STUDENT TEACHERS’ CHANGING CONFIDENCE IN TEACHING

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Research shows that student teachers find the mentor teacher and the student teaching experience itself the two most influential factors in their practicum experience. This study examined five student teachers and the two mentor teachers of each in elementary school settings within a metropolitan school district in North Texas. Lave and Wenger’s community of practice theory informed this study. Data sources included mentor teacher interviews, student teacher interviews, student teacher observations, student teacher/mentor teacher dialogue journals, and student teacher reflections. A collective case study approach was followed to gain a detailed understanding of the experiences of the five student teachers, looking specifically at their confidence in teaching and the factors associated with it.

Findings indicated that the confidence in teaching of all five student teachers changed throughout their practicum experiences. Results suggested many factors influenced these changes. Student teachers shared that the student teaching experience, the grade level/subjects taught, their relationships with their students, and their relationships with their mentor teachers contributed to their confidence. The mentor teachers perceived that student teachers’ confidence could be influenced by consistency in classroom management and their interactions with their mentor teachers. Two areas of influence on student teacher confidence not uncovered by other researchers were the quest of student teachers for perfection while teaching and the need of mentor teachers for control of the content presented by the student teachers, especially during the months prior to state-mandated testing.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Every fall, new teachers enter classrooms. Some enter with high confidence and extensive preparation to help their students learn; however, many who enter the classrooms are unprepared to meet the everyday challenges of being a teacher. Research reviewed by Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2007) suggests teachers come to the professional world of teaching with varied skills and experiences. Preparation continues to be an issue as higher demands than ever are placed on teachers to meet the needs of increased minority populations, more students coming from lower socio-economic backgrounds, demands for higher test scores, and the challenge of adapting the curriculum to meet the needs of all students (Roehrig, Pressley, & Talotta, 2002). Darling-Hammond and Baratz-Snowden (2005) believe that schools of education must design programs to help prospective teachers understand the learning, social, and cultural contexts in which they will work in order for them to transfer their learning into the classroom successfully. These authors state, “No amount of coursework can, by itself, counteract the powerful experiential lessons that shape what teachers actually do” (p. 9). Teachers are arguably the most important variables in their students’ academic success, as teachers become aware of student achievement, “it is how they [the teachers] respond and teach as a result of the awareness that makes the difference” (Alderman, 2013, p. 67). Therefore, understanding teacher preparation is paramount.

Part of this preparation for future teachers in most programs is supervised student teaching, which has been acknowledged as having a profound impact on student teachers’ learning (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2007). Student teaching is crucial in helping future teachers develop and practice the skills needed to be successful teachers. Boe, Cook, and
Sunderland (2006) found that beginning teachers with minimal (one to four weeks) or no preparation were twice as likely to leave the teaching profession as those having extensive preparation (10 weeks or more). However, Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2007) have explained how the student teaching experience varies dramatically within and across programs. Variations in the length of time student teachers are in actual classrooms teaching and observing range from just a few weeks to 30 weeks. Mentoring also varies considerably since some student teachers work with mentor teachers who model lessons, communicate, and plan with them, while others do not. Hence, if a student teacher is to see and emulate high-quality teaching, especially in schools serving disadvantaged students, it is necessary to seek out mentor teachers who can help prospective teachers learn productively.

Teacher educators recognize that student teachers bring prior knowledge, views, beliefs, and personal theories of teaching into student teaching. These views may or may not change, develop, or consolidate during their student teaching experiences. Lave and Wenger (1991) posit that a person learns through a contextualized experience in which he or she is completely actively participating. For the student teacher, the student teaching practicum becomes this experience. In this frame, it is the student teacher’s beliefs about teaching that will allow him or her to learn about the practice of teaching. To maximize the benefit of the student teaching experience, it is important for mentor teachers to understand their potential influence on the integration of the prior knowledge of the student teachers within the practicum.

According to Graves (2010), the support and verbal interaction student teachers receive from their mentor teachers are vital to student teachers’ learning processes during their practicum experience. Fives, Hamman, and Olivarez (2007) agree and say that the amount of guidance student teachers receive from their cooperating teachers contributes to their confidence in their
teaching capabilities. Although many factors influence the student teacher during the practicum experience, the mentor teacher plays an essential role in the formation of student teacher confidence (Knoblauch & Woolfolk Hoy, 2008). Therefore, understanding the nuances of student teachers’ self-confidence and the power/influence of their mentor teachers is valuable not only for mentor teachers, but also for student teachers.

As student teachers learn from their mentor teachers, not all interactions are positive in the eyes of the student teachers. Critical feedback and guidance are necessary for student teachers; nevertheless, too much criticism from the mentor teacher without a balance of positive feedback may be harmful and could even cause student teachers to have lower self-confidence in their abilities to perform as teachers (Sayeski & Paulsen, 2012). In Atjonen’s 2012 study of 201 student teachers, negative descriptors of mentor teachers attributed to student teachers indicated that they were demanding, strict, and inflexible. Whereas, when mentor teachers attended to encouragement, fairness, and respect, student teachers viewed these as positive descriptors. Schwille (2008) summed up the relationship between the mentor teacher and the student teacher by saying,

Mentors who thoughtfully and purposefully structure opportunities for their novices’ learning bring their novices further along in their learning than do mentor teachers who view their role as simply providing advice, emotional support, and technical pointers or just opening their classrooms for novices to perform teaching strategies. (p. 164)

While mentor teachers can affect student teachers’ confidence through feedback and guidance, other factors can contribute, as well. For example, Charalambous, Philippou, and Kyriakides (2008) surveyed 89 student teachers who revealed that their experiences as learners affected their perceptions of teaching mathematics because of poor teaching from their own teachers and the complexity of subject. Because of these perceptions, the teacher candidates were not confident in their own abilities to teach; however, actual classroom teaching experiences
enhanced their self-confidence as they experimented with different teaching techniques. Goh, Wong, Choy, and Tan’s (2009) study of 139 student teachers illuminated other factors affecting student teachers’ teaching confidence. These factors included acquiring content knowledge to teach effectively, managing discipline and classroom management, helping struggling students, and being able to monitor their students’ lessons and differentiate as needed. Aydin, Demirdöğen, and Tarkin (2012) postulated that although the student teaching experience and time spent with the mentor teacher can lead to different outcomes regarding confidence in student teachers, the pairing of the two influences the student teacher’s classroom experience and effectiveness during student teaching.

Many have studied the impact of mentor teachers on student teachers. Studies such as Anderson’s (2007), dealing with the influence of the mentor teacher on the student teacher portrayed the student teacher as giving into the ways of the mentor teacher for fear of a poor teaching evaluation. Similarly, Barrows (1979) found, with four student teaching triads, that student teachers chose to imitate or conform to the teaching practices of their mentor teachers instead of trying their own teaching strategies in order to receive good teaching evaluations. Weasmer and Woods (2003) found that mentor teachers exerted influence or power over student teachers in ways such as interrupting them mid-lesson or telling them to teach the way that they did. The theme pervading these findings was the issue of influence or power of the mentor teacher over the student teacher. However, the role of the mentor teachers’ influence or power is not adequately understood especially in relation to how this power influences the student teachers’ confidence in teaching.

Drawing on the theory of situated learning articulated by Lave and Wenger (1991), this study is framed by an understanding that learning to teach is guided during the student teaching
experience by both the discourse between the student teacher and mentor teacher and the practice teaching itself. During student teaching, learning becomes a socially situated activity mediated within the context of a community of practice. For the student teachers, the placement site is the community where learning about the craft of teaching occurs. Therefore, a community of practice serves as the intrinsic condition for learning since new knowledge is created in the social exchange of practice and experience.

Central to Lave and Wenger’s understanding of situated learning is legitimate peripheral participation, which they define as the process where “the mastery of knowledge and skill requires newcomers to move toward full participation in the sociocultural practice of a community” (p. 29). Legitimate peripheral participation suggests that student teachers enter student teaching located at the periphery of a community of teaching, and as they gradually engage in the practices of that community, they begin to move towards full participation in the practice of teaching. However, the mentor teacher must grant the student teacher legitimacy in order to for the student teacher to have access to all that is associated with teaching. Hanson-Smith (2006) simply stated that as student teachers participate in a community of practice they receive support as they interact with like-minded educators in order to avoid isolation. Because of this regular participation within the student teaching practicum, the student teachers not only gain teaching experience, but gain confidence in teaching.

This study focused on five student teachers and their mentor teachers. All participants were associated with one state-accredited university-based teacher education program at the University of North Texas and completed their student teaching within the same school district in the metropolitan area. The five student teachers participated in a 14-week student teaching experience (PDS2) where they were placed with one primary (K-2) mentor teacher for seven
weeks and one intermediate (3-5) mentor teacher for the remaining seven weeks. The semester before the student teaching semester, the student teachers were enrolled in an intensive early field experience (or PDS1). This experience included four methods courses (scheduled on two days each week) and two days each week on a public school campus. Each methods course made use of field based assignments such as reflective journal entries and creating and implementing lesson plans to insure that course content was tied to the student teachers’ campus-based experiences. Field experiences prior to PDS1 and PDS2 were associated with such courses and assignments as:

- Assessment and Evaluation of Reading (assessing a 2nd-5th grade student multiple times throughout the semester)
- Instructional Strategies and the Curriculum (observing a teacher using lesson objectives)
- Curriculum and Assessment for Bilingual and ESL Classrooms (assessing students during the semester)
- Environmental Process and Assessment (observing in the on-campus Child Development Laboratory)

Student teachers participated in more than 100 hours of observation of students individually in classroom settings before entering the observation phase of student teaching (PDS1).

This hands-on, 14-week student teaching experience provided a way for student teachers to become immersed in teaching and allowed a smooth transition into the role of classroom teacher. It involved working with each of the mentor teachers through communication and collaboration. Furthermore, the student teachers observed their mentor teachers and learned how to establish and maintain effective learning environments, differentiate instruction, create and implement effective lesson plans, and reflect and evaluate their teaching and learning. With the aforementioned student teaching experience described, the research questions that guided the
study sought determination of (a) factors that affected the confidence of student teachers during student teaching and (b) the extent to which the mentor teacher influenced the student teachers.

Research Questions

The research questions guiding this study were:

1. How do student teachers perceive their confidence in teaching during student teaching?
   
   (a) How did student teacher confidence in teaching change across both student teaching placements?
   
   (b) To what did student teachers attribute changes in their self-perceived confidence in teaching?

2. How did student teachers believe their mentor teachers influenced their confidence in teaching during the student teaching placements?

3. How do mentor teachers perceive their student teacher’s confidence in teaching during student teaching?
   
   (a) How did mentor teachers perceive their respective student teachers’ changes in teaching confidence during the student teaching placement?
   
   (b) To what factors did mentor teachers’ attribute these perceived changes in their respective student teachers’ teaching self-confidence?
   
   (c) How did mentor teachers perceive their own influence/power on these changes?

Overview of Methods

The study employed a qualitative approach to determine student teachers’ teaching confidence throughout the student teaching semester and identified specific factors associated with those changes. I interviewed and observed each of the five student teacher participants in two seven-week placements. Two observations and interviews were conducted during the first seven-week placement and two during the second seven-week placement. Each of the 10 mentor teachers was interviewed twice, at the beginning of the student teacher’s seven-week placement and at the end of the student teacher’s seven-week placement. In addition, dialogue journals between the student teacher and mentor teacher provided evidence of the student teachers’
changes in confidence and perception of influence/power. Last, Ellis and Evans’ (2001, 2013) clear and unclear windows method provided a look at what student teachers believed they understood and were clear about related to student teaching versus what they were unclear about, needing more information/guidance or more experience/practice. I transcribed the interviews before examining observation notes, dialogue journals, and the clear and unclear windows artifacts as a means of shaping my reactions.

The overarching phenomena examined in this study were (a) the student teachers’ confidence in teaching, including specific factors, (b) the mentor teachers’ view of the confidence of the student teachers, and (c) the mentor teachers’ influence/power over the student teachers as related to their confidence. As seen in previous studies (Graves, 2010; Sayeski & Paulsen, 2012), mentor teachers influence how student teachers act, think, and teach, which can result in positive or negative feelings or confidence for the student teacher. In order to uncover the aforementioned phenomena, I utilized Braun and Clark’s (2006) thematic analysis approach as I analyzed data from five data sources (student teacher interviews, mentor teacher interviews, student teacher observations, student teacher/mentor teacher dialogue journals and clear and unclear windows) for themes related to the student teachers’ teaching confidence and changes in confidence. Data from the observations and dialogue journals were coded and deductively related to Lave and Wenger’s situated learning theory related to student teacher confidence. Last, with the research questions in mind, I created and organized themes with the help of the program Atlas ti (qualitative data analysis software used to manage large amounts of data).
Definition of Terms

- **Community of practice.** Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly (Wenger, 1998).

- **Influence.** The interactive process in which people attempt to convince others to believe or act in certain ways (Rost, 1993).

- **Legitimate peripheral participation.** Legitimation and participation together define the characteristic ways of belonging to a community whereas peripherally and participation are concerned with location and identity in the social world (Lave & Wenger 1991, p. 29).

- **Mentor teacher.** An experienced individual who guides a novice teacher (Bott, 2012, p. 119).

- **Mentoring.** A collaborative effort between university teacher educators, school supervising teachers and student teachers (He, 2009), which includes emotional support and professional socialization in addition to pedagogical guidance (Schwille, 2008).

- **Power.** The ability of an actor to affect the behavior or another actor (Muth, 1984, p.27).

- **Rotation.** A seven-week teaching period during which the student teacher works with a mentor teacher.

- **Self-confidence.** An individual's belief that he or she has the ability to produce results, accomplish goals, or perform tasks competently (Schunk, 1991, p. 209).

- **Student teacher.** Teacher education students who participate in 14 weeks of student teaching that is required for the university teacher preparation program at the University of North
Texas (p. 6 cited from the Student Teaching Handbook provided by the University of Teacher Education Program at the University of North Texas).

