

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

EXAMINING THE ROLE OF MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS ON STUDENT  
LEARNING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:  
A COLLABORATIVE PROCESS WITHIN AN EARLY CHILDHOOD  
CONSULTATION PROGRAM

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the degree of Master of Arts in Education,

Educational Psychology

By

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May 2012

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**DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to my loving husband, Luis, for being patient, understanding, and essentially supportive of my decision and determination to further my education and for believing in me, my son, Evan, and my daughter, Kaylee, who have equally been supportive, but have also been my motivation to succeed and my reason for joining the ECEMA program, to my mother-in-law, who has allowed me to focus on my education by willingly helping me throughout the years in being there for my children while I'm gone to work or school, and lastly, my mother and father who have instilled in me the value of education, who have given me the quality of accepting challenges and the strength to overcome any obstacles I face in life. Thank you all, I greatly appreciate all of your love, support, and compassion.

Thank You.

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## ABSTRACT

EXAMINING THE ROLE OF MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS ON STUDENT  
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*Examining the Role of Mentoring Relationships on Student Learning and Professional Development: A Collaborative Process within an Early Childhood Consultation Program* expands on an existing follow-up study that was designed to examine any long lasting effects on students professional development through their experiences within the context of the Partnerships for Excellence, Early Childhood Education Consulting Services program.

The initial follow-up study revealed many interesting findings associated with the major influences on student learning and professional development, including student-mentor relationships. However, the initial study briefly discussed the significance of mentor-student relationships and little was said about *how* or *why* student-mentor relationships were a significant aspect of student learning and professional development. Therefore, the idea of a subsequent study further investigating the interviews from the

initial study pertaining to student-mentor relationship to better understand their practice and unique approach to learning became an interesting possibility, and has led to the examination of mentoring relationships in the context of the Partnerships for Excellence: ECECS program.

Interview transcripts from nineteen participants were collected and analyzed on Dedoose.com where key components of student-mentor relationships were identified and categorized into five themes. The five identified themes can serve an essential purpose to the field of child development by effectively enhancing student learning and professional development, not only benefitting students, but children, families, and future educators as well. Furthermore, the expansion of the early childhood education consultation program can help re-define or change professional development practices in the field of Child Development.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

*“Center program development is affected by the degree of staff turnover and major shifts in program philosophy, sources of funding, the community served, trauma experienced by individual staff members or communities, etc....these factors commonly intervene and affect program functioning as well as the course and pace of program growth and improvement. Collaborating for quality improvement in center-based early childhood programs is a delicate process; within each center there is a unique path to discover and follow.... we find that this process is founded on program strengths and enhancing relationships for the collaboration to be effective. To paraphrase the words of Deane Phinney, (community consultant for all four years), the content of the work to improve programs is the goal, but if the relationships are not strong, this goal cannot be met” (Fish, Isaacs, Chung, Boucher, & Pollack,2002, p.2).*

#### **The Power of Building Relationships**

Early childhood educational programs are vibrant, unique, and complicated systems, each with its own culture, mission, and goals to establish and fulfill.

Nonetheless, countless early childhood educational programs require assistance and support for various purposes including program improvement. The Partnerships for Excellence, Early Childhood Education Consultation Service program uses the method of collaboration to help centers successfully accomplish their goals and build a program based on best practices. Members involved in the consultation (mentors, graduate students, center staff, and the center director) build relationships based on trust,

communication, and mutual respect as they work towards a unified vision of what constitutes a *quality* program.

Whether relationships are built to improve program strengths or to gain knowledge and expertise in collaborative settings, focusing on relationships is imperative and needed to fulfill the ultimate goal of positively shaping the lives of children.

According to Fish, Isaacs, Chung, Boucher, and Pollack (2002), centers are relationships-based organizations. It is important to support and enhance the quality of relationships among individuals (children, families, staff, director, and related administrators) as these relationships shape the outcomes for both children and the adults.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System Theory implies that the mesosystem (between and among a child's home, school, neighborhood, etc.) is the connective tissue of relationship that holds micro-, exo-, and macrosystems together (Fish et al., 2002). This theory helps to describe a centers system by highlighting the role of relationships that interchangeably enter and exit within centers while underlining the importance of supporting and enhancing the quality of relationships among various individuals (children, families, staff, directors, mentors and students) who influence and shape the quality of one's life (Fish et al., 2002). The Partnerships for Excellence, Early Childhood Education Consulting Service Program values collaborative and interdependent relationships to help improve center strengths. Therefore, it is important to examine the product of building relationships, particularly within a collaborative setting amongst students and mentors, as it not only contributes to students professional development; it also contributes to center improvements, ultimately offering children the finest care and education possible (Fish et al., 2002).

Through the current study which constitutes this thesis, the role of student-mentor relationships on the professional growth and development of graduate students will be examined in hopes of transforming or expanding upon professional development programs, early childhood educational centers, and/or other educational establishments. In examining the role of student-mentor relationships in collaborative and interdependent settings, key components that lead graduate students and/or novice teachers to become better prepared, can be identified. Furthermore, teachers can receive the much needed support and assistance from a more experienced individual, such as a mentor. Mentors who are available to the student mentee consistently could offer solutions through reflective practice, guidance, and motivation leading them to a more successful path of growth and learning in their career.

This thesis examines the role of student-mentor relationships on learning outcomes and professional development within the context of the Partnerships for Excellence, Early Childhood Education Consulting Services. This chapter will first introduce the Partnerships for Excellence program and then continue to discuss crucial motives for continued education amongst individuals within a collaborative setting. Subsequent sections will offer insight into the role and the significance of mentoring relationships. Lastly, brief descriptions of several of key terms pertinent to this thesis will be defined.

**The Historical Context and Overview of the Partnerships for Excellence, Early Childhood Education Consulting Service**

Partnerships for Excellence, Early Childhood Education Consulting Services (ECECS) was conceived by Dr. Rose Bromwich and Professor Annabelle Godwin, MA,

and was developed collaboratively between the faculty of the CSUN Early Childhood Education M.A. Program and the Childcare Resource Center (CCRC) (Lieber, 2008). The Partnerships for Excellence Program was initiated in the fall of 1998 and has paired CSUN's Early Childhood Education graduate students with current or retired Early Childhood Education professionals who could serve as mentors. Together, students and mentors work as a team to offer consulting services to the directors and staff of center based childcare centers in the San Fernando Valley, at no charge, for one academic year (Lieber, 2008). Through this program, directors are given the opportunity to request ECECS to improve program quality through a collaborative process involving a group of Early Childhood individuals (mentors, graduate students, center staff and director), as it provides a strengths and relationship-based approach acquired from empowerment and participatory consultation/evaluation models. Furthermore, reflection, collaboration, and documentation are key elements applied and practiced throughout the consultation process (Sadler, 2008).

In addition to the time spent in the field doing consultations, graduate students participate in weekly seminars with Dr. Janet E. Fish (former coordinator of the CSUN Masters Program in ECE from 1998 to 2011, who is currently professor emerita/ part-time professor and Faculty- Coordinator of the PfE program), and their team mentors to share experiences and/or expertise, engage in discussions, and further enrich and develop student-mentor relationships (Lieber, 2008). Furthermore, participants engaged in a co-inquiry process, a problem-solving strategy that involves collaborative thinking amongst all individuals in the team (Sadler, 2008). Weekly seminars focus on group work, discussions, and on different aspects of the consultation process including:

- Developmentally appropriate practices in early childhood education
- Strategies that may prove effective for evolving stages of the consultation
- Relevant readings and other resources (Lieber, 2008).

Consultation meetings, followed by the weekly seminars led by Dr. Fish, provide participants with a setting which offers many opportunities for collaborative learning to occur (Lieber, 2008). According to Love and Rowland (1999), “Collaboration is considered a successful strategy for preventing the isolation of teachers, supporting beginning teachers, reducing teacher turnover, improving the quality of care and early education, and supporting professional development of experienced teachers” (as cited in Albrecht, 2000, p. 51). Furthermore, the role of mentors offers a significant component to the collaborative process and professional growth of student consultants as it opens doors to many positive outcomes (Love & Rowland, 1999).

### **The Need for Learning and Education in Collaborative Settings**

According to Meirink, Imants, Meijer, and Verloop (2010), teacher learning and education has recently become an important topic in educational research due to the ongoing pressure for changes in teaching practices to occur. Issues of quality and what constitutes quality care and education in early childhood centers is an example that demonstrates the importance of continuous professional development. Likewise, a stronger sense of teacher efficacy, increased self-confidence, lower rates of staff turnover, and more use of appropriate practices are among the various characteristics acquired through the continuance of teacher’s education. While teacher education and collaborative relationships are essential in enhancing teaching practices and child

outcomes, it is important to examine how factors within the context of the work environment influence teacher quality and teacher effectiveness.

Kipnis, Whitebook, Almaraz, Sakai, & Austin (2012) sheds light on the importance of the work environment and how it can significantly influence the quality of teaching practices by revealing, "... the work environment can either facilitate or impede practitioners' abilities to implement what they have learned at school and to continue to improve their instructional and caregiving practices" (p. 25). In other words, even when teachers complete academic degrees in the field of ECE and increase their ability to exercise quality teaching practices with children, negative center environment factors including inadequate training of co-workers, high staff turnover, lack of paid teacher planning time, and/or inadequate director education and training [to name a few], could negatively influence and limit teacher' demonstration of quality practices (strategies that enhance the teaching-learning process) with children. Additionally, research findings indicate that the quality of teacher practices also depends on the quality of the coursework and the practicum content and faculty quality characteristics of the academic degree program that teachers complete. As, Karoly (2012) affirms,

...requiring the ECE workforce to attain a particular degree or credential- without attention to the content and quality of the degree program or the context of the ECE [work] environment that can support or hinder effective practices\_ will not necessarily ensure that classroom quality will be enhanced or that child developmental outcomes will be maximized (p.18).

The attainment of a degree would become of no use if the work environment not only presents challenging factors, but lacks proper teacher support or relationship- based



professional development. Therefore, teacher education along with attention to providing a supportive work environment is essential for both teacher quality and successful child outcomes to be achieved. While the context of the work environment matters, collaborative settings greatly influence teachers' professional growth and development as well.

Literature suggests individuals achieve more knowledge and expertise through collaborative settings or learning communities (Meirink et al., 2010). In collaborative settings mentoring relationships can significantly transform individuals and their practice. Furthermore, a collaborative setting provides a powerful learning environment and is considered to provide positive conditions for learning to occur (Meirink et al., 2010). For example, research by Whitebook, Austin, Ryan, Kipnis, Almaraz, and Sakai (2012) demonstrated that students assigned with a mentor often reported they received the guidance and supervision they needed with sufficient opportunities for reflection as compared to those who did not have a mentor. Moreover, Kagan and Gomez (2011) described mentoring relationships as type of relationship-based professional development, allowing mentors/ coaches/consultants to provide ECE teachers with the opportunity to experience ongoing, intensive, individualized, field-driven pedagogical guidance. This approach not only has been used successfully with new teachers by "Breaking the isolation commonly associated with the teaching profession" (Kagan & Gomez, 2011, p. 72), it has also been proven effective in reducing staff turnover as well. Relationship-based professional development programs

...address the quality of teacher preparation and professional development programs, to recognize the need for ongoing professional development support in

addition to further formal education, and to strengthen the provision of a supportive work environment that allows practitioners to fully utilize their knowledge and skills (Károly, 2012, p. 28).

Similar to student-mentor relationships, teacher-teacher relationships in collaborative settings also allow members to exchange ideas or experiences, develop and discuss new materials, get feedback from colleagues, and give each other moral support (Butler, Novak Lauscher, Jarvis-Selinger, &Beckingham, 2004; Johnson, 2003; Meirink, Meijer, &Verloop, 2007 as cited in Meirink et al., 2010), thus eliminating issues concerning staff turnover due to the lack of proper teacher support. According to Meirink et al. (2010), “the learning potential of collaboration depends on the interdependency in the collaborative relationships” (p. 161). Although mentoring relationships within collaborative settings are believed to influence professional growth outcomes, there is no clear evidence indicating how or why. Whitebook et al. (2012) helped shed light on this matter by stating, “Because ECE teachers are not universally required to participate in a clinical experience, research to date has focused on [the] presence of any experiences, rather than its features” (p. 22). Whitebook et al. (2012) further stated, “The development of a detailed protocol for describing clinical experiences would strengthen our understanding of the range of practices included in higher education programs for early care and education practitioners, and permit us to access different approaches” (p.22). Hence, it is essential to examine the benefits of mentoring relationships in the context of an interdependent, collaborative setting such as the PfE: ECECS program.

### **Purpose of Examining Mentoring Relationships**

This study seeks to understand how mentoring programs such as the one manifested in Partnerships for Excellence furthers the professional growth and development of graduate students. Partnerships for Excellence, Early Childhood Education Consulting Services uses a method in which graduate students are paired with mentors (experienced professionals in the field) to help make quality improvements to centers. As mentors and students come together in collaboration, they build a relationship based on trust, mutual respect, and open communication. This relationship, along with the ECECS seminar and consultation experience, is believed to significantly contribute to positive learning outcomes for both mentors and graduate students in the program.

Upon concluding the ECECS program, graduate students are interviewed in regard to their experiences in order to examine any lasting effects on their professional development. Examination of the interview responses repeatedly reveals that relationships, especially with the mentor (s), are most important, memorable, and beneficial to their learning experience and outcome. For that reason, the current study has examined the interviews conducted in the initial study, identifying five major themes as the various aspects that make mentoring relationships most effective to the graduate students involved in ECECS. For the purpose of this study, the interviews from the initial study have been analyzed and each theme has been coded and described with specific quotes from the student interviews. These codes may help to offer a deeper understanding of how mentoring relationships shape the most effective and positive outcomes for professional development.

### **The Significance of Mentoring Relationships in Collaborative Settings**

The key components that lead graduate students to the most effective methods of gaining knowledge, expertise, and professionalism can be found in examining mentoring relationships. In this way, educators can not only provide children with positive memorable experiences, they can both model and implement best practices most effectively and mirror for staff (through supporting their professional growth and development) how to support all domains of children's learning and development in the programs that serve these children. Furthermore, this study may also contribute to PfE: ECECS practices in relation to center program accreditation efforts or other related program improvement projects for center development. This would offer center director and staff with opportunities to grow and to remain generative to support one another in their pursuit of creating, building and maintaining a "quality" program. For example, results of the current study may be valuable to the NAEYC/NCATE Professional Development Guidelines Standard 6 (Becoming a Professional) and 7 (Field Experiences), and the California Early Childhood Educators Competencies Standards 10 (Leadership) and 11 (Professionalism), which address enhancing professional development among individuals working in early childhood educational settings. More details of these standards will be described in greater detail in Chapter Five, Discussion and Conclusion.

Lastly, expansion of this PfE service may also allow students at other levels of higher education to benefit as fieldwork is re-defined or changed in the field of Child Development (Fish et al., 2002). PfE offers an academic field experience unlike most internships through which students can experience in-depth what it takes to work with children and adults. Through their relationships with mentors, professor and peers, students can learn about teamwork, collaboration, and partnerships between and among

consulting team members and center staff and director while having the opportunity to work with mentors who volunteer their time to support student growth and learning every step of the way.

According to Murch and Wollenburg (2000), “one-shot” workshops are informative and inspiring at the moment, but do not demonstrate real individual or organizational growth. The greatest impact lies within the on-going developmental process and the long term plans of formal training events. Furthermore, the development of relationships provides learners with the needed support to nurture their growth to becoming professionals.

### **Terminology**

Various terms that help explain aspects of the topic at hand and are used throughout the thesis are briefly defined to follow. Further description of these terms can be found in Chapter Two, the Literature Review.

*Facilitators:* A facilitator is defined as one that helps to bring about an outcome by providing assistance, guidance, and supervision (Merriam-Webster Online, 2011). Kent (2006) describes the facilitator’s responsibility as one who addresses’ the journey rather than the destination. Furthermore, facilitators promote reflection and actively apply and follow teaching practices.

*Reflective Practice:* Reflective Practice is characterized as the ability to look back and learn from one’s experience (Pultorak, 1993). Reflective practice can be used in collaborative settings between two or more individuals to analyze, problem-solve, and gain deeper understandings.

*Reflective Supervision:* Reflective supervision is characterized by active learning and thoughtful questioning by both parties. The role of the supervisor is to help the supervisee to answer his/her own questions, and to provide the support and knowledge necessary to guide decision making. In addition, the supervisor provides an empathetic, non-judgmental ear to the supervisee (Parlakian, 2001, p.2).

*Teacher Collaboration:* Teacher collaboration is the process of developing knowledge and expertise on various issues through joint work with others, especially in an intellectual endeavor (Merriam-Webster Online, 2011). It is an opportunity to learn from a colleagues' practice (Hindin, Morocco, Mott, & Aguilar, 2007), and to share and contribute own knowledge, expertise, and experiences in favor of mutual benefits. Teacher collaboration is considered to be a powerful learning environment for teachers' professional development and can be identified as the process through which teachers form a learning community (Meirink, Meijer, & Verloop, 2007).

*Co-inquiry Process:* The co-inquiry process is a tool that was introduced to the ECECS program in 2006. It offers students with the experience of sharing, listening, and reflecting in a safe environment. Furthermore, it allows teams to collaborate and enhance their documentation and analytical skills (Fish & Frey, 2006).

*Interdependency:* Interdependency within a mentoring or collaborative setting refers to the exchange of ideas or experiences, the moral support that is both given and received, and the discussions that strengthen one's potential to learn (Meirink et al., 2007). These characteristics describe individuals within a group who have established relationships and are mutually dependent upon one another.

*Mentors:* Mentors are described as being more experienced than their mentees and can provide knowledge and skills that the mentee wants or needs (Ambrosetti & Dekkers, 2010). Ambrosetti and Dekkers (2010) list three components of mentoring as relationship, process, and context.

*Mentoring Relationships:* A mentoring relationship is characterized as a collaborative relationship between two or more individuals and supports development throughout one's career (Murrell, 2007).

*Induction:* The London EPPI-Centre provides a broad definition of induction as the socialization process that the beginning teacher goes through at a social and professional level while incorporating an element of assessment (as cited in Moss, 2010). Induction is also defined by an ERIC search as beginning teacher orientation (as cited in Moss, 2010).

### **Arrangement of the Following Thesis Chapters**

Chapter Two, the Literature Review, will examine relevant research on the possible benefits of mentoring relationships and its effects on professional development. Focus will be placed on the role of mentors within the Partnerships for Excellence program. Other related research will discuss the subject matter of mentoring networks for graduate students and beginning teachers with an emphasis on collaborative relationships and teacher interdependency. Chapter Three will describe the methodology implemented to investigate the research assumptions on mentoring relationships and collaborative settings. Chapter Four will present and describe the findings of the study. Finally, in Chapter Five the findings will be discussed in relation to identified themes. Limitations of

this study, suggestions for possible actions based on the findings, and implications for future research and practice will be addressed as well.



## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This chapter will examine several characteristics of mentoring relationships that are thought to benefit and influence professional learning and development. First, an article focused on mentors, along with articles on the role of mentors in the Partnerships for Excellence program will be examined. This discussion will explore several aspects of the relationship-based role of mentors. Next, the current research on professional induction and mentoring will be reviewed. This will include a discussion of the development of mentoring networks for graduate students and beginning teachers with an emphasis on collaborative relationships. Finally, an article on the role of facilitators will be reviewed with attention to four emerging themes regarding quality relationships related to enhancing effective practices, providing a context for a subsequent discussion of articles on teacher interdependency in collaborative settings and leadership roles in facilitating change.

#### **Professional Development Mentoring Programs**

Peterson, Valk, Baker, Brugger, and Hightower (2010) examined the effectiveness of mentoring programs on professional development in their article titled *The Mentor-Protégé Relationship*. According to Peterson et al. (2010), most professional development opportunities such as workshops are proven to be ineffective for effecting long-term changes in knowledge or practice for early educators. Therefore, federal policies in the US (Early Reading First and Good Start, Grow Smart) placed funding toward mentoring programs to improve early care and education and examined how mentors offered instructional support and feedback along with social and emotional

support to educators in the context of their own classroom practice. Peterson et al. (2010), suggested that mentoring is a promising strategy for improving teaching practices, benefiting both the cognitive and socio-emotional aspects of professional development of the individual teacher.

## **Methodology**

In this study, twenty-five mentors worked with 214 infant, toddler, and preschool educators during the course of two years as part of a community-wide professional development initiative (Peterson et al., 2010). The mentors were recruited through advertisements in local publications and through word of mouth. Moreover, mentors were required to meet specific qualifications in regards to both education and experience. Mentors were interviewed by program staff prior to completing an extensive number of trainings including forty-five hours of training on the mentoring process followed by a two-week Program for Infant-Toddler Caregivers (PITC) training. Three supervising mentors with prior mentoring experience and one lead mentor directed the mentoring program (Peterson et al., 2010).

## **Procedures**

Mentors and educator-mentees were paired based on their geographic location, their corresponding schedules, and their shared cultural and linguistic backgrounds when possible (Peterson et al., 2010). Mentors visited with the educators twice a month for about two and one half hours per visit to observe adult-child interactions in the classroom as mentors modeled appropriate care-giving and instructional strategies. Mentors then met with educators about once a month to discuss the observations, provide feedback, develop goals and action plans, and provide any needed resources specific to the needs of

the mentee (Peterson et al., 2010). Observations and specific goals were set and recorded on mentor log sheets and were reviewed by the supervising mentor each month. A grounded theory approach was then used on both the mentors and educators in order to obtain qualitative data through surveys, interviews, reflections, and focus groups (Peterson et al., 2010). Through this process, four themes emerged and were described as:

- Building Relationships
- The Role of Mentors
- Readiness to Change
- Mentor Reflection and Professional Growth

### **Results: Four Themes**

**Building relationships.** Educators frequently commented on the ease of working with mentors. They described their experience in the mentoring program as being, for example, “very helpful I feel, especially when your mentor is very willing to work with you and you are able to get feedback” (Peterson et al., 2010, p. 163). The educators not only reported that they appreciated the mentoring relationships; the mentors also conveyed the importance of building relationships as the foundation for all of their work. This theme was repeatedly reflected in responses to both the mentor focus groups and the interviews. Not only does building relationships require mentors to make personal investments in connecting with the educators on a personal level; it is reportedly an emotional process through which overcoming fears and mistrust are major outcomes. Furthermore, through the process of building relationships, mentors encouraged educators to further their education as they aimed to build their confidence and encourage them to pursue higher degrees and succeed (Peterson et al., 2010).

**The role of mentors.** Mentors communicated their roles and expectations with the educators as they established clear rules and boundaries about their relationship. Mentors understood that many of the educators did not have prior experiences with mentoring relationships, and were most likely familiar with more authoritarian, threatening supervision relationships (Peterson et al., 2010). Although the educators needed to adjust to the newly established mentoring relationships, they seemed to understand that the mentor's primary role was to help the educator reach her goals. As reported by Peterson et al. (2010), the educators stated how mentors helped to provide "[an]other perspective to look at, observe, digest....Another pair of eyes" (p.165). One educator commented, "I enjoy the dialogue. It's nice to share information back and forth, brainstorm ideas that would help" (Peterson et al., 2010, p.165). Mentors reported that they helped educators reflect on their experiences in the classroom, maintaining frequent and ongoing communication.

**Readiness to change.** Building relationships allowed mentors to get to know the educators and adjust their expectations for what they could accomplish in terms of changing mentee beliefs and practices. Mentors helped educators change their behaviors and beliefs regarding how to support children's learning. However, they also encountered difficulties with educators who were not ready or willing to change. Mentors described their experiences by comparing these experiences to working with children as they stated, "small changes happen before big changes [do]" and "They're all at different levels, the same as the children are.... They're all gonna be at different stages" (Peterson et al., 2010, p. 166). Mentors reported less change in practice among educators who were less

responsive to mentoring. Furthermore, these authors emphasized that, without building strong relationships, slight progress is made.

**Mentor reflection and professional growth.** In this study, an important factor in the mentor-mentee relationship was the mentor's commitment to his/her *own* professional growth. Mentors attended monthly meetings with their supervising mentors who modeled the process of checking in, actively listening, providing positive feedback, setting goals, and reflecting with the educators. In addition, supervising mentors modeled ideal, supportive and nurturing relationships, which mentors perceived and practiced with the educators. These meetings allowed mentors to reflect on the mentoring process, collaborate with other mentors to discuss their experiences, problem solve, and share related professional resources, promoting professional growth (Peterson et al., 2010). Furthermore, mentors contributed diverse personal and professional experiences to the discussions, which served as a resource for mentors to learn about and practice different styles and strategies for working with educators as well as to consider additional factors affecting practice and expected outcomes. The awareness of cultural differences in communication styles also helped mentors to seek other methods or resources they could use in their relationships with the educators.

Results indicated that both mentors and educators became aware of the need and importance of building relationships for mentoring to be successful. One important factor cited is understanding the social and emotional nature of the mentoring relationship in terms of responding to a variety of factors that exist within the early childhood education context (e.g., the early educator's low status/prestige, low administrative support, and

high staff turnover). Results further indicated that additional social and emotional characteristics of the relationship consisted of:

- Finding ways to genuinely connect with the educator on a personal level
- Using differences in life experiences as opportunities to reflect on the mentor-mentee relationship
- Positioning themselves as allies of the mentee
- Validating the importance of the educator's work
- Supporting educators' professional growth (Peterson et al., 2010, p.172).

These findings indicated that such strategies used to provide educators with social-emotional support are fundamental components of the mentors' work. Through such interactions, educators began to develop a sense of trust over time, and began to view their mentoring relationships as collaborative rather than hierarchical.

Other results show that mentors learned to channel educators' resistance to change into perspective through recognizing different stages of change and adjusting expectations for what they could accomplish together (Peterson et al., 2010). Furthermore, they discovered a common feature among educators in this program who were resistant to change: these participants had not voluntarily enrolled; they had been signed up by their administrators. This significant factor is understood to have shaped the effectiveness of professional development programs in changing teacher practices. Finally, results indicated that group meetings and supportive relationships with supervising mentors greatly helped mentors reflect on and devise strategies for enhancing social and emotional aspects of their relationships with the educators (Peterson et al., 2010). These

results clearly indicated that the mentors' own professional growth greatly contributed to the success of building successful mentoring relationships.

### **Relationship-Based Role of Mentors and Students in PFE**

Mentors are wise and experienced professionals in the field who seek to share their knowledge with individuals such as students. Mentor-student relationships take time to build and are dependent upon individual personalities. However, it is also essential for relationships to be comfortable and honest in order to allow interdependency and collaboration to occur (ECECS Mentor, 2004). According to ECECS Mentors (2004):

The graduate student-community consultant/mentor relationship holds great promise for graduate student learning and networking in the field of Early Childhood Education. In addition, the strengths of this relationship is key to the success of the ECECS collaboration and outcomes with a center director and staff. This relationship is unique to the ECECS experience (p. 1).

### **Benefits of Building Relationships**

Furthermore, mentor-student interactions allow relationships to develop through:

- Trust
- Mutual willingness to work
- Acknowledging common and different/unique knowledge base(s)
- Respect
- Dependability
- Creativity
- Goal of Being “in-sync” (ECECS Mentor, 2004, p.1)

**Building relationships through the four phases of consultation.** In further developing a productive relationship, mentors recognize the strengths of the graduate students as they establish mutual respect and democratic exchange (ECECS Mentor, 2004). Moreover, their involvement in the Partnerships for Excellence ECECS program allows mentors and students to practice the four phases of consultation, a process developed specifically for the PfE: ECECS program by Dr. Janet Fish and Toni Isaacs, M.A., which not only facilitates the creation and maintenance of a community of learners among consultants, teachers and the director, but also facilitates the building of relationships between the participants, particularly between mentors and students. Building a community of learners requires the sharing of knowledge and ideas while creating an environment of trust, support, and respect. Furthermore, students are empowered to learn from one another to develop professionally (PfE: The Four Phases of Consultation, 2010).

***Phase One, gathering information.*** During Phase One, the consulting team builds a trusting and supportive relationship with the center. However, this process also builds the initial mentor-student relationships as well, through:

- The art of asking questions
- Active listening
- Collaboration
- Reflective practice and Reflective supervision (PfE: The Four Phases of Consultation, 2010, p.2)

Together, mentors and students begin to deepen their understanding of the center and staff as they observe the program in action, meet with the director and meet with the



staff and together, communicate ways to support and strengthen the program, the staff, and the director, to build a community of learners within the center (The Four Phases, 2010). Mentors and students contribute their knowledge, skills, experience, and interests to the consulting process and continue onto the next phase.

***Phase Two, developing the consulting plan.*** This next phase involves collaboration amongst the participants to develop the consultation plan. The goal is to structure a unified vision of the program and to generate long-term goals based on program strengths and the director's desired outcomes (The Four Phases, 2010). This requires participants, particularly the mentors and students to:

- Brainstorm strengths and areas of growth
- Share ideas and information
- Continue reflective practice and supervision
- Collaboration on consulting activity plans (PfE: The Four Phases of Consultation, 2010, p.2)

***Phase Three, implementing the consultation plan.*** A variety of activities, such as workshops, sharing of information and ideas, and other forms of program interventions are implemented during the third phase of consulting. Consultants use a modeling technique of ideas and/or behaviors for subsequent use by the staff and center director (PfE: The Four Phases of Consultation, 2010). Mentors and students work together to provide the center and staff with:

- One-on-one support
- Meetings and /or activities
- Providing resources

- Linking the program to other agencies, resources, or professionals related to the consultation focus (PfE; *The Four Phases of Consultation*, 2010, p.3)

The consultation team documents and monitors the effectiveness of each of the consultation activities and/or program interventions. They then collaborate with the center staff to make modifications to the planned activities through reflective practice, follow up questions, and other evaluation tools (PfE: *The Four Phases of Consultation*, 2010).

***Phase Four, evaluating the consultation.*** This final phase ends with the development and delivery of the culminating report to the center. This report includes a summary of the initial information gathered during Phase One, the development of the consultation plan, the implementation of consultation activities/interventions, the goals met, and areas for further growth and development. Furthermore, post assessments are completed by all participants including the students. In concluding the year-long consulting experience, graduate students and mentors then present a written case study report along with a PowerPoint presentation to the Partnerships for Excellence weekly seminar (PfE: *Four Phases of Consultation*, 2010).

This year-long consultation experience gradually unites students and mentors together to create a team of individuals who share goals and develop a unified vision towards enhancing effective practices. As mentors and students work together and collaborate around various topics relevant to the improvement of centers, they begin to gain knowledge, skills, and expertise. They open a door to professional growth and development, linking theories to context, concluding the year with deeper understandings of what it takes to form partnerships for excellence.

## **Professional Induction and Mentoring**

Professional induction and mentoring is a two-way partnership process that can exist between a novice and a more experienced individual such as, teachers and facilitators, or graduate students and retired professionals. The formation of such collaborative relationships and interdependency between networks of others is believed to help contribute to the professional growth and development of those involved. In such relationships where mutual benefits exist, “It is suggested that collaboration, rather than consultation, leads to the most successful outcomes” (Fish, Isaacs, Chung, Boucher, & Pollack, 2002, p.2).

### **Collaborative Mentoring Relationships**

Moss (2010) focused on professional *induction*, a period of learning, scaffolding, and reflecting that an individual experiences, and mentoring of beginning teachers and graduate students. This study aimed to understand the roles, interpretations, and collaborative actions of the participants associated with mentoring in one school site. This study emerged when the Beaumont school community in Australia recognized the need to support and strengthen beginning teachers and to ensure professional growth opportunities (Moss, 2010). The development of a “Buddy” program allowed all twenty-one staff members from this primary school to work with a mentor with the confidence that mentoring would provide “a wide range of opportunities for mentors and mentees to engage in discourse communities around pedagogy, reflective thinking, and the development of optimal mentoring relationships” (Moss, 2010, p. 44). Not only was there a need to provide beginning teachers with the necessary support system to help them build confidence in their classrooms, there was also a need to build and maintain

professionalism and set the course for improved professional practices within the whole school culture.

## **Methodology**

A small-scale, school-based research design using a cluster sampling technique was conducted with the twenty-one teaching staff members at a school that had long been considered to be an essential part of the local community for its lengthy history and its innovative use of various team structures. The teaching staff consisting of teachers and graduates was given a three item, open-ended question survey for qualitative responses on induction and mentoring issues (Moss, 2010). The survey items sought to reveal:

- What is a mentor?
- What could you offer as a mentor?
- A mentor could assist me with...

One year following the completion of the survey, staff interests in the mentor/mentee relationship were tapped through completion of the “Teacher self-assessment competency checklist” (Moss, 2010) by potential mentors and mentees. Two experienced teachers and three graduates in their first year of teaching responded. Mentor-mentee partnerships were then formed and their meetings were scheduled on an “as-needed” basis, each meeting lasting approximately one hour. During the meetings, the mentors and mentees shared their Professional Development Plan as a coordinator helped provide the pairs with opportunities for:

- Sounding out ideas.
- Debriefing.
- Maintaining focus.

- Extension of ideas.
- General advice and support.
- Mentors to be the negotiator for performance feedback (Moss, 2010, p.48).

## **Results**

Results from the initial open-ended survey questions of the twenty-one participants revealed that mentors provided friendship, encouragement, support, and the sharing of knowledge on matters concerning school operations (Moss, 2010). Furthermore, it was reported by the coordinators that mentees developed skills on a more practical level while mentors developed a tool for personal reflection regarding their own practice. However, additional responses indicated that mentors did not help “build a professional knowledge base” nor did they “support systematic inquiry of practice” (Moss, 2010, p. 49). Moss (2010) made it clear that the program was still a work in progress and was slowly progressing. Moreover, the small number of participants and the limited target group is thought to have played a role. Other areas of improvement included the need for staff commitment and a time for groups to meet formally of four, two-hour sessions by grade teams.

Despite these limitations the coordinators stated, “The mentoring program began to fill a previously unmet need” (Moss, 2010, p.49). The mentees received ongoing opportunities to benefit from the knowledge and expertise of their mentors through relationships that promoted interactions, interdependence, and reflective practices, which Moss (2010) referred to as the *discipline of noticing*. Moss (2010) cited research by Sachs (2003) explaining how supportive contexts, such as collaboration, brings “rich and mutually satisfying professional outcomes for teachers and academics alike” (p. 43).

Furthermore, relationships helped form a key link that would shape and strengthen collaborative relationships for both the mentors and mentees (Moss, 2010).

### **Quality Relationships and Effective Practices**

Similar to Moss, Kent (2006) examined the role of facilitators in collaboration with schools and teachers. However, Kent (2006) further discussed the impact and the links between quality relationships and professional growth while enhancing effective practices. This study sought to capture the experiences of the facilitators working with teachers on the Enhancing Effective Practices in Special Education (EePiSE) project in select New Zealand schools (Kent, 2006). Kent (2006) used a convenience sample of nine facilitators who were invited to participate in this study to be interviewed using a semi-structured interview format that included seven questions and prompts. The nine facilitators worked in ten out of twenty-four schools that were involved in the EePiSE project. The locations of the schools were spread across New Zealand and ranged from large urban schools to distant rural schools, and represented both primary and secondary schools. Two of the participants were male and two were identified as being Maori. A flexible interview schedule was used to allow participants the needed time to introduce their experiences and insights important to them (Kent, 2006).

### **Methodology**

Facilitators were presented to the schools and teachers, who were involved in the EePiSE project by the Ministry of Education in order to provide teachers with assistance in their action learning activities which “seeks to develop learning from the interactions that occur while problem-solving in real work contexts” (Kent, 2006, p. 59). Facilitators and teachers engaged in reflective practices which helped teachers identify ways to make

adaptations to their teaching and learning context. After going through the process of interacting and engaging with teachers, facilitators were interviewed revealing four themes that suggest there is an importance on quality relationships between teachers and facilitators. The themes included working together, teacher self-discovery, working/learning in context, and useful skills in enhancing outcomes (Kent, 2006). Each theme would reveal ways in which facilitators and teachers successfully united to enhance their professional and teaching practices.

## **Results**

This qualitative research study required the use of content analysis to help examine the collected data and identify core patterns or themes that were evident in the interviews (Kent, 2006). According to Kent (2006), “the themes were grouped and subjected to peer review by a Ministry of Education senior advisor not involved in the EEPiSE project” (Kent, 2006, p. 60). The participants were then able to review the draft to ensure accurate representation of their expressed views as well as their preserved anonymity. Furthermore, permission to incorporate quotes was obtained from the participants, allowing the reader to determine the validity of the interpretations made in accordance to the themes.

Relationships played a central role within the responses reported along each theme and suggested that the establishment of relationships would ensure successful facilitation. A brief review of each theme, including, working together, teachers self-discovery, working and learning in context, and useful skills for enhancing outcomes, revealed the various aspects of building relationships including the various roles of the facilitators.

**Working together.** Facilitators shared the perception that building and maintaining constructive relationships with teachers is critical for effective facilitation. According to Kent (2006) one facilitator stated, “Where a positive relationship already existed or time had been spent establishing one, the project was more easily activated” (p. 60). Another facilitator noted, “Working relationships among educators are not always easy, but even when faced with challenges, a constructive and open relationship enabled facilitators and school personnel to benefit” (Kent, 2006, p.60). Much like a community of practice, teachers and facilitators came together to share information, make decisions, plan work, solve problems, and learn together. Facilitators used their knowledge and skills to help teachers accomplish their goals (Kent, 2006). According to Bascal (2004), “The facilitator’s responsibility is to address the journey, rather than the destination” (as cited in Kent, 2006, p.59).

**Teachers’ self-discovery.** As teachers and facilitators engaged in a professional learning dialogue, it became evident that teachers became more aware of their ability to confront and cope with any challenges they experienced. Moreover, teachers gained knowledge and skills through reflection and planning with colleagues as they helped one another identify ways in which they could improve their teaching practices to benefit the children and increase their efficacy. Furthermore, they reportedly gained the ability to reflect on their own thinking as well as the children’s thinking as learners (Kent 2006). As stated by one facilitator, “teachers have begun to realize that what they do actually makes a difference in the outcomes that children achieve” (Kent, 2006, p.60).

