preservice teachers to make connections between real
life situations and curriculum by capitalising on real-time incidences and events.

"This is a real life situation, so let's turn it into a lesson. Is my current lesson out

the window? Yep. But at the same time, you've got that experience to turn it into

something because you've used a piece of your personality and taken whatever

they're all riled up about and combined the two and you just did a stellar lesson

where you reached 80% of the kids and uh, there it is. They're (preservice

teachers) terrified in the beginning, to deviate from task one, task two, task three

but that's where I get to help and teach and coach them." [Stacey]

Knowledge

Participants recognized that learning was reciprocated between themselves and preservice teachers when it came to problem solving or generating ideas to create richer learning opportunities for students. For Greystroke, the group of students that his preservice teacher was instructing, was challenging and sometimes problematic. He described feeling overwhelmed and stressed and noted that the preservice teacher was having more success with the same group.

"He (preservice teacher) could tell, er, sense when they (students) were having

problems and he got to learn how to work with that. And that also taught me

some ways of how to improve my techniques because he was learning, and I was

learning from him because he had such good rapport. So when you see things

like this, you do get some really, really good ideas from the students as preservice

teachers when you let them have freedom just to do the risks and let them do that

risk taking." [Greystroke]

Karen explained how serving as a cooperating teacher has had an impact on her own teaching practice and translated into her own interactions with students in the classroom.

"I am challenged to understand and explain knowledge that has become tacit and implicit – when I explain to a student teacher I also explain more to students."

[Karen]

KSA #8: Teachers apply a variety of technologies to meet students' learning needs

Teaching and learning in increasingly networked, technology-rich, digital classrooms requires new approaches to understanding knowledge and learning, and specialised skillsets of teachers. Beyond applying various technology to their lessons, teachers need to acquire new expertise to design and facilitate meaningful learning with technology. Many of the teachers in this study indicated that their competencies in using technology in the classroom were considerably less developed than their competencies in many of the other KSAs (Alberta Education, 1997).   Since teachers must have a minimum of three years of teaching experience to qualify to serve as cooperating teachers, most of the teachers in this study were veteran teachers. It might be expected that younger generations of teachers have higher levels of expertise with current technology than do veteran teachers. All participants acknowledged the increasing importance of improving their technological proficiencies to meet students' learning needs and expressed a desire to gain more skills.

Personal Characteristics

Participants agreed that having the technology modeled for them and being able to observe its use and application with their own students in the classroom helped to encourage and motivate teachers to use more technology in their own lessons. Many participants expressed that they enjoyed being able to work with a new technology

application or tool alongside with the preservice teacher, learning about the uses of the technology and troubleshooting any issues together. This increased teachers' collaboration skills, and boosted confidence in being able to use more technology in the classroom on their own. Additionally, participants grew in their value and appreciation of technology in the classroom as they were inspired and impressed by creative applications by preservice teachers. Trisha described how her knowledge of technology has been affected by preservice teachers:

> *"My student teacher was pretty good as far as bringing in some new technologies and had a good level of technical skill. She actually set up a video conference with um, Dubai…so it was really very impressive, she taught me a little bit and a little bit vice versa."* [Trisha]

<u>Pedagogical Skills</u>

Teachers in this study understood the need to model the appropriate use of technology in the classroom. In some cases, this occurred through having meaningful discussions with preservice teachers as to the value of timing the technology integration within lessons, the use and overuse of technology as a teaching tool, and the purpose of using technology for student learning. Rico shared:

> *"They (preservice teachers) generally have, you know, coming out of university, new knowledge of stuff that maybe we haven't seen or they've used it more, so I definitely learn some things. But then, also, I found that I had to talk to them about using the technology too much or what's the point, what are you trying to do with this technology, and how does it enhance learning."* [Rico]

Participants also needed to instruct preservice teachers in the use of specific educational technology tools and applications. Teachers felt that this modeling and instruction helped to solidify their own skills and understanding of the technology.

> *"Um, I think not only did I pick up some things from my student teacher, having him work in different schools, he didn't know how to use our specific technology, so a promethean board he didn't know how to use so I also had to share that…"*
>
> [Krissy]

Knowledge

Participants acknowledged preservice teachers as a source of new technological knowledge. Teachers offered very specific examples of learning new technology applications and new ways of using familiar tools in the classroom.

> *"…the preservice teacher sorta introduced me to some things that I hadn't used before, so I wasn't familiar with things like blogging, so that is something that she brought into the course…I found that interesting and learned a little bit about it."*
>
> [Stacey]

Karen added,

> *"The student teacher I had was working on coursework through Moodle and I was just starting to use Moodle in my courses…so we worked on those Moodle courses together and learned techniques."* [Karen]

Greystroke shared how he has transferred the knowledge he gained from preservice teachers into his own classroom practice.

> *"Student teachers have a better understanding of technology. Now I access youtube more frequently for snippets from tv shows and movies. I have borrowed*

or used ideas and techniques presented by the student teachers that enhance the

learning process within the classroom structure." [Greystroke]

KSA #9: Teachers gather and use information about students' learning needs and

progress

Our classrooms are increasingly populated with students with diverse learning

needs. Teachers expressed strong opinions about this KSA (Alberta Education, 1997)

and their abilities to meet this competency. Many participants expressed that they were

not meeting student needs as well as they would like to, due to lack of resources,

particularly time for the continuous monitoring of, and responding to, individual student

needs. All participants, however, acknowledged that student learning increases when

attention is paid to individual needs and therefore strived to increase their skills in this

area.

Personal Characteristics

Participants felt that their capacity to notice and attend to students' individual

learning needs in a timely manner was increased with preservice teachers in the

classroom. Observing preservice teachers offered cooperating teachers time to reflect

without the immediate need to respond to students. Trisha explained:

> *"I think for me, um, having that other set of eyes in the classroom gives you*
>
> *another way to look at the classroom in a different way. And you see things that*
>
> *you don't necessarily when you have the immediacy of the million questions in a*
>
> *minute. That, when you can step back, you can see that differently, and I think it*
>
> *just gives you that buffer to see the learning needs."* [Trisha]

Simon added:

> *"One can gain a more complete understanding of individual students as a third party, or more detached observer."* [Simon]

Penny related:

> *"My perspective on how to reach all levels of students has changed. Sitting back and observing allowed me the chance to see student behaviour that I may have missed and then plan to address it."* [Penny]

Pedagogical Skills

Participants not only observed new perspectives in preservice teachers, but also developed new perspectives for themselves, and new lenses through which to examine and think about teacher pedagogy and student learning. Greystroke shared:

> *"And the other thing is when you see your student teachers assessing your students, that gives you an insight of what the weaknesses are too of how they mark and things…in some cases can be subjective even though you've got your rubrics. You get to see what these student teachers are looking for in their marking process, and at that beginning stage then you can think well maybe perhaps I'm a little too tough, a little too strict in this and when you see what they're doing it gives you a chance to also assess your own way of assessing things with the students that make you sort of question some of the things you're doing which makes it a lot better as a teacher to work with. You get to see what they (preservice teachers) have with their strengths and weaknesses and improve your strengths and weaknesses too at the same time."* [Greystroke]

Several participants indicated that having a preservice teacher in the classroom helped to keep them more accountable for their own actions and improved their practice because they wanted to model best instructional practices despite acknowledging that they didn't always perform at their optimum level when on their own.

> *"Um, my student teacher, when he had only one class for the first two, three weeks, was very, very responsive with regards to IPPs, or would say 'hey, you notice the trend here that's been happening?' I guess so, right. And he was very open to call mom and dad and who we should email on this and that sort of stuff, and then, you know, he gets a few more classes and it's funny how quickly that slows down because they can't. And you know, in one respect I probably should call home more often. Um, is it always possible and am I always picking things up that I should be? No, no probably not."* [Geoff]

Rico concurred:

> *"One nice thing for the kids is that with student teachers, they get one class sometimes first, and they'll be with that class for a couple weeks, just them. So, they take the time to maybe look through their assignments and quizzes a little bit more and reflect on all, did they get better, or you know, whereas when you've got 140 kids plus, you have your own kids, plus you're coaching, plus you're doing this, you're marking it, you're giving it back, you're going over it, you're not reflecting nearly as much. So for them to come to you and talk to you about it, you're just like wow, yeah, maybe I could do a little bit more. It's hard to change that when you have so many kids, but for them it was cool to see how much they*

could do with a small group when they could take the time to reflect on each kid a

little bit more." [Rico]

Knowledge

        Participants did not indicate that they felt any impact on their knowledge of gathering and using information about student needs as a result of serving as cooperating teachers. The benefits they attributed to mentoring preservice teachers was concentrated on increasing their capacity to meet individual student needs rather than gaining knowledge on how to effectively meet those needs.

KSA #10: Teachers establish and maintain partnerships among school, home and community, and within their own schools

        "Being a cooperating teacher has made me realize that it's important not to be

'an island' in the teaching profession and that team work, collaboration of ideas,

and sharing of resources is essential in being a master teacher." [Greystroke]

This participant captured the sentiments of all of the cooperating teachers in this study. His statement demonstrates an awareness of the value of connecting with others and fostering professional relationships in learning and teaching.

Personal Characteristics

        Participants noted increased levels of personal accountability for their professional practices when they mentored preservice teachers. Reflective dialogue with preservice teachers allowed cooperating teachers the opportunity to self-examine their teaching practices while offering a chance to explore their beliefs, attitudes, and mindsets about teaching. Specific to this KSA (Alberta Education, 1997), participants felt that

connecting with parents about student achievement and behaviour could be influenced by what preservice teachers believed and acted upon in regards to communication. Krissy shared:

> *"Um, I think this kind of thing is maybe um, more personal on how often you might contact home. You may be somebody that contacts home all the time but suggesting this to my student teacher and he's like yeah yeah I know it's good, I know, and then when parent teacher interviews came around and his first one went all crazy and fell apart and then he's like oh I guess I should have taken your advice. Um, it was interesting to see like, okay, and looking back more and reflecting on what I do and making sure that I still follow through…"* [Krissy]

Pedagogical Skills

Some teachers noted that their preservice teachers sometimes served as a bridge between themselves and other colleagues within their schools.

> *"I think this also ties into getting to know your own colleagues better, not just what you're doing in the classroom. I always encourage my student teachers to get outside of the classroom and sometimes it means you do too as a result."* [Geoff]

Alix offered:

> *"Occasionally, student teachers can be shared with colleagues and this is a good opportunity to work together professionally and share ideas."* [Alix]

Knowledge

Much of the focus group discussion around this KSA (Alberta Education, 1997) focused on the perceived lack of support that cooperating teachers felt they received from

post-secondary institutions who were supplying the preservice teachers to their classrooms. Particularly in cases of concern, participants felt that they did not have enough guidance or resources to problem solve and desired more interaction and a stronger professional relationship with post-secondary institutions providing preservice teachers.