- **Student teaching practicum.** A full time, school-based experience supervised by both a certified mentor teacher and a university supervisor. The primary objective of student teaching is to provide the opportunity for acquisition and demonstration of instructional competence with beginning professional educators (p. 5 cited from the Student Teaching Handbook provided by the University Teacher Education Program at the University of North Texas).

**Significance of Study**

This study was undertaken in response to the gap in the literature pertaining to student teachers’ confidence and the factors involved in shaping it, including the influence of their mentor teachers. So far, many researchers have examined student teachers’ confidence using primarily quantitative measures including scales and open-ended questionnaires as seen in Goh, Wong, Choy, and Tan (2009) and Iqbal and Mahmood (2010). Other studies have focused on student teachers’ perceptions of their own confidence and the factors that influence confidence (Ambrosetti, 2010; Sayeski & Paulsen, 2012); others have included only the mentor teachers’ views on factors which influenced their student teachers’ confidence (McNay & Graham, 2007; Russell & Russell, 2011). Taking a different approach, this qualitative study informs teacher education efforts by investigating not only the student teachers’ self-perceived changing confidence during student teaching and specific factors relating to that change but also the mentor teachers’ perceptions of the student teachers’ changes in confidence and of their role in that process.

This study focused specifically on student teachers’ self-confidence while teaching. Although there were many studies about teacher self-efficacy as defined in Bandura (1984), this
study did not follow this tradition. Most research related to self-efficacy was strictly quantitative based on scores from efficacy scales such as Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk-Hoy’s (2001) Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES) and Gibson and Dembo’s (1984) Teacher Efficacy Scale (TES). The TSES scale showed increases or decreases in self-efficacy in the areas of student engagement, instructional strategies, and classroom management, but did not consider formative factors. The TES showed relationships between the teacher and students and how they affected the self-efficacy of the teacher, but did not consider the relationship between the mentor teacher and the student teacher. When exploring self-confidence, many researchers used qualitative data collection methods such as observations and interviews, which enabled the researcher not only to observe what was happening, but also to ask clarifying questions. In this study, the theoretical stance of Lave and Wenger’s (1991) situated learning theory informed the theoretical framework of student teaching as a contextualized experience in which participants were active learners involved in an experience that included interactions with their mentor teachers and others in their communities of practice.

Limitations of the Study

Several limitations were noted for this study. First, the group of student teachers involved was limited to those who had completed their student teaching experiences while enrolled in the University of North Texas and were all placed in the same medium-sized city to student teach. No other higher education institutions or cities of placement were included in the study.

Furthermore, I was the university supervisor of these five student teachers during the spring 2014 semester; therefore, this was a sample of convenience, not a random sample of participants, and students supervised by no other university supervisor were included. The study
identified confidence and influence during only a 14-week student teaching practicum; no longitudinal data were studied.

Because I was also the student teachers’ university supervisor, the student teachers could have provided data according to what they thought I wanted to hear, knowing that I was their evaluator. Although student teaching was graded pass/fail and not with a letter grade, there was still the possibility of student behavior being shaped by concern about the final grade. Three out of five of the student teachers had been in the researchers’ class in previous semesters, which could also have affected the interview responses given by student teachers.

Lastly, because the student teachers were teaching during a semester that included state-mandated testing for their students, the mentor teachers’ influences or the boundaries set for the student teachers while teaching might have contributed to power struggles between the student teachers and their mentor teachers. These struggles might have occurred because mentor teachers were solely responsible for their students’ test scores. Therefore insuring that the content was taught correctly was of upmost importance to the mentor teacher. However, if this study had been conducted during the fall semester, the struggle might not have been as evident.

Dissertation Overview

This chapter is an introduction to a study of changes in student teachers’ confidence and factors that might influence those changes in confidence during the student teaching semester. The problem, approach to the problem, purpose, research questions, significance of the study, overview of methods, definitions, and the limitations of this study are discussed in this chapter. The chapter that follows presents a review of the research literature about student teachers’ confidence and the influence or power of their mentor teachers in changing confidence. Chapter III explains the rationale for the methodology to be used in the study and introduces the methods,
site, population, data collection, instrumentation, and data analysis. Chapter IV presents the findings from the research. The fifth chapter offers discussion and interpretation of findings, implications, and suggestions for further research. Finally, this dissertation includes appendices followed by a list of the references cited.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this study was to examine two aspects of student teachers' confidence in teaching: their own perceptions of factors affecting their confidence and the mentor teachers’ perspectives related to student teacher confidence. This chapter begins with consideration of the purposes of student teaching and its role in pre-service teacher education. A discussion of the theoretical framework found in situated learning theory, by Lave and Wenger (1991), which serves as a framework for this study, appears next. This framework defines communities of practice and legitimate peripheral participation in relation to student teachers’ teaching experiences and their relationships with their mentor teachers, as well as how these relate to student teacher confidence. The remainder of the chapter explores definitions of self-confidence of student teachers and reviews research specifically related to the mentor teachers’ influence on student teacher confidence, including not only mentor teachers’ views of their contributions to their student teachers’ success, but also the views of student teachers.

The Purposes of Student Teaching

For most students, the student teaching experience remains the most challenging aspect of the teacher education program. As Wentz (2001) studied student teachers, he addressed the practical, day-to-day induction of student teachers and confirmed the basic purpose of student teaching as “providing a situation in which student teachers learn and practice varied techniques of teaching while working with ‘real students’ under the direction of a certified teacher” (p. 3). Similarly, Cavanagh and Prescott (2007) stated, “The practicum is completed under the supervision of a more experienced teacher who is charged with the task of assisting the pre-service teacher develop confidence and expertise in the art of teaching (p. 182).” These
researchers have considered this experience an opportunity for student teachers to encounter first-hand the “convergence of the theory” discussed in their college courses with daily classroom teaching practice.

Osunde (1999) suggested that, despite having taken theory and practice courses and having accumulated many hours of classroom observations, student teachers remain unsure of what to expect from their actual classroom teaching experience. Osunde observed that student teachers begin this process:

- Nervous and unsure about handling classroom management
- Confused about their roles in the classroom
- Surprised by the amount of work that goes into planning and preparing lessons

Osunde expressed concern about the attrition of student teachers resulting from their experiences being stressful or even traumatic. This occurred especially for student teachers who did not have adequate insight about the expectations of student teaching.

With this in mind, Leatham and Peterson (2010) reported on results of a survey of 45 secondary mathematics cooperating teachers’ perceptions of the primary purposes of student teaching and their roles in accomplishing those purposes. The authors have declared that there is a lack of literature looking specifically at the purpose of student teaching. However, from their study, the three most important aspects of student teaching as reported by the cooperating teacher participants were teacher interaction (33% or 34 out of 134 responses indicated that interaction with a practicing teacher was one of the primary purposes of student teaching), real classroom experience (21% or 28 out of 134 responses indicated that one of the primary purposes for student teaching was to teach in a real classroom), and classroom management (18% or 24 out of
134 responses indicated that one of primary purposes for student teaching was to learn how to run a classroom).

For Leatham and Peterson, teacher interaction referred to the broad area of communication between student teachers and experienced teachers. Specifically, these interactions included the opportunities student teachers were afforded to learn from mentor teachers in a real classroom as they observed, planned, taught, and reflected. Real classroom experience meant that student teachers had real teaching experiences where they were in charge, undertaking the roles and tasks of teachers. Student teachers gained this real classroom experience in controlled, supervised situations where they could practice teaching students, not just discussing what might happen from the vantage point of a college classroom. The third purpose of student teaching, classroom management, referred to the opportunity for student teachers to see, understand, and practice managing a classroom on their own as a starting point for developing their own senses of classroom management and control.

Student Teaching in Practice

Many individuals enter teaching with formal preparation from a teacher education program, but more and more new teachers arrive via alternate pathways where the rigor of preparation can range from excellent to nonexistent. As a result, an increasing number of teachers in the field have had no formal preparation (Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2005). Because of this, teachers have entered the field with varied knowledge and skills. Some have been familiar with the content area, but have little knowledge about working with children. Some have lacked skills to differentiate instruction for struggling students. Others have only worked with children in settings outside of school. Since education courses cannot impart a body of knowledge of everything a teacher needs to know to be successful, the student teaching
experience helps student teachers connect their knowledge of content and pedagogy with actual classroom teaching experience. Teacher candidates gain experiential knowledge from student teaching that builds upon the conceptual knowledge gained through university courses. Therefore, student teaching has been considered the important part of teacher preparation in which student teachers try to translate what they have learned into practice (Graves, 2010).

According to the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (Hunt & Carroll, 2003) teachers who participate in student teaching are twice as likely to stay in teaching after their first year. Goh, Wong, Choy, and Tan (2009) surveyed 139 student teachers and found that their responses indicated a significant increase in their levels of confidence while practice teaching ($t = -5.48, p$-value $< .001$). The researchers noted specific areas that were associated with increased confidence from the beginning to the end of student teaching, which included:

- Improving teaching skills
- Maintaining classroom management for effective lessons
- Helping struggling students
- Efficiently monitoring and changing teaching strategies during lessons
- Increased content knowledge necessary to teach effectively

Student teaching affects student teachers’ confidence, pedagogical knowledge, and classroom management skills. Even the length of the practicum has influenced student teachers’ confidence in these areas. After studying 120 pre-service teachers, Spooner, Flowers, Lambert, and Algozzine (2008) concluded:

Common sense indicates that student teachers who receive increased amounts of classroom teaching and guidance from their mentor teachers benefit from their understandings of the realities of teaching and are therefore better prepared to deal with the complex realities of today’s schools, classrooms, and students. (p. 264)
Overall, student teachers have exited this experience feeling more confident and prepared to teach than when they entered (Ronfeldt & Reininger, 2012).

Theoretical Framework

In recent years, the seminal work of Lave and Wenger (1991, 1998) has proved helpful to researchers in understanding how student teachers come to know and learn about the practice of teaching. For Lave and Wenger, learning is a social activity enabled by active engagement in the world in a community of practice. This community is characterized by mutual engagement (defined by the participants through a shared repertoire) that holds the community together. This mutual engagement includes those already inside the community and those striving to move from observer to active participator. As the newcomers move from legitimate peripheral participation as observers of the inner activity of this community, they strive to reach a place where they can move to greater levels of participation in the culture of the community. This theoretical base has provided an appropriate foundation for understanding and exploring student teachers’ confidence and their experiences during student teaching because of its emphasis on prior experience, communities of practice, and legitimate peripheral participation.

A community of practice contains three basic dimensions: domain, community, and practice (Snyder & Wenger, 2010).

- Domain: Those within a community of practice focus on a specific ‘domain’ or interest that they are passionate about, often seen through their identity as a way to express their lifework.

- Community: The community itself and the relationships formed within it constitute the community. Learning and collaboration are necessary in order for all participants to feel a part of the community.

- Practice: Practice is developed by sharing and developing knowledge of practitioners within their domains. Tools, methods, and activities related to learning are all part of the element of practice (p. 118).
All three dimensions are visible within a school setting. Student teachers do not enter the classrooms in isolation; they enter a new world filled with other educators who may or may not support them in their initial attempts to be a part of the school community. Ideally, student teachers become co-learners (Lave & Wenger, 1991) with experienced educators as they develop their knowledge and skills. A community of practice provides a way for student teachers to learn and grow in a reciprocal process between the student teacher and the mentor teacher. Mutual dialogue, both interactive and reflective, is achieved through a mentoring process where dyads communicate, share ideas, and support each other with an exchange of feedback or advice (McLoughlin, Brady, Lee, & Russell, 2007). In sum, a community of practice includes a network of people with shared interests who actively pursue related goals. In other words, a community of practice includes dynamic and not static participants (Sadler, 2014).

Learning to teach involves becoming attuned to different situations of practice (Peressini, Borko, Romagnano, Knuth, & Willis, 2004) and developing new identities (Sumara & Luce-Kapler, 1996). This development has resulted in the transformation of the identities with which student teachers began the teacher-education journey into their new teaching identities. Research has suggested that pre-service teachers bring their own beliefs, values, and attitudes, influenced by their personal experiences, into student teaching. Therefore, the situative perspective (as opposed to the cognitive perspective) has been appropriate to understanding the complexity of both learning to teach and the relationship of the student teacher to his or her mentor teachers.

Lave and Wenger’s (1991) situated learning theory implied that having an experience could alter an opinion or belief about any phenomenon. While student teaching, newcomers learned through immersion in the practices of the community as they rehearsed skills, which prepared them for entry into a community of practice (Schell & Black, 1997). Therefore, the
experience of student teaching can cause changes in how student teachers perceive instruction and classroom management. From this view, situated learning has occurred through the lens of a sociocultural phenomenon rather than in isolation (Buysse, Sparkman, & Wesley, 2003). Lave and Wenger (1991) state,

Learning is a way of being in the social world, not a way of coming to know about it. Learners, like observers more generally, are engaged both in the contexts of their learning and in the broader social world within which these contexts are produced. Without this engagement, there is no learning, and where the proper engagement is sustained, learning will occur. (p. 24)

The underlying assumption of situated learning has been that a person’s experience and the activity of the social world cannot be separated. It can be argued that participation in social activities not only influences, but also defines, the changes in how a person participates in the world (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Therefore, learned teaching methods are embedded in authentic situations such as student teaching.

As previously stated, through situated learning, student teachers learn as active participants in the classroom. The student teacher's role in the classroom has evolved through ongoing negotiations with the mentor teacher. Critical to this role has been the sense of belonging to the community achieved when student teachers view themselves as contributors. This sense of belonging has the potential to bolster confidence in teaching.