**Working and learning in context.** Effective professional development has been described as being collaborative, site-based, involving peer engagement, and involving



teachers as experimenters/learners (Centre for the Use of Research and Evidence in Education, 2005 as cited in Kent, 2006). One participant noted, “What was reported to me was having the theory separately and uncontextualized wasn’t that helpful, but when it was brought in alongside the actual work and interpreted in the context of the actual children they were working with and in their school and community it was far more meaningful and powerful” (Kent, 2006, p. 61). Working and learning in context helped participants gain knowledge and better understand theories of practice. Furthermore, through a supportive network of professionals in the field, participants were inspired through guidance and insight on such applications.

**Useful skills for enhancing outcomes.** The supportive skills used by facilitators for enhancing outcomes with participating schools were to establish a positive relationship with the schools early on. This included being available, being present, and being involved. Facilitators visited with the teachers regularly and exchanged email addresses and phone numbers while they continued to get to know each other and their roles. Furthermore, teachers felt supported by the facilitators as the facilitators helped teachers learn and improve their practices rather than telling teachers what to do or simply focusing on accomplishing tasks (Kent, 2006).

There was an emphasis on the need to establish relationships as it is a significant component manifested within each of the four themes that have been discussed. Furthermore, the interviews revealed that relationships have had an influence on the roles and the successful experiences of both the facilitators and the teachers. A learning team that consists of facilitators and participating teachers who share and reflect on experiences while collaborating may be the most effective approach for enhancing

effective teaching practices and professional development. Further research illustrated the course of learning that took place within collaborative groups.

### **Cognitive and Behavioral Outcomes of Collaboration**

According to Merink, Meijer, and Verloop (2007), there is a lack of empirical research describing *how* teachers become skilled and gain knowledge through collaboration. Therefore, Meirink et al. (2007) examined the learning activities that take place in collaborative settings in relation to reported cognitive and/or behavioral changes by the participants. Research showed that collaborative settings or learning communities are perceived by teachers as being important, relevant, and valuable to the improvement of their own teaching practices. As teachers exchange new ideas and experiences, develop and discuss new materials, or receive feedback from their colleagues, it is difficult to assess exactly how and when learning occurs (Merink et al., 2007). Therefore, Merink et al. (2007) took a different perspective in trying to identify the types of activities that resulted in learning. For the purposes of their study, teacher learning was defined as “an active process in which teachers undertake learning activities that lead to a shift in their cognition and/or behavior” (Meirink et al., 2007, p.147). Learning activities were then identified as reading books, attending conferences, and engaging in dialogue between colleagues. Meirink et al. (2007) then sought to combine the learning activities with what teachers have reportedly learned.

### **Methodology**

A letter was sent to the principals and managers of forty-five Dutch upper secondary schools in the western part of the Netherlands. Subsequently, nine schools responded and five were selected to participate. Of the five schools, teachers of different

subjects formed five collaborative groups (Groups A-E) and discussed two topics concerning active and self-regulated student learning and experienced problems with individual students (Meirink et al., 2007). The frequency of the meetings were determined by each group and ranged between 5-7 meetings during the school year to weekly meetings (set by one group). The group meetings were videotaped while an experienced coach observed the process of collaboration. The coach used a study team approach as a guideline for monitoring the collaborative process. The study team approach consisted of three stages:

1. Reflection: raising problem awareness by explicating knowledge and beliefs.
2. Study: investigation or inquiry using different perspectives
3. Change: generation of conceptual artifacts (Meirink et al., 2007, p. 150).

A total of six teachers (one or two teachers from each group) were selected to participate in an in-depth study using semi-structured interviews and digital logs to obtain information about the learning activities and outcomes. The interviews were conducted within one to two days after the group meetings occurred. Each teacher was asked to submit a total of six digital logs during the period of the study to help provide information on cognitive and behavioral changes as well as in-depth descriptions of their learning experiences.

Meirink et al. (2007) combined data from the interviews and the digital logs to complete a qualitative analysis. An example of one reported learning outcome illustrated a teacher who became “more aware of her own teaching method (reported change in cognition) and formulates an intention to change her teaching methods (reported intention to change behavior)” (Meirink et al., 2007, p. 152). It was clear that changes in cognition

and behavior were two separate entities in which changes in cognition did not necessarily result in changes in behavior (or vice versa) in order to recognize that learning has occurred. Furthermore, Meirink et al. (2007) defined teacher cognition as an “integrated unit of theoretical and practical insights, beliefs, and orientations (examples include personal goals, emotions, expectations, and attitudes)” and behavior is described as changes in classroom behavior and/or teaching practices (p. 147).

## **Results**

Results indicated that a common starting point within each group consisted of teachers learning from getting to know their colleagues’ (experiences with) teaching methods. The learning activities and outcomes, however, differed with each group. The reported learning activities and cognitive and/or behavior changes were divided into seven configurations that help give a closer look of *how* teachers learn in collaborative settings. The seven configurations have been categorized as:

1. Experimenting with others’ teaching methods
  2. Becoming aware of one’s own forgotten plans
  3. Becoming aware of own shortcomings in teaching methods
  4. Valuing colleagues’ teaching methods
  5. Confirmation of own teaching methods
  6. Getting/obtaining new insights
  7. Reflecting on and valuing collaboration in study group and own experiments
- (Meirink et al., 2007, p. 156).

The interactive relationships and the interdependency that was formed between the members in each group helped teachers to achieve greater knowledge and

understanding of new and/or other teaching methods. Results confirmed that teachers reported more cognitive changes than behavioral changes. Teachers indicated that they did not implement new teaching methods in their classroom due to reasons such as, plans that have already been set for the school year, or the wish to postpone experiments until the following school year for various reasons (Meirink et al., 2007). According to Meirink et al. (2007), interviews and digital logbooks only provided *reported* changes in behavior and cognition. The use of another method of data collection, such as classroom observations, may have revealed different findings. For example, teachers may have failed to report behavioral changes due to their lack of awareness regarding the changes that could have occurred. Finally, since changes in behavior take time and effort, the period of examination may have been too short.

The final results addressed by Meirink et al. (2007) indicated that Configurations 2-6 can characterize changes in cognition in which teachers use the expertise of their colleagues to adjust, extend, expand, substitute or supplement their own beliefs and practices. Meirink et al. (2007) believed that in order to further validate the configurations of learning activities and their effects on cognitive and behavioral changes, it would be necessary to examine a greater number of teachers and interview more than one or two teachers from each group, given that teachers from the same group can learn different things. A different study conducted by Meirink, Imant, Meijer, and Verloop (2010) highlights necessary components of collaboration that can help maximize teacher learning.

Figure 2.1

The Seven Configurations of Reported Learning Activities and Cognitive and/or Behavioral Changes

<p><b>Configuration 1: Experimenting with other teaching methods</b></p> <p>Getting to know colleague's (new) teaching methods (experiences and plans) and experts' teaching methods through reading, brainstorming, discussing, or exchanging</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Relating/comparing teaching methods or theories to own teaching method</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Value colleagues' methods positively(+adjust method for own subject/practice)</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Experimenting with teaching methods</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Valuing experiments (individual, with colleagues, students)</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Intention to use a teaching method more often with</p>	<p><b>Configuration 2: Becoming aware of forgotten own plans</b></p> <p>Getting to know colleague's experiences with (new) teaching methods through exchanging</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Becoming aware of earlier plans to use a similar teaching method in own teaching practice</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Intention to use teaching method in own teaching practice</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Thinking about how to implement a teaching method in next school year</p>	
<p><b>Configuration 3: Becoming aware of own shortcomings in teaching method</b></p> <p>Getting to know colleague's (new) teaching methods (experiences and plans), colleagues' ideas, and experts' teaching methods (presentation and articles) through observing, listening, reading, brainstorming, discussing, or exchanging</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Relating teaching methods to own teaching method</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Becoming aware of/recognizing own conceptions or shortcomings in own teaching method</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Intention to change current teaching method or intention to reconsider a discussed topic</p>	<p><b>Configuration 4: Valuing colleagues' teaching method</b></p> <p>Getting to know colleagues' (new) teaching methods (experiences and plans) and ideas through listening, reading, brainstorming, discussing, exchanging, and asking questions</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Valuing elements in colleagues' teaching methods</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Intention to use a teaching method in own practice and ask a colleague for more information</p>	
<p><b>Configuration 5: Confirmation of own teaching method</b></p> <p>Getting to know colleagues' (new) teaching methods (experiences and plans) through discussing, exchanging or asking questions</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Relating/comparing teaching methods to own teaching method</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Confirmation of own teaching method</p>	<p><b>Configuration 6: Getting/obtaining new insights</b></p> <p>Getting to know colleagues' (new) teaching methods (experiences and plans) and ideas through brainstorming, asking questions or exchanging</p> <p>↓</p> <p>(Relating/comparing teaching methods to own teaching method)</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Conclusions or new comprehension/understanding/insight/view</p>	<p><b>Configuration 7: Reflecting on and valuing collaboration in study group and own experiment</b></p> <p>Reflecting on collaboration in teacher groups/own experiments carried out within the scope of the teacher group</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Valuing collaboration/own experiments</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Thinking about possible solutions</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Intention to change teaching methods</p>

Teacher Learning and Collaboration in Innovative Teams (Meirink et al., 2007)

## **Interdependency in Collaborative Teams**

Collaboration with colleagues is understood to be the perfect condition for teacher learning, a powerful environment, and a promising direction for professional development. However, according to Meirink et al. (2010), the learning potential of collaboration profoundly relies on the interdependency within the collaborative relationships. Meirink et al. (2010) investigated the emergence of teacher collaboration in teams and its relation to group characteristics and teacher learning. Furthermore, they hypothesized that high levels of interdependency would be evident in collaborative teams that promoted teacher learning. It is important to keep in mind that mentoring relationships can be established within collaborative teams among teachers, coaches, and/or group leaders.

## **Methodology**

Five innovated teams, operating in the context of the national educational reform, were formed in five Dutch senior secondary schools (students aged fifteen to eighteen) in which teachers voluntarily participated to design and experiment with new teaching practices (Meirink et al, 2010). The composition of the teams was interdisciplinary; participants represented various subjects (art, science, and social sciences), ideally to promote learning from diverse perspectives. Furthermore, the reform context was considered ideal for examining teacher learning in teams as it required teachers to examine and change their beliefs about teaching, learning, and instructional practices. Meirink et al. (2010) explained how teams were permitted to devise their collaboration and specify a topic of their choice with the help and support of experienced coaches from the university. The coaches used a study team approach to focus on the process of

collaboration in the teams. This study team approach consisted of three stages understood to foster changes in beliefs: (Note: These are the same three stages used in Meirink et al., 2007 study):

1. Reflection: Raising problem awareness by explicating knowledge and beliefs
2. Study: Investigating or enquiry using different perspectives
3. Change: Generation of conceptual artifacts (Meirink et al., 2010, p. 166).

Interdependency in collaborative team settings were explored by observing and recording field notes of each meeting. Furthermore, the topics of interactions were recorded to differentiate between teams that succeeded in finding a shared problem or project, and teams that focus on teacher's individual problems. According to Meirink et al. (2010), each team held about five collaborative team meetings during the school year that consisted of participants' engaging in activities such as storytelling, reflections, brainstorming, discussions, feedback, etc. Each team at each meeting was labeled with a level of interdependency, depending on the extent in which valuable interactions occurred. Teams were classified into one of four types of collaborations labeled and described as:

- *Storytelling and Scanning*, used to characterize teams that simply exchanged experiences in regards to individual problems with students or classes
- *Aid and Assistance* characterized teams that exchanged individual experiences, critically examined these experiences, and gave each other feedback
- *Sharing* characterized teams that exchanged experiences, ideas, and methods
- *Joint Work* characterized teams that focused on shared problem-solving and planning. This suggests that they shared experiences, ideas, and methods



aimed to develop shared innovative teaching practices (Meirink et al., 2010, p.164).

Teachers completed various questionnaires that sought to examine interdependency in collaborative groups and teacher learning. One questionnaire collected information on group cohesion (the positive relationships within the teams). The next questionnaire investigated each team's shared goals and the alignment between teacher goals, images, or perceptions and their team's collaboration. Finally, two more questionnaires were administered on teacher learning, both before and after the end of the school year. Additionally, members of teams were asked to report learning experiences in digital logs every six weeks in order to understand how teachers learn in context and to provide teachers with the opportunity to think carefully about their meaningful learning experiences. Due to the reform context, teachers were asked to record the experiences exclusively relevant to the topic, 'fostering active and self-regulated student learning' (Meirink et al., 2010). Four categories were identified as:

1. Learning experiences in which teachers referred to their collaborative teams as the context in which learning occurred
2. No explicit references to their collaborative teams as the context in which learning occurred
3. Theme of learning experiences that corresponded with the theme of collaboration in the teams, indirectly indicating effectiveness of the collaborative teams
4. Learning experiences in which teachers referred to collaboration occurring with colleagues outside the team (Meirink et al., 2010).

Meirink et al. (2010) used a comparative case study methodology to collect both qualitative and quantitative data which has been validated by triangulation, a systematic comparison of cases producing a pattern of the same results. According to Meirink et al. (2010), results indicated that collaboration in all five teams was characterized as ‘sharing.’ Furthermore, it has been revealed that interdependence within the teams played an essential role in teacher learning. Teams with higher levels of interdependency had higher levels of group cohesion. As an effect, teacher’s initial expectations of their team’s collaboration were met as they jointly reported similar goals for their collaboration. Furthermore, teachers were able to align their goals and change their beliefs about teaching and learning in accordance to the purpose of the reform. Results further indicated strong interconnection between collaboration and learning due to the changes which have occurred within individual teacher learning in the team context. Teachers reported they had experienced changes in both pedagogical beliefs and classroom practices as well as changes in their collaborative work relationships with colleagues in teams (Meirink et al., 2010).

Meirink et al. (2010) revealed that although all five teams were classified as ‘sharing,’ some teams did not result in innovative teacher learning. According to Meirink et al. (2010), there may have been more success in teacher learning if standards were placed on the collaborative teams. For example, identifying different types of ‘sharing’ under this classification may have resulted in more learning efforts from the teams. Likewise, simply exchanging ideas does not seem to be enough for teachers to learn through their collaborative teams. Leaders and coaches need to motivate teachers to experiment with alternative teaching methods in their practices in a way that contributes

to solving a shared problem (Meirink et al., 2010). Additionally, when all teachers are held responsible for contributing to a group effort, the level of interdependence increases. However, on the contrary, with the help and support of school leaders and coaches it is also important for teachers to experience autonomy in the *process* and the *topic* within their collaborative teams in a way that will result in innovative learning (Meirink et al., 2010).

The first limitation of this study was the short period of one year in which the teams were studied (Meirink et al., 2010). Investigating teams over a longer period of time would have allowed teachers to effectively start and develop collaborative teams while further enhancing their aligned goals and initial images of their collaboration. Moreover, images of collaboration could have been examined more often, providing further information on the process of aligning goals and images. Finally, long term effects on teacher learning could be explored over a longer period of research or with periodic follow-up studies (Meirink et al., 2010). The next limitation to this study was due to the focus on individual teacher beliefs regarding learning and teaching in the context of a collaborative team. According to Meirink et al. (2010), it may be an interesting and promising direction for future research to examine if and how teachers develop a shared view within a collaborative team designed to solve shared problems.

### **Effective Practices for Professional Development**

In examining related research on the efficacy of mentors in professional development, researchers have established the importance of the role of relationships in collaborative teams. Some major findings included key components of mentoring relationships such as:

- Friendship
- Encouragement
- Support
- Sharing of knowledge
- Reflective Practice
- Guidance
- Insight

Such relationships promote positive interactions and interdependence, leading to constructive and open relationships. Together, mentors and mentees mutually help to identify ways in which they can improve their teaching practices and increase their efficacy. Working and learning in context further helps to inspire and support the understanding of theories in practice. Research indicates that teachers use the expertise of others to adjust their own beliefs and practices. Furthermore, there is a strong interconnection between levels of interdependency in collaborative settings and levels of group cohesion. In other words, the more interdependent a group becomes, the more they establish positive relationships. Mentoring Relationships demonstrate changes in knowledge, skills, and practices as collaborative work relationships with colleagues improve. Ambrosetti and Dekkers (2010) explained that “[M]entoring is a non-hierarchical, reciprocal relationship between mentors and mentees who work towards specific professional and personal outcomes for the mentee” (p.52).

### **Leadership Role in Facilitating Change**

As mentoring relationships allow mentees to improve, refine, and change their teaching practices, it is essential for mentors to truly understand the process of change

and to be sensitive to the mentees experiences with such changes. For instance, when the new National and State Standards are put into effect, mentors/leaders will likely be faced with resistance by staff members who refuse to change their beliefs and/or practices, especially if they have been in the field for a long time. Change can be difficult for those who have become accustomed to a particular approach or practice that they consider to be valuable, effective, and efficient. Bridges (2009) explored the process of change experienced by individuals' as they underwent modifications in their lives. Furthermore, Bridges (2009) described the process of change (or transition management) as three phases which have been identified and defined as:

- *Transition (Ending)*, “letting go of the old ways and the old identity people had. This first phase of transition is an ending, and the time when you need to help people to deal with their losses” (p. 4).
- *Neutral zone*, “...an in-between time when the old is gone but the new isn't fully operational... when the critical psychological realignments and repatternings take place” (p. 5)
- *Change (New beginning)*, “Coming out of transition and making a new beginning. This is when people develop the new identity, experience the new energy, and discover the new sense of purpose that makes the change begin to work” (p. 5).

These three phases allow leaders, such as mentors, to positively and effectively support and facilitate changes in skills and practices. According to Bridges (2009), change and transitions are two separate components in which change is described as being situational and transition is described as being psychological. In other words,

change is the outcome and transition is the process. Ultimately, “Getting people through the transition is essential if the change is actually to work as planned” (Bridges, 2009, p.3). Moreover, “Because transition is a process by which people unplug from an old world and plug into a new world, we can say that transition starts with an ending and finishes with a beginning” (Bridges, 2009, p. 5). Once individuals let go of their old ways, they have successfully managed the transition phase, and are ready to move on to the next phase, the neutral zone.

Bridges (2009) describes the neutral zone as, “the time when the old way of doing things is gone but the new way doesn’t feel comfortable yet” (p.8). Individuals who do not understand or are surprised by the emotions caused by the neutral zone may react to this phase in various, unconstructive ways. For example, individuals may rush through or bypass the neutral zone, causing them to feel discouraged. Additionally, others may feel frightened and try to escape, resulting in increased levels of staff turnover. Overall, disregarding or rushing through the neutral zone will compromise the change, losing a great opportunity for personal and occupational growth (Bridges, 2009). As Bridges (2009) explains, “The neutral zone is thus both a dangerous and an opportune place, and it is the very core of the transition process” (Bridges, 2009, p. 9). Lastly, individuals experience changes in both beliefs and practices as they develop new identities, discover new purposes, and successfully implement the new changes.