"I would have liked more observation, more interaction, more availability, more support… And I've rarely had someone from the university come into the class and watch them teach. I know they don't have the context, but I think they need to do that." [Karen]

Preservice teachers were also viewed as sources of new community connections, new resources, and new ideas for building on school and community relationships.

"I have two things about the partnership piece. One, about the university, I felt that there was a huge communication gap. They have the documents online but some are ambiguous and trying to get further information was frustrating. The flip side to the partnership piece with the community, I've found that student teachers, um, over the past, were great with community pieces. Uh, I've got to learn more, where, from their area of expertise depending on where they were in terms of bringing new things in. They were able to bring in areas of expertise in terms of being able to kinda tie into different parts of the community and it has been fantastic. The partnership piece has always been really strong." [Penny]

In some cases, participants felt that they were able to lessen feelings of isolation and connect with like-minded people in their curriculum areas through collaborating with preservice teachers. Preservice teachers often have strong affiliations within post-

secondary communities, with other students, and professors within their subject area and can share these connections with cooperating teachers. Simon explained that preservice teachers sometimes offer a chance to create personal professional learning networks, particularly in specialised subject areas or smaller school communities.

> *"Making connections is very important in my area (visual arts) and I have been able to make connections and also help my student teachers to establish valuable connections with individuals in the area of public education. I have had the opportunity to meet others who are into visual arts and are practicing artists, and who, as such, have personal insights of the area. I enjoy being able to share my perspectives with those who are creative and appreciate new and interesting ideas."* [Simon]

Although used as an example of increased use of technology in the classroom, Trisha reiterated the use of technology by preservice teachers to make connections with other schools and teachers in other parts of the world.

> *"She (preservice teacher) actually set up a video conference with um, Dubai…so it was really very impressive, she taught me a little bit and a little bit vice versa."* [Trisha]

KSA #11: Teachers are career-long learners

Teacher instructional leadership roles can help to create career ladders for teachers. As they refine and increase their skills in the classroom, as well as their leadership skills, the opportunities and responsibilities presented to them often also

increase. Participants interpreted this KSA (Alberta Education, 1997) to imply that they should continuously inquire into and improve their own teaching.

Personal Characteristics

For many participants, serving as cooperating teachers provided opportunities to reflect and gain insight into their own personalities and how they influence students in the classroom. The teaching profession is known as a service and caring profession. Participants reaffirmed this notion as they viewed their own professional development path to be one of service and hoped to be role models to inspire aspiring teachers. Serving as cooperating teachers also helped to reaffirm participants' career choices as educators by allowing them time to reflect and re-evaluate their own choices and professional fulfillment. Stacey shared:

> *"Um, I've had huge personality clashes (with preservice teachers), but at the same time, it helped me to grow too and it made me realize how to be a different kind of leader, uh, even in very challenging circumstances. It also made me realize I am a bit of a control freak and I had to let some of those things go, but it also showed me how much I love teaching and I love those kids…and that really showed me that I am in the right profession myself…and I also saw growth in her (preservice teacher)."* [Stacey]

Karen expressed not only her desire to continue learning, but indicated that cooperating teachers view preservice teachers as valuable colleagues from whom they can learn.

> *"I've always thought that I have more to learn, and that there are different ways to teach, so I'm open to learning from a practicum student."* [Karen]

Pedagogical Skills

Participants recognized professional development as a necessary part of their career process and that they need to learn while they are teaching if they are going to better serve the learning needs of their students. Preservice teacher mentoring is an ongoing professional development opportunity that can be continued and connected with one's teaching experiences throughout an entire professional career. Trisha expressed:

> *"It gives me an opportunity every year, to learn something new, to evaluate what it is I'm doing, and continuously makes, I think, me a better teacher in the long run because I have invited student teachers in. It also makes me a better teacher to have those conversations. I can attribute much of my professional learning and reflection, and so on, to having student teachers in my classroom. I have had many student teachers, approximately 15-20 so far."* [Trisha]

Knowledge

Participants valued continually seeking new knowledge to create a better understanding of their teaching practices. By mentoring preservice teachers, cooperating teachers have opportunities to observe the learning and professional development of other teachers. This can help to solidify their own understandings of the professional development process for their own growth. Trisha elaborated:

> *"Inviting a student teacher into my classroom is one of the most effective ways of professional learning. Each new student teacher brings in new knowledge and a new perspective."* [Trisha]

Working with preservice teachers increased many participants' intellectual curiosity and acted as a gateway to connect cooperating teachers with new and current best practices.

"I realised how I am a life long learner and it's important to keep updated on

current teaching practices." [Krissy]

Teachers understand that teaching is a scholarship, which improves through

practice informed research and evidence. Some teachers expressed a desire to have more

opportunities to discuss current and relevant research with their preservice teachers and

viewed post-secondary institutions as resources for current research literature.

"Perhaps some additional reference material to stay current with educational

research could be provided by the post-secondary schools when they send

preservice teachers." [Alix]

Summary of Findings for Research Question #1

Participants reported a positive impact on their teaching practices as a result of

engaging in preservice teacher mentorship and were able to identify many areas of

growth within each KSA (Alberta Education, 1997), as affected by the preservice teacher

mentoring experience. Although each KSA (Alberta Education, 1997) has already been

discussed individually, five major themes emerged from the data collected in the focus

group interview, follow-up surveys, and individual interviews during this study. These

themes describe the ways in which the cooperating teachers felt that their professional

development had been affected by serving as cooperating teachers throughout all of the

knowledge, skills, and attributes (KSAs) as described by Alberta Education (1997).

These five themes will now be discussed in conjunction with findings from external

research: 1) reflection, 2) articulation of teaching practices, 3) collaboration and shared

problem solving, 4) new ideas/strategies, 5) meaningful conversations.

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Reflection

The concept of reflection as a process for professional development is not a new one. Indeed, Dewey (1933) believed that reflection was a key component in making an experience worthwhile. Since then, reflection has become a standard part of the learning process and a means for improving practice. Lambert (2003) asserts, "reflection is a higher form of learning and an essential dimension of constructivist learning, for it is how we integrate what we are coming to know" (p. 61). For educators, personal reflection leads to the refinement of teaching practices as teachers identify strengths and weaknesses pertinent to teaching. Since Schön (1983, 1996) describes reflective practice as thoughtful considerations of one's own experiences while trying to connect theory to practice, the role of cooperating teacher dictates that reflective practice occur during this mentoring process.

Social constructivism emphasizes the relationships and connections within social interactions for building new understandings. Vygotsky (1978) referred to reflection as a necessary component for deeper understandings of knowledge. As preservice teachers strive to make connections between the theories taught in post-secondary education courses and authentic students and classroom practices, cooperating teachers can share the knowledge and experience that they have to aid in building these connections. Boud (2009) asserts that when teachers are aware of how and why decisions are made regarding daily processes, they can identify assumptions behind these decisions and can choose to act from a new perspective. Penny shared:

"The shifting perspective piece is really powerful. You have to choose to learn, be receptive, be open to dialogue, and be prepared to reflect. Both parties have to be." [Penny]

Teachers already reflect on the learning goals of a particular lesson in their daily assessment practice. However, cooperating teachers in this study reported opportunities to reflect on their students, classroom, and teaching practice from a different viewpoint, as an observer. They shared:

"I reflect on my own teaching – my interaction with students, my planning, my assessment methods, how I talk to students." [Karen]

"It helped me to reflect on my own practice and was a very fulfilling part of my job." [Alix]

"It provides me with a formal place to reflect when I communicate out loud." [Trisha]

"It also is a great opportunity to reflect on best practice and work on the craft of serving as an effective educator. The most impact comes from taking the time to reflect on 'what we do' and 'how we do it'. By providing insight into the teaching profession it is impossible not to reflect on your own practice. It is also an impetus to try out new ideas and reflect on the "why" of personal pedagogical choices." [Penny]

"I greatly valued the opportunity for professional dialogue and reflection. It was very beneficial to work with the preservice teacher and go through the mentoring process. We reflected on practice – what worked well, what didn't, and why. How could the lesson or instructional practice be improved?" [George]

Participants felt that serving as cooperating teachers helped to improve their teaching by allowing them to reflect on approaches to teaching students with various learning styles. Practicing reflection allowed teachers to explore their beliefs, attitudes, and mindsets about teaching, and a chance to identify, and value good teaching practices. When given the opportunity to reflect with others, teachers had the opportunity to collectively strategize, plan, and problem solve.

Reflection in education is often referred to as teacher inquiry in which they assess their effectiveness and plan for improvement. In addition to having the opportunity to reflect upon and assess their own instruction, cooperating teachers also developed an inquiry into knowing themselves. Participants acknowledged serving as cooperating teachers as helpful to seeing and appreciating the growth of their own knowledge and skills. "We have found that teachers naturally reflect on their own practice when they articulate evidence of highly effective instruction and ask questions" (Gullen & Chaffee, 2012, p. 41). Reflective dialogue with preservice teachers emphasized self-examination of both teachers` practices that led to shared understandings and peer learning. Participants shared:

"I don't think you can be a good mentor without thinking about the reasons why you do what you do." [Trisha]

"The most beneficial thing for me is the reflection on my own lessons and delivery." [Rico]

"I also took away a new understanding of my own instructional practice through this process." [George]

Articulation of Teaching Practices

Cooperating teachers learned, not only through observing, but also through discussing teaching practices with preservice teachers. While preservice teachers usually have a substantial knowledge base of their subject area before arriving in the classroom, Feiman-Nemser (2001) imparts the need for cooperating teachers to help preservice teachers understand subject knowledge from a pedagogical perspective. Feiman-Nemser (2001) describes this as "understanding what students find confusing or difficult and having alternative explanations, models, and analogies to represent core concepts and processes" (p. 1019). Serving as cooperating teachers gives teachers opportunities to share instructional strategies with preservice teachers in very detailed and specific terms. Alix identified the learning that occurs for teachers through failed lessons:

"One thing too, I love about brand new teachers is that you know, they have beautiful plans that'll totally fall apart and the beauty of that though, is that then it's just the stark reality of like well, why does this work, why doesn't that work." [Alix]

Once issues are identified, this participant explained the powerful conversations that can take place between cooperating teachers and preservice teachers around approaching lesson challenges.