As student teachers joined the classroom community of practice, they began on the outside looking in. This “legitimate peripheral participation” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 27) involved beginners (student teachers) who were peripheral in the community of practice but, as novices, they gained experiences (practice teaching) especially tailored to guide them to more centralized, sophisticated participation. Student teachers strove to emulate the practice of others who were considered masters of the communal knowledge and skills (mentor teachers). Situated
learning focused on the relationships that were developed within social situations where learning occurred. Student teachers learned by becoming involved in activities, performing new tasks, and mastering new understandings. These experiences did not take place in isolation but occurred within a broader system of relationships in which they had meaning (Lave & Wenger, 2002). For example, for student teachers, the system of relationships exposed them to members of the teaching profession, more specifically, mentor teachers and other faculty. From this set of referents, student teachers developed their own teaching identities and styles as part of the community of practice. Membership and participation in a community of practice has been the key feature of situated learning and “shapes not only what we do, but also who we are and how we interpret what we do” (Wenger, 1998, p. 4). Student teachers have discovered who they are as teachers while adhering to the goals of the community. In the process, they have learned to adjust themselves within the given social context and with the support of and guidance from a mentor teacher. As Lave and Wenger (1991) pointed out, apprenticeships have encouraged gradual participation and provided a safe environment where trainees can learn and make mistakes. As student teachers have gained teaching experience, they have moved toward more central participation in the classroom.

Because the core of a community (where central participation occurs) can be considered a place of power, negotiations between the student teacher and the mentor teacher have allowed for “possibilities for variation and even intra-community conflict” (Handley, Sturdy, Fincham & Clark, 2006, p. 642). These conflicts have needed to be negotiated if the student teacher were to achieve a sense-of-self as a teacher. The closer the student teacher has moved to full participator, the harder it becomes for the mentor teacher to relinquish control of the classroom. In essence, mentor teachers who have invested in this community can deny full participation to student
teachers if the threat of transforming knowledge or practices has arisen (Carlile, 2004). This might be seen as either constructive or destructive (Chambers & Armour, 2011) for student teachers. As destructive energy has become evident, newcomers might experience difficulties accessing the community of practice. In other words, when the mentor teachers have limited or prevented student teachers from a full range of teaching options, learning has been minimized for the student teachers and their practice teaching has become compromised. Conversely, during circumstances of constructive energy, student teachers have learned from their mentor teachers and moved closer to autonomy in their teaching.

**Student Teachers’ Confidence**

Morehead, Lyman, and Foyle (2008) presented student teaching as the most influential experience for the professional development of future teachers. They acknowledged that this influence has included the impact of and support from the mentor teacher who could encourage and help the student teacher gain confidence. In other words, as the relationship between the student teacher and mentor teacher influenced the student teacher, this influence could in turn affect the teaching confidence of the student teacher.

Although many researchers have studied self-confidence, few have defined the term. Merriam-Webster (2014) defines self-confidence as “confidence in oneself and confidence in one’s abilities”. According to Schunk (1991), “Self-confidence is an individual’s belief that he or she has the ability to produce results, accomplish goals, or perform tasks competently” (p. 209). Although, I used Schunk’s definition of self-confidence in my definition section in Chapter 1, which helped guided my analysis throughout this study, I observed or noted self-stated or self-perceived self-confidence through the eyes of the student teacher, mentor teacher,
and the university supervisor who is also the researcher of this study. This provided a more accurate view of self-confidence as it is through the eyes of the participants of the study.

While studying prospective elementary science teachers’ content knowledge and level of confidence in teaching science, Tairab (2008) defined science teachers’ self-confidence as “the extent to which prospective science teachers believe they have the capacity and the ability to positively impact students’ learning through their ability to demonstrate teaching competencies and skills” (p. 63). A major component in these definitions of self-confidence has been the emphasis on one’s belief in his/her own capacity. As these definitions suggest, self-confidence for a teacher has meant believing that students could learn through his/her guidance.

Norman and Hyland’s (2003) study was one of the few in which student teachers were asked to define their own self-confidence. This study investigated the views of 43 student teachers about the meaning of confidence, the causes for lack of confidence, and factors that increased confidence by using a questionnaire created from findings of previously conducted qualitative studies. The results uncovered student teachers’ varied understandings of confidence. For example, some believed that confidence is the “belief in one’s knowledge and ability,” while others described it as “the belief that others believe in you.” Other definitions included “knowing your strengths and weaknesses” and “not being frightened in a situation” (p. 266). Findings also revealed that student teachers’ bases for lack of confidence included:

- Newness of the task of teaching
- Self-doubt
- Fear of not being accepted
- Being afraid of not succeeding
Basically, the lack of teaching experience, unfamiliarity with material taught in the class, or even student teachers’ attitudes toward the topic they were teaching might have negative affect on their confidence levels. Conversely, factors that might have increased their confidence included working with mentor teachers and receiving the following elements:

- Positive feedback
- Support
- Encouragement or reassurance while teaching and planning lessons

Because it has seemed that increased confidence for student teachers occurs with support and encouragement, mentor teacher support has been crucial to the student teacher’s confidence while teaching.

The Mentor Teacher's Role in Student Teachers’ Confidence

As student teachers move away from the peripheral and into the central role of teacher, many factors have influenced their confidence. Overall, the personality of the student teacher and the conditions of the practicum experience, such as time spent with the mentor teacher, have played essential roles in the formation of student teacher confidence. The pairing of personality and situation has influenced the student teacher’s classroom experience and effectiveness (Aydin et al., 2012). The following section reviews literature that has addressed specific factors that have to potential to affect the interplay between the mentor teacher and the student teacher and, in turn, student teacher confidence. They are:

- Feedback
- Trust
- Communication
- Classroom environment
• Constant negotiation or power struggles
• Sharing practical knowledge

Lave and Wenger’s (1991) apprenticeship construct informed understanding of the relationship between the mentor and the student teacher in this study. Related to this construct, the mentor teacher is the master who is a full member of the community, while the student teacher is the novice who is a peripheral member of the community desiring to develop his/her own identity during the student teaching process. All of the following are part of the master-novice relationship:

• How much authority or classroom control the student teacher has
• How the student teacher moves from peripheral to full participation
• How negotiation influences the student teacher’s learning and personal identity
• How the student teacher and mentor teacher communicate with each other (Kang, 2012)

Student teachers have considered their mentor teachers the most important contributors to their teacher preparation programs because of their significant guidance in both pedagogical and content knowledge throughout student teaching. Although the mentor teachers’ support and encouragement have been crucial to the student teacher’s confidence and success in the classroom, this relationship may nevertheless, have been perceived as a limitation to the student teaching experience instead of a benefit. The studies reported below explored both the positive and negative influences student teachers perceived from their mentor teachers with respect to the six factors noted in the research.

Feedback

Within a community of practice, feedback forms the basis for on-going critical reflection. Examining current teaching and understanding it within a domain have expand the knowledge of
the community and contribute to its future development (Han, 1995; Hatton & Smith, 1995). This community can then strive to draw on the collective experience and understanding of individuals within it, analyzing practices to improve and advance its knowledge base and practices (Daniel, Auhl & Hastings, 2013). As members of the community, student teachers depend on and even welcome advice and feedback from their mentor teachers as they work toward full participation in the classroom.

Within this framework, mentor teachers are seen as having a great deal of influence over and responsibility for guiding student teachers. Although giving constructive criticism has largely defined the work of cooperating teachers, the quality of that feedback can be problematic, as seen in the two studies that follow. Kahan, Sinclair, Saucier Jr., and Caiozzi (2003) studied six mentor teachers who utilized think aloud techniques for providing feedback to student teachers. Researchers found that a majority of the verbal feedback from mentor teachers to student teachers seemed to focus solely on the technical aspects of teaching, and that these aspects often dominated the conversation. In addition, Lemma (1993) found through interviews, journaling, and audiotaped conversations of a cooperating teacher and a student teacher, that the mentor teacher preferred giving feedback through informal interaction rather than more formal written feedback, which could have been viewed as more challenging and time consuming. Although these studies by Kahan, et al., (2003) and Lemma (1993) revealed that mentor teachers had provided a great deal of feedback to their student teachers, that feedback tended to be narrow and technical, and feedback was rare that promoted deep reflection on the student teachers’ teaching abilities.

According to Morehead, Lyman, and Foyle (2008), effective feedback has been one of the most beneficial ways for mentor teachers to discuss the instructional performances of their
student teachers while also building positive relationships between the student teacher and the mentor teacher, but that feedback has the potential to inflate or deflate the confidence of the student teacher. To avoid overwhelming discouraging the student teachers, the amount of feedback the student teacher receives should be appropriate, and the focus should be on just a few practices to sustain or change. Careless, poorly focused feedback can cause them to become less confident in themselves as teachers. By offering student teachers specific classroom management and/or teaching strategies through positive feedback and constructive criticism, mentor teachers can help them identify and construct rich teaching situations.

In a study of student teacher perceptions of mentor teacher practice by Sayeski and Paulsen (2012), approximately 400 student teachers, over a three-year period, completed open-ended online evaluations of their mentor teachers at the conclusion of their student teaching experiences. The mentoring practice identified as contributing positively to the student teacher experience by 87% of the student teachers was specific constructive criticism. These student teachers appreciated receiving positive feedback, which helped them improve their performance in the classroom and increased their confidence in teaching. They also valued the honesty and respect they received from their mentors while the feedback was delivered. Sixteen percent of the student teacher participants viewed varied modes of feedback as helpful, preferring written over verbal feedback so they could more fully reflect on the comments from their mentor teachers at a later time.

Open-ended questionnaires administered online to 201 student teacher candidates invited their consideration of the ethics of their mentor teachers during their teaching practice in a study conducted by Atjonen (2012). These student teachers valued feedback that was honest, balanced, and included boosts to the student teachers’ confidence and development. However, critical
feedback and guidance were also welcomed and considered necessary for student teachers’ professional growth. Additionally, Ambrosetti (2010) found 43% of student teacher participants preferred that mentor teachers provide guidance, set an example, be available, model teaching strategies, and give feedback. Summary of online survey data from this study revealed that these student teachers even expected to learn about confidence from their mentor teachers.

Russell and Russell (2011) found from open-ended questionnaires administered to nine cooperating teachers that student teachers valued a supportive and reassuring mentor teacher who provided advice and guidance without being critical. Likewise, these cooperating teachers believed that student teachers appreciated observations accompanied by effective feedback and constructive criticism. In addition to providing guidance and effective feedback, these cooperating teachers believed they had modeled good teaching practices by providing student teachers with ideas about the curriculum, teaching strategies, and lesson planning. Nevins, Stanulis, and Russell (2000) postulated that positive communication, with effective listening, led to building trust between the two teachers. In part, engaging in this kind of communication encouraged the mentor teachers to model professional attitudes towards students, parents, and colleagues. In sum, researchers have viewed providing effective feedback as a vital communication skill that contributed to student teachers’ confidence, as they became future teachers.

Hobson (2002) found through interview and questionnaire data that student teachers’ views about teaching and their own teaching capabilities were highly dependent upon their mentor teachers and the relationships formed during student teaching. However, even the most enthusiastic student teachers could develop debilitating negative attitudes because of the student teaching experience. Specifically, these discouraged pre-service teachers disclosed complaints
about or limitations to the student teacher/mentor teacher relationship such as lack of communication or of relevant feedback. Similarly, student teachers complained about a lack of advice offered relating to classroom issues like lesson planning or classroom management. Conversely, mentors who communicated, modeled, encouraged, and gave effective feedback were highly valued by student teachers and perceived as helping student teachers feel more confident about what was expected of them while teaching.

Weasmer and Woods (2003) interviewed 28 mentor teachers, one of whom stated that sometimes you have to let student teachers be “baptized by fire. You can’t explain it. You just have to let them do it and find out that sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn’t work” (p. 176). Weasmer and Woods, however, concluded that abandoning the student teacher at a time when explicit guidance was necessary was unacceptable because the mentor teacher's presence was a vital part of that role. Likewise, questionnaire data from Ekiz’s (2006) study of 55 student teachers concluded that allowing student teachers to sink or float on their own opposed the concept of mentoring. Such a practice caused student teachers to rely on trial and error rather than draw from the veteran teachers’ expertise and feedback. In particular, the absence of mentoring became a challenge for student teachers when it came to classroom management. In this domain, mentor teachers might have left the classroom, come back after the lesson, and asked how it went. Ekiz’s results showed that in order for the student teacher to teach the class effectively, the mentor teacher had to remain in the classroom to get to know the student teacher’s teaching style. Nevertheless, some student teachers in Ekiz’s study disagreed, stating that having their mentors stay in the classroom while they were teaching led to increased anxiety. For these student teachers, lack of confidence was associated with mentor teachers interrupting and critiquing them while they were teaching. These student teachers felt their mentor teachers
did not trust them and made them feel more like visitors than co-workers. This contributed to the student teachers’ feeling lack of control over the students. When the mentor teacher interrupted the student teacher’s lesson, the students were perceived to question the student teacher’s role in classroom management and instruction. Although in Ekiz’ study, student teachers views about the mentor teachers’ appearances in the classroom varied, all agreed it was imperative that student teachers receive support, direction, and nurturing through effective feedback in order to grow professionally and develop confidence as teachers.

**Trust**

In addition to receiving timely and constructive feedback, student teachers’ feeling a sense of security and connection to the mentor teachers’ classrooms and students has been deemed essential. This sense of having a safe place in which to practice planned instruction and classroom management as well as to voice concerns is part of a trust-building cycle that significantly improves the student teacher’s confidence while student teaching. Forty cooperating teachers and 78 English teacher candidates who participated in focus groups conducted by Rajuan, Beijaard, and Verloop (2007) described a safe haven environment as one in which mentor teachers refrained from interrupting instruction, reserving feedback to be shared during planned debriefing sessions. Other student teacher respondents from the same study reported feeling more respect based on the degree to which the mentor teacher conveyed confidence in the student teacher’s performance to the extent that the student teacher saw his or her role as a partner or equal. Rajuan et al. (2007) concluded that this relationship-oriented trust provided student teachers with uninhibited learning opportunities in safe environments. According to the participating student teachers, trust meant that mentor teachers did not interrupt the student teachers’ lessons when they were teaching. Refraining from interrupting not only created an
atmosphere of trust and support but also allowed the student teacher freedom to explore his/her teaching style, which increased self-confidence.