The three-phased process of change is described as occurring simultaneously, as Bridges (2009) illustrates, “Endings are going on in one place, in another everything is in neutral zone chaos, and in yet another place the new beginning is already palpable” (p.9). Leaders such as mentors who follow these three phases can properly implement changes,

manage transitions, and provide the support and guidance needed to create new beginnings. As stated by Bridges (2009), “If they [leaders] don’t help people through these three phases, even the most wonderful training programs often fall flat” (p. 6).

Similar to Bridges (2009), Fullan (2001) acknowledged the importance of leaders in fostering change. Fullan (2001) not only sought to discover how to lead in a culture of complex change, he aimed to encourage and promote leadership in others as well. As Fullan (2001) described leadership, he stated, “Instead of looking for saviors, we should be calling for leadership that will challenge us to face problems for which there are no simple, painless solutions – problems that require us to learn new ways” (p. 3). In other words, successful leadership is supporting others in their mission to face issues that have not been successfully attended to.

According to Fullan (2001), leaders can effectively guide others through the process of change by utilizing the framework he developed, containing five components of effective leadership, leading to successful changes. This framework developed by Fullan (2001) is said to “...help us confront complex problems that do not have easy answers” (p. 3), allowing individuals to think about and lead change more effectively than ever before. The five components of effective leadership and change were identified by Fullan (2001) and described as:

- *Moral purpose*, “...acting with the intention of making a positive difference in the lives of employees, customers, and society as a whole” (p.3).
- *Understanding change*, “...leaders who combine a commitment to moral purpose with a healthy respect for the complexities of the change process not only will be more successful but will unearth deeper moral purpose” (p.3).

- *Developing relationships*, “If relationships improve, things get better.... Thus leaders must be consummate relationship builders with diverse people and groups- especially with people different than themselves” (p.5).
- *Knowledge building*, “...leaders commit themselves to constantly generating and increasing knowledge inside and outside the organizations” (p.6).
- *Coherence making*, this “extracts valuable patterns worth retaining” (p.7).  
Through coherence making, organizations can make new ties and connections by way of relationships building, resulting in new interactions and ideas.

These five components work together with another set of (seemingly personal) characteristics which Fullan (2001) entitled the *energy-enthusiasm-hopefulness* constellation, which are believed to be possessed by all effective leaders. Fullan (2001) states how leaders who immerse themselves in the five components of effective leadership and change, begin to act and feel increasingly energetic, enthusiastic, and hopeful. Moreover, according to Fullan (2001), “effective leaders make people feel that even the most difficult problems can be tackled productively” (p.7). Thus, leaders are able to generate internal and external commitment in others. Additionally, “External commitment is triggered by management policies and practices that enable employees to accomplish their tasks. Internal commitment derives from energies internal to human beings that are activated because getting a job done is intrinsically rewarding” (Fullan, 2001, p. 8). Both internal and external commitments are valuable because they allow individuals to feel motivated, thus encouraging them to put forth effort into the task at hand. As a result, feelings of excitement and satisfaction of accomplishments are produced. The final outcome of practicing effective leadership through this framework

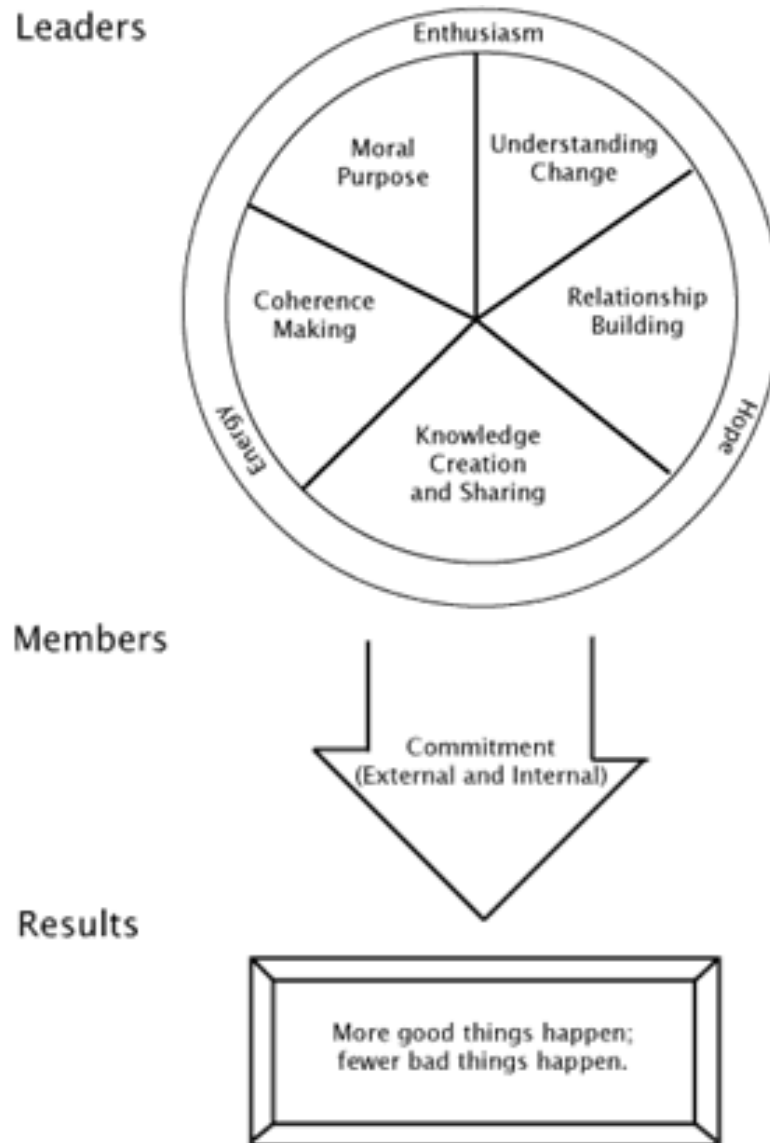


was described by Fullan (2001) as “more good things to happen” (p.10) such as customer satisfaction in businesses, or enhanced student performance and greater parent involvement in schools. On the other hand, “fewer bad things to happen” (p.10) meant the decline in frequency of bad things occurring, such as, “fewer aborted change efforts” or “less wasted effort and resources” (p. 10).

This framework allows leaders to successfully work *with* others in order to effectively create and establish new and improved practices or modifications in a more positive manner, resulting in individuals who commit to staying on course. Moreover, as leaders, mentors can use this framework to help develop positive, collaborative relationships to successfully cultivate skills and facilitate change. Fullan (2001) explains how Lewin and Regine (2000) makes clear that “...there is a new style of leadership in successful companies- one that focuses on people and relationships as essential to getting sustained results” (p. 52).

Figure 2.1

A Framework for Leadership



Leading in a Culture of Change (Fullan, 2001)

The review of literature on mentoring relationships provides insight on how mentors foster professional development through collaboration and interdependency. Additionally, results of these studies greatly support the purpose of practicing mentor-student relationships in the PfE: ECECS program designed mainly to promote the professional growth and development of CSUN's graduate students in Early Childhood Education. These studies help to analyze the role of mentors-student relationships on learning outcomes and professional development. Furthermore, it provides evidence of the success of collaborative relationships within teams. Examining mentoring relationships helps to deepen and increase understandings of efficient practices on gaining knowledge, expertise, and professionalism, ultimately contributing to both a successful consultation and centers with a promising future. As such, "Recognizing and responding to early educators holistically and as authentic professional learners validates the utmost importance of the work they do every day in helping young children to reach their full potential" (Peterson et al., 2010, p. 172).

### **Bridge to the Next Chapter**

Chapter Three, *Methodology*, will describe the sample population, instrumentation, and methods used for the current study which explores mentor-student relationships in the context of the Partnerships for Excellence, Early Childhood Education Consulting Services program. This following chapter, *Results*, will examine the various components of mentoring relationships thought to significantly impact and enhance the professional development of graduate students.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODS

#### **Examining Mentor-Student Relationships**

*Examining the Role of Mentoring Relationships on Student Learning and Professional Development: A Collaborative Process among an Early Childhood Consultation Program* is built upon an existing study designed to document students' experiences in the Partnerships for Excellence: ECE Consulting Services program (See Appendix D for ECECS Course Description), while examining any long-lasting (enduring) effects of this experience on their professional development. This initial study was centered on the students' experiences along with class activities (e.g., reflective practice, documentation of observations, meeting with center director and staff, developing a consultation plan with mentor and student colleagues, implementing and evaluating the consultation activities and preparing case studies and culminating reports) with regard to those who played important roles in the consultation process (e.g., the professor, mentors, students colleagues, center staff and center director). This student follow-up study was initially designed by Dr. Jan Fish, Toni Isaacs, M.A. and other PFE mentors and was primarily conducted by three former CSUN ECEMA graduate students, Shoshana Grattidge, MA, Barbara Rosner, MA, and Eleni Zgourou, MA, who formed a collaborative team under the supervision of Dr. Jan Fish. Dr. Fish is the former coordinator of the CSUN Masters Program in Early Childhood Education from 1994 to 2010 and is now professor emerita/part-time professor and Faculty Coordinator of the PFE: ECECS program.

Data analysis from the student questionnaires and interviews (Appendices B and C) collected in the initial study revealed that students often cited collaboration/teamwork, relationships, and their mentors as being the most important aspects of their PfE experience and professional growth. Based on thesis findings, the idea for the current study was developed. Therefore, this thesis was designed to re-examine the interview data and, through further analysis, investigate student-mentor relationships in the context of the unique approach to student learning provided by the Partnerships for Excellence: ECECS program. More specifically, by utilizing the interviews from the initial study, this thesis sought to analyze and discover how students' relationships with mentors reportedly fostered students' professional development within collaborative and interdependent settings. This chapter will first briefly describe the initial study including its research design, sample population and instruments used to collect and analyze the data. Then, details related to the current study, including the secondary interview analysis will be presented. Results will be discussed in Chapter Four and implications for future research and practice will be explored in Chapter Five.

### **Description of Initial Study**

The initial student follow-up study collectively focused on students' experiences of PfE class activities and consultation in collaboration with mentors, student colleagues, professor and center directors and staff members--who played key roles in the consultation process within the Partnerships for Excellence: ECE Consulting Service program from the years of 1998 to 2009. Furthermore, the initial study aimed to examine and document any student-reported long-lasting effects of the these experiences on students' professional growth and development by analyzing the data obtained from the

research instruments (questionnaire and semi-structured interview) that have been utilized and implemented by a research team formed under the supervision of Dr. Janet Fish and in collaboration with PfE mentors.

## **Participants**

### **Sample Population**

Participants were selected using a simple random sampling technique which included the original sample population of the eighty-seven students who had enrolled in the PfE class and participated in the consultation service from 1998 to 2009. Out of the total pool of eighty-seven students, fifty-two students responded to the initial request to participate in the study. Of the fifty-two students who responded, twenty-five students completed and submitted the Informed Consent and Subjects' Bill of Rights forms to the study's Research Coordinator. Among the participating students, twenty-four students completed and returned the written questionnaire (Appendix B) and nineteen students completed both the written questionnaire and the oral interview (Appendix C).

Amongst the nineteen students who participated in the initial study, ten students participated in the PfE program for one semester and nine students participated for two semesters. A number of students who participated for two semesters continued their participation to take on additional roles in the PfE program (e.g., served as T.A.'s for PfE or became mentors after they graduated from the program). The majority of the participants were graduate students for the CSUN Department of Educational Psychology and Counseling, M.A. Program in Early Childhood Education while two were CSUN

EPC graduate students specializing in Development, Learning and Instruction. Lastly, eighteen students were females and one student was male.

**Recruitment.** All students were initially and primarily contacted by email. However, due to the fact that many of the students had already graduated and left the university up to ten years prior to the start of the initial study, it took several months to confirm valid contact information (e.g., email addresses) for some of the students. Furthermore, during this ten year period, email addresses changed, perhaps due to the emergence and disappearance of service providers as it was an era in which email was technologically a recent innovation. The students received an email (Appendix E) that described the purpose of the research and informed those who were interested in participating in the PfE student follow-up study to respond to the study's Research Coordinator. Students who responded with interest in participating in the initial PfE student follow-up study were given two copies of the Informed Consent and the Subjects' Bill of Rights form either by mail and email. Furthermore, they were informed that their participation would be entirely voluntary, that they could choose to discontinue their participation at any point during the study. Additionally, they were told they would receive a \$10 gift card if they completed both the questionnaire and the interview.

### **Instrumentation**

The researcher- developed written questionnaire (Appendix B) and the framework for the oral interview questions (Appendix C) were the primary tools used to collect data for the initial student follow-up study. These measures were developed based on Dr. Tom Weisner's Eco-Cultural Family Interview (Weisner, 2002) with the assistance of Dr. Eli

Leiber who introduced and trained the research team on the use of Dedoose.com for storage, management and analysis of mixed-methods research data. Both instruments were developed by a number of PfE mentors in the Partnerships for Excellence program by voluntarily participating in PfE mentor meetings every other week as well as in several specially designated research meetings. Several PfE graduate students also volunteered their time during the data collection and analysis stage to help upload and code the results of the questionnaire and input them onto an excel document.

### **Questionnaire**

Questionnaires were sent by mail or email to participants after Human Subjects forms were returned to the Research Coordinator. A written questionnaire was used to request participant information, including the number of semesters or year(s) the participant was enrolled in PfE course, information relevant to the participant's professional experience in the field of early childhood education and/or their current employment position (Appendix B). The questionnaire also included different aspects of the PfE experience which participants rated on a Likert scale. This measured the direction and the intensity of effect that each factor had on the participant's PfE experience. At the end of the questionnaire, each participant was asked to indicate whether he/she would be willing to complete an interview. Those who indicated interest in participating in the research interview were contacted by one of three Research Interviewers to schedule a semi-structured interview.

### **Semi-Structured Interview**



The semi-structured interview was specifically developed for the initial research study to explore the participants' experience in further detail and to gain a deeper understanding of the impact of being a part of PfE. The interviews were conducted by graduate students who were trained based on tenets of *Qualitative Interviewing* as described by Patton (1980), a resource used to train students on interviewing techniques. Students were also given training based on Ryan and Bernard's *Techniques to Identify Themes* (Ryan & Bernard, 2003), another resource used to describe strategies for identifying themes from the interviews. An inter-rater reliability check was then employed with the student coders to make sure they were qualified to code interview data and identify themes presented in the interview data.

The interviews were either conducted face-to-face or by telephone and participants authorized that they could be audio taped. The interviews ranged from 20 minutes to 1 hour to complete. The purpose of the interview was to gather greater detail from the written survey responses, as they were conducted using a technique in which the interviewer asked short follow-up probes to help participants describe their responses to the questionnaire with more depth and clarity. The method of combining two different forms--one qualitative and one quantitative (the written questionnaire and an oral interview)--allowed the data from one type of data collection to be compared, contrasted and analyzed in relations to another type of data collection method, contributing to a greater likelihood of reliable and valid results. Furthermore, the use of the two different forms of data collection allowed responses from the students to be extremely useful and enlightening to both the initial and the current study.

### **Procedures/Research Design**

The CSUN Standing Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects reviewed and approved the initial study's research design, methodology and instrumentation on June 3, 2009 submitted by Dr. Jan Fish and Toni Isaacs, M.A.

The design of the initial study employed a mixed-methods design, utilizing both written questionnaires and semi-structured interviews designed to be entered into Dedoose.com, "a data entry and analysis system that optimizes management and analysis of data gathered through a mixture of qualitative and quantitative data" (Fish, Zgourou, Rosner, & Grattidge, 2011, p.1). Subsequent to the attainment of students' email contact information, the initial study commenced in 2009 as questionnaires and then semi-structured interviews were offered to the 19 student participants. The interview responses were uploaded into Dedoose.com to be organized, coded and analyzed for evidence of impact from students' PfE professional growth and development. Amongst the various results of the initial study, participating former students cited relationships and collaboration as being important. Moreover, the importance of the impact of building student-mentor relationships in collaborative settings was cited most frequently.

### **Procedures for the Current Study**

The current study used a qualitative data analysis and interpretation research design to further analyze the interview data collected from the initial study to examine the different aspects of student-mentor relationships reported to have encouraged and supported students' professional development. The interview transcripts were examined and analyzed on Dedoose.com by the present researcher where the data were coded according to themes that were identified by investigating the frequency with which

students cited certain aspects of mentoring relationships as being beneficial. The identified themes were based on aspects of student-mentor relationships reported by the students as pivotal or crucial to their professional development through the PfE program.

These themes included:

- Knowledge
- Support
- Insight
- Inspiration
- Guidance

Subsequent to the identification of themes, sub-themes were discovered as various elements of mentoring relationships were identified in interviews that fell under the five major themes. The sub-themes identified were as follows:



Each interview was then coded, noting each theme and sub-theme, as applicable. Furthermore, the frequency of citations of themes in each interview was tallied and examined as well as the content within each theme and sub-theme in order to analyze and discover any patterns that may have occurred within the interview responses pertaining to mentor-student relationships.

Interview results regarding these identified themes and sub-themes will be discussed in the next two chapters as the fundamental components of successful mentor-student relationships within the context of the PfE: ECECS program. Chapter Four, *Results*, will describe the secondary analysis of the existing interview data by introducing themes found in the interviewees' responses, highlighting the findings associated with the hypothesis of this current study. Chapter Five, *Discussion and Conclusion*, will discuss these themes related to the stated research hypothesis, discuss limitations of both the initial and current study, and finally suggest implications for future research and practice.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **RESULTS**

#### **Introduction**

As described in the previous chapter, the initial research study aimed to document students' experiences within the context of the Partnerships for Excellence, Early Childhood Education Consulting Services Program for evidence of any long-lasting and continuing effects on students' professional growth and development. The current study expands on the work of the initial research study by investigating mentor-student relationships within an interdependent setting (PfE: ECECS) and its role on students' professional growth and development. The current study examines existing data from the initial study, and is presented in this chapter to uncover *how* mentoring relationships offer students optimal experiences in enhancing their practices. This chapter will provide the results of the current study, detailing the five identified themes that are hypothesized to have the most influence on students learning. Lastly, implications for future research and practice will be discussed in Chapter Five.

#### **The Mentor-Student Relationship:**

##### **Five Themes**

The analysis of the interviews from the initial study demonstrated the significance of mentor-student relationships in five specific areas. These led to the establishment of five major themes, which represents the major findings of this thesis. These themes are as follows:

- Knowledge
- Support

- Guidance
- Insight
- Inspiration

Furthermore, three related sub-themes have been identified within each theme; these help characterize and define the various components reportedly indicated to benefit and enhance the professional growth and development of students in the context of the Partnerships for Excellence, Early Childhood Education Consulting Service program.

The subthemes are listed below clustered under each overarching theme:

*Knowledge:* Sharing experiences; Modeling appropriate practices; and Learning by doing

*Support:* Teamwork; Collaboration; and Availability of mentors

*Insight:* Looking from different perspectives; Increased awareness of factors; and Enhanced listening skills

*Inspiration:* Inspiration to act; Admiration; and Self-confidence

*Guidance:* Advice; Guidance through modeling; and Following a path

The interview data from the initial study has been analyzed and tallied in accordance to the five identified themes that are considered to be significant components of student-mentor relationships. Each of the following distribution tables organizes and examines the interviews and themes, providing alternative means of observing and studying the data.