> *"Question number 1, the kids don't understand anything, right? And they're a math person, so they're like, why do you not get this? So they just show the same thing again you know, and then everyone just starts talking and they're looking at you like what do I do now? So you can have a really good conversation with them after and say well, what do you do?"* [Rico]

Feiman-Nemser (2001) identifies a good teacher as one who understands a variety of approaches to teaching and has the skills and expertise to apply them strategically. According to participants in this study, responding to preservice teachers' questions about why they choose to do what they do when they do helped to solidify their teaching practices for themselves and often led to further reflection on their own practices. When preservice teachers ask questions, cooperating teachers have the opportunity to examine their instructional practices and clarify their knowledge about teaching and learning. The process of articulating teaching practices forces teachers to reflect upon their choices and provide reasons for their pedagogical decisions. This helps them to become more conscious of their teaching practices and their impact on students and student learning. Cooperating teachers have opportunities to focus on specific aspects of teaching when preservice teachers ask for clarification, seek assistance, or question practices. Participants felt that having to thoroughly explain their daily decisions in the classroom enhanced their pedagogical and content knowledge and helped them to gain a greater awareness of the learning process. They shared:

"It is excellent professional learning and I enjoyed the conversations. It allows me to remain current in research and requires me to articulate the reasons why I do what I do. Having those conversations about the whys of teaching, has given me that opportunity to clarify my own position on why I do what I do. It evolves and strengthens with every student teacher I encounter." [Trisha]

"Mentoring preservice teachers helps you to break down the fundamentals of your practice that you normally don't think about, you just do; and it helps you to reflect on those practices and verbalize it so that you become more aware as a teacher of what you are doing in the classroom, and what your students are getting out of your lessons." [Stacey]

"I am more aware of my methodology, assessment, planning, even speech, because I feel like I have to model and explain and show. Cooperating teaching is beneficial because I reflect on my practice and I am challenged to understand and explain knowledge that has become tacit and implicit. When I explain to a student teacher, I also explain more to students." [Karen]

By offering teachers a chance to articulate their evolving philosophy of teaching and to engage in personal and professional reflection the cooperating teacher role is a valuable tool in developing and improving teacher professional practice.

Collaboration and Shared Problem Solving

"In constructivist theories of learning, social context is the environmental variable with the most significant impact on learning" (Steffy et al, 2000, p. 19). Indeed, the

information age acknowledges that learning is not done in isolation. Collaboration was a major theme throughout the focus group discussion and individual interview data collected for each of the eleven KSAs (Alberta Education, 1997). Participants in this study discussed ways in which they were able to collaborate with preservice teachers to overcome daily operational issues through planning and reviewing work together. Dufour (2001) argues that professional development is most effective when opportunities are created for "staff to work together, engage in collective inquiry, and learn from one another" within their regular routine structures, and encourages job-embedded professional development (p. 1). According to Feiman-Nemser (2001), however, schools have not been designed with collaboration in mind. In many cases, schools are organised into many pockets of isolated areas, which does not support shared practice. Many high schools continue to be departmentalized and teachers do not have many opportunities to network across departments.

Researchers have advocated for collegiality amongst teachers (Frost & Durrant, 2004; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001; Lambert, 1998) to openly and respectfully share their knowledge about teaching for system improvement. The school improvement research shows that communication is key to improving organisations and increasing morale among staff members (Frost & Durrant, 2004; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001; Lambert, 1998). Lambert (2003) imparts, "pondering ideas and interacting with others enables learners to construct their own meaning and shared knowledge" (p. 54). In contrast to the traditional high school setting whereby each teacher works in isolation on individual goals, teachers in this study enjoyed working with others, including preservice teachers, to share, develop, and support best practices. Teachers agreed that preservice

teachers brought forth many new ideas from which they could collectively problem solve. They appreciated obtaining multiple perspectives to view problems and being able to discuss their ideas to strategize solutions. In addition to bringing in new ideas, having preservice teachers in the classroom helped cooperating teachers to focus on critical issues of teaching and learning for specific sets of students, creating powerful problem solving opportunities. Due to the element of change within the classroom (having preservice teachers lead lessons), problem solving becomes current and specific student needs can be addressed. Rico explained:

> *"Because preservice teachers usually only teach one or two classes at a time, they have more time to pay attention to the small details that can tell a lot about what certain students need and they have more time to attend to these and communicate with more people like calling home or involving other people like counselors or administrators. It's like having another set of hands, eyes and ears that also knows about teaching and learning and understands students' needs."*

[Rico]

Every political election year hears public cries for smaller class sizes, acknowledging that teachers are more effectively meeting student needs with smaller numbers of pupils. While teacher assistants lack instruction in pedagogy, preservice teachers offer skills and knowledge in teaching and pedagogy and are keen to gain experiential knowledge in meeting student needs.

Lambert (1998) contends that educators must be offered venues for collaboration to deal with complex issues. Participants in this study felt that serving as cooperating teachers offered opportunities to build dialogue and collaboration not only between

themselves and preservice teachers, but also with their colleagues, during the school day.

Feiman-Nemser (2011) explains that "professional development with like-minded

colleagues grounded in the content and tasks of teaching and learning" allows teachers to

"deepen knowledge of subject matter and curriculum, refine their instructional repertoire,

hone their inquiry skills, and become critical colleagues" (p. 1042). Participants reported

an increased sharing of practice as they sought out other colleagues to share with, in

addition to the preservice teachers who were placed in their classroom. They also

encouraged their preservice teachers to interact with other teachers within the school,

seeking them out as resources or arranging classroom visits.

> *"Occasionally student teachers can be shared with colleagues and this is a good*
>
> *opportunity to work together professionally and share ideas."* [Alix]

As teachers shared their practices with their preservice teachers, they gained a

greater sense of trust and confidence in their work that allowed them to open up and share

their practice with others.

> *"Once you share with student teachers, it makes it easier to not say this is mine*
>
> *only and I don't want to share with people. We learn how to be more*
>
> *cooperative. That's why we're cooperating teachers."* [Greystroke]

The mentoring relationship between cooperating teachers and their preservice

teachers expects and necessitates open, honest, and supportive communication. Serving

as cooperating teachers helped teachers to become more comfortable in teaching other

adults. As they gained more confidence as instructional experts, they increasingly

recognized the value that they have to contribute, which often led to further motivation to

continue sharing. This sharing of practice was affected by an increased sense of

community and increased collaboration. Collegiality involves a respect for peers and fostering a supportive work environment. Dufour (2000) argues that positive school context is an important component for successful professional development and recommends "opportunities for learning and growth that are structured into routine practices" (p. 1). Teachers in this study indicated that they felt less isolated as a result of serving as cooperating teachers, and for some, preservice teacher mentoring offered a partner with which they could discuss their subject.

> *"Uh, in my case, I'm a one person department. I used to think in the early years that, geez, it would be nice just to have another adult I could talk to in the class. So, I, you know, I accepted having a student teacher and found it to be really, a really beneficial experience."* [Simon]

Trisha added:

> *"I took on a preservice teacher primarily for the chance to work with someone else in the classroom at the colleague level. Teaching can become quite solitary at times, even though we are around students all day, the opportunities to actually work with another teacher are often few and far between."* [Trisha]

In addition, participants felt that it was beneficial to consult with preservice teachers and colleagues to identify and value good teaching. When teachers lack opportunities to observe other teachers teach, many of their views on teaching and best practices may become very self-focused and recognizing good teaching outside of their own classrooms becomes more difficult.

Serving as cooperating teachers offered opportunities for increased teacher interaction. Through collaborative reflection, meaningful conversations, idea sharing,

and critiquing, participants could solve problems, create new knowledge, and explore the art of teaching. Interactions with preservice teachers offer teachers a chance to work with others in a constructive manner. "Designing curriculum together gives teachers an opportunity to examine their purposes and articulate the bases for decisions about what and how to teach" (Feiman-Nemser, 2001, p. 1044). Participants agreed that in some cases, cooperating teachers and preservice teachers have the opportunity to engage in team teaching.

> *"If it (practicum experience) went well we developed resources together, we team taught certain classes together, and it gave us a chance to bounce instructional, pedagogical and classroom management ideas off of each other."* [George]

In a field experiences setting, cooperating teachers and preservice teachers work together to share, promote, develop, and support best professional practices.

Participants also mentioned that preservice teachers often facilitated connections to other resources and the community.

> *"Making connections is very important in my area and my student teachers and I have been able to help each other to establish valuable connections with individuals in the area of public education. I have had the opportunity to meet others who are into visual art and are practicing artists and who, as such, have personal insights of the area. I enjoy being able to share my perspectives with those who are creative and appreciative of new and interesting ideas."* [Simon]

Many teachers are reluctant to share their teaching practices due to the fear of being judged or criticized. During an individual interview, George shared that he sometimes experienced feelings of anxiety about mentoring preservice teachers.

"I think most teachers including myself (from time to time) still struggle with the notion of having other teachers in my classroom (preservice teachers included). It is hard enough to get up and perform in front of a class of students, but then throw another adult in the room…it just puts a little more pressure on the teacher. Especially if you have a teacher who is not that comfortable with their own practice or is uncertain if they are doing a good job. I think for a lot of teachers when it comes to questions of team teaching, coaching, peer observations, or preservice teacher mentoring, they are just not comfortable with the idea. It adds a possible new level of stress and vulnerability. You can't help but think, 'Now there is an adult in the room who can judge my teaching style or practice'."

[George]

Relationship building requires time. Trust is an essential component to collaboration and is required for successful preservice teacher mentoring. Participants expressed that a high level of trust must be present prior to working with preservice teachers and engaging in true dialogue and deep reflection. Cooperating teachers need to view preservice teachers as colleagues and sometimes it can be very difficult to achieve this level of respect and trust within the short time frame of the field experience. For some teachers, establishing relationships with preservice teachers is easier than for others. Many participants acknowledged that it is sometimes difficult to give up control of the classroom, especially when they are not yet familiar with the preservice teachers' skillsets. George reported that when given a choice, he would prefer to invest his time engaging in peer coaching or team teaching rather than preservice teacher mentoring. He questioned:

"If I had the choice, am I going to put all of this time into trying to build a reflective practice with a teacher who is a student that I barely know, or would I put this time into working with a respected colleague that I already know, trust, and respect?" [George]

The sharing of work and ideas can be a very personal act. Teachers reported feeling overprotective of their students and classroom and had to learn to release control to the preservice teachers before any positive growth could occur. Teachers reported that in some cases, they felt that having a preservice teacher in the classroom had a negative impact on student learning. Sometimes preservice teachers are not able to meet all curriculum objectives at a pace necessary to complete the course, or the quality of instruction may hamper student understanding. Karen shared:

"I had someone who just didn't plan, or who had planned and then deviated from the plan. And that's very frustrating. You don't want to turn your kids over to that person again." [Karen]

Geoff added:

"Because I'd always taught diploma courses, I didn't take a preservice teacher because I don't really trust one to get through the curriculum. I started having preservice teachers once I taught non-academic courses and I had to have confidence that if something went wrong, I could step in and fix it." [Geoff]

Teachers at the secondary level particularly have such concerns because of the high level of accountability that they are held to regarding student achievement. For many of these teachers, their curriculum subjects culminate with a provincial achievement or diploma examination and/or play a large role in students' abilities to pursue future post-secondary

programs. Teachers feel pressure from students, parents, school administration, post-secondary institutions, community members, and the provincial government to ensure high student achievement, and they feel great responsibility for this. As Rico explained:

"The math courses that I teach have rigor and a diploma exam and at the end, I'm the one that's held responsible for the success of those students. And it's not just in the years that have the exam (grade 12) because each grade level is building up to it. If I didn't have that pressure, I'd probably take a preservice teacher into my classroom every year." [Rico]

Some teachers also feel as though the success of their preservice teachers reflects on their own success as a teacher, adding additional pressure. George added:

"If you have a difficult preservice teacher, it can lead to a number of parent complaints and it can also reflect poorly on you to your own administration. You can be looked at as being part of the problem. Why haven't I taught or directed my student teacher well enough so they are not causing these problems/issues? Some teachers feel like they have failed when the preservice teacher is not a success." [George]

Teachers in the mentoring role require support and resources from schools, districts, and partnering post-secondary institutions. Participants recognized the growing need for, and trend towards greater collaborative work in schools and regarded the collegial aspect of mentoring preservice teachers to be very rewarding.