*Communication*

A relationship with open communication has contributed to rapport and helped student teachers feel more confident in working with their mentor teachers. This level of communication can, in turn, enhance professional learning. For example, findings from Hamman et al. (2006) showed that the quality of the interaction between the student teacher and mentor teacher might affect many factors that led to a positive student teaching experience. One hundred and twenty student teachers completed the Learning to Teach Questionnaire, analysis of which yielded outcomes associated with cooperating teacher and student teacher interactions during instruction. Results showed that open communication between the student teacher and mentor teacher led the student teacher to have:

- Greater enthusiasm for teaching
- A wider variety of teaching strategies in his/her toolbox
- Better classroom management
- Overall positive beliefs about teaching and instruction

In addition, Hamman et al. (2006) indicated that purposeful interactions between the mentor teacher and the student teacher had helped the student teachers effectively teach content while increasing their self-confidence as teachers.

Having linked supportive communication between student teachers and their mentors to increased confidence in teaching, I took a closer look at what defines supportive communication. Graves (2010) explored the mentoring relationships of student teachers and their mentor teachers through interviews, observations, and journals (both reflective and dialogue) of four student
teachers and seven mentor teachers. Graves established three related themes: expectations, communication, and time. First, student teachers had entered the teacher education program with expectations of learning specific skills and having relationships with their mentor teachers. Lesson planning and classroom management were the two areas for growth most important to student teachers. However, while the student teachers had expected to learn how to plan lessons and implement classroom management techniques, the cooperating teachers had tended to expect the student teachers to be able to interact and build relationships with students. When expectations of both parties had been met, the mentoring relationships were considered positive and supportive, but if the two sets of expectations were not met, the relationships were considered distant and unsupportive.

Second, in Graves (2010) study, communication between student teachers and their mentor teachers (or lack of it) was found to influence the mentoring relationship. Sustaining communication could be difficult or impossible if neither took responsibility it. Student teachers expected mentor teachers to communicate with them, and visa-versa. One way to increase communication was through the use of dialogue journals. Graves’ (2010) study showed potential advantages of mentor teacher and student teacher dialogue through journals, but problems occurred if journaling replaced verbal communication. No matter what type of dialogue occurred, the relationship between the student teacher and mentor teacher appeared to benefit from both verbal and written communication.

Last, according to Graves (2010), student teacher participants felt that spending quality time with their mentor teachers was associated with to better relationships and more learning opportunities. Participants from the study reported they felt they needed more one-on-one time with their mentor teachers. They wanted time built into the day to just sit and talk with their
mentor teachers about upcoming lessons or classroom management strategies. Regardless of how much time they were able to spend with their mentor teachers, using dialogue journals enabled student teachers to write down their thoughts and questions for reference in later face-to-face discussion with their mentor teachers. They reported this had helped keep the lines of communication open when time was limited.

Student teachers perceive mentor teacher demonstration of support for student teachers as associated with the amount of communication they initiate. Talvitie, Peltokallio, and Mannisto (2000) discovered while reading and coding student teachers’ journals that communication had lagged between the student teacher and his or her mentor teacher when the mentor teacher did not invest enough time or interest in guiding and attending to the student teachers’ lessons. This lack of communication on the part of the mentor teachers mattered because student teachers in this study believed that feedback and conversation were important to helping them grow as professionals. Furthermore, these student teachers felt that the mentor teachers' failure to give practical advice or critique lessons showed disrespect toward the student teachers. These findings showed that interactions between the student teacher and the mentor teacher contributed not only to the student teachers’ learning, but also to their perceived self-worth and self-confidence in teaching.

Classroom Environment

Along with providing effective feedback, building trust, and participating in purposeful interactions, the mentor teacher must also consistently exhibit professional behavior by creating a positive learning environment (Morehead, Lyman, & Foyle, 2008). Student teachers observe routines and procedures including daily rituals, classroom management, differentiated instruction, and specific and general ideas of teaching content as practiced by their mentor
teachers. A qualitative study by Nilsson and van Driel (2010) uncovered that student teachers felt that observing their mentor teachers and participating in discussions afterward were vital to the relationship and contributed to their own success in the classroom, which was equated with self-confidence in teaching. The bond between the two was strengthened as the mentor teacher shared artifacts and tools of teaching, such as lesson plans, handouts, timelines, and specific lesson topics. Giving student teachers access to lesson materials and resources helped them feel more like teachers.

*Sharing Practical Knowledge*

Another role of mentor teachers has been to articulate practical knowledge in the presence of their student teachers. Zanting, Verloop, and Vermunt (2001) demonstrated this need using concept mapping and sentence completion. Thirty-five student teachers from a teacher-training institute in the Netherlands participated in sentence completion and concept mapping tasks that enabled comparison of student teacher and mentor teacher thoughts about their teaching. Student teachers and their mentor teachers created concept maps comparing their practical knowledge and theories. Student teachers indicated that using this tool provided insight into the thoughts that their mentor teachers had concerning their own teaching. When student teachers understood these thoughts, they were able to apply them to their own lessons.

The sentence completion task was a structured, written way to gain information from the participants pertaining to classroom management. The advantage of the sentence completion task was that it made similarities and differences in classroom management beliefs visible. This type of understanding helped student teachers to recognize the connections between their mentors’ teaching and classroom management beliefs and their own. This deeper understanding
of the mentor teachers' management helped them determine which style worked for them as they taught.

Studies of mentor teachers have also considered the sharing of practical knowledge using critical reflection. Studies of critical reflection have focused on topics such as the student teachers’ own experiences, their mentor’s practical knowledge, and applications of theory (Meijer, Zanting, & Verloop, 2002; Zanting, Verloop, & Vermunt, 2001; Zanting, Verloop, & Vermunt, 2003). Through critical reflection, the mentor teacher typically acted as a guide who shared practical knowledge with his/her intern and as a moral supporter who created a collaborative partnership between the two. Hence, the mentor teacher acted as a partner to create a more complete picture of the teaching craft. Accessing this complete picture supported the student teacher's development of expertise and contributed to his or her increased confidence.

_Mentor Teachers' Senses of Power or Influence_

Several threads in the literature examined mentor teachers' senses of power over student teachers. Power has been defined in many ways. Many researchers have described power as an individual’s ability to influence another person. However, individuals have not always needed to use their power to be considered powerful. For example, a mentor teacher has often not needed to give directives constantly to the student teacher to be perceived as powerful, but rather has needed only the ability to modify the student teacher’s behavior if needed. Dahl (1986) had a slightly different view, proposing that a person had power over another if person A can get person B “to do something that person B would not otherwise do” (p. 38). Therefore, power may have been in play in any situation where the student teacher has changed actions, beliefs, or intentions in response to the mentor teacher during the student teaching practicum.
However, Foucault (1980) argued that power could not be separated from knowledge. In essence, those with knowledge (the mentor teachers) have power over those who need or want knowledge (the student teachers). For the purpose of this review, I have accepted Foucault’s definition. Although the mentor teacher may not have realized his/her sense of power in the classroom, the student teacher has often played a submissive role. At first, some mentor teachers have had a difficult time handing over their classroom to one who was less experienced. In reality, many student teachers have not always been confident enough to handle the responsibility. Certainly, during student teaching, power or negotiation has been a continual give and take between the student teacher and mentor teacher.

Although student teachers have acknowledged the power held by their mentors, they have still expected their mentor teachers to help them become confident in their own teaching throughout the student teaching semester. In a study by Rajuan, Beijaard, and Verloop (2007), the student teachers envisioned their mentor teachers as guides who would share information about ways to motivate students, create interesting and creative lesson plans, and improve management to prevent discipline issues. The student teachers needed their mentors to trust them and to be available and open-minded about their different teaching styles and ideas, and, overall, to appreciate their efforts. The student teachers felt that these factors allowed them to learn and develop their own teaching styles. When unexpected behaviors on the part of mentor teachers occurred, student teachers felt their cooperating teachers did not believe in them and their confidence while teaching suffered.

Managing the power held by a mentor teacher has been challenging. Atjonen (2012) found that some cooperating teachers mishandled power, always wanting their ideas to be implemented, giving little to no feedback, and criticizing student teachers. These behaviors have
been interpreted by student teachers in different ways. For example, some student teachers have viewed more communication with their mentor teachers as supportive, as when the mentor teacher helped with classroom management or gave the student teacher a teaching idea that might help the students in the classroom understand the lesson better. Others saw such communication in a negative light, feeling that comments from the mentor teachers had interrupted the flow of the lesson or indicated they had made a teaching error during the lesson. Student teachers were sensitive to the idea that the mentors thought they could not handle the classroom management side of teaching. Clearly, acknowledging the sense of power and need for negotiation with the mentor teacher has played an important role in the student teaching experience and influenced student teacher perceptions on their own self-confidences in teaching.

In a study of 12 student teachers and their mentors, Anderson (2007) found that student teachers perceived mentor teachers as having significant influence ($M = 4.16, SD = .757$) over their development as teachers. During interviews, these student teachers frequently mentioned that their mentor teachers would be evaluating them at the end of the semester. Student teachers felt they should copy what the mentor teachers did in class and not try to change things for fear of receiving low evaluation scores or even worse, not receiving recommendation letters for future teaching positions. The power or influence of cooperating teachers had caused some student teachers to imitate their mentor teachers instead of trying new techniques and strategies. One example provided by student teachers was that a student teacher had chosen an idea to add to the lesson but had decided not to share that idea for fear of creating tension with the mentor teacher. Anderson found that student teachers wanted to participate in lesson planning and classroom management decisions as part of their learning experiences, but mentor teachers had experienced difficulty letting go and allowing that to happen.
Anderson (2007) also examined the role of power held by the cooperating teacher over the student teacher by administering the Teaching Perspectives Inventory twice during the student teaching semester to 56 student teachers and 48 mentor teachers. Although mentor teachers’ teaching styles might have differed from what student teachers learned in their education courses or what they actually believed, student teachers might still have been afraid of not teaching like the mentors. One important finding was that mentor teachers had a sense of hidden power in their classrooms that had caused student teachers to feel pressure to conform to their mentors’ teaching styles as a way to please them. These findings conflicted with the belief that respect for individual growth in the context of a trusting relationship must have occurred in order for student teachers to develop teaching competencies during the student teaching experience.

As shown in Anderson’s study, power has played a major role in building and increasing confidence in student teachers. Studies presented earlier reflected views of both student teachers and mentor teachers regarding the confidence of the student teacher and the influence of the mentor teacher. However, the studies in the next section separated these two. First, studies by Russell and Russell (2011) and McNay and Graham (2007) discussed findings about how mentor teachers envisioned their contribution to student teacher success, and then studies by Sayeski and Paulsen (2012) and Goh et al. (2009) revealed what student teachers thought their mentor teachers had contributed.

**How Mentor Teachers Believe They Contribute to Student Teachers’ Confidence**

Mentor teachers have believed they contribute to student teachers’ confidence through interaction that occurs while modeling and providing guidance, as seen in the research of Russell and Russell (2011). This study investigated the role of the cooperating teachers as mentors to
student teachers through a qualitative lens, as cooperating teachers answered open-ended questions during focus groups. These mentors believed that they should:

- Provide time for authentic dialogue
- Listen to their student teachers’ concerns
- Share their pedagogical knowledge
- Listen to their student teachers to acquire knowledge about current teaching trends
- Share ideas and experiences that allowed student teachers the opportunity to observe accomplishments and errors in teaching
- Serve as role models for student teachers
- Facilitate and encourage the student teachers’ growth and success

Russell and Russell (2011) also discovered that these student teachers believed they gained autonomy as the mentor teachers gradually gave them opportunities to build confidence in their own teaching while providing an environment where student teachers were not afraid to take risks. When student teachers had imitated their mentors’ instructional behaviors, the mentors felt confident about teaching and therefore had become effective role models. In addition, mentor teachers believed that their modeling good teaching practices helped the student teachers shift from mimicking them to more independent and reflective practices of teaching, which had contributed to student teachers’ confidence as a teacher. Overall, these mentor teachers had seen themselves as helpers, listeners, facilitators, encouragers, and supporters who shared their pedagogical knowledge through experiences and expertise.

McNay and Graham (2007) designed a questionnaire, set up focus groups, and interviewed cooperating teachers to gain insight into how their visions and beliefs influenced their work with student teachers. Comments of advice from the mentor teachers included: “Encourage student teachers to take risks,” “Offer support and encouragement,” and “Build their
confidence” (p. 230). McNay and Graham viewed the mentor teachers as accepting responsibility for the professional growth of their student teachers. The Russell and Russell (2011) research echoed those findings by showing that cooperating teachers believed they should provide guidance and support by gradually releasing responsibility to help the student teachers build confidence in their own teaching. In addition, the cooperating teachers had wanted to share their knowledge and pedagogy for teaching and gain insight about current teaching styles from their student teachers. Therefore, the research led one to believe that cooperating teachers understood how critical their role was to the professional growth, confidence, and development of future teachers.

What Student Teachers Think About Mentor Teachers’ Contributions

Commonly research has demonstrated that student teachers believed their mentor teachers were the most important contributors to their teacher preparation program. Weiss and Weiss (2001) agreed that “cooperating teachers are the most powerful influence on the quality of the student teaching experience and often shape what student teachers learn by the way they mentor” (p. 134). As shown in research cited earlier (Ambrosetti, 2010; Rajuan et al., 2008; Sayeski & Paulsen, 2012), student teachers believed mentor teachers contributed to their success by modeling the following:

- Effective teaching and classroom management strategies
- Differentiating instruction
- Ways to motivate students for increased student learning
- Confidence while teaching

Student teachers had learned not only from their mentor teachers, but also were given valuable resources, as seen in Sayeski and Paulsen’s (2012) study of 389 student teachers and
their evaluations of their mentor teachers. In addition to wanting shared resources and ideas on lesson planning, instructional strategies, and classroom management techniques, these student teachers had desired time, effective and continual feedback, and overall professional support from their mentor teachers. The student teachers shared that this kind of support had been demonstrated when their mentor teachers were open to their ideas, appreciative of their efforts, and willing to give them an opportunity to teach without interruption. In addition, Taskin (2006) interviewed 32 student teachers, and Turley, Powers and Nakai (2006) gave 119 novice teachers a teacher confidence survey, and both found that pre-service teacher confidence increased or decreased depending on the approval and support or the lack of support provided by their mentor teachers.

