**A Tale of Two Novices**

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Previously, I examined novice teacher mentoring programs in West Virginia by surveying an administrator in each county. Variations existed in many aspects of these programs, and when I presented that study at the West Virginia Music Educators Association conference, a number of mentees in those programs spoke of the inadequacies of the program, especially the discrepancies between how the program was described in a handbook and how it was actually carried out. I wanted to hear more from mentees, so I conducted a study to investigate mentoring activities experienced by novice music teachers. I identified and examined the types of mentoring activities novice teachers experienced in their first three years of teaching. Results indicated that novice music teachers participate in a variety of mentoring program activities including formal and informal district, school, and department-wide activities. Novice music teachers also sought activities independently either in addition to, or because of a lack of mentoring activities.

I wanted to go more in-depth with novice music teachers. Therefore, the purpose of this multiple case study (Yin, 2014) was to examine the mentoring experiences of two novice music teachers in different school districts; to identify the types of mentoring assistance experienced, their perceptions of mentoring based on their experiences, and other forms of professional development they sought independently. Data includes journal entries, interviews, and questionnaires. Data collection remains in progress, but data analyzed to this point indicate feelings of isolation vs. integration (Weimer & Thornton, 2014). Themes of variation and optimism are emerging. Variation in the way the programs are designed and implemented; variation in the goals of the program, mentor, and mentee; and variation in the matching mentor and mentee have been identified.

References

Weimer, K. & Thornton, D. (2014). *Mentoring relationships in music education: Pre-service to experienced teacher.* Paper presented at the Mentoring Institute Conference Annual Conference, University of New Mexico.

Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods.* Washington DC: Sage.

Applications

* Novice teacher mentoring programs need to be designed and implemented based on researched models.
* Novice teacher mentoring programs need to have clearly defined goals for the program, the mentor, and the mentee.
* Mentors need to be highly qualified and well trained in order to fully support the mentee.
* Mentor and mentee must be matched by subject and grade level as closely as possible.
* Novice music teachers should take responsibility for their own professional growth and development by seeking help from resources such as people, publications, and professional organizations.
* Feelings of isolation are common among novice music teachers. While they need to take responsibility for their professional growth, they also need to be supported in order to feel confident about their teaching and remain in the profession.