New ideas/strategies

Social constructivism emphasizes the critical role that others play in the acquisition and utilisation of knowledge (Fosnot, 2005). New perspectives are

introduced and acknowledged when teachers work collaboratively. Participants felt that serving as cooperating teachers was beneficial to both their content and process expertise and valued opportunities to observe innovative teaching practices. Sharing with others offered opportunities to access a broader base of resources and share effective techniques. Networking allows teachers to gain a variety of ideas from one another. In a collaborative effort with preservice teachers, many participants described examples of creating new products and learning new skills.

Teachers felt motivated in their professional development because preservice teacher mentoring allowed their learning to be active and directly relevant to the context of their practice. They described numerous ways in which new ideas and teaching strategies were shared. First, teachers appreciated being able to bring their own ideas to the table and gain feedback on these ideas.

> *"I always get new information and a new perspective when a student teacher is in my room with me. Each new student teacher brings in new knowledge and a new perspective. I can take that information and grow my classroom. Usually, it gets better with new ideas to deliver content, different projects, or seeing a student in a new way."* [Trisha]

Second, participants described developing their own new ideas as a result of observing their preservice teachers` ideas or teaching practice. Because observing other teachers can help to get out of our own patterns of thought or routines, the preservice teachers act as triggers for new thoughts or ideas. "Seeing things done differently can guide us to new places in our teaching" (Houghton, 2001). Participants shared:

"It brings a new perspective, and can bring new technology, or ways to use it to light." [Rico]

"I've always thought that I have more to learn and that there are different ways to teach, so I'm open to learning from a practicum student. I'm also interested in how the students in my class respond to a different teacher, particularly a novice, and especially how they are willing to cooperate and provide support." [Karen]

Third, preservice teachers themselves brought new ideas with them and access to new resources.

"I have gained new and different perspectives on my subject area. In the most basic way, I have gleaned ideas for lessons from their (preservice teachers) lessons. I have received new and valuable perspectives which inform my own practice." [Simon]

"I love the energy and new ideas they (preservice teachers) bring! It gives me a chance to reflect on my own practice and they often have technological skills that I can learn from." [Andrea]

Fourth, cooperating teachers felt inspired and motivated to try new ideas that were brought forth.

"It (serving as a cooperating teacher) made me more willing to try new things and gave me new ideas to try." [Alix]

In addition to generating new ideas, participants reported being able to experiment with different approaches and work on interpreting new information about students and

learning through different points of view. This information can then be used as a base for collaborative problem solving to support student learning. Cooperating teachers are given the chance to first observe, trial, and gauge the effects of new strategies prior to incorporating them into their own teaching practice. By first observing the new ideas or strategies in use with students in the classroom, cooperating teachers increase their familiarity of and comfort level of working with the new ideas. Simon shared:

> *"Having the opportunity to observe students responding (or not) to a preservice teacher has given me a new perspective and new ideas about how to adjust my own approach."* [Simon]

Meaningful Conversations

Dialogue is important and teachers need to openly discuss their classroom practices in order to improve teacher quality. Gullen and Chaffee (2012) state "to determine what effective instruction is and how to improve their own instructional practice, educators must clarify and publicly state their beliefs about instruction" (p. 58). Unfortunately, teachers often do not have the time to engage in deep professional conversations with colleagues during the regular teaching day. Professional dialogue is a necessary component of the cooperating teacher-preservice teacher relationship and allows teachers the time to engage in constructive conversations on an ongoing basis.

Teachers reported that working with and mentoring preservice teachers helped to increase their confidence as teachers. While conversations between teachers and students are often limited to assistance or cursory sharing, participants reported many of the conversations that they had with preservice teachers to be pedagogy-driven. They shared:

"When I think of meaningful conversations with preservice teachers, I think about the times that they are fully engaged and inquiring about my thinking. It's when they ask questions about why I do something. This then requires me to be clear of the vision and purpose I have for my classroom. We talk about everything! From assessment, to planning, to professionalism, to engagement, nothing is out of bounds. The meaningful conversations are both about the philosophy and the praxis." [Trisha]

"...trying to get that outcomes based approach can be very, very frustrating for both of us at times, but we can discuss why we are doing this and what's the big picture..." [Stacey]

The demands of teaching are high and burnout is common amongst novice teachers. Participants hoped that by discussing expectations of teaching and how to navigate one's teaching career while balancing a fulfilling personal life, they could better prepare preservice teachers for a career in teaching.

"We don't just talk about goals and whether or not they are accomplished. We talk about how to balance a successful teaching career and a fulfilling family life." [Andrea]

"Professional development takes place through serious, ongoing conversation. It focuses on the particulars of teaching, learning, subject matter, and students. Through critical and thoughtful conversations, teachers develop and refine ways to study teaching and learning" (Feiman-Nemser, 2001, p. 1042).

As Vygotsky (1978) described, the interaction between the cooperating teacher and the preservice teacher is influenced by the environment, behaviours, and personal factors. Since these factors change with each field experience, cooperating teachers identified their learning and personal growth as unique to each mentoring experience. As teachers reflect on their practice and ask difficult questions about themselves and their preservice teachers, they can begin to create new understandings to build on and expand their repertoire. Rico shared:

"When conversing with pre-service teachers, I have found that it is inevitable that I also engage in reflection on my own teaching practice. In asking questions of the preservice teacher(s) I am working with, I end up asking those same questions of myself, and usually end up tweaking my teaching practices to better engage my students. The process of working with preservice teachers has led me to be a more reflective practitioner, and I believe, a better teacher, because of the dialogue process." [Rico]

The values and beliefs learners have already formed help them to interpret and construct meaning. Teachers can share their personal interpretations of teaching and learning with preservice teachers to construct new ones. Multiple perspectives of the same school, classroom, lessons, and groups of students provide for new interpretations and insights. The learning opportunities afforded to teachers through the cooperating teacher experience help to reaffirm their practices, leading to an increase in teacher confidence.

"I feel I am more confident in my own practice as a result of serving as a cooperating teacher." [Simon]

Summary

Data collected from this study indicates that preservice teacher mentoring can be a beneficial professional development option for teachers. Indeed, participants recognized preservice teacher mentoring as one of their most effective forms of school-based professional development. Mentorship is an opportunity for professional self-reflection and growth (Lambert, 2003). Mentoring preservice teachers can provide important opportunities to grow as educators, to reflect on professional practice, and to engage in ongoing professional conversations. All participants shared a high level of commitment to the teaching profession. Teachers recognize that they have valuable knowledge and skills to share with others within the profession. Serving as cooperating teachers fulfills their desires to give back and make substantial contributions to the profession. In turn, the teaching profession gains a cohort of master teachers, willing to meet and serve the educational needs of students.

Findings and Discussion for Research Question #2

After sharing their perspectives and opinions about the effect of preservice teacher mentoring on KSAs (Alberta Education, 1997), participants were directed into a discussion about preservice teacher mentoring and teacher instructional leadership. Specifically, I was interested in understanding their personal motivations for serving as cooperating teachers, and also on how they perceived teacher instructional leadership to be facilitated by this service. The focus group interview, individual interviews, and subsequent follow-up surveys with cooperating teachers yielded valuable insights into their perceptions of preservice teacher mentoring and teacher instructional leadership.

Although not all of these findings directly answer either of the two research questions, they are included in this section as they were likely to inform what cooperating teachers shared about preservice teacher mentoring and facilitating teacher instructional leadership.

Participants' Conceptions of Teacher Instructional Leaders

According to Elmore (2000), school leadership is the "guidance and direction of instructional improvement" and the knowledge used to invoke such improvement lies with teachers (p. 13). When discussing preservice teacher mentoring as a tool to facilitate teacher instructional leadership, it is important to first understand how teachers conceptualize teacher instructional leadership. Lieberman and Miller (2004) describe the concept of teacher leadership as teachers helping colleagues to improve their classroom practice, with a focus on student learning and working collectively. Although there are models of teacher leadership in the education literature, there is little consensus on definitions of such. Participants, however, were clear about what they perceive to be the role of teacher instructional leaders.

> *"It (being a teacher leader) means using your role as a teacher to benefit student learning by helping others to achieve this."* [Krissy]

Alix added:

> *"Being a teacher instructional leader means leading in vision and in practice. It means taking risks that are driven by educational research to improve student learning."* [Alix]

Greystroke indicated that teacher instructional leadership should also include teamwork.

"Being a teacher instructional leader means being knowledgeable about the components and expectations of the courses that you are responsible for. Being willing to accept input and ideas from the team you're working with, and to be fair and firm in your decisions." [Greystroke]

Participants in this study identified several traits in successful teacher instructional leaders, including strong communication skills, and the ability to guide teachers towards better instructional practice and resources. They shared:

"A teacher instructional leader is someone with experience and a reputation for excellence who is willing to share with and support their colleagues. They must be able to communicate clearly and be confident enough in their own abilities to share. They also need to be open to what is possible and what is next. They need to be a lifelong learner." [Trisha]

"Being a teacher instructional leader means sharing materials, methods, collaborating, and encouraging other teachers to share and collaborate. You have to be organised with the workings of teaching or a department – policies, specific course content and resources, and how these resources can be used and accessed. You also have to be able to assess and understand what teachers need and seek ways to meet those needs, being a conduit for requests to administration to support professional development." [Karen]

"A teacher instructional leader means to help shape other teachers to be the best they can be. That means refining things that are good, correcting things that are

bad, and giving guidance and advice about specific issues that a teacher may be

having in the classroom." [Rico]

"It is a huge responsibility to inspire and encourage new teachers in the

profession." [Andrea]

Participants' Self-Perceptions as Teacher Instructional Leaders

Fairly early into the discussion, it became clear that while participants understood

the concept of teacher instructional leadership, many participants did not have a clear

vision of themselves as leaders, even if they held designated roles of responsibility within

their schools. Rather, when asked about leaders and leadership, teachers thought of

formal leadership roles, namely, the administrators in their schools.