With this in mind, Goh, Wong, Choy, and Tan (2009) collected data from questionnaires completed by 139 student teachers and 235 cooperating teachers. By the end of the student teaching semester, the student teachers stated that help they had obtained from their cooperating teachers raised their confidence levels in teaching. The student teachers felt that their cooperating teachers had been approachable, willing to listen and help, prompt with feedback and suggestions for improvement, and fair in their assessments of the student teachers. Support from the mentor teachers was deemed effective in helping student teachers gain confidence and feel prepared for the teaching profession. Data revealed that what student teachers learned could have had a positive or negative affect on the student teacher/mentor teacher relationship.

Sayeski and Paulsen (2012) also found both positive and negative views of student teachers about the mentor teacher/student teacher relationship. On the positive end, student teachers had appreciated frequent feedback with encouragement and specific suggestions for improvement. Furthermore, student teachers had appreciated their mentors’ modeling effective
teaching practices and classroom management strategies. Sayeski and Paulsen (2012) found that student teachers valued “being treated as ‘an equal’” (p. 125) in the classroom. In sum, effective feedback, modeling, and being treated as a co-worker, had contributed positively to the student teachers’ practicum experience.

Conversely, negative reactions to the mentor teacher/student teacher relationship found by Sayeski and Paulsen (2012) occurred when mentor teachers planned at the last minute or failed to include the student teacher in the planning process. In these cases, the student teacher had felt lost and unorganized while trying to decide what to help with or what to teach at the last minute. Because the student teacher learned from observing the mentor teacher, this type of haphazard lesson planning had hindered the student teacher’s own view of planning. These student teachers expressed the need for frequent feedback and identified a preference for different types of feedback, appreciating not only verbal, but also written, feedback. They expressed that often when a mentor teacher had given verbal feedback to a student teacher, that person had felt anxious and, therefore, had not processed everything heard. However, when the mentor teacher wrote the feedback down, the student teacher had time to re-read and process the information. In essence, these student teachers had learned from the practicum experience regardless of whether they received positive or negative feedback from their mentor teachers. Although there are studies that have reported increased or decreased confidence for student teachers during the student teaching semester in relation to the relationship their mentor teachers and perceptions of the student teaching experience, none has examined the relationship between teaching confidence and the students' position within a community of practice. Research has shown that there have been both positive and negative reactions to the mentor teacher/student teacher relationship noted by student teachers. Although student teachers, in general, believed
that they had learned from and received support and resources from their mentor teachers, they also believed mentor teachers needed to be approachable in order for student teaching to be successful. When relationships were close, student teachers’ confidence in teaching had increased.

Summary

Clearly, many factors influence student teacher confidence throughout the student teaching semester. To form a better understanding of student teachers and the factors that influence their confidence while teaching, one must gain insight into how these participants interacted with their surroundings. Overall, the mentor teacher and the student teaching experience have seemed to play an essential role in the formation of teacher confidence as student teachers learn from a contextualized experience (the student teaching semester) in which they are completely and actively participating (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Consequently, creating a positive relationship between a student teacher and the mentor teacher has contributed to growth of the novice teacher. Extensive preparation in shaping and molding student teachers by mentors’ modeling, guidance, and continual feedback has created future teachers who are not only well-prepared to teach but also confident in their ability to positively impact student learning. Understanding this phenomenon could lead to improved student teaching experiences and possibly help decrease attrition of our future teachers.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides a rationale for the design of the study based on the problem and research question and describes the data collection tools, the research setting and participants, the data collection procedures, and the methods for analysis of the data. This qualitative collective case study examined changes in student teachers’ confidence in teaching, with attention to the factors that influenced those changes. Student teaching is crucial in helping a future teacher develop skills needed to become a successful teacher while actively participating in a classroom setting. The research questions guiding this study in its particular case study context were:

1. How do student teachers perceive their confidence in teaching during student teaching?
   
   (a) How did student teacher confidence in teaching change across both student teaching placements?
   
   (b) To what did student teachers attribute changes in their self-perceived confidence in teaching?

2. How did student teachers believe their mentor teachers influenced their confidence in teaching during the student teaching placements?

3. How do mentor teachers perceive their student teacher’s confidence in teaching during student teaching?
   
   (a) How did mentor teachers perceive their respective student teachers’ changes in teaching confidence during the student teaching placement?

   (b) To what factors did mentor teachers’ attribute these perceived changes in their respective student teachers’ teaching self-confidence?

   (c) How did mentor teachers perceive their own influence/power on these changes?

Research Design

Case study research offers a thick, rich description of a phenomenon situated in real life that may play a role in advancing a field’s knowledge base that quantitative data cannot provide
(Hancock & Algozzine, 2006; Merriam, 1998, 2009). Stake (1995) believes that case study approach should be used when researchers want to understand more about a particular program or group of people, noting their similarities and differences, hearing their stories, and obtaining wisdom about a particular phenomenon through interviews, observations, and study of documents. Yin (2009) agreed that if a researcher wanted to explain a phenomenon or circumstance extensively, then a case study method would be appropriate. For the purpose of this study, a collective case study approach (Stake, 2000, 2005) was followed in order to gain a detailed understanding and insight into the experiences of five student teachers, looking specifically at their teaching confidence and the factors associated with it. According to Yin (2009), a collective case study approach occurs when a researcher examines more than one case study. First, a detailed description of each study is presented, followed by themes within the case (within case analysis) and across cases (cross-case analysis) (see Chapter 4), with a conclusion of what was learned from the analysis (see Chapter 5). Within this case study, descriptive and holistic evidence was sought through student teacher interviews, mentor teacher interviews, student teacher observations, student teacher/mentor teacher dialogue journals, and student teacher clear and unclear windows. As suggested by Stake (2000), this study followed a descriptive research design that presented a comprehensive description of a natural phenomenon where listening to the voices of both the student teachers and their mentor teachers provided data to understand changes in the self-confidence of student teachers.

Student teachers acquire “situated learning,” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 34) or more specifically, the knowledge, skills, and the experiences they need to perform independently in the classroom by engaging in teaching in a supportive school setting. Student teachers become “legitimate peripheral” participants (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 29) as they enter a community of
practice with a goal of full participation. As student teachers begin their practicum, first observing, and then participating in teaching, they become absorbed into the culture of practice. This is evident as student teachers slowly begin to engage more in the teaching process while learning from someone with more expertise, such as their mentor teacher. Becoming overwhelmed with teaching and implementing classroom management tends to influence student teachers’ confidence as they move closer to becoming the sole teacher in the classroom. In addition, this process of becoming part of a community of practice can become difficult, as during this process, there is often a power struggle between the student and the mentor teacher that can cause tension and conflict as the mentor teacher sets boundaries, leading to confidence changes for the student teacher.

Context and Participants

The sites for data collection for this study were four schools located in a metropolitan area of north central Texas. All four of the schools were in the same school district and served students from kindergarten through fifth grade. The student population for each school ranged from 450 to 800 with a staff population ranging from 45 to 60. The school with the lowest student population had almost 60% White students, while the other three schools had 50% to 70% Hispanic students. This district was chosen for this study because I was the university supervisor of the student teachers at these schools. I live in close proximity to this district, and that was taken into consideration when the director of clinical practice placed me to supervise student teachers at these four schools.

The participants for this study included five student teachers and ten mentor teachers. Two of the student teachers were EC-6 Generalist majors, while the other three were EC-6 Generalist majors also earning EC-12 ESL endorsement. All five student teachers were in their
The aforementioned participants all entered the student teaching semester having met the following two admission conditions of the program. All had been formally admitted to teacher education by having a minimum grade point average of 2.75 in all teacher education courses and all had completed 60 or more coursework hours. During the first semester of the yearlong placement (Professional Development School 1 or PDS1), the student teachers had spent a part of each week as teaching assistants in classrooms in the assigned schools while concurrently enrolled in teaching methods classes offered either at the teaching site or at the university.
During the second semester (PDS2), students were based at an assigned school with an assigned mentor teacher and were supported by a university-assigned supervisor while engaged in an actual classroom teaching experience as required by the state’s definition of “student teaching.” Four out of the five student teachers started the student teaching semester at a primary grade level (K-2), one began in an intermediate grade level (third grade), and they all moved after seven weeks to an intermediate grade (3-5) classroom within the same school where they first student taught.

The student teaching experience (PDS2) is a 14-week school based experience supervised by a certified mentor teacher and a university supervisor. In Spring 2014, 148 students participated in this student teaching program. All student teachers from this study were placed in locations according to their content area preparation in elementary education. Placement considerations included the number and location of classrooms that were available during their student teaching semester and the mentor teachers who volunteered to work with them. Student teachers were able to request a preferred geographical area for their student teaching placement by listing the top three districts of interest. The director of clinical practice and the district human resource department made the final student teacher placement decisions. Student teachers assumed the full teaching responsibilities for a minimum of ten consecutive days per seven-week rotation upon mutual agreement of the student teacher, mentor teacher, and the university supervisor. As noted, all of the student teacher participants in this study changed assignments (subject and/or grade level) at the end of the first seven weeks. Therefore, all student teachers had two mentor teachers for a period of seven weeks each. This practice of placement with two mentor teachers is common in the program but not required by the state.
I met with the student teachers before the start of the student teaching practicum in order to discuss the study and to begin to form relationships. Forming a relationship early creates trust between the researcher and the participants (Morrow, 2005). During the first student teacher meeting held one week before school began, I asked each student teacher to participate in my study and then informed them of the purpose, procedures, and timeline. All five student teachers, and a sixth, who withdrew early in the semester, accepted the assurances associated with informed consent. They also completed demographic surveys that included items such as ethnicity, age, and degree of enrollment in the program (see Appendix A).

During the first and second placements, all ten mentor teachers were white females who had experience working with student teachers in the past. Tables 2 and 3 below show the first and second placement mentor teacher’s names (all pseudonyms), ages, grade levels, and years of teaching. I entered the mentor teachers into the tables according to years of teaching experience, from the least to the most years of teaching.

Table 2

First Placement Mentor Teacher Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Grade Taught</th>
<th>Years Teaching</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Andrews</td>
<td>40+</td>
<td>1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>11-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Sproles</td>
<td>40+</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>16-20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Copeland</td>
<td>40+</td>
<td>1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>16-20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Bridges</td>
<td>40+</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>20+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Waldrop</td>
<td>40+</td>
<td>3&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>20+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I approached the mentor teachers of the student teachers who had consented to participate in the study and asked them to participate in my study during our first meeting on their campuses. After each mentor teacher had provided informed consent, each filled out a survey similar to those completed by the student teachers except for an additional item about years of teaching experience. (See Appendix A for a copy of the student teacher demographic survey and Appendix B for the mentor teacher demographic survey.)

Data Collection Procedures

This study represented four out of five of Merriam’s (1998) characteristics of qualitative research, which include (a) an emic or insider’s perspective from the participants, (b) a researcher collecting and analyzing the data, (c) fieldwork, and (d) a final product that is richly descriptive. Although Merriam also discusses an inductive research strategy, my study adheres to a deductive strategy as my theoretical framework guides the study through the eyes of Lave and Wenger’s situated learning theory while looking at student teachers confidence within the community of practice. My adherence to these characteristics was shaped as follows. In planning this study, I used my eyes as a former administrator and current student teacher supervisor to view the phenomenon of change in self-confidence of student teachers from their points of view. Seeking the emic perspective required me to obtain an insiders’ view of the student teachers’

Table 3

Second Placement Mentor Teacher Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Grade Taught</th>
<th>Years Teaching</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Coonce</td>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>4th</td>
<td>6-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Ruffin</td>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>6-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Griffith</td>
<td>40+</td>
<td>4th</td>
<td>11-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Young</td>
<td>40+</td>
<td>4th</td>
<td>20+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Ganzer</td>
<td>40+</td>
<td>5th</td>
<td>20+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
teaching experience. By collecting data from both observations and interviews, I was able to clarify points by probing in order to gain a clearer understanding of the phenomenon. Fieldwork was part of this study, as I acted as the supervisor of the student teacher participants, a role that required a minimum of four 45-minute observations along with pre and post observation conferences across the semester. As Merriam suggested, I observed and talked with the student teachers and mentor teachers in the school setting, which helped me understand the environment. Different from Merriam’s explanation of fieldwork, I have a relationship with the participants of the study, as I am the student teacher supervisor. As I collected and analyzed data deductively, I hoped to find data to match my theory of situated learning in relation to student teacher confidence. This study also focused on seeking meaning from richly descriptive words and pictures from student teacher observations, mentor teacher and student teacher interviews, dialogue journals between the student teachers and their mentor teachers, and clear and unclear windows from the student teachers. The sample size for this study was relatively small because of the intense concentration required to construct meaning from data collected in multiple ways to address the same phenomenon. However, a small sample size allowed me to build rapport with the participants in their environments.

I employed the data collection strategies in a patterned way. First, when I visited the schools, I talked with the mentor teachers to obtain their perspectives for understanding how the student teachers were adapting to the school environments and students. Then, after these brief conversations, I asked the mentor teachers interview questions for this study, which occurred twice during the semester, once at the beginning of their student teachers’ placement and again at the end. After conducting each mentor teacher interview, I observed the student teacher and immediately following, I interviewed the student teacher for the purpose of this study. Finally, as
a student teacher supervisor as well as researcher, I talked with the student teachers about their lessons. This occurred directly after each student teacher interview.