Table 4.1 examines the number of themes that were present in each interview (i.e., How many of the 5 themes were coded for in each interview?). Of the 19 interviews and 5 identified themes, 6 interviews cited all 5 themes, 7 interviews cited 4 of the 5 themes,

3 interviews cited 3 of the 5 themes, and three interviews cited 2 of the 5 themes. Thus, more than half of the interviews had 4 or 5 themes coded through the secondary analysis.

Table 4.1

*Number of themes coded for in each interview*

<b>Number of interviews with x number of themes coded (N= 19)</b>	<b>Number of themes coded per interview (5 THEMES)</b>
6	5
7	4
3	3
3	2

Table 4.2 examines the number of times each theme was cited throughout the nineteen interviews. Within the 19 interviews, Support and Knowledge were cited most frequently followed by Inspiration and Insight, while Guidance was cited less often.

Table 4.2

*Thematic Analysis of the Nineteen Interviews*

<b>THEMES</b>	<b>TOTAL NUMBER OF TIMES EACH THEME IS CITED</b>
Guidance	16
Support	33
Knowledge	33
Inspiration	26
Insight	26

Table 4.3 presents the number of total codes per interview as it ranged from 2 to 14. Some interviews yielded more data as various themes were described multiple times. For example, Interview 6 cited various themes 14 times, while Interview 3 cited various themes only 2 times. Therefore, a number of themes were

applied within each of the 19 interviews. These were tallied and presented in the following frequency distribution table:

Table 4.3

*The Total Number of Themes Cited per Interview*

<b>INTERVIEWS</b>	<b>TOTAL NUMBER OF THEMES PER INTERVIEW</b>
Interview 1	7
Interview 2	10
Interview 3	2
Interview 4	7
Interview 5	4
Interview 6	14
Interview 7	5
Interview 8	7
Interview 9	5
Interview 10	10
Interview 11	7
Interview 12	8
Interview 13	9
Interview 14	7
Interview 15	4
Interview 16	9
Interview 17	8
Interview 18	7
Interview 19	9

### **Results for Each Theme**

This section will discuss the ways in which students described their mentoring relationship to have promoted their professional development based on the five themes, which have been identified as Knowledge, Support, Insight, Inspiration, and Guidance. Moreover, each theme contained three sub-themes which will be presented and discussed in order to help characterize and define the



various components of mentoring relationships thought to benefit and enhance the professional growth and development of the PFE: ECECS graduate students.

### **Knowledge as a Vital Component**

Evidence from the interviews illustrates the importance of sharing knowledge within student-mentor relationships on students' professional development, as knowledge was cited 33 times throughout the 19 interviews. The students often described their experiences with their mentors as a special opportunity to gain deeper understandings of theories within context, gain professionalism, and acquire knowledge and skills. For example, one student stated, "They [Mentors] are so knowledgeable and it allowed me to gain insight on being more open to how things are done different ways in centers" (Interview 6). Another student cited, "Mentors added theories and knowledge. [They] helped to put things in perspective" (Interview 19). Additional examples of how the sharing of knowledge enhanced student's comprehension and skills have been included within the three sub-themes which have been identified, revealing that mentors and students have shared and obtained knowledge in various ways.

**Sharing experiences.** Analysis of the interviews revealed that mentors helped students gain knowledge and understanding by sharing their personal and professional experiences. One student noted, "Mentors have a lot of experience. They are so professional, humble, and knowledgeable. [They] teach application of theory and join you in [the] process" (Interview 19). Another student expressed her appreciation for mentors as she stated, "...hearing about all of the mentors experiences in the field...really felt honored in learning from them...the wisdom that they shared with us" (Interview 4). Students often found it important to listen to experiences from mentors because their

many experiences have helped students answer questions, gain ideas, and become more aware of their practice. For example, a student noted, “She had so much experience and knowledge in the field. It was just great to learn from her and hear her perspective. She could appreciate simple things that someone newer in the field wouldn’t acknowledge” (Interview 2).

**Modeling appropriate practices.** Evidence from the interview data demonstrated that students benefited from watching mentors model certain skills. As one student noted, “Consultants use the same methodology on students that they are using with centers-reflective practice” (Interview 19), meaning that as mentors and students utilized reflective practice when working together, students were better able to understand the value of implementing reflective practice within centers. Another student stated that s/he benefited from mentors use of “Modeling good question-asking. We developed a personal relationship, Important for mentor to reveal a bit of their personal lives in a very lovely way” (Interview 8). Lastly, a student illustrated how they enjoyed “Learning from mentors, watching their interactions. Example they set was valuable” (Interview 1). As mentors modeled appropriate practices, students listened, observed, and gained the desired knowledge that can be used throughout their own career working with children.

**Learn by doing.** The interview data demonstrated that students gained skills and knowledge by applying practice and performance to what they have learned from their mentors. For example, a student described her experience with the co-inquiry process, a tool used to offer students the experience of sharing, listening, and reflecting in a safe environment, allowing students to collaborate and enhance their documentation and analytical skills (Fish and Frey, 2006), by stating, “Co-inquiry process, I try to use it at

my center, use collaboration, relationships, how we build them effectively. I try to do that in both my professional and personal life” (Interview 6). Likewise, another student practiced using her observational skills and stated, “Observing the classrooms, rating scales we used at the center, I am able to use now” (Interview 7).

As students practiced and participated in the ECECS program experience, they developed skills and knowledge as they interacted and learned from their mentors. Another student noted, “Definitely, my ongoing involvement in the consulting service motivated me to continue my Master’s. It made me more mindful of relationships, building on strengths as a teacher and administrator. It also allowed me the opportunity to do independent consulting. Knowledge/skills [I am] able to exercise” (Interview 16). Through such opportunities to become actively involved with others in the field from which one can learn, students can gain important skills to use throughout their career.

### **Support as an Essential Component**

The interview data revealed that a supportive relationship between mentors and students was an essential component, as it was cited 33 times throughout the 19 interviews. Students expressed appreciation for their mentor’s support throughout the ECECS experience, as illustrated by one student stating, “This was very hands on. I liked that I was going out to a school, working with the teachers and having my mentor support me. It was a very nice process” (Interview 15). This student further commented, “I knew what I wanted to do and they supported that. Currently, the experience makes me more aware of the needs of the interns that I have. I know that they need a lot of support.” Likewise, another student noted, “The time you spend with these mentors is very rewarding. They are so supportive as human beings...” (Interview 9). The interviews

revealed how students benefited from various forms of support, which have been arranged into three sub-themes described as teamwork, collaboration, and availability.

**Teamwork.** Throughout the ECECS program experience as characterized in these student interview responses, mentors and students practiced teamwork to improve the quality of various centers in the San Fernando Valley. As they worked together, mentors supported student's professional development by assisting with issues unique to the team's experiences within a specific center. One student described her experience as, "Teamwork, relationships, open communication" (Interview 5), while another student realized the importance of teamwork within the program by stating, "I come from a team approach- if we're not in it together it will fall apart" (Interview 12). Mentors were able to support students' learning through teamwork as a student explained, "... it's better to talk to more experienced professionals in the field when you have an issue rather than dealing with it on your own" (Interview 14). Moreover, another student mentioned, "Listening to ideas from everyone, suggestions for the unique issues we were dealing with" (Interview 11) was helpful. Students learned the value of teamwork and understood how critical it was for the improvement of centers as well as themselves.

**Collaboration.** Another form of support came from the collaborative relationship between mentors and students. Collaboration with mentors allowed students to develop essential skills listed by one student as, "Collaborating with others, working with teams, communication skills, see other's perspective, [and being] more empathetic" (Interview 10). Similarly, another student stated, "I have a much more collaborative approach to working with teachers, looking at their strengths" (Interview 6) through her experience with ECECS. A collaborative approach to learning is very effective, especially between

mentors and students as one student commented, “The mentors were the most meaningful part. They were informative and really guided us in ways that I have never been helped before. I learned what the true meaning of collaboration is from them” (Interview 18).

**Availability of mentors.** The interview data suggests that mentors not only supported students through teamwork and collaboration, they were readily available to the students. A student noted, “They were always available, they keep you on track” (Interview 9). Another student similarly reported, “... They were supportive and set limits while sharing knowledge. Very available to the students. Help to keep you on track and on time” (Interview 19). Not only were mentors readily available, multiple mentors participated within a team, allowing students to have plenty of support. One student stated, “The mentors made a big difference. I feel like in PfE, you had several mentors available and they were helpful ...it was better experience then just the regular fieldwork class” (Interview 14).

### **Insight as a Main Component**

Insight was noted as a significant element in the student’s professional development as it was referred to 26 times throughout the 19 interviews. Mentors helped student become more conscious of variation within centers as well as individuals. One student was quoted saying, “Mentors helped me a lot. They taught me how to look at a child’s or center’s strengths... instead I learned to help someone by looking at their strengths and really listening to what they needed” (Interview 18), while another student made a similar statement, “Definitely my relationship with the mentors. They are so knowledgeable and it allowed me to gain insight on being more open to how things are done different ways in centers” (Interview 6). Three sub-themes were identified to help

describe the various ways in which students gained insight through their interactive relationship with their mentors.

**Looking from different perspectives.** Mentors have helped students gain the skill of becoming more mindful of different perspectives as mentors and students shared their experiences with others on their consulting teams and in class. One student explained, “there were so many different perspectives to share together—mentors, students, professor—and being a TA in another class, I just had the professors—this was different—so many perspectives” (Interview 12). Students were then able to utilize their skills in examining classroom dynamics through different lenses, a skill which can be practiced throughout their lives. The same student explained, “Even though I don’t currently work in the field, it still impacts me when I am listening to parents, people with infants—better appreciation for people—I come from a more open perspective now” (Interview 12). Another student went on to say, “I have a much more collaborative approach to working with teachers, looking at their strengths” (Interview 6). As students learned to shift their perspective to focus on the strengths of a center or a teacher as opposed to their weaknesses or flaws, they helped make a difference in the teacher or centers level of success.

**Increased awareness.** The interviews revealed how experiences with mentors had helped students increase their awareness of various perspectives in many ways, allowing them to then gain insight on their own needs as well as those of others. For example, after proclaiming how much her mentor supported students’ ambitions, one student said, “...the experience makes me more aware of the needs of the interns that I have, I know that they need a lot of support” (Interview 15). Another student’s

experiences within a collaborative relationship with her mentor demonstrated her increased level of awareness after taking the class, stating that “It showed me that it’s easier to have a collaborative, rather than a top down approach” (Interview 6). By becoming more aware, students reported they gained insight on various aspects of working in a collaborative relationship with professionals in the field.

**Enhanced listening skills.** Mentors helped students understand the importance of listening to others, as listening is another method of gaining insight, and is closely tied to examining different perspectives and increasing one’s awareness. One student stated, “Learn[ing] about being a great listener from Madeleine, hearing about all of the mentors experiences in the field. Really felt honored in learning from them, the wisdom that they shared with us” (Interview 4). A student also acknowledged that it is important to “Listen to people who have a lot of experience” (Interview 10). Likewise, another student admired “How mentors work with people and listened” (Interview 1). Mentors were able to teach students’ first-hand the importance of listening to others as a technique to gain insight and effectively accomplish center goals and become increasingly successful in other settings within the field.

### **Inspiration as a Fundamental Component**

Similarly to Insight, Inspiration was cited 26 times throughout the 19 interviews. The interview data describes how mentors inspired students to advance in their career, to strive for success, and believe in themselves. One student stated, “I was offered the Pierce[Community College] job as a mentor and advisor after I graduated. I think that by participating in the PfE program, it gave me the courage to jump in and take the job. I said, ‘Yes, I can make a difference’” (Interview 13). Another student described her

experience with the mentor as, “It was a very rewarding experience. I really loved my mentor. She was inspiring and knowledgeable. I learned a lot from her” (Interview 2) and then continued to say, “She inspired me, she was motivating, she was always someone who really inspired me.” Another student commented, “They were an inspiration to me and made me feel that if they could be in the field so long, then I could” (Interview 16). The connection between mentors and students reportedly inspired students to feel that they too could become successful in the field. One student stated, “Just hearing about how successful these women were in the field, that making a difference can happen” (Interview 7).

**Inspiration to act.** Students reported they have been inspired by their mentors to strive to become professionals in the field, as one student noted, “Great models of professionalism in the field. I try to remember what I learned from them as I work with others” (Interview 13). Mentors inspired students to take chances as the same student explained, “It helped me feel more sure of myself, to take chances and look into different areas of personal and professional development. It made me more confident in the field” (Interview 13). Mentors also inspired students to take what they learned and use it whenever possible, as one student describes, “Co-inquiry process, I try to use it at my center, use collaboration, relationships, how we build them effectively. I try to do that in both my professional and personal life” (Interview 6).

**Admiration.** The interviews verified that students admired and looked up to their mentors. One student noted, “I really, really enjoyed watching Professor Fish and the mentors collaborate. I had never been in a group of professionals to see how they analyze issues and problem solve. Just to see professionals in a group like that, I took away a lot



from that. Developing relationships is important and being professional in the field” (Interview 13). Another student commented, “Having them volunteering their time made an impact on me” (Interview 7). Through admiration, students developed ideas for their own future as the same student exclaimed, “The experience with the mentors was the most valuable piece. I would love to be a mentor myself one day” (Interview 7).

**Self-confidence.** Students gained confidence in their abilities to take initiative and become ambitious. One student stated, “It helped me feel more sure of myself, to take chances and look into different areas of personal and professional development. It made me more confident in the field” (Interview 13). Likewise, another student explained, “It really helped me find what I really wanted to do and I felt confident going in that direction” (Interview 2). With the help of their mentors, students were able to discover and pursue their hopes and goals for their future in their career.

### **Guidance as a Core Component**

Guidance was cited merely 16 times throughout the 19 interviews. However, evidence from the interviews suggests that guidance is nonetheless a core component of the students’ professional development. Mentors were described by students as “...the most meaningful part. They were informative and really guided us in ways that I have never been helped before. I learned what the true meaning of collaboration is from them” (Interview 18). Additionally, another student’s response to the interview stated, “Guidance was helpful to development in class and in everyday life and work” (Interview 10). Within Guidance, three sub-themes have been identified, exemplifying the seemingly small role by revealing its particularly meaningful characteristics to the growth and development of CSUN’s graduate students.

**Advice.** The advice students received from their mentors was noted within the interview data as a practice that helped guide students through challenges or uncertainties. For example, one student stated, "...it's better to talk to more experienced professionals in the field when you have an issue rather than dealing with it on your own" (Interview 14). Another student described how her mentor "Taught me to always have professionalism no matter what you are doing. Always put your best foot forward. [This] Industry is large in a small way" (Interview 17). Students reported that the advice they received from their mentors guided their professional development and enhanced their mentoring relationship as students confided in their mentors and allowed mentors to help guide them through their learning experience.

**Guidance through modeling.** As mentors and students worked together, students were given the opportunity to observe and examine their mentor's interactions with other professionals in the field. As noted above, for example, as one student expressed, "I really, really enjoyed watching Professor Fish and the mentors collaborate. I had never been in a group of professionals to see how they analyze issues and problem solve. Just to see professionals in a group like that, I took away a lot from that. Developing relationships is important and being professional in the field" (Interview 13). The same student specifically described mentors as, "Great models of professionalism in the field I try to remember what I learned from them as I work with others" (Interview 13). Students were able to observe and model practices their mentors displayed throughout their ECECS experience. Mentors provided students with the guidance they will need as they pursue the same or similar profession.

**Following a path.** Mentors played an important role in helping students follow a path that will allow them to learn, grow, and develop. One student cited, “Madeleine is amazing, what she brings is great; she pushed you to think more in a gentle way. Pat was great, knowledgeable, and really supportive” (Interview 6). Another student pointed out, “My mentor played a tremendous role in my [knowledge of] child development. She connected me to the teacher I became a TA for and really supported me in doing that. She inspired me, she was motivating, she was always someone who really inspired me” (Interview 2). Working collaboratively with mentors within a team supported and guided students as one student exclaimed, “often you are on your own, working with your own team, and the whole group was really excellent” (Interview 8). Working collaboratively within an interdependent setting allows students to follow a path that leads them closer to becoming professionals in the field of child development and early care and education.

### **Summary of Results**

Results indicated that “knowledge” and “support” were vital components of the students’ professional development as students cited both themes 33 times throughout the 19 interviews. Further results identified “insight” and “inspiration” to also be strong indicators of mentoring relationships that are believed to benefit students’ professional growth and development, as these indicators were cited 26 times throughout the nineteen interviews. Lastly, results for “guidance” demonstrated it was the least significant of the 5 themes as it was cited with less frequency -- only 16 times.

Much of the same data presented in the interview transcripts were coded multiple times by various themes. In other words, many of the themes were interconnected as approximately every quote coded multiple (two to five) themes. Therefore, themes cannot

be assumed to independently immensely impact students significantly. Moreover, the combination of themes working together may be the most reasonable explanation to support the hypothesis as to *how* mentor-student relationships enhance student's professional growth and development, as the interview data truly captured the different elements highlighted and enhanced by each theme.

The following chapter will explore and discuss the results by describing the significance of the identified themes, and discuss implications for future research.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

#### Summary

The aim of this thesis was to identify the characteristics of mentor-student relationships that are thought to effectively enhance student's professional growth and development by examining existing data from an initial student follow-up study. The initial study sought to document and discover any enduring, long lasting effects of the Partnerships for Excellence: ECECS program experience, on graduate student's professional development. In other words, the purpose of this thesis was to answer the question: *How* do student-mentor relationships support and enhance the professional growth and development of graduate students in the context of the Partnerships for Excellence: Early Childhood Education Consulting Services program?

Subsequent to examining the initial student follow-up study and upon reviewing the existing related research literature, it was evident that mentoring relationships in a collaborative and interdependent setting (such as the PfE: ECECS program) would offer students optimal experiences, providing them with the opportunity to support and enhance their growth and professional development. However, it was unclear *how* or in what ways this occurred. For this reason, the existing interview data from the initial study was analyzed, revealing five themes (knowledge, support, insight, inspiration, and guidance) that students reported both benefited and enhanced their students' professional development through engaging in collaborative and interdependent relationships with mentors. Furthermore, three sub-themes have been identified to help characterize and define the various components for each of the identified themes. The results of each of

the five themes indicated that knowledge and support were the two most significant themes supporting students professional growth and development, as students cited knowledge and support most often (thirty-three times) throughout the nineteen interviews. Insight and inspiration also emerged as essential themes as they were cited twenty-three times throughout the nineteen interviews. Guidance was the least significant theme of the five as it emerged only sixteen times. Even so, students' responses indicated that guidance played an indispensable role in the professional development of graduate students. Each theme and sub-theme helped to identify the nature of mentoring relationships that contribute to the fundamental purpose of enhancing students' professional development.