It was only through careful consideration of teacher instructional activities and

practices that teachers acknowledged their own potential for leadership. Upon closer

examination, it appeared that while teachers are actively engaging in significant

instructional leadership activities in their daily work, concepts such as distributed

leadership, teacher instructional leadership, or shared leadership, are not widely used and

discussed in schools, thus leading to being unable to recognize what it means to be a

teacher leader when not an administrator. Even those teachers holding leadership titles

such as Learning Leader or Department Head were not clear on leadership expectations

for these roles. One participant explained that he had been given the role of Department

Head during his first year of teaching, as there was no one keeping track of textbook

orders. While the definition and expectations of his role have most certainly evolved and

expanded over time, participants concurred that little guidance has been given on the

concept of the teacher instructional leader in their schools. Changes in administration have also brought along new expectations and role definitions.

"With the exception of formal administrative positions, the teaching profession offers few opportunities for continued advancement" (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2011, p. 86). A variety of roles informed participants' experiences as teacher instructional leaders. In addition to ten participants having experience as learning leaders or department heads, other roles such as being mentors for colleagues, committee chairs, coaches, guides, and union representatives were mentioned as other ways teachers practice teacher leadership.

In high schools, it is common for leadership to occur through structures such as subject departments. Because high school teachers possess content-area expertise, they are often called upon to exercise instructional leadership among colleagues. Roles as informal leaders often include acting as mentors and supports for other teachers and sharing best instructional practices. When it comes to content, teachers respect the expertise of their peers, and extend this respect to preservice teachers. Some teachers become experts in their area and are passionate about education, but do not aspire to become formal leaders or administrators. However, they do recognize that their influence over both students and colleagues can extend beyond the classroom.

Many participants have begun to seek out more active roles in the school community – sitting on committees, working with families, planning staff meetings, participating in school-based decision making. By sharing new knowledge, teachers can influence the practice of colleagues. Participants spoke about leadership competencies they perceive themselves exercising in their professional practice.

"I think it (serving as a cooperating teacher) has a positive impact with colleagues as they appreciate that you are trying to be a positive mentor/role model to new teachers." [Andrea]

"Being a cooperating teacher is being a teacher instructional leader. Just because a teacher has a teaching certificate, it doesn't mean that they are a master teacher. Many teachers struggle and ask for help. Modeling, guiding, and giving feedback to teachers are things that are used with student teachers and teachers alike." [Rico]

Having good experiences as cooperating teachers can encourage teachers to seek out other opportunities to participate in their school and the profession, and acts as a springboard for other teacher leadership roles.

"Since serving as a cooperating teacher, I have been motivated to mentor new teachers that come to my school as well." [Krissy]

Participants indicated that their experiences as cooperating teachers informed how they approached formal leadership positions.

"I think there's a lot of similarities between being a cooperating teacher and being a leader in your school, and I think it's very handy to have had that experience. There are a lot of transferable skills, in terms of just having those conversations about curriculum, planning, and professional development. It's good to have a bit of a background in terms of having just thought about how to talk through those things and how to approach them." [Alix]

"The collaboration has translated into the work I do now as an administrator." [Trisha]

"The relationship I've had in mentoring preservice teachers has greatly helped me as an administrator. To work with a preservice teacher is a similar process in evaluating seasoned teachers. It has helped me to know which are the foundational things to look for in the classroom and gave a number of key instructional focuses to talk about with teachers." [George]

While formal leadership roles have traditionally been used as stepping-stones for career advancement, it seems that many teachers enjoy working in the classroom and engage in teacher leadership as a means to perfect their teaching practice. Boles and Troen (1996) found that teachers prefer leading by developing their professional expertise, rather than assuming formal leadership positions. Participants agreed that they prefer teacher leadership work that focuses on teaching and learning processes as opposed to administrative tasks such as timetabling or student discipline.

Simon related that because he has been the only teacher in his subject specific department for some time, he feels that there is little opportunity for him to be an instructional leader amongst his colleagues at his present school. However, he recognized his role as a cooperating teacher to be valuable as a leader for preservice teachers.

"I believe my situation as a 'one man department' would not make me the best candidate for such a role (formalized leadership)." [Simon]

Other participants echoed:

"I have been the department head/curriculum leader/learning leader for most of my career, but I have no wish to become a school administrator." [Karen]

"Off and on I've been the lead teacher, acting administrator, or summer school principal, and I'd rather be a classroom teacher working occasionally with student teachers or being a mentor for rookie teachers." [Greystroke]

Motivation to Serve as Cooperating Teachers

Preservice teacher mentorship provides an avenue for large numbers of teachers to become involved in teacher education and make meaningful contributions. The idea of "giving back" strongly influenced all of the participants to serve as cooperating teachers. This notion of having something to offer back to the profession as a whole was echoed by all participants throughout the focus group interview, individual interviews and self-surveys. Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001) suggest that factors influencing a teacher's decision to engage in leadership roles include excellent professional teaching skills, a strong and developed personal philosophy, and being at a point in life where the necessary energy level and time are available. They go on to reason that even teachers who are not aspiring to formal leadership roles need to strengthen their leadership skills "as society changes and advances, so does the need to produce stronger teachers who are able to meet the current needs of their students and schools" (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001, p. 4). The research data in this study indicated that trust and pedagogical self-confidence were necessary prior to teachers being willing to open up and share with

others. Sharing their classrooms with preservice teachers helped teachers to feel valued in their work. Participants shared:

> *"When I first got into this, uh, mentoring of student teachers and stuff like that, uh, I just wanted to share what I'd learned. You want to give back to the neighbourhood."* [Greystroke]

> *"I absolutely went in it to give back and I had great experiences and I wanted to be able to give people a place to, a safe place to learn and practice the craft. By 'giving back' I can help to strengthen our profession."* [Penny]

> *"And for me initially, I think it was the, um, it was the giving back…"* [Trisha]

> *"I served as a cooperating teacher to enhance my professional development opportunities and give back to the teaching profession."* [Krissy]

Another influencing factor for teachers to serve as cooperating teachers seems to be their own personal experiences as preservice teachers. Inspired by their past cooperating teachers and mentors, both positive and negative experiences encouraged participants to try the mentorship role for themselves. This indicates that mentoring experiences encourage other mentoring experiences. Ideally, this means that schools that invest in mentoring opportunities for teachers at all stages of their careers will be investing in long-term teacher professional development. It also supports the notion that teachers have the capacity to inspire and influence the practice of colleagues. Karen

described how her own negative experiences as a preservice teacher have influenced her decision to serve as a cooperating teacher.

"I had bad experiences as a practicum student, with the exception of my last one and so I think part of it was this idea of making it better for someone else. I feel it is my professional obligation, but that sounds like I have to and I don't mean it that way." [Karen]

In contrast, many other participants described positive mentee experiences that motivated them to serve. Krissy shared:

"I was influenced by my own feelings towards my student teaching. I still talk to and cooperate with my mentor from my practicum days (8 years later) and felt that I could also build those relationships with new young teachers." [Krissy]

After having positive experiences in the practicum process as a preservice teacher, Stacey chose to serve as a cooperating teacher hoping to recreate her own experience and cultivate a similar professional relationship with her own preservice teacher.

"I had an amazing experience myself, both years. Um, in a way that hurt me when I took on a student teacher 'cause I wanted that. I was like, I'm going to be that. That was how it was gonna go…it did not go like that." [Stacey]

In a follow up interview with this participant, she went on to explain that her expectations of preservice teacher mentoring were not realistic, as instead of embracing the new experience that she was having with her preservice teacher, she was trying to recreate her own experience as she remembered it years ago. She attributed her unrealistic expectations to a lack of knowledge about the preservice teacher mentoring process, and how to act as a mentor. Instead, she relied on what she remembered

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experiencing herself, as a mentee. Support for cooperating teachers will be discussed in the next chapter.

Many teachers lead because they view it as a professional responsibility. Although teachers acknowledged that "post-secondary institutions need schools to help prepare and induct beginning teachers" (Feiman-Nemsar, 2001, p. 1037) and are prepared to assist them by mentoring preservice teachers, many participants were not aware of their responsibilities as written in the *Alberta School Act* (2007) and regarded the service as strictly voluntary. Geoff shared:

> *"I think it's um, part of my responsibility. I had two fantastic placements, they were both very compassionate people, they were both very personable with students, they were very real. I still remember the time I spent with them. So I think it's my responsibility to try and give that back too."* [Geoff]

Rico added:

> *"It is important to give back to education, as I had a great co-op teacher in my phase three, but I don't know any teachers that think they have to do it if they're asked."* [Rico]

Beginning teachers often have a difficult time transitioning to full-time teaching (Mandel, 2006). Some teachers are motivated to serve as cooperating teachers in an effort to support beginning teachers. The teachers in this study were genuinely interested in the well-being and introductory teaching experiences of the preservice teachers that they were coaching and mentoring. They shared:

"I wanted to try and help new teachers as much as I could to make their experience in the profession as positive as possible. It was very rewarding to help new teachers get a good start." [Alix]

"I hope to help students develop competencies for entering into the teaching profession. Mentoring is important in any profession. In teaching, the first few years are so grueling and demanding that any small help I can give novices I am willing to give, because much was given to me." [Karen]

As the expectations of teachers, schools, and the education system continue to increase, many new teachers are becoming overwhelmed, stressed out, and are leaving the profession. In my own experience as an administrator, I have witnessed many young, new teachers, moving on to other more lucrative professions. Indeed, the 21st century has opened many new opportunities that promise less accountable, less stressful, rewarding careers. Also, there are many other careers that value the skills that teachers bring with them from teaching and learning.

"I've seen a lot of brand new teachers come to the profession, get stressed out, and take a stress leave, never returning in the last few years. I think it's becoming more common, so I hope that I can provide a good practicum to help student teachers get more of the skills they need for their first years of teaching, and not become discouraged." [Rico]

Rico sarcastically reported being motivated to serve as a cooperating teacher due to common ideas or stereotypes of what types of compensation cooperating teachers might receive.