Besides interviews and observations, five times throughout the practicum, the student teachers completed the clear and unclear windows: once before student teaching, twice during the first placement and twice during the second placement.

Table 4

**Summary of Data Collection by Weeks**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Data Collection Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 0</td>
<td>Jan. 9th: Student teacher and university supervisor (who is also the researcher) meeting prior to student teaching</td>
<td>Collected consent forms, demographic surveys, and student teachers’ clear and unclear windows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>Week of Jan. 13th: Informal meeting with student teacher and mentor teacher</td>
<td>Collected consent forms and demographic surveys from mentor teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 4</td>
<td>Week of Feb. 3rd</td>
<td>Observed student teachers and interviewed both student teachers and mentor teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 5</td>
<td>Week of Feb. 9th</td>
<td>Collected student teachers’ clear and unclear windows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 6</td>
<td>Week of Feb. 16th</td>
<td>Observed student teachers and interviewed both student teachers and mentor teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 7</td>
<td>Week of Feb. 23rd  (last week of rotation 1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 8</td>
<td>Week of March 2nd: Meet with new mentor teachers/student teacher</td>
<td>Collected consent forms and demographic sheets from new mentor teachers and student teachers’ clear and unclear windows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Week of March 9th: SPRING BREAK</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 9</td>
<td>Week of March 16th</td>
<td>Observed student teachers and interviewed both student teachers and mentor teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 10</td>
<td>Week of March 23rd</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 11</td>
<td>Week of March 30th</td>
<td>Collected student teachers’ clear and unclear windows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 12</td>
<td>Week of April 6th</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 13</td>
<td>Week of April 13</td>
<td>Observed student teachers and interviewed both student teachers and mentor teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 14</td>
<td>Week of April 20</td>
<td>Collected student teachers’ clear and unclear windows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 1-14</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Student teachers and mentor teachers dialogue journals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The dialogue journals created an ongoing dialogue between the student teachers and their mentor teachers, which continued throughout each placement. I made copies of the dialogue journals after the first rotation. After I met with the student teachers the last week of student teaching, I handed them self-addressed envelopes and asked them to make a copies of their dialogue journals, to fill out their last clear and unclear windows, and to send them to me by the following week. This allowed the student teachers more time to reflect on their clear and unclear understandings of student teaching. Table 4 summarized the administration of the data collection tools noting the week and date each was collected during the student teaching semester.

Data Collection Tools

In order to obtain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of student teacher confidence in their own teaching, I employed five data-collecting tools: student teacher observations, student teacher interviews, mentor teacher interviews, dialogue journals, and clear and unclear windows. By collecting data from multiple sources and relying on multiple methods to obtain descriptive data, I achieved a triangulation (Patton, 2002). This technique made use of various sources and methods, which shed light on my themes within the study related to each research question. Multiple types of data (student teacher interviews, mentor teacher interviews, student teacher observations, dialogue journals, and clear and unclear windows) served to support these themes. Data collection methods were discussed in the sections that follow and the research questions were addressed in relation to Lave and Wenger’s (1991) situated learning for each of five data collection tools.

Student Teacher Observations

Through the eyes of situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991), observing the student teachers helped me visualize how they developed their identities and practices according to the
participatory opportunities available to them. Participating provided a way for each student teacher to understand, take part in, and subscribe to the social norms, behaviors, and values of teaching in two particular and different contexts. While they were developing their identities and practices by teaching, they showed changes in confidence, the phenomenon under study.

My primary goal when conducting observations was to gather accurate, naturalistic data that reflected the reality of student teacher behavior in the teaching role. As a student teacher supervisor and former elementary teacher and administrator, I was familiar with the classroom setting and had a connection with the role of the student teachers. However, the degree of participation for me as an observer could be classified as a complete observer, using the termination of Gold (1958), because there was no interaction between the student teacher and me during the observation. Although I did not use a formal instrument for recording observation data, two instruments influenced the way I took field notes for this study. Since I had previously worked as an administrator in Texas, the Professional Development and Appraisal System (PDAS) used in Texas public schools to appraise classroom teachers guided some of my thinking. In addition, as a student teacher supervisor at the University of North Texas, I was required to complete the North Texas Appraisal of Classroom Teaching (NTACT) after each observation. This program-specific instrument represented the conceptual framework of the University of North Texas program, which is summarized as “Teacher as guide for engaged learners”. My familiarity with these instruments led me to focus on particular parts of the lessons and on aspects of student engagement as I sought to determine changes in confidence in teaching by attending to behavior in areas such as questioning, teaching performance, and classroom management.
While observing in the field, I took both descriptive and analytical notes in Evernote (software designed for note taking). My descriptive field notes included specific details from each observation; these notes helped me visualize the actual observation later on as described by Bryman (2012). This documentation provided detailed descriptions of the student teachers and their interactions with students, the teaching and learning activities, actions directed toward classroom management, and use of the physical layout of the classroom. My analytical notes, which included thoughts, comments, or questions that I wrote to myself during the observations, as suggested by Glaser and Strauss (1967), helped me start to make sense of my observation. As I typed both the descriptive and analytical notes into Evernote, I differentiated the two by using parenthesis around my analytical thoughts or comments. Utilizing the descriptive and analytical note-taking strategies provided pertinent information for my interpreting and reflecting on the student teachers’ teaching experiences. By conducting the observations first, I was able to clarify my analytical speculations and wonderings during the student teacher interviews that followed as a way to member check these thoughts with the student teachers during the interview. Observing and documenting verbal and non-verbal interactions of student teachers with students, resources, and the classroom environment helped me visualize and better understand the student teachers’ confidence in teaching. The research question most associated with student teacher observation as a research tool was:

(a) How did student teacher confidence in teaching change across both student teaching placements?

I conducted four 45-minute observations for each student teacher throughout the semester: two within the first seven-week placement and two within the second seven-week placement. During each observation, I typed descriptive and analytical field notes into Evernotes.
Concentrating on and recording not only the student teacher’s actions in the classroom, but also her interactions with students became my focus. I made no contact with students in the classroom for the purpose of this study, but only noted their interactions with the student teacher. The physical setting, subject matter, time of the lesson, student teacher intention, intended student activities, student behavior, student teacher questioning, interaction between the student teacher and students, technology used by the student teacher and students, classroom management (including pacing, transitions, wait time, student discipline) and body language of the student teacher were all noted during the visit with special attention to any aspect of the environment that I thought could have influenced the student teacher’s confidence. Within my descriptive notes, I recorded any comments or questions that came to me during the observation. According to Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2011), “when qualitative researchers obtain data by watching the participants, they are observing” with an emphasis on “understanding the natural environment, without altering or manipulating it” (p. 381). With this in mind, I tried to maintain a nonjudgmental and open attitude while carefully observing and listening attentively to the classroom and its members. Blending into the classroom setting became easy for me, as I perceived myself to have established a rapport with each student teacher.

**Interviews**

In this study, interviews were a way to clarify and make sense of what was observed in the classroom. They provided the story behind the student teachers’ actions. Patton (1990) believed that the purpose of interviewing was to “allow us to enter into other people’s perspective” (p. 196) and to find out what is in someone’s mind. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) claimed that the interview is a “conversation with structure and purpose” (p. 3), while Gubrium and Holstein (2002) stated that it is a way to secure knowledge. Chong (1993) discussed the
advantages of interviewing, suggesting that researchers fully record how participants arrived at their opinions. While a researcher cannot actually observe the mental processes that give rise to participant responses, they can witness many of the outward signs of inner struggles. The way participants ramble, hesitate, stumble, and meander as they formulate their answers tips off the listener as to how they are thinking and reasoning. Two sets of interviews occurred in this study, those of student teachers and of the mentor teachers.

Student Teacher Interviews

In-depth semi-structured interviews were important because they provided me with a deeper understanding of each student teacher’s perceived teaching confidence. I conducted interviews with all five student teachers and both mentor teachers of each student teacher. After each of the four 45-minute observations of the student teachers, I conducted a 15-20 minute interview, which included questions such as “Tell me about your strengths that you developed as a result of your student teaching practicum” and “What would you change about your lesson?” However, the first question I asked each time was “How do you think your lesson went?” I asked the student teachers questions related to the research questions as shown in Table 5 below. To the extent that the content addressed in the interviews overlapped with considerations raised by the observations, I increased the trustworthiness (Creswell, 2012) of the study by cross-referencing. Table 5 is similar to a matrix created by Anfara, Brown, and Mangione (2002), a step they deemed important as “research questions provide the scaffolding for the investigation and the cornerstone for the analysis of the data,” and as “researchers should form interview questions on the basis of what truly needs to be known” (Anfara, Brown & Mangione, 2002, p. 31). Therefore, within Table 5 I presented the major research questions and sub-questions that served as the foundation for the study in association, with the planned interview questions.
Table 5

*Student Teacher Interview Questions in Relation to Research Questions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Interview Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. (a) How did student teacher confidence in teaching change across both student teaching placements?</td>
<td>ST1, ST2, ST6, ST7, ST9, ST10, ST11, ST13, ST14, ST20, ST23, ST24, ST25, ST26, ST27, ST29, ST30, ST31, ST34, ST22, ST35, ST36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) To what did student teachers attribute changes in their self-perceived confidence in teaching?</td>
<td>ST1, ST3, ST6, ST7, ST8, ST9, ST10, ST11, ST12, ST13, ST14, ST17, ST18, ST19, ST21, ST23, ST25, ST26, ST27, ST29, ST31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How did student teachers believe their mentor teachers influenced their confidence in teaching during the student teaching placements?</td>
<td>ST4, ST5, ST15, ST16, ST17, ST18, ST19, ST28, ST32, ST33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interviewing became a way to better discern the student teachers’ confidence and eventually led to answers for my research questions as the student teachers’ emic perspective helped me grasp their thinking, feelings, or beliefs about their confidence in teaching. I also came to understand not only the student teachers’ confidence based on self-report, but also how they saw themselves across the teaching practicum as part of the teaching community through legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Since the interviews immediately followed the observations, on-going perceptions and clarification by the student teachers of what was observed (member checking) strengthened the data collection process of this set of qualitative case studies.

Mentor Teacher Interviews

The purpose of interviewing the mentor teachers was to uncover their perspectives on their student teachers’ changing confidences and their possible roles in those changes. By using their professional judgment and working within earshot of the student teachers on a daily basis, mentor teachers provided third party perspectives as to the changing confidence of the student.
teachers. For a student teacher supervisor, this became useful information since I could not be there every day to observe the phenomenon of interest. I interviewed both of the student teachers’ mentor teachers twice during the seven-week period for approximately 15-20 minutes per interview. See Appendix C and D for the questions asked. The first mentor teacher interview was before the student teacher’s first observation and interview, while the second mentor teacher interview was at the end of the student teachers’ rotation. In order to understand the relationship of the mentor teachers’ interview questions to the research questions, I devised Table 6, similar to the one developed for student teacher interview questions.

Table 6

*Mentor Teacher Interview Questions in Relation to Research Questions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Interview Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. (a) How did the mentor teachers’ perceive their respective student teachers changes in confidence during the student teaching placement?</td>
<td>MT7, MT13, MT14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) To what factors did the mentor teachers attribute any perceived changes in their respective student teachers’ teaching self-confidence?</td>
<td>MT4, MT7, MT11, MT13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) How do the mentor teachers perceive their own influence/power on these changes?</td>
<td>MT1, MT2, MT3, MT5, MT6, MT8, MT9, MT10, MT12, MT14, MT15, MT16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The interview questions, integral to the data collecting process, helped me construct the mentor teachers’ perspectives regarding the research questions. To this end, cross-referencing the interview questions and the study’s research questions became vital to insure that the interview questions asked were related to the research questions.

Creating trust between the researcher and the participants had begun in this study before the student teaching semester, and all participants seemed relaxed during the interviews as I listened carefully and observed their body language. Before the interviews began, the student
teachers and mentor teachers received copies of the interview questions, as this helped the process flow. During the interviews, responses from both student teachers and mentor teachers were audio-recorded, since according to Gay et al. (2011), audio-recorded data were reliable, consistent, and easily accessible. This insured entire conversations verbatim and without the intervening bias associated with note taking. By coupling observation field notes with transcripts of interviews that included probing questions, I addressed the halo effect as first described by Thorndike (1920), which is related to the bias of the researcher about the phenomenon. For example, bias could have occurred from my preconceived notions related to confidence in teaching, but instead I used data from more than one source and accurately took notes, which increased my focus on the data. Therefore, using audio-recorded interviews strengthened and clarified my impressions of what was viewed during the observations, which in turn, helped with the validity of this study.

_Dialogue Journals_

Student teachers try to make sense of and understand what it takes to become a full practitioner (Lave & Wenger, 1991) as they are student teaching. Professional development as a teacher involves observing and on-going communication with mentors, a process that can be advanced by a dialogue journal. Dialogue journaling is a strategy complementary to other data collection methods such as interviews and observations. Bogdan and Biklen (2002) describe a journal as “any first-person narrative that describes individuals’ actions, experiences, and beliefs” (p. 132). The decision to use dialogue journals for this study was driven by the research questions asked. Specifically, the journals provided further insight into the phenomenon being studied by introducing a new context within which student teachers could raise questions, seek advice, or just write down thoughts during the day. Gay et al. (2011) explains that teachers’
journals can give the researcher firsthand accounts of what is happening by providing a glimpse of teachers and/or schools from a different perspective. Journaling between the student teachers and mentor teachers provided a way for me to understand what was happening when I was not present. In sum, according to Merriam (1998), first person documents are a reliable source of data concerning a person’s attitudes, beliefs, and view of the world as the researcher seeks the participant’s perspective. For the purpose of this study, a student teacher/mentor teacher dialogue journal not only increased the evidence of conversation between the two, but also was a source of insight into their relationships and perspectives. The student teacher/mentor teacher journal provided data relating to the following research questions:

(a) How did student teacher confidence in teaching change across both student teaching placements:

(b) To what did student teachers attribute changes perceived in their self-perceived confidence in teaching?