## **Discussion**

### **The Vital Role of Developing Relationships**

The review of research literature related to mentoring relationships emphasized the need to first build and establish relationships between mentors and mentees in order to form a collaborative learning team. Given that mentoring relationships have been described as the foundation on which professional growth and development is expected to occur, researchers acknowledged it is crucial for mentors to initiate the development of relationships with mentees (Peterson et al., 2010). Various articles highlighted the important role of mentors in a variety of ways and have been listed, including:

- Making an investment to genuinely connect with mentees on a personal level
- Using differences in life experiences as opportunities to reflect on the relationship
- Positioning themselves as allies

- Validating the importance of the educators/mentees work
- Supporting the educators/mentees professional growth (Peterson et al., 2010, p.172).
- Providing friendship, encouragement, support, and the sharing of knowledge (Moss, 2010; Ambrosetti & Dekkers, 2010)
- Reflective Practice, providing guidance and insight (Ambrosetti & Dekkers, 2010).

These various forms of social-emotional support are believed to be an emotional and influential piece of the process in which mentees can overcome fears and develop a sense of trust over time, viewing their mentoring relationships as collaborative rather than hierarchical (Kent, 2006). Building and maintaining relationships allows effective mentoring to occur, which then allows mentors and mentees to come together and share information, make decisions, plan work, solve problems, and learn together. Furthermore, engaging in mentoring relationships leads to mentee's changes in knowledge, skills, dispositions, and practices, while improving their collaborative work relationships with work colleagues (Kent, 2006).

The review of literature expresses how constructive and open relationships allow mentors and mentees to mutually help identify ways through which they can improve their teaching practices and increase their efficacy (Ambrosetti & Dekkers, 2010). Moreover, according to the literature, working and learning in context further helps to inspire and support the understanding of theories in practice. Research indicates that teachers use the expertise of others to adjust their own beliefs and practices as there is a

strong interconnection between levels of interdependency in collaborative settings and levels of group cohesion (Ambrosetti & Dekkers, 2010).

Similarly, the Partnerships for Excellence: Early Childhood Education Consulting Services program has recognized and embraced the value of building and maintaining relationships. Likewise, the existing interview data reveals how relationships have played major roles in students' experiences within the program and have positively influenced the quality of interactions between mentors and students. The analysis of the existing student follow-up study interview data demonstrates that students have expressed the various ways in which their relationship with their mentors has influenced their professional growth and development. Themes similar to the literature have emerged from the initial interview data and have been recognized and listed as:

- Knowledge
- Support
- Insight
- Inspiration
- Guidance

These five themes along with the existing literature can help provide details of *how* mentoring relationships are beneficial to students' professional growth and development, offering students the opportunity to advance in their career working in the field of early childhood education.

### **Comparison of Results and Existing Literature**

**The significance of sharing knowledge.** The review of literature related to knowledge disclosed how mentees received ongoing opportunities to benefit from the



knowledge and expertise of their mentors by establishing relationships, thus promoting positive interactions, interdependence, and reflective practices (Moss, 2010). Mentor's helped mentees reflect on their experiences in the classroom through reflective practice, and brainstormed ideas together while maintaining frequent and ongoing communication. (Peterson et al., 2010, p.165). Literature further documents that teachers/mentees acquired the ability to reflect on their own thinking as well as on children's thinking as learners (Kent 2006). According to Kent (2006), knowledge and skills were also acquired and exercised through collaborative relationships with colleagues who planned and helped one another identify ways in which they could improve their teaching practices.

The existing interview data validated the importance of sharing knowledge as it was clearly associated with the students' professional development in a manner similar to the literature. According to the existing interview data, establishing a level of comfort in which mentors shared their wisdom along with their own personal and professional experiences as a form of sharing knowledge was one way in which mentoring relationships helped students acquire knowledge and skills. The sharing of wisdom and experiences, helped students answer questions, gain ideas, insight, and become more aware of their practices, allowing students be open to differences in center operations. Another method by which mentors helped students gain knowledge and skills was by modeling techniques pertinent to students' career and daily life. Similar to the literature by Ambrosetti and Dekkers (2010), mentors modeled the use of reflective practice, communicated the value of reflective practice, and encouraged students to adopt and exercise this practice with others in the program (i.e., center staff members). Likewise, mentors modeled ways in which students can build positive relationships, collaborate,

and implement the co-inquiry process. Mentors applied theories in context, helping students comprehend and see different perspectives.

**The value of offering support.** Existing literature discussed how mentors attended monthly meetings where their supervising mentors modeled the process of checking in, actively listening, setting goals, reflecting with the educators (mentees), and providing positive feedback (Peterson et al., 2010). Additionally, supervising mentors modeled ideal, supportive and nurturing relationships, which mentors perceived and practiced with the educators (mentees). These meetings allowed mentors to reflect on the mentoring process, collaborate with other mentors to discuss their experiences, problem solve, and share professional resources (Peterson et al., 2010). Lastly, mentors contributed diverse personal and professional experiences to the discussions, which served as a resource for mentors to learn about and practice different styles and strategies for working with educators (Peterson et al., 2010).

This research is related to the task of mentors who volunteer their time to meet regularly and engage in discussions on various topics related to students and centers in the Partnerships for Excellence, Early Childhood Education Consulting Services program. Within the context of supportive relationships among mentors, mentors are better able to support and educate their mentees, a support system resembling a domino effect. Additional research literature illuminated the important role of mentors in offering students with plenty of support, especially when learning about, and/or attempting to alter behaviors, beliefs, and practices.

The review of literature described characteristics of support as including 1) being available, 2) being present, and 3) being involved (Kent 2006). This entailed mentors'

arrangement of regular visits with their mentees and an exchange of email contact information, as well as phone numbers for easy access in order to get to know each other and their roles. Furthermore, the literature notes, support allowed mentees to learn and improve their practices more effectively than they would have been able to by simply receiving instructions or focusing on accomplishing tasks (Kent, 2006). Related research describes a supportive context as a collaborative setting in which relationships help form a key link that would shape and strengthen collaborative relationships for both the mentors and mentees (Moss, 2010). Literature by Meirink et al. (2010) further indicates strong interconnections between collaboration and learning.

Based on the PfE initial interview data results related to support, students often cited teamwork, collaboration, and availability of mentors as the three characteristics describing the form of support proven to be most beneficial to their professional development. Students indicated how mentors supported them with issues unique to the team and the specific center with which they were working. Students also expressed how teamwork and collaboration allowed them to depend on mentors as well as each other for ideas and suggestions. Lastly, students who had participated in PfE stated that mentors were readily available; especially given the situation that multiple mentors may participate in a given PfE consulting team, students on each team were able to receive ample support.

**The major role of insight.** Literature by Peterson, et al., (2010) briefly mentioned how mentors provided educators with different perspectives to note or observe. Similar to this research literature, the initial PfE interview data identified perspectives as a major role in students' professional development, along with other identified

characteristics such as, increasing awareness, and enhancing listening skills. According to the PfE interview data, mentors reportedly helped students become more conscious of different perspectives within centers and individuals by coaching them on ways to look at each centers and child's strengths. Furthermore, students in the PfE: ECECS program reported that they had also learned to become more mindful of the different perspectives that existed within their consulting team (mentors and peers) by sharing their knowledge and experiences. The relationships that had been developed between mentors and students helped make it possible for students to gain insight and become more open to variations, especially within centers. This context allowed students to examine the classroom dynamics through different lenses and shift their point of view to focus on the strengths of a center, a teacher, or a student, as opposed to their weakness or flaws, increasing the level of success of the consultation within the center by making positive change and sustainability of positive change more likely.

PfE: ECECS graduate students reported that they not only gained insight by examining different perspectives; they increased their awareness and enhanced their listening skills within the context of the center as well as their team. As mentors supported students learning and ambitions, students became aware of others need for support as well (i.e., center staff members). Students' participation and experience in forming a collaborative relationship with their mentor(s) allowed students to gain awareness and insight on the various aspects of working in a collaborative relationship with professionals in the field. Listening was also identified as another method of gaining insight. Mentors not only helped student understand the importance of listening to others, students were given the opportunity to further enhance their listening skills through their

practice and participation within the PfE program. Students expressed the honor and value in learning from their mentors experiences and wisdom. Moreover, students were given the opportunity to observe their mentors work with and listen to others as well. Mentors were able to teach students' the value of listening to others as a technique to gain insight and effectively accomplish both personal and professional goals.

**Inspiration as a fundamental component.** Research literature related to inspiration simply describes how leaders and coaches needed to motivate teachers to experiment with alternative teaching methods within their teaching practices (Meirink et al., 2010). Moreover, literature stated that teachers have begun to realize how much of a difference they made in the success and achievement of their students; in this way, students have become more aware of their ability to cope with any challenges they experience (Kent, 2006). Through the support and motivation of mentors, mentees were able to take risks and experiment with various teaching methods, becoming inspired when experiencing and realizing the extent to which they enhanced their effectiveness.

The existing interview data described similar results to that of the existing literature, and further expanded on the ways in which inspiration served as a beneficial component to students' professional growth and development. According to the initial PfE interview data, several students reported that they felt empowered by their mentors as they not only realized changes could be made with center director and staff, but also that they could help make the difference. Mentoring relationships along with the PfE experience helped students gain the confidence and courage to advance in their career, strive for success, and believe in themselves.

Mentors not only inspired students to take chances, they inspired students to utilize and practice the skills and knowledge they had acquired through the PfE experience. Moreover, students expressed how they admired their mentors who motivated and inspired them to become professionals in the field. Students explained how they admired the way mentors developed relationships and collaborated with others in the field. Furthermore, students admired the fact that mentors volunteered their time to help them learn and grow, causing students to aspire to become a mentor, as well, one day. With the help of their mentors and the self-confidence they gained through their experiences, students reported that they were able to discover and pursue their hopes and goals for both their career and their future in general.

**The key characteristics of guidance.** Related research literature very briefly described guidance as a process of building relationships in which mentors increased students' confidence to succeed and encouraged them to further their education to pursue higher degrees (Peterson et al., 2010). Although the existing PfE interview data revealed similar findings, additional information related to guidance was identified as well. Guidance was the least cited theme identified in the initial interview data, yet this data contained essential components that have not been identified by the existing literature, and have been classified as advice, leading a path, and modeling. As mentors gave students advice, they guided students by forming a path towards professionalism. Moreover, mentors guided students to think in various ways and introduced students to new people who were able to access new opportunities for students and their professional careers.

The existing literature by Peterson et al. (2010), did not discuss modeling as a significant characteristic of guidance, possibly because educators or mentees were not given the opportunity to observe mentors in an environment in which they interacted with other professionals in the field. The participants of the PfE: ECECS program were not only given the opportunity to examine their mentors collaborate with other professionals in the field, they were able to observe and discover the different ways in which mentors analyzed issues and solved problems. Observing mentors allowed students of the PfE: ECECS program to practice and develop new knowledge and skills to use in their future career as a professional.

### **Concluding Remarks**

#### **Limitations of the Current Study**

One limitation of the current study may be in the use of the initial interview data. The current study utilized data from an existing study, which sought to discover any long-lasting effects of the Partnerships for Excellence: Early Childhood Education Consulting Services program on students' professional development. The initial semi-structured interview questions were designed and developed for a different purpose than that of which the current study aimed to discover. Therefore, it may have been useful to develop a new or additional set of interview questions designed specifically for the current study. In this way, students may have been able to present additional data related to the five identified themes or additional data resulting in the identification of new themes.

Another limitation of the study may exist in the amount of time that has passed between the year 1998, when the first team was developed, to 2009 when the last group

included in the interview study was formed. A number of participants experienced a memory drift which prevented them from recollecting any specific information related to their experiences in the PfE: ECECS program. For the purpose of the study, it may be more functional to conduct an interview shortly after the end of each semester or maybe conduct interviews related to the five themes at specific points during each semester.

### **Overall Conclusions of the Study**

In examining the existing interview data, five themes were identified, categorized, and discussed in order to understand the bigger picture that aimed to answer the question, *how* does mentoring relationships benefit the professional growth and development of graduate students in the contexts of the PfE: ECECS program? Although the themes were categorized into different components, it is important to understand that the themes collectively and simultaneously impact students' professional growth and development. Both the review of related literature and the initial PfE interview data highlight the unique elements of mentoring relationships believed to impact and enhance students' experiences and their professional growth. Overall, the PfE: ECECS program reportedly provided students the unique opportunity to benefit from mentoring relationships in which working and learning in context helped participants gain knowledge and better understand theories of practice. Furthermore, through a supportive network of professionals in the field (mentors), participants were inspired through guidance and insight to make differences in both centers and in themselves.

### **Implications for Future Research**

Future research may be able to obtain a more in-depth understanding of the different ways in which mentoring relationships benefit the professional growth and



development of graduate students in the context of the PfE: ECECS program by recreating or expanding upon the existing interview questions. Creating or adding additional interview questions that are specifically designed to seek data on mentoring relationships may result in new or more detailed information. Furthermore, the five identified themes of this current study may be used as a foundation for future research. The examination of the initial interview data demonstrated the range in detail and quality of the informants' responses related to how long ago their PfE participation had ended, suggesting interviews be conducted shortly after students' the semester ends or at specific points during the year, as it may allow participants to easily recall specific details, preventing participant to experience a memory drift.

Lastly, in order to gain additional information on the benefits of mentoring relationships, further investigation regarding the effects of mentoring relationships on center staff (i.e. teachers, directors, and supervisors) is another relevant possibility for future research. In particular, information about their perspectives and experiences in the context of PfE: ECECS program may shed light on the various ways in which mentoring relationships effects the professional development or practices of others in the field of child development.

### **Implications for Future Practice**

In this study, the examination of mentoring relationships revealed ways in which graduate students effectively gained knowledge, expertise, and professionalism. The evidence obtained through the current study may allow centers to utilize mentoring relationships to help educators not only provide children with positive memorable experiences, but implement best practices most effectively and support all domains of

children's learning and development within the programs that serve these children. The implementation of ECECS in relation to accreditation efforts or other related program improvement projects for center development is another useful possibility resulting from the current research. This would teach and allow centers as a whole to support one another in their pursuit of creating "quality" programs. Furthermore, in understanding the process of change one undergoes when experiencing modifications, as described in Chapter Two by Bridges (2009), ECE leaders would be able to utilize mentoring relationships as a strategy to help support staff through program changes, successfully.

Furthermore, this current study may be beneficial to the NAEYC/NCATE Professional Development Guideline Standards 6 ( Becoming a Professional) and 7 (Field Experiences), which both highly recommend ECE student professional development academic programs to have professionals in the field who have the innovative strengths to work with and respond to children and families, along with critical issues in the field, and community and state context, and the NAEYC (Standards for Initial and Advanced Early Childhood Professional Preparation Programs, 2011) Standard 7 which cites that candidates [need to] develop the "knowledge, skills and professional dispositions necessary to promote the development and learning of young children across the entire developmental period of early childhood... and in the variety of settings that offer early education" (p. 41).

Likewise, this study would be valuable to the California Early Childhood Educators Competencies (2001) Standards 10 (Leadership) and 11 (Professionalism), in which Standard 10 requires leaders in the field of child development to have the "knowledge and skills to effectively represent the profession publicly; to develop,

implement, and advocate policy; and to engage with others in continuous quality improvement” (p. 90). Additionally, Standard 11 describes professionalism as the “knowledge, skills, dispositions, and an overall vision that allow early childhood educators to work effectively with children, families, colleagues, and communities and to provide high- quality early care and education service” (California Early Childhood Educators Competencies, 2001, p. 98). Standards 10 and 11 can be put into practice by building upon Fullan’s framework for leadership. Fullan (2001) developed and described a framework containing five components of effective leadership in “Leading in a Culture of Change” (Discussed in greater detail in Chapter Two). This framework not only allowed leaders to effectively guide others through the process of change, it encouraged leadership in others as well. Through Fullan’s framework for leadership, professionals could successfully and positively implement changes for center and quality improvements. Furthermore, this framework allowed individuals to gain professionalism as they practiced effective leadership skills.

Lastly, expansion of this Partnerships for Excellence service may also allow students at other levels of higher education to benefit as fieldwork is re-defined or changed in the field of Child Development (Fish et al., 2002). Unlike most internships, in PfE, students can experience in-depth at what it takes to work with children and adults. They can learn about teamwork, collaboration, and partnerships while having the opportunity to work with mentors who volunteer their time to support student growth and learning every step of the way.

As discussed in Chapter One, the greatest impact lies within the on-going developmental process and the long term plans of formal training events like the one

offered in the PfE: ECECS program. Furthermore, as demonstrated in the current study, the development of mentoring relationships provides learners with the essential components identified in the five themes, to nurture optimal professional development in the field of early childhood education.

## **AFTERWORD**

**March 28, 2012**

In the spring of 2010, I joined the PFE, ECECS program with Dr. Janet E. Fish, not knowing exactly what this program was about, but feeling intrigued by what I heard this program was like. I did not join a team of mentors and students, however, I was given the opportunity to write about and present information relevant to the work they did within their particular centers. I was also able to observe mentors and students work together, collaborate, and discuss issues and ideas about their center during our weekly meetings. As I listened to the teams engage in discussion about their issues, goals, plans, and their success, I thought of how beneficial and great it was for mentors to be a part of this program to support the students in their experience working with centers. Moreover, as I listened, I began to think about my own experiences as a pre-k teacher, and how much I would have or can still gain from having a mentor as well.

Thinking back on when I became the lead teacher (with very little prior teaching experience) of an LAUP program, I remembered at times feeling a bit lost, insecure, and even alone in my quest to being the 'best' teacher I can be. I often wondered if anyone else felt the way I did. I also felt as though there was a specific method or formula to being an effective teacher who offered children the finest educational experience, and I just wasn't grasping it. I also remember just wanting to work with an exceptional teacher who had years of prior experience (a mentor), and could just simply show me how it's done. However, at the time, didn't think I had anyone who I can turn to and share my concerns with. With that being said, I have taken time and effort, to piece together parts

to a large puzzle and sought to make sense of how and why things are done the way they are.

Towards the end of the year, in fall 2011, I decided to write my thesis on the PfE, ECECS program, but with a focus on student-mentor relationships. I had the support of Janet E. Fish and her team (Elenie Zgourou, Barbara Rosner, and Shoshana Gratidge) and was able to use the interview data from their initial student follow-up study to discover interesting information on mentoring relationships. Not only did I discover *how* mentoring relationships were beneficial to students professional growth and development, I discovered that like myself, other teachers shared my concerns and insecurities, they faced challenges as I did (and still sometimes do), and lastly, that teachers like myself strongly need support to strengthen their teaching practices.

Furthermore, through the PfE: ECECS program, I began to understand that there isn't just one single way in which a one could be an extraordinary teacher. Moreover, teaching is not an occupation in which one reaches the top and they are finished. Teaching is an ongoing, complex process in which the interactions between the teacher, children, families, the community, the environment, etc. are essential. I strongly believe there's a need for more programs with mentors who can help support teachers to understand, advance, and continue to refine their practices. Furthermore, I truly believe the PfE program or similar programs would be incredibly useful to students still at the undergraduate level. My experiences in the PfE: ECECS program along with my overall experiences in CSUN's ECEMA program have led me to feel that I have come a long way in my quest to making a greater impact in the field of Child Development. Not only have I gained many valuable skills and knowledge through my classes with my professors

and my peers, I have gained some insight on ways to effectively work with staff members, young children, and their families. Most importantly, I now understand the power of building relationships and the difference it makes in the quality of interactions.

Participating in the PfE program, writing my thesis on a topic that I can relate to, and being given the opportunity to meet astonishing and brilliant professors has made my years in this program worthwhile.