"I do it because the bonus structure's so good and all the extra time you get off after school. The bonus is like 30 bucks, or used to be. I don't think they even do that anymore." [Rico]

Although this statement was made in jest, participants agreed that serving as cooperating teachers often holds minimal discernable benefits. They discussed the reluctance that many of their colleagues have expressed against serving as cooperating teachers. Teachers view time as a scarce and precious commodity and are correct in assuming that quality preservice teacher mentoring requires a high commitment of time. Cooperating teachers require time to plan for the involvement of preservice teachers in their classrooms and hold daily conferences, usually before and after the regular school day, with preservice teachers and faculty advisors from the partnering post-secondary institutions. In addition to their regular classroom work, a large number of secondary teachers are involved in coaching, leading, and planning extra-curricular sports or activities for students outside of the teaching timetable, leaving them limited time to commit to other projects or activities. Unfortunately, when teachers are paired with weak preservice teachers, the time invested may not seem worthwhile. George explained:

"If I had a preservice teacher who needed a lot of work and was struggling, I think my ability to grow as a teacher with this student through true dialogue and reflection would be limited. I certainly wouldn't appreciate his/her skillsets and would not feel comfortable engaging in any dialogue past just surface conversations. While I might gain some professional development through working with this student to improve their skillsets, I would argue that this might not be the best use of my time." [George]

Greystroke commented that his ability to serve as a leader for his preservice teachers and colleagues is affected when he must devote additional time to struggling preservice teachers.

> *"If I have a student teacher who is a concern, my work load increases and my leadership abilities are also strained."* [Greystroke]

Leadership Traits Strengthened by Cooperating Teaching

Formal leadership roles require strong mentorship skills. Participants in this study reported numerous benefits for serving as cooperating teachers, including coaching and assessment skills. They described working with preservice teachers as a way to increase and improve their instructional leadership skills with other adults and colleagues. Cooperating teachers are given the opportunity to learn about the importance of feedback, how to give constructive feedback, and what the content of that feedback should be. Krissy explained:

> *"I get to practice evaluating and having conversations with student teachers which has given me an increased ability to give constructive feedback and build relationships with other staff members. I feel it is beneficial to me to work on giving positive and constructive feedback. Being in an evaluating role for the student teacher is helping me to prepare for when I make the move to administration."* [Krissy]

Mentoring preservice teachers also allows teachers to gain experience in giving constructive feedback and supporting other teachers. Feedback for preservice teachers is often guided by their education program requirements and focused on continued improvement. Since graduated tasks and responsibilities are designated to preservice

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teachers over time in a shared classroom environment, feedback from cooperating teachers can be very specific, focusing on particular student behaviours or teaching methods. Since the purpose of the feedback is to contribute to the development and growth of the preservice teacher rather than for performance evaluation, feedback is likely to be constructive. Rico described the type of feedback he strived to give to preservice teachers:

> *"It (serving as a cooperating teacher) gives me experience in giving feedback. It is always important to point out things the preservice teachers do well, or are improving in, as well as areas that need a lot of work."* [Rico]

For those aspiring to become school administrators, serving as a cooperating teacher is often the only experience that they have in evaluating other teachers prior to formally supervising and evaluating teachers. Although participants appreciated opportunities to advance their skills in giving constructive feedback and having difficult conversations, many felt that formal evaluations were time-intensive and sometimes uncomfortable. Participants described evaluating preservice teachers as an unfamiliar task and one in which greater support is needed. Rico complained:

> *"Often the reports/observations/evaluations required from most universities are a huge pile of work. When you take on a preservice teacher you also have to make regular detailed observations, provide constant feedback in writing, write a mid-term report, and then coordinate meetings with other cooperating teachers who might also be supervising this preservice teacher and university representatives. For a lot of teachers, even when they get a good preservice teacher, it's just too much paper work and meetings to deal with."* [Rico]

During an individual interview, George relayed feeling unsupported and put into difficult situations when needing to evaluate weak preservice teachers.

"If the preservice teacher is not great, you now have the added pressure of evaluating and communicating to them that they have not passed the program. I have had to do this twice and it is not pleasant or comfortable. Even now, as an administrator, these are difficult situations and I have a hard time doing it. I think for most teachers faced with the possibility of having to fail a student and end their career…they may just opt out of having one at all." [George]

One aspect of being a cooperating teacher that participants connected with being a leader was the growing appreciation for personal and professional growth that is observed in others, in this case, their preservice teachers. As their own commitment to sharing knowledge was strengthened, participants discussed increasing opportunities for their colleagues to do the same.

"It was nice to develop relationships with the new teachers and to see them gaining confidence and becoming successful teachers. All of my student teachers are now on permanent contracts in classrooms of their own. I am proud to have been part of their development." [Alix]

Participants also reported a growing understanding and appreciation for differences between people, particularly amongst other teachers. They grew to recognize and appreciate that just as all learners are different, there exists a diversity of teachers and skillsets that are brought to the classroom. They discussed being able to improve their skills in providing emotional support and encouragement as they gained empathy for others with diverse backgrounds.

"It (serving as a cooperating teacher) has shown me that teachers come to the job with a variety of skill sets, and that most of them will be successful as long as they want what is best for the students, treat them with respect, care for them, and if they know what their strengths are as a teacher." [Rico]

"It has helped me to be present and be supportive of others." [Karen]

"I am able to build stronger relationships with staff. I have learned to be more understanding and how to give constructive feedback in challenging situations. I have been put into difficult situations where I now know how to deal with them. I have grown as a teacher by learning new things from my student teachers and I also think my classroom practices have been solidified by having others observe me." [Krissy]

"Inviting a student teacher into my classroom requires a certain level of openness and willingness to share. It strengthened my ability to work collaboratively with other teachers." [Trisha]

Teachers in this study reported feeling energized by working with preservice teachers. By serving in the leadership role of cooperating teacher, participants elicited stronger feelings of professional value. Not only did they increase their feelings of confidence in the classroom, but also in their leadership abilities in the school. They shared:

*"It has allowed me a chance to develop my communication skills and articulate
the reasons I do what I do. Also, when it comes to dealing with the management
and organisation for a class, it's about the modeling. It has given me the ability
to create a vision and purpose of my classroom and now I can transfer that skill
to the school as a whole."* [Trisha]

*"Student teachers allowed me to expand my vision of teaching to include
professional teaching and learning. I think this helped me in my later role as a
learning leader. It is important to be able to learn and teach with colleagues.
Working on classroom strategies from the perspective of student learning with a
student teacher was my starting point for initiating several changes in my
department at a later date to support student learning."* [Alix]

For some participants, serving as cooperating teachers helped them to identify
personal areas for growth. Their image of self as teachers and professionals was
sometimes challenged and highlighted.

*"It (the cooperating teacher experience) made me adjust my communication
skills, which I thought was a strength, but I guess there's always room for
improvement."* [Stacey]

*"My perspective on how to reach all levels of students has changed (as a result of
preservice teacher mentoring). Sitting back and observing allowed me the chance
to see student behaviour that I may have missed and then plan to address it."*
[Penny]

"Although I have been teaching in my present situation for 10 years, I have been somewhat self-conscious of my delivery style. Seeing and helping others in this area has, I believe, given me a better idea of my own style and ideas of how to deal with these issues connected to my own style of delivery." [Simon]

"The biggest thing is that having a student teacher in your classroom gives you the opportunity to really ground yourself as a teacher and leader. You need to consider all new research, and all viewpoints, and through that you gain confidence and great skill." [Trisha]

Many participants felt that strengthening themselves as classroom teachers allowed them to become more effective leaders. They reported increasing their content knowledge and improving their teaching skills through their mentorship of preservice teachers.

"I am more conscious of questioning and using differentiated instruction. I realised how much guidance some student needs and how natural ability for teaching is common. I realised how I am a life long learner and it's important to keep updated on current teaching practice." [Krissy]

"I further developed my classroom management strategies, and teaching strategies." [Karen]

"I have grown in two areas as a result of being a cooperating teacher. Strengthening my pedagogical guidance (interpreting curriculum, planning and choosing delivery models), and implementing classroom management models (exploring strategies for managing student behaviours and creating a positive and productive learning environment)." [Alix]

"Modeling and guiding are skills that are affected by cooperating teaching. The student teacher watches me teach, reflects, and then can ask questions. I get a chance to then discuss why I do things. I can make suggestions for upcoming lessons for problem areas that students have for specific topics, and can make recommendations for how to handle and prepare for it." [Rico]

"Being a cooperating teacher has allowed me to develop strong communication skills and become a more reflective teacher." [Trisha]

Cooperating teachers are responsible, not only for the learning occurring for preservice teachers, but also for the student learning taking place in the classroom. The learning needs of both preservice teachers and students often become competing demands and cooperating teachers are continuously learning to balance responsibilities and outcomes. Teachers need also be aware of the student learning taking place in their classroom when preservice teachers are directing lessons. Geoff explained:

"We don't get time off when the preservice teacher is teaching. We have to stay aware of the student learning because we don't want to have a negative impact on our students while the preservice teacher is learning." [Geoff]

Summary

The results analysis indicates that this particular group of cooperating teachers perceived that all eleven KSAs (Alberta Education, 1997) are or can be affected by serving as cooperating teachers. However, each preservice teacher mentoring experience is unique, depending on each individual in the mentoring relationship. The personal knowledge, skills, and attributes of the preservice teacher influence the categories in which the cooperating teachers feel personal professional growth. Since constructivist views of learning hold that individuals construct their own knowledge and understandings, the degree to which teachers' personal characteristics, pedagogical skills, or knowledge are affected vary with each experience. While many participants expressed that they have had negative experiences in serving as cooperating teachers, they reported a constructive overall impact of the experiences on their professional growth.

When considering desired outcomes of teacher professional development, Guskey (1986) recommends that it should result in changes in classroom practices, teacher beliefs, and student learning. As teachers learn to articulate their teaching practices in specific and concrete ways and continually challenge their personal beliefs and practices, they create new understandings about teaching and learning (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). Findings from this study indicated that teachers:

- appreciated having a partner with whom to share teaching strategies and problem solve
- increased their knowledge of pedagogy and technology use in the classroom
- developed greater personal awareness through the opportunities preservice teacher mentoring presented for reflection

- became more confident in their teaching and mentorship abilities

- were committed to sharing knowledge and professional development

- viewed learning with preservice teachers to be reciprocal

- felt that their preservice teacher mentoring experiences were constructive

- perceived personal and professional growth in their leadership abilities

In addition, increased communication skills, and the opportunity to collaborate and share were seen as valuable personal and professional growth areas. Teachers were appreciative of the time created to share professional ideas and reflections while working together to develop their abilities and skills.

CHAPTER 5: FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter briefly summarizes key points from the previous chapter and provides an overall conclusion. There is also a discussion of the limitations and delimitations of this study and suggestions for future research.