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**APPENDIX A**  
**Initial Student Follow-up Study Questionnaire**  
**Cover Letter**

Dear Student,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the student follow-up study of the California State University Northridge/Child Care Resource Center Early Childhood Education Consulting Services (ECECS, now called the Partnerships for Excellence: ECECS). The attached questionnaire should take approximately 15-25 minutes to complete.

Also attached, please find your copy of the study's Informed Consent and Subject's Bill of Rights forms. Because we need signed copies of these forms from you...

**1. On or before March 26<sup>th</sup>, 2010, please review, sign and return the signed Informed Consent and Bill of Rights forms...**

*...by scanning your signed forms and emailing them to: ezgourou@hotmail.com*

**-OR-**

*...by faxing your signed forms to:*

ATTN: Dr. Jan Fish  
EPC Department  
FAX: 818-677-2544

***...and keep a copy of the forms for yourself.***

**2. On or before April 2, 2010, please complete and email the questionnaire to ezgourou@hotmail.com**

***Thank you again for your willingness to participate.***

If you have a specific question about the study you may contact Dr. Janet Fish, 18111 Nordhoff Street, California State University, Northridge, Northridge, CA 91330 or at [janet.fish@csun.edu](mailto:janet.fish@csun.edu), or ezgourou@hotmail.com.

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**APPENDIX B:**

**Initial Study Follow-up Questionnaire**

**Partnerships for Excellence: Early Childhood Education Consulting Services (Pfe)  
Student Follow up Study**

1. When and for how many semesters did you participate in the ECECS, (now called the Partnerships for Excellence Program)?

a. What semester(s) and what year(s)? From when to when?

\_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

2. Please check the box which best describes the length and scope of your consultation experience:

\_\_\_\_\_ The entire consultation process was one semester only.

\_\_\_\_\_ The entire consultation process was two semesters, and I participated in both semesters.

\_\_\_\_\_ The entire consultation process was two semesters, and I participated in the first semester of consultation.

\_\_\_\_\_ The entire consultation process was two semesters, and I participated in the second semester of consultation.

\_\_\_\_\_ The entire consultation process was three semesters, and I participated in the third semester of consultation.

3. What did you like best about your experience in the Pfe: ECECS?

4. What did you like least about your experience in the Pfe: ECECS?

5. Why did you initially enroll in Pfe: ECECS?

6. What did you expect to learn from enrolling in this course?

7. If you enrolled for a second semester, what were your reasons for continuing?
8. If you did not enroll for a second semester, what were your reasons for not continuing?
9. As a student, do you feel that enrolling for one or two semesters in this course was sufficient? Please explain.
10. What changes would you recommend for PfE: ECECS program improvement?
11. In what way(s) did the center show program quality improvement?

**The following questions refer to your experience *prior* to participation in the PfE: ECECS**

12. Did you have center-based experience with young children prior to participation in the PfE: ECECS program?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes                      \_\_\_\_\_ No

If “yes,” please answer the following questions:

- a. In what capacity? (Check all that apply)

_____ Assistant Teacher	_____ Teacher
_____ Volunteer	_____ Fieldwork student
_____ Assistant Director	_____ Director
_____ Other (Please state) _____	

b. What were the ages of the children at the center(s) where you worked? (Check all that apply)

- Infants 0-6 months       Infants 6 months to 11 months  
 I/T 12-23 months       Twos 24-35 months  
 Threes 36-47 months       Fours 48-59 months  
 Kindergarten children       School-age children

c. How many years experience did you have at a center-based program(s) **prior** to participation in the PfE: ECECS program?

- Less than one year       One to three years  
 Three to five years       Five to eight years  
 Eight to ten years       More than ten years

d. Was the center accredited by NAEYC?

- Yes       No

13. Did you have non-center-based ECE Related experience with young children **prior** to participation in the PfE: ECECS program?

- Yes       No

If "yes," please answer the following questions:

a. What other non-center-based, related early childhood education experiences have you had **prior** to your participation in the PfE: ECECS? (Check all that apply)

- Teaching at a community college or university  
 Presenting ECE workshops or in-service trainings  
 ECE Consultation  
 Child Development Specialist/Early intervention  
 Family Day Care Provider  
 Parent/Family Educator

b. What were the ages of the children at the non-center-based related ECE program where you worked? (Check all that apply)

- Infants 0-6 months       Infants 6 months to 11 months  
 I/T 12-23 months       Twos 24-35 months  
 Threes 36-47 months       Fours 48-59 months  
 Kindergarten children       School-age children

- c. How many years experience did you have at a non-center-based ECE Related program(s) **prior** to participation in the PfE: ECECS program?

Less than one year       One to three years  
 Three to five years       Five to eight years  
 Eight to ten years       More than ten years

**The Following Questions refer to your experience following participation in the PfE: ECECS program:**

14. Have you had center-based experience with young children **following** participation in the ECECS: PfE program?

Yes       No

If “yes,” please answer the following questions:

- a. In what capacity? (Check all that apply)

Assistant Teacher       Teacher  
 Volunteer       Fieldwork student  
 Assistant Director       Director  
 Other (Please state) \_\_\_\_\_

- b. What were the ages of the children at the center where you worked? (Check all that apply)

Infants 0-6 months       Infants 6 months to 11 months  
 I/T 12-23 months       Twos 24-35 months  
 Threes 36-47 months       Fours 48-59 months  
 Kindergarten children       School-age children

- c. How many years experience have you had at a center-based program **following** your participation in the PfE: ECECS?

Less than one year       One to three years  
 Three to five years       Five to eight years  
 Eight to ten years       More than ten years



d. Was the center accredited by NAEYC?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes                      \_\_\_\_\_ No

15. Have you had non-center-based, ECE-related experience with young children **following** to participation in the PfE: ECECS program?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes                      \_\_\_\_\_ No

If “yes,” please answer the following questions:

a. What other non-center-based, related early childhood education experiences have you had **following** to your participation in the ECECS: PfE? (Check all that apply)

- \_\_\_\_\_ Teaching at a community college or university
- \_\_\_\_\_ Presenting ECE workshops or in-service trainings
- \_\_\_\_\_ ECE Consultation
- \_\_\_\_\_ Child Development Specialist/Early intervention
- \_\_\_\_\_ Family Day Care Provider
- \_\_\_\_\_ Parent/Family Educator

b. What are the ages of the children at the non-center-based related ECE program where you have worked? (Check all that apply)

- \_\_\_\_\_ Infants 0-6 months                      \_\_\_\_\_ Infants 6 months to 11 months
- \_\_\_\_\_ I/T 12-23 months                      \_\_\_\_\_ Twos 24-35 months
- \_\_\_\_\_ Threes 36-47 months                      \_\_\_\_\_ Fours 48-59 months
- \_\_\_\_\_ Kindergarten children                      \_\_\_\_\_ School-age children

c. How many years experience have you had at a non-center-based ECE Related program(s) **following** participation in the ECECS-PfE Program?

- \_\_\_\_\_ Less than one year                      \_\_\_\_\_ One to three years
- \_\_\_\_\_ Three to five years                      \_\_\_\_\_ Five to eight years
- \_\_\_\_\_ Eight to ten years                      \_\_\_\_\_ More than ten years

**The following questions refer to your current employment.**

16. Are you currently employed in early childhood education or a related field?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes                      \_\_\_\_\_ No

If “yes,” please answer the following questions:

a. Name of organization or workplace \_\_\_\_\_

b. How long have you been with this employer/center?

\_\_\_\_\_ Less than one year                      \_\_\_\_\_ One to three years  
\_\_\_\_\_ Three to five years                      \_\_\_\_\_ Five to eight years  
\_\_\_\_\_ Eight to ten years                      \_\_\_\_\_ More than ten years

c. What is your job title?

\_\_\_\_\_ Assistant Teacher                      \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher  
\_\_\_\_\_ Volunteer                      \_\_\_\_\_ Fieldwork student  
\_\_\_\_\_ Assistant Director                      \_\_\_\_\_ Director  
\_\_\_\_\_ Other (Please state) \_\_\_\_\_

d. What ,if any, other positions with this employer/center?

\_\_\_\_\_ Assistant Teacher                      \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher  
\_\_\_\_\_ Volunteer                      \_\_\_\_\_ Fieldwork student  
\_\_\_\_\_ Assistant Director                      \_\_\_\_\_ Director  
\_\_\_\_\_ Other (Please state) \_\_\_\_\_

e. What are the ages of the children at your current job? (Check all that apply):

\_\_\_\_\_ Infants 0-6 months                      \_\_\_\_\_ Infants 6 months to 11 months  
\_\_\_\_\_ I/T 12-23 months                      \_\_\_\_\_ Twos 24-35 months  
\_\_\_\_\_ Threes 36-47 months                      \_\_\_\_\_ Fours 48-59 months  
\_\_\_\_\_ Kindergarten children                      \_\_\_\_\_ School-age children

17. If you are currently working in ECE, how long do you expect to be in the field of ECE?

**The following questions refer to your ongoing professional development.**

18. What related professional organizations or advocacy efforts are you involved in, if any?

19. What professional or related books, journals or magazines did you read last year?

20. What professional or related workshops or conferences have you attended recently?  
When?

21. What professional trainings or conferences have you led or facilitated?

22. At what stage are you in your education?

23. What opportunities have you had to mentor others?

**The following questions refer to your experiences in the PfE: ECECS. Please circle the best answer.**

<b>24. Rate your TOTAL OVERALL_experience in the PfE: ECECS</b>	Very Negative	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Very Positive
(class and consulting program activities with your team and center director and staff)	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>25. Would you recommend this experience ?</b>	Not at all	Not Likely	Don't Know	Perhaps	Strongly
a. To other students	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
b. To potential mentors	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
c. To other center directors	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>26. What aspects of the experience were the most meaningful to you?</b>	Not At All Meaningful	Not Very Meaningful	Neutral	Somewhat Meaningful	Very Meaningful
d. Other students	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
e. Mentors	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
f. Center Director	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

g. Center teaching staff	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
h. Professor	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
i. T.A. (If Applicable)	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>27. What aspects of the experience were the most challenging to you?</b>	Not At All Challenging	Not Very Challenging	Neutral	Somewhat Challenging	Very Challenging
a. Other students	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
b. Mentors	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
c. Center Director	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
d. Center teaching staff	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
e. Professor	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
f. T.A. (If Applicable)	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>28. How did your participation contribute to your growth?</b>	Not At All Contributing	Not Very Contributing	Neutral	Somewhat Contributing	Very Contributing
a. Your PERSONAL growth	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>29. How much did your participation contribute to your growth as a PROFESSIONAL?</b>	Not At All Contributing	Not Very Contributing	Neutral	Somewhat Contributing	Very Contributing
a. Identifying and involving oneself with the early childhood field	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
b. Knowing about and upholding ethical standards and other professional guidelines	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
c. Engaging in continuous, collaborative learning to inform practice	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
d. Integrating knowledgeable, reflective and critical perspectives on early educational practices and policies	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
e. Engaging in informed advocacy for children and the profession	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>30. What aspects of the experience were instrumental in your professional development?</b>	Not At All Instrumental	Not Very Instrumental	Neutral	Somewhat Instrumental	Very Instrumental

a. Weekly class meeting discussions	1	2	3	4	5
b. Meetings with the ECE center director	1	2	3	4	5
c. Engaging in reflective journals	1	2	3	4	5
d. Engaging in Reflective supervision with the professor or your team with the professor in class	1	2	3	4	5
e. Conducting Observations	1	2	3	4	5
f. Staff meeting and workshop techniques	1	2	3	4	5
g. Preparation of reports for the center	1	2	3	4	5
h. Preparation of written and PowerPoint case study presentations	1	2	3	4	5
i. Community Resources	1	2	3	4	5
<b>21. How much do you agree with the following statements?</b>	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
a. I am more passionate about the field of ECE.	1	2	3	4	5
b. I have a greater appreciation of the complexity of influences on a program's quality.	1	2	3	4	5
c. I have stronger ability to work as part of a team.	1	2	3	4	5
d. I have become a stronger advocate for high quality ECE.	1	2	3	4	5
e. I am more reflective.	1	2	3	4	5
f. I have stronger observation skills.	1	2	3	4	5
g. I have a stronger ability to collaborate with others.	1	2	3	4	5
h. I am better able to identify program strengths.	1	2	3	4	5
i. I am better able to identify areas of further program growth.	1	2	3	4	5
j. The PfE: ECECS experience has had a	1	2	3	4	5

positive effect on my professional development.					
k. There has been a positive impact on the quality of the programs that have participated in the consultation process.	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
l. The mentors helped to strengthen my professional development.	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
m. My participation in the PfE: ECECS has led to subsequent job opportunities.	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

Thank you for your participation. Please feel free to add any additional comments on the back of this questionnaire.

## APPENDIX C

### Interview Transcriptions Organized into Themes

#### Knowledge

Title: Interview #14

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied:      Guidance      Support      Knowledge

That's it's better to talk to more experienced professionals in the field when you have an issue rather than dealing with it on your own.

Title: Interview #14

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied:      Knowledge

One thing I learned from them was about professional ism and how to discuss issues in a professional manner

Title: Interview #12

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied:      Insight Knowledge

I came to better appreciation of different perspectives and XXX.

Title: Interview #13

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied:      Guidance      Inspiration      Knowledge

I really, really enjoyed watching Professor Fish and the mentors collaborate. I had never been in a group of professionals to see how they analyze issues and problem solve. Just

to see professionals in a group like that, I took away a lot from that. “Developing relationships is important and being professional in the field”

Title: Interview #13

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Guidance Inspiration Knowledge

“Great models of professionalism in the field” I try to remember what I learned from them as I work with others.

Title: Interview #11

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Support Insight Knowledge

Listening to ideas from everyone, suggestions for the unique issues we were dealing with.

Title: Interview #11

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Guidance Knowledge

Of course, Jan and her wonderful wisdom and experiences. And slow down, don't need to rush through.

Title: Dedoose\_Document\_Fredy summary.docx.docx

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Insight Knowledge

Hands on. Working toward improving a program which can have a real impact. Was like real work.

Title: Interview #10



Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Knowledge Insight

Listen to people who have a lot of experience.

Title: Interview #8

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Guidance Knowledge Inspiration

Watching modeling of mentors.

Title: Interview #8

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Knowledge

Modeling good question-asking We developed a personal relationship, Important for mentor to reveal a bit of their personal lives in a very lovely way.

Title: Interview #7

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Knowledge

observing the classrooms, rating scales we used at the center, I am able to use now.

Title: Interview #6

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Knowledge Inspiration

Definitely my relationship with the mentors. They are so knowledgeable and it allowed me to gain insight on being more open to how things are done different ways in centers.

Title: Interview #6

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Knowledge Support Insight

It showed me that its easier to have a collaborative, rather than a top down approach.

Title: Interview #6

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Knowledge Inspiration Support

Co Inquiry process, I try to use it at my center, use collaboration, relationships, how we build them effectively. I try to do that in both my professional and personal life

Title: Interview #6

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Guidance Knowledge Support Inspiration

Madeleine is amazing, what she brings is great; she pushed you to think more in a gentle way. Pat was great, knowledgeable, and really supportive.

Title: Interview #5

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Knowledge

Communication with staff and parents, building relationships.

Title: Interview #4

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Knowledge Inspiration Insight

Learn about being a great listener from Madeleine, hearing about all of the mentors experiences in the field Really felt honored in learning from them. The wisdom that they shared with us.

Title: Interview #2

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Inspiration Knowledge

It was a very rewarding experience. I really loved my mentor. She was inspiring and knowledgeable. I learned a lot from her.

Title: Interview #2

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Insight Inspiration Knowledge

She had so much experience and knowledge in the field. It was just great to learn from here and hear her perspective. She could appreciate simple things that someone newer in the field wouldn't acknowledge. She came in the field when there wasn't as much out there in ECE. I loved how she was still so actively involved in impacted the field in a positive way even though she was retired.

Title: Interview #1

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Knowledge Inspiration

Learning from mentors, watching their interactions. Example they set was valuable.

Title: Interview #1

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Knowledge

Hope to be better listener. Patient with difficulties. Mentors to hear everything out and ask better questions.

Title: Interview #1

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Support Knowledge

Supported what I was doing. Answered questions. Provided ideas. Vision of their example.

Title: Interview #9

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Knowledge

professors and mentors, too, so humble and knowledgeable not just the theories in class, you are analyzing what is going on.

Title: Interview #9

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Knowledge

Knowledge they gave you like reflective practice—it was very helpful—they were helping with the same process with ourselves that we were using with the staff—everything, the whole process, working with us and showing us what we could do and not able to do;

Title: Interview #16

Doc Date: 2/13/2012

Codes Applied: Inspiration Insight Knowledge

Definitely, my ongoing involvement in the consulting service motivated me to continue my masters. It made me more mindful of relationships, building on strengths as a teacher

and administrator. It also allowed me the opportunity to do independent consulting.  
Knowledge/skills able to exercise

Title: Interview #17

Doc Date: 2/13/2012

Codes Applied: Support Guidance Inspiration Knowledge Insight

Because Jan Madeleine and mentors played integral part in my life. "how would they handle this situation". I will call them and ask.

Title: Interview #19

Doc Date: 2/13/2012

Codes Applied: Knowledge

Mentors have a lot of experience. They are so professional, humble and knowledgeable. Teach application of theory and join you in process.

Title: Interview #19

Doc Date: 2/13/2012

Codes Applied: Insight Knowledge Support Guidance

Mentors added theories and knowledge. Helped to put things in perspective. Was not alone.

Title: Interview #19

Doc Date: 2/13/2012

Codes Applied: Knowledge Support Guidance

Consultants use the same methodology on students that they are using with centers – reflective practice. They were supportive and set limits while sharing knowledge. Very available to the students. Help to keep you on track and on time.

Title: Interview #18

Doc Date: 2/13/2012

Codes Applied: Knowledge Guidance Support

The mentors were the most meaningful part. They were informative and really guided us in ways that I have never been helped before. I learned what the true meaning of collaboration is from them.

Title: Interview #18

Doc Date: 2/13/2012

Codes Applied: Knowledge Insight

instead I learned to help someone by looking at their strengths and really listening to what they needed.

Title: Interview #14

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Knowledge

Hearing from all of the mentors who have been in the field for so many years.

### **Support**

Title: Interview #14

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Guidance Support Knowledge

That's it's better to talk to more experienced professionals in the field when you have an issue rather than dealing with it on your own.

Title: Interview #14

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Support

I feel like I can talk to Toni about any issues/concerns openly without holding things back.

Title: Interview #12

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Support

—I was not just a student—I was a peer.

Title: Interview #12

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Support

I come from a team approach—if we're not in it together it will fall apart.

Title: Interview #13

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Support

Other fieldwork was individual, not in a group. The work was done by observation, not a lot of collaboration or reflection.

Title: Interview #15

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Support

This was very hands on. I liked that I was going out to a school, working with the teachers and having my mentor support me. It was a very nice process.

Title: Interview #15

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Support Insight

I knew what I wanted to do and they supported that. Currently, the experience makes me more aware of the needs of the interns that I have, I know that they need a lot of support.

Title: Interview #11

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Support Insight Knowledge

Listening to ideas from everyone, suggestions for the unique issues we were dealing with.

Title: Interview #11

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Support

I realize that I don't have to have all of the answers. That I can use my time more wisely and gather information from many sources, instead of doing it all on my own. It's okay to bounce ideas off of other people.

Title: Interview #10

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Support

Collaborating with and getting to know people

Title: Interview #10

Doc Date: 12/18/2011



Codes Applied: Support

Collaborating with others, working with teams. Communication skills. See other's perspective, more empathetic.

Title: Interview #8

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Support

Most valuable exp is mentor-mentee relationship becuz work cannot go forward without that first relationship.

Title: Interview #8

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Guidance Support

often you are on your own, working with your own team and the whole group was really excellent.

Title: Interview #6

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Knowledge Support Insight

It showed me that its easier to have a collaborative, rather than a top down approach.

Title: Interview #6

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Insight Support

I have a much more collaborative approach to working with teachers, looking at their strengths

Title: Interview #6

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Knowledge Inspiration Support

Co Inquiry process, I try to use it at my center, use collaboration, relationships, how we build them effectively. I try to do that in both my professional and personal life

Title: Interview #6

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Guidance Knowledge Support Inspiration

Madeleine is amazing, what she brings is great; she pushed you to think more in a gentle way. Pat was great, knowledgeable, and really supportive.

Title: Interview #5

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Support Insight

Teamwork, relationships, open communication

Title: Interview #4

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Insight Guidance Support

Being open to other perspectives, other programs. Having the perspectives from the mentors was very helpful and I still think about what they would do.

Title: Interview #3

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Support Insight

The group meetings, they were supportive and you could hear what other people were experiencing and they could give you some advice. Really stimulating and useful.

Title: Interview #2

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Support Inspiration Guidance

My mentor played a tremendous role in my CD. She connected me to the teacher I became a TA for and really supported me in doing that. She inspired me, she was motivating, she was always someone who really inspired me.

Title: Interview #1

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Support Knowledge

Supported what I was doing. Answered questions. Provided ideas. Vision of their example.

Title: Interview #9

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Support

The time you spend with these mentors is very rewarding they are so supportive as human beings...

Title: Interview #9

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Support

they were always available, they keep you on track (reports...)

Title: Interview #16

Doc Date: 2/13/2012

Codes Applied: Support

The most valuable was working with the mentors. My mentor Betty Brady, was so supportive.

Title: Interview #17

Doc Date: 2/13/2012

Codes Applied: Support Inspiration

Could try things out in a safe environment.

Title: Interview #17

Doc Date: 2/13/2012

Codes Applied: Support Guidance Inspiration Knowledge Insight

Because Jan Madeleine and mentors played integral part in my life. "how would they handle this situation". I will call them and ask.

Title: Interview #19

Doc Date: 2/13/2012

Codes Applied: Insight Knowledge Support Guidance

Mentors added theories and knowledge. Helped to put things in perspective. Was not alone.

Title: Interview #19

Doc Date: 2/13/2012

Codes Applied: Knowledge Support Guidance

Consultants use the same methodology on students that they are using with centers – reflective practice. They were supportive and set limits while sharing knowledge. Very available to the students. Help to keep you on track and on time.

Title: Interview #18

Doc Date: 2/13/2012

Codes Applied: Knowledge Guidance Support

The mentors were the most meaningful part. They were informative and really guided us in ways that I have never been helped before. I learned what the true meaning of collaboration is from them.

Title: Interview #14

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Support

The mentors made a big difference. I feel like in PfE, you had several mentors available and they were helpful ...it was better experience then just the regular fieldwork class

Title: Interview #15

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Support

Really good, learned a lot from the mentors. There was lots of feedback.

Title: Interview #18

Doc Date: 2/13/2012

Codes Applied: Support

Dr. Fish was supportive and I learned so much from her in this class.

## **Inspiration**

Title: Interview #12

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied:       Inspiration

I was there to make a difference—as well as mentors, director, staff.

Title: Interview #12

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied:       Inspiration

Encouragement to xxx my own abilities and appreciate them.

Title: Interview #13

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied:       Guidance       Inspiration       Knowledge

I really, really enjoyed watching Professor Fish and the mentors collaborate. I had never been in a group of professionals to see how they analyze issues and problem solve. Just to see professionals in a group like that, I took away a lot from that. “Developing relationships is important and being professional in the field”

Title: Interview #13

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied:       Guidance       Inspiration       Knowledge

“Great models of professionalism in the field” I try to remember what I learned from them as I work with others.

Title: Interview #13

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Inspiration

“It helped me feel more sure of myself, to take chances and look into different areas of personal and professional development. It made me more confident in the field.”

Title: Interview #13

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Inspiration

I was offered the Pierce job as a mentor and advisor after I graduated. I think that by participating in the PfE program, it gave me the courage to jump in and take the job. I said yes. I can make a difference.

Title: Interview #8

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Guidance Knowledge Inspiration

Watching modeling of mentors.

Title: Interview #7

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Inspiration

Having them volunteering their time made an impact on me.

Title: Interview #7

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Inspiration

The experience with the mentors was the most valuable piece. I would love to be a mentor myself one day

Title: Interview #7

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Inspiration

The first day the mentors shared about themselves. The mentor I was with had similar experiences as me as I really connected with her. Just hearing about how successful these women were in the field, that making a difference can happen.

Title: Interview #6

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Knowledge Inspiration Support

Co Inquiry process, I try to use it at my center, use collaboration, relationships, how we build them effectively. I try to do that in both my professional and personal life

Title: Interview #6

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Guidance Knowledge Support Inspiration

Madeleine is amazing, what she brings is great; she pushed you to think more in a gentle way. Pat was great, knowledgeable, and really supportive.

Title: Interview #4

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Knowledge Inspiration Insight

Learn about being a great listener from Madeleine, hearing about all of the mentors experiences in the field Really felt honored in learning from them. The wisdom that they shared with us.

Title: Interview #2



Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied:        Inspiration     Knowledge

It was a very rewarding experience. I really loved my mentor. She was inspiring and knowledgeable. I learned a lot from her.

Title: Interview #2

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied:        Insight Inspiration     Knowledge

She had so much experience and knowledge in the field. It was just great to learn from here and hear her perspective. She could appreciate simple things that someone newer in the field wouldn't acknowledge. She came in the field when there wasn't as much out there in ECE. I loved how she was still so actively involved in impacted the field in a positive way even though she was retired.

Title: Interview #2

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied:        Inspiration

It really helped me find what I really wanted to do and I felt confident going in that direction.

Title: Interview #2

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied:        Inspiration

Being in consulting gave me confidence to be able to speak and give presentations in a classroom.

Title: Interview #2

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Support Inspiration Guidance

My mentor played a tremendous role in my CD. She connected me to the teacher I became a TA for and really supported me in doing that. She inspired me, she was motivating, she was always someone who really inspired me.

Title: Interview #1

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Knowledge Inspiration

Learning from mentors, watching their interactions. Example they set was valuable.

Title: Interview #9

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Inspiration

Betty Brady opened her house—an amazing person—she inspired you.

Title: Interview #16

Doc Date: 2/13/2012

Codes Applied: Inspiration

I think it really opened my eyes as a student and empowered me to see that ece is more than just being a teacher. It made me feel like I could be one of the mentors one day.

Title: Interview #16

Doc Date: 2/13/2012

Codes Applied: Inspiration Insight Knowledge

Definitely, my ongoing involvement in the consulting service motivated me to continue my masters. It made me more mindful of relationships, building on strengths as a teacher

and administrator. It also allowed me the opportunity to do independent consulting.  
Knowledge/skills able to exercise

Title: Interview #16

Doc Date: 2/13/2012

Codes Applied: Inspiration

There were an inspiration to me and made me feel that if they could be in the field so long, then I could.

Title: Interview #17

Doc Date: 2/13/2012

Codes Applied: Support Inspiration

Could try things out in a safe environment.

Title: Interview #17

Doc Date: 2/13/2012

Codes Applied: Support Guidance Inspiration Knowledge Insight

Because Jan Madeleine and mentors played integral part in my life. "how would they handle this situation". I will call them and ask.

Title: Interview #19

Doc Date: 2/13/2012

Codes Applied: Inspiration

Mentors are inspirational. Met in home of one of the mentors. They are amazing people.

**Insight**

Title: Interview #12

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Insight

there were so many different perspectives to share together—mentors, students, professor—and being a TA in another class, I just had the professors—this was diff—so many perspectives.

Title: Interview #12

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Insight Knowledge

I came to better appreciation of different perspectives and XXX.

Title: Interview #12

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Insight

Even tho I don't currently wk in field, it still impacts me when I am listening to parents, people with infants—better appreciation for people—I come from a more open perspective now.

Title: Interview #15

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Support Insight

I knew what I wanted to do and they supported that. Currently, the experience makes me more aware of the needs of the interns that I have, I know that they need a lot of support.

Title: Interview #11

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Support Insight Knowledge

Listening to ideas from everyone, suggestions for the unique issues we were dealing with.

Title: Interview #10

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Insight Knowledge

Hands on. Working toward improving a program which can have a real impact. Was like real work.

Title: Interview #10

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Insight

See other's perspective, more empathetic.

Title: Interview #10

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Insight

Open to new ideas.

Title: Interview #10

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Knowledge Insight

Listen to people who have a lot of experience.

Title: Interview #6

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Knowledge Support Insight

It showed me that its easier to have a collaborative, rather than a top down approach.

Title: Interview #6

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Insight Support

I have a much more collaborative approach to working with teachers, looking at their strengths

Title: Interview #5

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Support Insight

Teamwork, relationships, open communication

Title: Interview #4

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Insight Guidance Support

Being open to other perspectives, other programs. Having the perspectives from the mentors was very helpful and I still think about what they would do.

Title: Interview #4

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Insight

Looking at things from another's perspective

Title: Interview #4

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Knowledge Inspiration Insight

Learn about being a great listener from Madeleine, hearing about all of the mentors experiences in the field Really felt honored in learning from them. The wisdom that they shared with us.

Title: Interview #3

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Support Insight

The group meetings, they were supportive and you could hear what other people were experiencing and they could give you some advice. Really stimulating and useful.

Title: Interview #2

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Insight Inspiration Knowledge

She had so much experience and knowledge in the field. It was just great to learn from here and hear her perspective. She could appreciate simple things that someone newer in the field wouldn't acknowledge. She came in the field when there wasn't as much out there in ECE. I loved how she was still so actively involved in impacted the field in a positive way even though she was retired.

Title: Interview #1

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Guidance Insight

How mentors work with people and listened.

Title: Interview #16

Doc Date: 2/13/2012

Codes Applied: Insight

It was great to see the mentor's perspective of what the field looked like

Title: Interview #16

Doc Date: 2/13/2012

Codes Applied: Insight

Also you got to understand and see the perspective of the other students.

Title: Interview #16

Doc Date: 2/13/2012

Codes Applied: Inspiration Insight Knowledge

Definitely, my ongoing involvement in the consulting service motivated me to continue my masters. It made me more mindful of relationships, building on strengths as a teacher and administrator. It also allowed me the opportunity to do independent consulting. Knowledge/skills able to exercise

Title: Interview #17

Doc Date: 2/13/2012

Codes Applied: Support Guidance Inspiration Knowledge Insight

Because Jan Madeleine and mentors played integral part in my life. "how would they handle this situation". I will call them and ask.

Title: Interview #19

Doc Date: 2/13/2012

Codes Applied: Insight Knowledge Support Guidance



Mentors added theories and knowledge. Helped to put things in perspective. Was not alone.

Title: Interview #18

Doc Date: 2/13/2012

Codes Applied: Insight

Mentors helped me a lot. They taught me how to look at a child or centers' strengths.

Title: Interview #18

Doc Date: 2/13/2012

Codes Applied: Knowledge Insight

instead I learned to help someone by looking at their strengths and really listening to what they needed.

Title: Interview #6

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Knowledge Insight

Definitely my relationship with the mentors. They are so knowledgeable and it allowed me to gain insight on being more open to how things are done different ways in centers.

## **Guidance**

Title: Interview #14

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Guidance Support Knowledge

That's it's better to talk to more experienced professionals in the field when you have an issue rather than dealing with it on your own.

Title: Interview #13

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied:        Guidance        Inspiration        Knowledge

I really, really enjoyed watching Professor Fish and the mentors collaborate. I had never been in a group of professionals to see how they analyze issues and problem solve. Just to see professionals in a group like that, I took away a lot from that. “Developing relationships is important and being professional in the field”

Title: Interview #13

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied:        Guidance        Inspiration        Knowledge

“Great models of professionalism in the field” I try to remember what I learned from them as I work with others.

Title: Interview #11

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied:        Guidance        Knowledge

Of course, Jan and her wonderful wisdom and experiences. And slow down, don't need to rush through.

Title: Interview #10

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied:        Guidance

Guidance was helpful to development in class and in everyday life and work.

Title: Interview #8

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Guidance Support

often you are on your own, working with your own team and the whole group was really excellent.

Title: Interview #8

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Guidance Knowledge Inspiration

Watching modeling of mentors.

Title: Interview #6

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Guidance Knowledge Support Inspiration

Madeleine is amazing, what she brings is great; she pushed you to think more in a gentle way. Pat was great, knowledgeable, and really supportive.

Title: Interview #4

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Insight Guidance Support

Being open to other perspectives, other programs. Having the perspectives from the mentors was very helpful and I still think about what they would do.

Title: Interview #2

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied: Support Inspiration Guidance

My mentor played a tremendous role in my CD. She connected me to the teacher I became a TA for and really supported me in doing that. She inspired me, she was motivating, she was always someone who really inspired me.

Title: Interview #1

Doc Date: 12/18/2011

Codes Applied:        Guidance        Insight

How mentors work with people and listened.

Title: Interview #17

Doc Date: 2/13/2012

Codes Applied:        Support        Guidance        Inspiration        Knowledge        Insight

Because Jan Madeleine and mentors played integral part in my life. “how would they handle this situation”. I will call them and ask.

Title: Interview #17

Doc Date: 2/13/2012

Codes Applied:        Guidance

Taught me to always have professionalism no matter what you are doing. Always put your best foot forward. “Industry is large in a small way”

Title: Interview #19

Doc Date: 2/13/2012

Codes Applied:        Insight Knowledge        Support        Guidance

Mentors added theories and knowledge. Helped to put things in perspective. Was not alone.

Title: Interview #19

Doc Date: 2/13/2012

Codes Applied:      Knowledge    Support      Guidance

Consultants use the same methodology on students that they are using with centers – reflective practice. They were supportive and set limits while sharing knowledge. Very available to the students. Help to keep you on track and on time.

Title: Interview #18

Doc Date: 2/13/2012

Codes Applied:      Knowledge    Guidance      Support

The mentors were the most meaningful part. They were informative and really guided us in ways that I have never been helped before. I learned what the true meaning of collaboration is from them.

## **APPENDIX D: Partnerships for Excellence: ECECS Course Description**

**M.A. Program in Early Childhood Education  
Department of Educational Psychology and Counseling  
California State University, Northridge  
18111 Nordhoff Street  
Northridge, CA, 91330-8265**

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### **Partnerships for Excellence:**

#### **E C E Early Childhood Education Consulting Services**

**S**            *Collaborating to Improve Quality of Care*

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### **Program Overview and Description**

Partnerships for Excellence, the Early Childhood Education Consulting Services (ECECS), was conceived by Dr. Rose Bromwich, professor emerita of the California State University, Northridge (CSUN) Master of Arts degree program in Early Childhood Education (ECE) and Professor Annabelle Godwin, MA, professor emerita of Child Development at Los Angeles Mission Community College both located in the San Fernando Valley, a suburban community of Los Angeles, California. The program was developed collaboratively with faculty of the CSUN Early Childhood Education M.A. program, the Childcare Resource Center (CCRC) Executive Director, Lorraine Schrag, who has now retired from that position and joined the program as a mentor, and Laurla Escobedo, then CCRC director of community relations. The Partnerships for Excellence program was initiated in the fall of 1998.

Partnerships for Excellence pairs selected graduate students in Early Childhood Education with current or retired early childhood education professionals. The mentoring teams offer consultation, at no charge, to directors and staffs of center childhood programs located in the San Fernando Valley. Directors who request consulting assistance are asked to identify specific challenges they wish to address in order to improve program quality. Applications are mailed and distributed through the Child Care Resource Center. Participation in the program is for a period of one academic year.

In addition to the consultation, working in collaboration with their team mentors and program directors, graduate students participate in a weekly seminar with Dr. Janet E. Fish, Co-Coordinator of the CSUN Masters Program in ECE. The voluntary participating

professionals often attend the seminar to contribute their expertise and experience and to enrich the opportunity for on-going development of the mentoring relationships with students. During class, group work and discussion focus on several facets of the consultation process: developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood education, strategies that may prove effective for evolving stages of the consultation, as well as relevant readings and other resources. Dr. Fish leads the seminar guiding participants as they examine the depth and breadth of their professionalism in a setting which offers many opportunities for collaborative learning.

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A collaboration among Professionals in the Child Care Community, the Child Care Resource Center and the CSUN department of Educational Psychology and Counseling

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Revised 8, 2008

**Appendix E: Cover Letter Describing Initial Study**

*California State University, Northridge  
Partnerships for Excellence: Early Childhood Education Consulting Services (PfE)  
Student Follow-up Study: Spring, 2010*

*Dear student,*

*This spring, we will be conducting a follow-up study of students who have participated in the California State University Northridge/Child Care Resource Center **Early Childhood Education Consulting Services (ECECS, now called the Partnerships for Excellence: ECECS).***

*All students who participated in the PfE: ECECS between the years of 1998-2008 will be invited to participate in the study and will subsequently be sent a questionnaire, informed consent form, and subject's bill of rights.*

*The purpose of this email is to update our list of past students who have participated in our CSUN/CCRC Partnerships for Excellence: Early Childhood Education Consulting Services. We would like to request your current phone number, street address, and email address(es).*

*To help us update your records, please complete the following information:*

*Your Name:*

*Address:*

*Phone(s):*

*Email Address(es):*

*Would you be willing to participate in the study by completing a questionnaire?*

*Yes\_\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_\_*

*If yes, please let us know the best way to send it to you.*

*By Mail\_\_\_\_\_ By Email\_\_\_\_\_*

*Would you be willing to also participate in a follow-up interview (to take place this spring, 2010)?*

*Yes\_\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_\_*



*If yes, please let us know your availability, and best location.*

*Morning \_\_\_\_\_ Afternoon \_\_\_\_\_ -OR- Evening \_\_\_\_\_*

*CSUN \_\_\_\_\_ CCRC \_\_\_\_\_ -OR- By Phone \_\_\_\_\_*

*When you have completed this form, please email it by using the “Reply All” button so both myself and Dr. Fish will receive your response.*

*We thank you for your participation.*

*Eleni Zgourou, Master’s Student*

*for  
Dr. Janet Fish,  
Department of Educational Psychology  
18111 Nordhoff Street  
California State University, Northridge  
Northridge, CA 91330-8265*

## Appendix F: Photo-Documentation of Mentor-Student Relationships

### Collaboration amongst Mentors and Students



**Mentors and Student, Fall 2011**