Overview of Study

This study sought to explore how teachers perceive their own professional growth while serving as cooperating teachers, and how it impacts teacher instructional leadership development. Teachers who were surveyed and interviewed for this research offered insights into their own personal experiences about preservice teacher mentoring. The data from this study suggests that preservice teacher mentoring gives teachers the opportunity to receive immediate relevant, job-embedded professional development. The teachers in this study were highly positive about the impact of serving as cooperating teachers on their own professional and personal development. The findings of this study enrich understandings in the area of teacher education and teacher instructional leadership.

Implications of the Study

Implications for schools and school districts. Teacher leadership can substantially improve our schools. Teacher instructional leaders can shape school culture, improve student learning, and influence the practice of colleagues (Killion, 1999). School boards and school administrators have the resources to foster environments in which teachers can lead. One such way is to promote preservice teacher mentoring as a cost effective way that school districts can support partnerships to meet the needs of educators and educational leaders. It also allows schools to offer targeted professional opportunities to

strengthen the pedagogical skills of existing teachers and to develop teacher instructional leaders within the school.

For example, preservice teachers need high-quality teacher mentors. Schools can improve preservice teachers' access to quality mentors by carefully selecting and encouraging accomplished teachers to serve as cooperating teachers. This model can help generate the desired instructional and professional behaviours and expectations from preservice teachers, especially when many of them are eventually hired to teach within the schools in which they complete their practicum experience.

By supporting and encouraging experienced teachers to serve as cooperating teachers, schools are promoting teacher leadership by giving teachers specific leadership responsibilities and providing opportunities for development. In this way, schools can make teacher leadership a component in planning for continued success. Schools can further develop teachers as instructional leaders by providing access to mentorship training. Participants in this study reported a lack of overall system support and desired more support from schools and post-secondary institutions by way of release time, resources, and mentorship guidance.

> *"It adds a lot of work to be a cooperating teacher. It would be great to have*
>
> *extra time allotted in the schedule for it."* [Penny]

By working with, encouraging, and supporting cooperating teachers, schools and school districts can increase and broaden teachers' appreciation of preservice teacher mentorship as a professional learning opportunity.

Implications for teachers. Teachers have limited time and resources to engage in professional development activities outside of the school and classroom. Preservice

teacher mentoring is an opportunity for teachers to ensure that the teacher preparation system meets both the teaching requirements of our schools, and the learning needs of students. Because opportunities for growth are structured into routine practices, serving as cooperating teachers can be powerful professional development experiences for teachers and in their development on individual knowledge, skills, and attributes. Participants in this study reported personal transformations in knowledge, pedagogy, understandings, and skills as a result of the preservice teacher mentoring experience.

Through personal and joint reflection, teachers are able to think critically about teaching and learning. Within the preservice teacher mentoring experience there is a focus on teaching practice and professional conversation. The social constructivist perspective emphasizes learning as a collaborative process. Teachers can learn ways to support each other in their professional growth through the development of personal and learning relationships of mutual benefit. They can use preservice teacher mentoring as a way to gather new data to inform continuous practice improvement and refine new practice through self-reflection and feedback.

Taking on leadership roles helps teachers to feel empowered, increases self-confidence, and allows teachers to engage in the task of developing other teachers, expanding their social impact. When used for leadership preparation, preservice teacher mentoring is an opportunity to build professional capacity through the development of skills in supervision, mentoring, and coaching. Enhancing leadership skills often leads to more options for career mobility. Several of the participants in this study indicated that the knowledge, skills, and attributes that they gained through mentoring preservice teachers have helped them to be successful in new leadership roles. This study provided

evidence that observation and a greater personal awareness through reflection leads teachers to improved teaching and learning. Through the process of reflection on their practice, both individually and collectively, teachers had opportunities to identify their own professional strengths and weaknesses within the context of their school's vision and focus. Teachers can take on further leadership by supporting new cooperating teachers and encouraging other teachers to mentor preservice teachers.

Implications for preservice teachers. The mentorship of preservice teachers is a partnership between schools, school districts, post-secondary institutions, teachers, and preservice teachers. Most preservice teachers understand the field experiences in schools to be important components of their education programs, and view themselves to be the benefactors of these experiences. When preservice teachers learn to view field experiences as shared learning opportunities for both mentor and mentee, they have opportunities to become more deliberate and focused in their questioning and communication, aiding in the reflection process incurred by cooperating teachers. By treating the practicum experience as professional development for all parties involved, preservice teachers can "see that learning is an integral part of teaching and that serious conversations about teaching are a valuable resource in developing and improving their practice" (Feiman-Nemser, 2001, p. 1019).

Implications for teacher education programs. There are wide variations in the nature and quality of teacher preparation programs. Participants were in favour of the recent program changes initiated by University A [pseudonym] and many would like to see similar programs reviewed by other post-secondary institutions in the province.

"One of the post-secondary schools is undergoing change to the program and the advisor came out to meet with us ahead of time and I really appreciated that. I would have liked more observation, more interaction, more availability, more support and have never had it to this extent." [Karen]

Consensus amongst participants was that there is a need for greater support and communication by post-secondary institutions for cooperating teachers. In addition to requiring a thorough explanation of the mentoring role, cooperating teachers desired more guidance on how to mentor from post-secondary institutions, indicating that they perceive post-secondary institutions to be responsible for the training of new teachers, and less so of schools or teachers already in the profession. Specifically, teachers expressed frustration with a lack of support regarding assessment, and by faculty supervisors. Further clarification of roles and expectations for themselves as cooperating teachers and also for preservice teachers at incremental stages in their development was touted as essential. They shared:

"I didn't feel that I understood the program well enough before meeting my student teacher." [Stacey]

"There were times when it feels like if things were rotten there wouldn't be a lot of support or direction (from the university). It would be nice if there was a curriculum for us so that we knew what sort of stages the university was expecting as well too." [Geoff]

"You need clear expectations from the university as to what they want you to

evaluate and what kind of experience they would like their students to have."

[Andrea]

Many teachers have become jaded as a result of negative experiences as

cooperating teachers. Teachers in this study expressed feelings of being unsupported,

isolated, and left to their own devices when problems or challenges occurred during the

practicum experience. In the words of one participant:

"I remember one student in particular that was never prepared, had terrible

discipline practices, he was unprofessional and would not take feedback to

improve his practice. He became a terrible burden to me and no one at the

university seemed to care enough to help me." [George]

Some participants were frustrated by the perceived lack of institutional support

and acknowledged a withdrawal from serving as cooperating teachers due to this

frustration. After describing a disheartening experience, Karen admitted:

"I took a break after that." [Karen]

Participants also identified a lack of feedback procedures for cooperating

teachers. Many felt that being able to discuss the mentorship process within a group of

colleagues such as the focus group used in this study was beneficial to their learning and

practice and provided a means of support. Cooperating teachers need opportunities to

thoroughly understand the mentoring role and to share understandings and experiences

with each other and the teacher preparation programs they are partnered with. This is

particularly important to allow cooperating teachers to construct contextual and

professional knowledge collaboratively, as well as individually. Teachers may not be

aware of the extent of impact that preservice teachers have had on their own professional development until they have an opportunity to reflect on their experiences with others. Many would like to see a platform developed for teachers to discuss their work as cooperating teachers and suggested that they could further exercise teacher leadership skills by sharing strategies for working with preservice teachers and mentoring new cooperating teachers. The cooperating teachers in this study appreciated the time this focus group interview gave them to share professional ideas and reflections with colleagues and wished for more opportunities to share and reflect with one another.

> *"After this year's experience, I did not want to take on any more student teachers. I was frustrated with the student more often than not, however, after attending this focus group meeting with others around the division I may consider it again."*
> [Krissy]

Rico added:

> *"Talking to you about it makes me want to take on another student teacher right away!"* [Rico]

Effective placement of preservice teachers in high schools was also an area of concern to cooperating teachers. Participants reiterated the need to ensure that preservice teachers had subject expertise that matched those of their classroom placements. When asked where cooperating teachers felt that they needed the most support, Rico offered:

> *"In making sure the students have the subject knowledge before coming into the classroom."* [Rico]

In addition, the specific education programs at various post-secondary institutions had an effect on the perceptions of teachers regarding the benefits that they felt they had

gained by serving as a cooperating teacher. If perceptions do in fact differ based on the post-secondary institution, perhaps these institutions should determine an agreed-upon philosophy on which to base preservice teacher practical experiences.

Implications for the teaching profession.

Responsibility for the recruitment of cooperating teachers extends beyond post-secondary institutions. Indeed, strong education programs, which include positive field experiences, are integral to the education system's ability to provide high quality teachers serving public education. Creating a stronger support system for cooperating teachers may help post-secondary institutions, schools, and the teaching profession to attract and retain future cooperating teachers to support preservice teachers. Fostering a greater awareness of teacher leadership and its importance to improved education outcomes.

It is clear that these cooperating teachers had a wealth of accumulated experience and expertise and were willing to share this with others. If we are to continue to build capacity and improve learning opportunities for teachers and students alike, we must find new ways to tap into the vast experiences and knowledge that teachers hold.

Limitations and Future Considerations

In addition to limitations already pointed out in previous chapters to this small-scale study research, there is a further one to consider, namely, the likelihood for a researcher bias in interpreting and analysing the data of this study. Social constructivism recognizes that a researcher's personal experiences and background shapes his or her understandings and interpretations, and therefore, researcher bias is simply one interpretation of events and phenomenon. Since qualitative research is subjective and experiential, my background as a former teacher and school-based administrator must be

acknowledged as shaping my view of preservice teacher mentoring and teacher instructional leadership. My abilities to collect and analyse data must also be considered in addition to any researcher bias. Since no independent party assisted in analysing the findings, hence no cross and double checking of such, the likelihood of the appearance of a researcher bias might be the result. In order to mitigate the effect of personal influences on the interpretation and analysis of the data, as many participant quotes as possible were used from the focus group interview and follow-up surveys to lessen the threat to the authenticity of individual participants' views and experiences.

A recommendation for future research might include the application of the same methodological approach on a wider scale. The data collection design of this study can be utilized as a basis for future research, including a larger number of participants. When considering desired outcomes of teacher professional development, Cole (2004) recommends that it should result in changes in classroom practices, teacher beliefs, and student learning. Since a primary goal of professional development is to improve student performance, a critical examination of how teaching practices and student achievement are affected as a result of serving as a cooperating teacher is certainly warranted.

Furthermore, many Alberta faculty of education programs are currently undergoing revision. It would be interesting to re-study the perceptions of cooperating teachers once the new education programs have been implemented for a few years. This study could therefore help to provide a preliminary structure on which to frame future enquiries. This research could provide an instructive starting point for those who wish to research gaining greater knowledge of how teachers understand the role of cooperating teacher. As the expectations of teachers change, so do school leadership roles. Students

and schools benefit when teachers accept and build their leadership capacities (Couture & Murgatroyd, 2012). If we are to support teachers in these new roles, a better understanding of teacher leadership is critical.

It is clear that strong partnerships between postsecondary institutions and schools are necessary to not only prepare preservice teachers for the classroom, but also to support veteran teachers (Chesley & Jordan, 2012; Feiman-Nemser, 2001). Further research into expanding teacher induction to become part of a larger vision and plan for on-going teacher professional development is necessary. Reconceptualising preservice teacher mentoring as a learning opportunity for veteran teachers can build capacity within schools, an essential part of the school improvement process. At the time of this writing, the school board in which this study was conducted has plans to restructure their recruitment, training, and support of cooperating teachers. It is my hope that this study will provide a basis for recommendations for change and improvement to facilitate the professional development of teacher leaders.

Summary

This study explored professional development through the eyes of the participants to gain a better understanding of how serving as a cooperating teacher can improve knowledge, skills, and attribute (KSA) competencies and build teacher instructional leadership capacity. It proposed that the role of cooperating teacher be extended to facilitate professional development while continuing to prepare quality teachers to enter the teaching profession. While the small sample size of this study is not yet sufficient to ground any generalizations, it does provide useful insights into how cooperating teachers perceive their roles as cooperating teachers and how they affect their personal

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professional development and teacher instructional leadership. This study has strengthened the knowledge base on which decisions can be made about supporting cooperating teachers in their leadership development. Teachers in this study viewed and respected preservice teachers as valuable partners and resources. It is important to continue to provide opportunities for teachers to work together to promote professional development by way of sharing their learning and new ideas with colleagues. Beyond building leadership capacity, serving as cooperating teachers encouraged teachers to develop a commitment to service. Preservice teacher mentoring provides an ongoing opportunity for teachers to challenge themselves while making greater contributions to the school, and to the profession as a whole, without having to leave the classroom.

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APPENDIX A: CFREB ETHICS APPROVAL

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

MEMO

To: **Justina Law**
Graduate Division of Educational Research

From: Dr. Kathleen Oberle, Chair
Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board (CFREB)

Re: **Certification of Institutional Ethics Review:** Preservice Teacher Mentoring as Professional Development for Teacher Instructional Leadership

The above named research protocol has been granted ethical approval by the Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board for the University of Calgary.

Enclosed are the original, and one copy, of a signed **Certification of Institutional Ethics Review**. Please make note of the conditions stated on the Certification. A copy has been sent to your supervisor as well as to the Chair of your Department/Faculty Research Ethics Committee. In the event the research is funded, you should notify the sponsor of the research and provide them with a copy for their records. The Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board will retain a copy of the clearance on your file.

Please note, an annual/progress/final report must be filed with the CFREB twelve months from the date on your ethics clearance. A form for this purpose has been created, and may be found on the "Ethics" website, http://www.ucalgary.ca/research/compliance/ethics/renewal

In closing let me take this opportunity to wish you the best of luck in your research endeavor.

Sincerely,

Cari Jahraus
For:
Kathleen Oberle, Ph.D., and
Chair, Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board

Enclosures(2)
cc: Chair, Department/Faculty Research Ethics Committee
Supervisor: Helen J. Mahoney

APPENDIX B: SELF-SURVEY

Demographics Questions

1. Please choose the number of years of teaching experience that you have:

   3-4   5-6   7-8   9-10   10-12 +12

2. Please choose the highest level of education you have earned:

   1 Bachelors   +1 Bachelors Masters   Doctorate   Other

Self-Survey Instructions and Questions

Part I

Using the Stages of Teacher Development described on the next page, please indicate which of the six stages most closely aligns with your current level of teacher development for each of the eleven knowledge, skills, and attributes (KSAs) as defined by the Teacher Quality Standard (Alberta Education, 1997).

Part II

Knowledge, Skills, and Attributes (KSAs)	Stage of Teacher Development						Affected by Cooperating Teaching
1. Teachers apply a variety of technologies to meet students' learning needs.	1	2	3	4	5	6	**Yes/No**
2. Teachers understand the subject disciplines they teach.	1	2	3	4	5	6	**Yes/No**
3. Teachers know there are many approaches to teaching and learning.	1	2	3	4	5	6	**Yes/No**
4. Teachers engage in a range of planning activities.	1	2	3	4	5	6	**Yes/No**
5. Teachers create and maintain environments that are conducive to student learning.	1	2	3	4	5	6	**Yes/No**
6. Teachers' application of pedagogical knowledge, skills and attributes is based in their ongoing analysis of contextual variables. Teachers' analysis of contextual student, school, parent and societal, teacher, and regulatory variables underlies their reasoned judgments and decisions about which specific pedagogical skills and abilities to apply in order that students can achieve optimum learning.	1	2	3	4	5	6	**Yes/No**
7. Teachers translate curriculum content and objectives into meaningful learning activities.	1	2	3	4	5	6	**Yes/No**
8. Teachers understand the legislated, moral and ethical frameworks within which they work. They function within policy frameworks established by school and legislative authorities.	1	2	3	4	5	6	**Yes/No**
9. Teachers gather and use information about students' learning needs and progress.	1	2	3	4	5	6	**Yes/No**
10. Teachers establish and maintain partnerships among school, home and community, and within their	1	2	3	4	5	6	**Yes/No**

own schools.							
11. Teachers are career-long learners.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**Yes/No**

In the Yes/No column, indicate if you feel that serving as a cooperating teacher has affected your teacher development growth for each of the eleven KSAs.

APPENDIX C: SELF-SURVEY STAGES OF TEACHER DEVELOPMENT

Stages of Teacher Development
Adapted from Leithwood (1992)

1	2	3	4	5	6
• partially developed classroom management skills • limited knowledge of and skill in use of several teaching models • little reflection on choice of teaching model • student assessment is mainly summative and carried out using limited techniques • believes strongly in rules and roles • poor link between the focus of assessment and instructional goals • self-protective, unilateral dependence	• well-developed classroom management skills • well-developed skill in use of several teaching models • experimentation and application of certain teaching models for particular parts of curriculum • student assessment begins to reflect formative purposes • focus of assessment linked to instructional goals easiest to measure • conformist, moral, conventional	• automated classroom management skills • growing awareness of need for and existence of other teaching models and initial efforts to expand repertoire and experiment with application of new models • choice of teaching model from expanded repertoire influenced most by interest in providing variety to maintain student interest • student assessment carried out for both formative and summative purposes • repertoire of techniques is beginning to match purposes • focus of assessment covers significant range of instructional goals • conscientious, moral, conditional dependence • future and achievement oriented	• classroom management is integrated with the program • little attention to classroom management as an independent issue is required • skill in application of a broad repertoire of teaching models • instructional goals, student learning styles, content to be covered, as well as the maintenance of student interests used as criteria for choice of teaching model • student assessment is carried out for both formative and summative purposes, using a wide array of techniques • program decisions are informed by assessment, and the focus of assessment is directly linked to the full array of instructional goals • autonomous, interdependent, principled, integrated	• high level of expertise in classroom instructional performance • reflective about own competence and choices and the fundamental beliefs and values on which they are based • able to assist other teachers in acquiring instructional expertise through either planned learning experiences, such as mentoring, or more formal experiences, such as inservice education and coaching programs • maintain a broad perspective • autonomous, interdependent, principled, integrated	• committed to the goal of school improvement • accepts responsibility for fostering that goal through any legitimate opportunity • able to exercise leadership, both formal and informal, with groups of adults inside and outside the school • has a broad framework from which to understand the relationships among decisions at many difference levels in the education system • is well informed about policies at many difference levels in the education system • autonomous, interdependent, principled, integrated

APPENDIX D: TEACHER LEADERSHIP FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

1. How does serving as a cooperating teacher affect your teacher and leadership professional development within each KSA? (Discuss all 11 KSAs)

2. What does being a teacher instructional leader mean to you?

3. Describe the cooperating teaching activities that impact your ability to be a teacher instructional leader.

FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why have you served as a cooperating teacher in the past, and would you serve as a cooperating teacher in the future?

2. How has serving as a cooperating teacher impacted or changed you?

3. How has serving as a cooperating teacher changed how you teach?

4. Has your perspective on teaching and learning changed since serving as a cooperating teacher and if so, how?

5. As a cooperating teacher, where do you need the most support?

6. Do you have a desire to hold a formal school leadership role??

7. How does serving as a cooperating teacher affect your relationships and/or status with other colleagues (teachers, administrators)?

8. Giving as much detail as possible, describe the leadership skills that you feel are affected by serving as a cooperating teacher.

9. What has influenced you the most in choosing to serve as a cooperating teacher?

10. Describe the sort of things you discuss with your preservice teacher during mentoring meetings.

11. Do you enjoy serving as a cooperating teacher? Why or why not?

12. Do you feel that serving as a cooperating teacher is useful or beneficial to you?

13. What previous mentoring experience have you had prior to serving as a cooperating teacher?

14. What is a meaningful conversation (with preservice teachers)? How have these impacted your own professional development?

APPENDIX E: ROCKY VIEW SCHOOLS RESEARCH APPROVAL

2651 Chinook Winds Drive SW, Airdrie, Alberta T4B 0B4
403.945.4000 p   403.945.4001 f
www.rockyview.ab.ca

May 17, 2012

Re: **Preservice Teacher Mentoring as Professional Development for Teacher Instructional Leadership**
      Justina K. Law, *Principal Researcher*

      Approval Date: May 15, 2012

Dear Justina,

Thank you for your interest in conducting action research in Rocky View Schools.

The Research Review committee members have individually examined your proposal and are pleased to inform you of their consent to proceed with your research pending the following conditions:

1. The final decision of participation rests with the school administration, teachers, students and/or parents involved.
2. This letter does not obligate participation by anyone associated with Rocky View School Division No. 41.
3. This approval does not include access to student, staff or school records beyond your normal duties as an employee of RVS.
4. Upon completion of your thesis, we require an abstract, synopsis or a copy of this study where it will be posted on the RVS website to support research knowledge mobilization.

Upon completion of your project, please use the attached Completion Form to indicate the date the project was completed as well as confirmation that your findings have been sent to Rocky View Schools (e.g. final report, research article, abstract of findings).

This approval to undertake the research is valid for **one year only.** Any significant changes of the above mentioned proposal and/or informed consent form should be reported to the Research Review Committee in advance of implementation of such changes.

We look forward to working with you on this endeavour.

Dr. John Burger
Director of Schools
RVS Research Review Committee

:lms

ecopy: Dave Morris, RVS Research Committee
         Manny Ferreirinha, RVS Research Review Committee

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