The student teachers’ dialogue journals became non-verbal means of communication between student teacher and mentor teacher. Student teachers received notebooks for their dialogue journals during our first campus meeting. I told them to begin the dialogues with their mentor teachers by using the journals to pose questions or to comment about anything related to teaching such as their observations of their mentors or questions about classroom management. When discussing the dialogue journal with the mentor teachers, I asked them to respond to the student teachers’ questions and/or comments in a timely manner. The mentor teachers were also asked to use the journals to ask questions or make comments to the student teachers. During the semester, I sent several phone text reminders to the student teachers to encourage them to use their journals.
During the school day, there was not always time for the student teachers and mentor teachers to dialogue orally about activities in the classrooms. Questions or comments that arose at the beginning of the school day might have been forgotten by the end of the day. Therefore, writing in the journals when thoughts or questions occurred enabled dialogue and reflection later that day or the next. In this study, the dialogue journal process led to a creation of a minimum of one to two journal entries per week from each participant.

Talvitie, Peltokallio and Mannisto (2000) discovered while reading and analyzing student teachers’ journals that a lack of communication between the student teacher and mentor teachers occurred when the mentor teachers did not invest enough time or interest in guiding and attending to the student teachers’ lessons. This lack of communication on the part of the mentor teachers mattered, according to Talvitie et al., because the student teachers believed that feedback and conversation were important to help them grow as future teachers and helped create confidence in teaching. What’s more, these student teachers felt that the mentor teachers’ failures to give practical advice or criticize lessons showed disrespect towards the student teachers or lack of initiative in the relationship, which could have decreased the student teachers confidence in teaching. In sum, using a dialogue journal had some potential to continue conversations between the student teacher and mentor teacher throughout the day and to increase discourse between the two as well as to provide data for study.

Clear and Unclear Windows

Student teaching is more than just observing. It involves active “participation as a way of learning—of both absorbing and being absorbed in—the ‘culture of practice’” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 95). As student teachers strive to make this culture of practice [student teaching] their own, their reflecting upon the process helps them understand areas where they may be confident
and areas where they are still unsure. The role of reflection during student teaching depends on how student teachers view their practicum experiences. The clear and unclear windows method of assessment developed by Ellis and Evan’s (2001; 2013) provided insight into what student teachers believed they understood and felt confident about (clear windows) versus what they did not completely understand or feel confident about (unclear windows). Essentially, learning can be clear or unclear, like looking through a window. Sometimes a window has streaks or dirt on it making it hard to see out, while other times it seems crystal-clear and easy to see out. Although this method seems to have been used predominately in high school settings in the past (Ellis, 2001; Evan & Ellis, 2013), it was easily adaptable for student teacher reflections. By utilizing this self-reporting or self-diagnosing instrument, student teachers determined and declared what they did and did not understand at particular points during the practicum. These clear and unclear windows became useful while looking for data relating to the following research questions:

(a) How did student teacher confidence in teaching change across both student teaching placements?

(b) To what did student teachers attribute changes perceived in their self-perceived confidence in teaching?

(c) How did student teachers believe their mentor teachers influenced their teaching during the student teaching placement?

The Clear and Unclear Window method was utilized five times during the student teaching semester, once at the beginning of the year initial student teacher meeting and at both the beginning and end of each student teaching rotation. See Table 5 for specific dates. I met individually with the student teachers, explained the window metaphor to them, and then asked them to write down their thoughts related to their student teaching experiences. (See Appendix E
The structured reflection enabled by this technique helped me to understand the confidence levels of student teachers as I could see what they were clear and unclear about related to teaching. In sum, Table 7 depicts the research questions related to all five types of data-gathering instruments.

Table 7

**Research Questions and Related Data Instruments**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Data Instruments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How did student teacher confidence in teaching change across both student teaching placements?</td>
<td>Field Notes from Observations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student Teacher Interview Transcripts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dialogue Journals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clear and Unclear Windows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what did student teachers attribute changes perceived in their self-perceived confidence in teaching?</td>
<td>Transcripts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dialogue Journals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clear and Unclear Windows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How did student teachers believe their mentor teachers influenced their teaching during the student teaching placements?</td>
<td>Student Teacher Interview Transcripts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dialogue Journals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clear and Unclear Windows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How did mentor teachers’ perceive their respective interns’ changes in teaching confidence during the student teaching placement?</td>
<td>Mentor Teacher Transcripts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dialogue Journals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what factors did mentor teachers’ attribute these perceived changes in their respective student teachers’ teaching self-confidence?</td>
<td>Mentor Teacher Transcripts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dialogue Journals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do the mentor teachers perceive their own influence/power on these changes?</td>
<td>Mentor Teacher Transcripts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Data Analysis**

The overarching phenomenon explored in this study was the student teachers’ confidence in teaching as influenced by factors such as interactions with students, reactions of mentor teachers, and grade level/subject taught during the student teaching practicum. A thematic analysis approach as described by Braun and Clarke (2006) was adopted in analyzing the sets of data collected through interviews, observations, dialogue journals, and clear and unclear...
windows during the course of the study. By using Braun and Clarke’s six phases approach as a foundation, I was able to identify themes and analyze them across these data sources. The following sections explain the processes used to extract themes and the data analysis approach/es used with each type of data.

For the purpose of this study, thematic analysis provided a detailed account of student teachers’ teaching confidence during the student teaching practicum. According to Braun and Clark (2006), “thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (p. 79) by organizing and describing data in detail. I followed Braun and Clark’s (2006) six phases of thematic analysis which include becoming familiar with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and lastly, producing the report which, in this case, examines the relationships between themes and the research questions.(p. 86-93). More specifically, Braun and Clark’s phases begin as I became familiar with the data. One way I became familiar with the data was through transcribing and comparing it to the audio recordings. The software program OTranscribe aided with the transcription process. Once transcribing and member checking were completed, I began the recursive process of reading and re-reading the transcripts searching for themes that related to the research questions for the study. Braun and Clark note that “a theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning with the data set” (p.82). Most importantly, Braun and Clark reveal that a researcher’s judgment determines what a theme is and that it is necessary to be flexible in the process.

After becoming familiar with the data, I began Phase 2, which involved producing initial codes from the data. Braun and Clark (2006) stated, “Codes identify a feature of the data that
appears interesting” (p. 88). As a researcher works through data, attention is given to repeated patterns or themes within the data set. For this study, the software program, Atlas ti, was used to help with this process, as it was an easy and efficient way to contain and code data. The most important part of creating themes was to make sure that consistency prevailed throughout, as it was critical during the creation of themes. With this in mind, I asked a colleague to check for the accuracy of themes created. Within Table 8, an example of locating initial data is seen in one student teacher’s interview as this step consisted of finding large, repeated themes throughout the data. While creating codes, I went through the student teacher interviews and observations first. Afterward, I created a chart combining the 25 clear and unclear windows from all five student teachers (see Appendix F). Next, I extracted data from the Clear and Unclear Window data in relation to mentor teachers and noticed that student teachers were clear about:

- Needing a relationship with my mentor teacher
- Working and cooperating with my mentor teacher
- Asking questions to my mentor teacher without hesitation
- Needing to be open to new ideas from my mentor teacher

Table 8

*Phase 2: Extracted Data from a Student Teacher Interview*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Extract</th>
<th>Coded for</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| I've learned a lot from my mentor teacher. I don't think I really understood what it meant to be a teacher until I saw her teaching. But, seeing someone who has the experience in action every single day and seeing all the things and all the effort that she puts in shows me what it really means to be a teacher. Then I can take what I have learned and actually practice in a real school setting. | 1. Mentor teacher models teaching  
2. Learned from mentor teacher  
3. Student teaching experience |
Phase 3 re-focused me toward broader themes. Combining themes generated in Phase 2 began within Atlas ti, which helped me to organize themes and subthemes from transcripts from all five data sources for the purpose of this study. For example, from Table 8, I combined themes such as:

- Learning from mentor teacher
- Mentor teacher models
- Supportive
- Helps me plan lessons
- Gives advice
- Discusses classroom management strategies
- Always available

Then I created a broad theme of “mentor teacher’s influence.”

After creating themes within the data, I began Phase 4 by reviewing and refining the themes. This phase included two levels of refinement. At the first level, I reviewed the data and the themes and subthemes created in Phase 3 and re-read the data sets within Atlas ti. The second level of refinement occurred when I deleted inaccurate information and added missing information. During this phase, when I went back into the data I added such observations as, “Mentor teacher interjected while student teacher taught,” and “Mentor teacher lets the student teacher have full control of the classroom.” Phase 4 ended when I found that the coded data within Atlas ti (student teacher and mentor teacher interviews) fit the data set as well as the observation, dialogue journals, and clear and unclear window data.

The last two phases were defining and naming the themes and developing the final report. Each research question had its own set of themes as seen in Table 11 in Chapter 4. After creating
themes in Atlas ti, I went back to the original data and extracted and organized it to support my interpretation of the data. Then, I wrote a detailed analysis for each theme to illustrate its relationship to the research questions located in Chapter 4 of this study. By the end of Phase 5, the themes were clearly defined. Phase 6 yielded a final analysis and written report in which I tried to include strong evidence of how the findings related to the study’s research questions, which is contained in Chapter 4.

After creating my in-case analysis, I went back and created a chart related to each theme and each data instrument utilized, across each student teacher. An example of the theme: “Building relationships with students” is shown in Table 9. Note that the second column, student teacher observation came from my observation notes related to relationships with students. As noted above, I wrote a final analysis based on all the data and then a report relating evidence from the data of all the student teachers as an across-case analysis as seen in Chapter 4.

Table 9

Example of Combining Data Evidence for Building Relationships with Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Teacher</th>
<th>Student Teacher Observations</th>
<th>Student Teacher Interviews</th>
<th>Dialogue Journals</th>
<th>Clear and Unclear Windows</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hannah</td>
<td>“Hannah is relaxed and calm in the classroom. She is positive and the students respond well to her.”</td>
<td>“My friends say that I am very motherly. I want to build relationships with my kids. Having a relationship with the kids makes it a fun day at the end.”</td>
<td>“You definitely have to back up what you say, and then students behave much better.”</td>
<td>“There needs to be a balance between discipline and wanting to be liked.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jenna</td>
<td>“Although Jenna is quiet, she has formed relationships with her students; however, she still struggles with classroom management.”</td>
<td>“…having a relationship with the kids and just earning their trust in a way and feeling comfortable and having an open communication with them.”</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>“I am clear that I need to have a relationship with students.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(table continues)
Within this study, my findings were based on both semantic and latent data, as semantic data referred to the words spoken and latent referred to the more subtle indicators of meaning such as the expressions on the student teachers’ faces, their gestures, etc., while they were teaching. Four out of five of my data collection instruments, the student teacher and mentor teacher interviews, dialogue journals, and clear and unclear windows sought oral or written responses, while the use of observations enabled me to consider student teachers’ behaviors or latent data. Therefore, my understanding of confidence was based on what was said by my participants as viewed through my professional lens as an educator. In the end, I did not seek to
understand the student teachers’ confidence outside the context of the professional student teaching situation.

Summary

This chapter identified the qualitative research design to be used to collect and analyze data gathered from experiences of the five student teachers and ten mentor teachers. Each student teacher was observed and interviewed four times throughout the student teacher practicum, while both of their mentor teachers were interviewed twice. The student teacher/mentor teacher dialogue journals and 20 student teacher observations also supplied qualitative information related to the research questions. Each of the 20 student teacher interviews and 20 mentor teacher interviews was recorded and transcribed. Braun and Clark’s (2006) six phases of thematic analysis related to the mentor teachers and student teachers’ confidence in teaching throughout their teaching practicum were taken into account. Analysis of the interview transcripts coupled with observational field notes, dialogue journals, and clear and unclear windows data analysis allowed me to consider whether student teachers’ confidence changed during student teaching and if the mentor teachers had any influence on the changes both within and across each case. The following chapter presents the findings of the dissertation research.
CHAPTER 4
DATA AND ANALYSIS

This qualitative collective case study investigated student teacher self-confidence in teaching and specific factors that influenced this confidence, including the influence of the mentor teacher. To investigate student teacher confidence, I examined the data collected from five student teachers and their mentor teachers through a collective case study method, interpreting data as informed by Lave and Wenger’s situated learning theory.

Three main research questions and three sub-questions guided this study:

1. How do student teachers perceive their confidence in teaching during student teaching?
   (a) How did student teacher confidence in teaching change across both student teaching placements?
   (b) To what did student teachers attribute changes in their self-perceived confidence in teaching?

2. How did student teachers believe their mentor teachers influenced their confidence in teaching during the student teaching placements?

3. How do mentor teachers perceive their student teacher’s confidence in teaching during student teaching?
   (a) How did mentor teachers perceive their respective student teachers’ changes in teaching confidence during the student teaching placement?
   (b) To what factors did mentor teachers’ attribute these perceived changes in their respective student teachers’ teaching self-confidence?
   (c) How did mentor teachers perceive their own influence/power on these changes?

This chapter offers examples of trustworthiness of the data and provides a detailed description of the student teacher participants and their mentor teachers. Data collection utilized the following instruments: student teacher and mentor teacher interviews, student teacher observations, student teacher/mentor teacher dialogue journals, and clear and unclear windows.
Based on data from these instruments, I describe how each student teacher demonstrated confidence throughout each student teaching placement both through the eyes of the student teachers and their mentor teachers. For each student teacher, I include three tables at the end of her section, one showing that student teacher’s themes across data sets related to research questions one and two, followed by both mentor teachers’ themes related to research question three. An across case analysis, which produced common themes, follows the discussion of the five individual student teachers. These themes are supported with examples from the data.

**Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness of the data was established in multiple ways throughout the study. The following techniques gave me the ability to state my findings since they came from the data that were gathered by using the established procedures for qualitative collective case study methods. The use of these measures meets Creswell’s (2012) recommendation for establishing trustworthiness.

- **Triangulation.** This technique made use of various sources and methods to shed light on a particular theme or themes within the study. Multiple types of data (student teacher interviews, mentor teacher interviews, student teacher observations, dialogue journals, and Clear and Unclear Window assessments) served to support the emergent themes. Data were gathered through audiotaped interviews, which were transcribed, as well as through notes taken during observations.

- **Member checking.** This allowed participants to ensure that the interviews were an accurate portrayal of their thoughts related to this study. Participants were allowed to read the material gathered and to have their input included.

- **Peer review.** An outside reader, who obtained a doctorate degree in teacher education and had experience in qualitative research, reviewed my study. This external check provided me with an individual who could question me about my methods, interpretations, meanings, etc.

- **Relationship and trust.** Because of my prolonged engagement, persistent observation in the field, and constant communication with the participants, I built a relationship and trust with the participants while learning about their confidence in teaching.
Audit trail. I kept an audit trail of all information collected and the process by which it was analyzed and coded as recommended by Miles and Huberman (1994).

Description of Participants

This study began with six student teachers. However, one left student teaching mid-semester because she realized that teaching was not her forte. Therefore, this study included five student teachers, each of whom was assigned to two placements and two mentor teachers. All five student teachers taught in a metropolitan area of north central Texas within the same district. Three of the student teachers taught at the same elementary school, while the other two taught at two different elementary schools. The following includes descriptions of each of the five student teachers and input from their mentor teachers. The descriptions and mentor teacher input focus on the student teachers' confidence in teaching.

Hannah

Hannah student taught at one of the largest elementary schools in the district with the lowest percentage of economically disadvantaged students. She student taught in a first grade self-contained classroom during her first placement, and in her second placement, she taught two classes of mathematics and science to fourth graders. At the beginning of the semester, Hannah feared making mistakes, felt unsure about classroom management, and wanted to be able to think on her feet. As the first placement continued, her mentor teacher Ms. Andrews said Hannah was "a natural born teacher and was ready to have her own classroom." Her second mentor, Ms. Coonce, said, "She jumped in, and was not afraid to take the teacher role."

I asked Hannah why she wanted to be a teacher and her reply was:

I love children. My senior year I was between teaching and pediatric nursing or just nursing in general, and my senior year I took Ready, Set, Teach and a nursing class where I actually got to go out and do different field experiences, and I was in a classroom during first period, and I hated being in the hospital. I wanted to be able to do things where I could build a relationship with kids and that, you know, I am very motherly as
my friends say. I'm very “Mom.” So to be that kind of person that kids may not have, to be that support in that classroom, has just been my thing. No matter if I was having a bad day or if I was in a fight with my friends or my boyfriend, they always made my day and made me smile. I could walk into the classroom and, you know, they were able to make my day, and I was able to leave it at the door and do it and have a good time and not let it take over my thinking.

During Hannah’s first placement in a first grade classroom, she and Ms. Andrews worked very well together. They were both technologically savvy and, according to Hannah, they organized, structured, and planned every lesson together and were in constant communication before, during, and after school. I conducted an interview with Ms. Andrews, who told me,

Her [Hannah’s] confidence is so much different now than it was when she started with me. She’s ready to go. She just steps in and goes. She’s already built that relationship, that foundation, with the kids and has that confidence to try things. We’re doing a weather project right now with technology. She has that confidence to try something new that was not planned on any of our team plans. Let’s just try it and see if it works or if it doesn’t I told her.

Hannah agreed and told me after her first lesson she realized, “If you have the relationship with the kids it ends up being a fun day with them at the end.” She continued by sharing an example of how she knew that she was creating relationships with her students. One day when Hannah’s students pointed out a typo in her PowerPoint, she felt that telling them everyone makes mistakes, including the teacher; let her students know that she was not perfect. She wanted them to know that they were more alike than they thought so she could start building a relationship with them. When it came to classroom management and relationships, Hannah said,

You just can't expect a student to obey you because you said so. You have to have that relationship, and you have to have that type of, I guess, bond of saying, ok, there is another reason, why are you having a hard time and you are not acting yourself. You want them to have that kind of a relationship with you where you want to be the reason that they are having a good day and you can tell when they are off and it's not just because they are just acting up to act up.

Hannah shared ideas and integrated technology into her lessons. She began with a basic PowerPoint at the beginning of the semester and, by the end of the semester, she created her own
technology lesson. This time students worked in groups, took pictures of their work with their iPads, inputted definitions into the iPad, audio-recorded answers to reflection questions, and created mind maps with a voice overlay to share as a group presentation. She shared with me that being able to suggest and implement her own lessons gave her more confidence in teaching.

Hannah frequently talked about making sure the lesson content was taught correctly. She said, “It’s like, I stress out about it because there is the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) testing coming up, and if they [the students] don’t understand it and they don’t tell [me], then how am I supposed to know?” When she did not teach the lesson correctly, she felt that the students would not have the accurate information they needed for the upcoming state mandated tests. Hannah later told me that she felt that part of her mentor teacher’s responsibility was to make sure she was teaching the lesson accurately. She told me, “I expect her [her mentor teacher] to tell me when I am not doing something right….and not to sugarcoat it.” Ms. Andrews agreed and told Hannah, “I am not going to let you mess up bad enough that I have to fix it when you are gone.” Ms. Andrews told me that she wanted Hannah to understand that and “if there becomes a problem, I am going to nip it.”

Hannah's experience in in Ms. Andrew’s classroom was not without problems. Classroom management seemed to be an ongoing struggle for Hannah. Even though she had a good rapport with Ms. Andrews, Hannah felt that she should not make any changes related to the classroom management system implemented by her. Hannah summed it up by saying,

I am still not the teacher and I try to make sure that I don't mess up her [Ms. Andrews] classroom management so that when I leave, you know, she has to almost completely retrain them. So, I am trying to stick with that as much as possible.

Hannah taught in a fourth grade classroom for her second rotation, teaching two classes of mathematics and science. Her mentor teacher was Mrs. Coonce. Hannah continued to
struggle with her confidence in classroom management as she tried to find a balance between disciplining students and wanting to be liked. Hannah said,

It’s so much more than they [college professors] actually tell you in class. They are like, you will have this, and you will have that, and you are like, what? And when you get here, you realize that classroom management is as hard as they say. Student teaching has helped me to find a balance of what I want as a teacher and how I expect things to go.

During her third observation, I noticed that Hannah did not have a strategy for getting students’ attention. She stopped her lesson or called on students more than ten times during her first 45-minute observation with Ms. Coonce’s class. She said things like, “Are we being respectful right now?”, “No talking from now on,” and “We should not have any talking right now”. However, during the last observation of Hannah, I noticed she used a wind chime to get the students’ attention. She told them what she expected from them from the beginning, and she even used the strategy, “If you can hear my voice, clap once.” During this time, Hannah only stopped twice during her lesson to correct behavior. Later Hannah told me that she shared with Ms. Coonce,

I realized that I know that my college professors drill this into you, but classroom management really is difficult, so being able to watch you teach in an organized and structured classroom has helped me realize that I need this in my own classroom.

Additionally, when I observed Hannah during her second rotation, she had implemented her own electronic classroom management system (ClassDojo). She told me during the interview that Ms. Coonce, who did not have a consistent classroom management system in place, welcomed the idea. The students were excited and worked well with the system, according to both Hannah and Ms. Coonce. This computerized system helped Hannah improve student discipline while reinforcing positive behavior. The change in Hannah’s confidence became evident to me while reading the notes she had written in her dialogue journal. She saw herself constantly giving students warnings without any type of infraction and was concerned about students liking her. She continued by saying, “When I finally went through with my warnings
students behaved much better.” However, toward the end of the practicum, she admitted, “I still get overwhelmed and frustrated sometimes when I can’t get my classroom management under control, but it is getting easier.” She continued by saying, “The best thing for me is to create a relationship with my students so they are having fun.” At the end of the practicum, she had written in her dialogue journal, “Building community is the most important thing” and “Relationships are key.” Ms. Coonce struggled with not interfering during a lesson and confessed, “It’s hard not to talk and let them [the disruptive students] have it. When I notice something, I do write it on a white board and hold it up to her.” Ms. Coonce told me that although she feels that she needs to interject and correct students, she thinks that Hannah’s classroom management is improving.

Besides trying out a new classroom management system, Hannah took suggestions or constructive criticism well in order to improve her teaching. As her student teacher supervisor, I asked Hannah how she knew that students understood and comprehended her lessons. The next time I observed her, she was walking around, talking with, and asking questions of students while putting marks by their names. She later told me that she had created a check system to make sure that she talked with every student and that each understood the objective for that day. Throughout the semester, Hannah really worked on building relationships with students, and it was evident that they respected her and saw her not as their friend, but as their teacher. Because of this, her classroom management began to improve. Once Hannah got into the classroom and started making it her own, she formed relationships with her students, and her confidence rose.

Although Hannah seemed more confident in her teaching and her classroom management during her second rotation, she also showed signs of frustration, as her confidence seemed to shift from the first rotation to the second. She told me that her relationship with Ms. Coonce was
different from the one with Ms. Andrews, her first mentor teacher. Ms. Andrews gave her lesson plans every week and Hannah knew exactly what she was teaching. They would collaborate and plan lessons together. Hannah said that while she was with Ms. Coonce, she did not see any lessons plans. Ms. Coonce would tell Hannah, “Today we are teaching perimeter and area.”

Another point of frustration for Hannah became evident when she talked about not having routines in the classroom. She said,

> There are no routines in this class. She’s [her second mentor teacher, Ms. Coonce] taught for a long time and she just does things on the whim. It’s just different. I was stressed because I didn’t know how my observation lesson was going to go. Ms. Andrews [her first mentor teacher] had everything structured.

Even though it seemed that there were no routines or lesson plans visible within this classroom, Ms. Coonce said that she tried to give Hannah ownership in the classroom. At one point, this became a struggle for Ms. Coonce as she admitted to overriding Hannah when she saw her self-created lesson plans on decimals because “she didn’t exactly know the content that she needed to teach.” Hannah's lesson with decimals went way beyond what the fourth graders needed to know.

Hannah stated that when she felt prepared and organized, the lesson and classroom management flowed, and she felt more confident while teaching. Hannah preferred to over-prepare, which included not only planning ahead, but also by watching Ms. Coonce teach the lesson first. When the first group of students came into the classroom, Hannah would take notes while watching Ms. Coonce teach and then imitate her in the afternoon when the second group of students came. Toward the end of the semester, Hannah’s confidence increased when she was able to teach a lesson in the morning, receive feedback from her mentor teacher, and then tweak it for the afternoon class.

Even though Ms. Coonce and Hannah had different teaching and management styles,
Ms. Coonce felt she was supporting Hannah with her ongoing feedback. She told me, “If I have to say anything to Hannah, I try to start with the positive, and then I do always try to give her something that she can change and work on.” She continued supporting Hannah as she prepared for interviewing for a teacher position.

I want Hannah to leave here ready to step into a classroom. I want her to feel confident about going into that interview. I was trying to give her interview questions and what they are going to throw at her. I really want her to succeed.

Although Hannah felt a sense of frustration during the second rotation, her dialogue journal showed that she felt most confident when she implemented ClassDojo, created relationships with her students, followed up with discipline, planned ahead, when students were engaged and when other teachers liked her teaching ideas. According to her Clear and Unclear reflections at the end of student teaching, Hannah expressed a lack of confidence and clarity about how to seek assistance for students who may have special needs, how to conduct parent conferences, and how to prepare for the first day of school. Hannah summed up her practicum experience by saying, “You hear about it, learn about it, but you just need to experience it.”

Table 10 shows Hannah’s themes across data sets related to her confidence in teaching, specific factors related to her changes in confidence and how Hannah perceived her mentor teachers influenced her confidence in teaching. Tables 11 and 12 reveal her mentor teachers’ perspectives about Hannah’s confidence in teaching, factors they to which they attributed Hannah’s changes in confidence, and how they perceived their own influence/power over these changes.
### Table 10

**Hannah’s Themes Across Data Sets**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| RQ1 (a): How did student teacher confidence in teaching change across both student teaching placements? | • Used more higher-level questions  
• Modeled for students  
• Implemented pacing and time management  
• Carried out discipline  
• Kept students engaged |
| RQ1 (b): To what did student teachers attribute changes in their self-perceived confidence in teaching? | • Built relationships with students  
• Classroom management implementation  
• Over-preparation and perfection  
• Actual student teaching experience  
• Relationship with her mentor teacher  
• When mentor teacher accepted her ideas |
| RQ2: How did student teachers believe their mentor teachers influenced their confidence in teaching during the student teaching placement? | • Gave positive feedback and constructive criticism  
• Helped plan lessons  
• Modeled teaching and classroom management strategies so that Hannah teacher could imitate their style  
• Supportive |

### Table 11

**Ms. Andrews’ Perspectives Related to Hannah’s Confidence in Teaching**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ3 (a): How did mentor teachers perceive their respective student teachers’ change in teaching confidence during the student teaching placement?</th>
<th>RQ3 (b): To what factors did mentor, teachers attribute these perceived changes in their respective student teacher’s teaching confidence?</th>
<th>RQ3(c): How did mentor teachers perceive their own influence/power over these changes?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Increased confidence with student engagement | • Created relationships with students  
• Gained students respect  
• Followed through with classroom management | • Corrected students while Hannah taught  
• Added to Hannah’s lessons |
| Increased confidence while student teaching | • Actual teaching experience  
• Implemented technology lessons  
• Planned lessons for the team | • Allowed Hannah to take over the class |

*(table continues)*
### RQ3: How did mentor teachers perceive their respective student teachers’ change in teaching confidence during the student teaching placement?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Increased confidence with mentor teacher support</th>
<th>Daily communication</th>
<th>Gave positive feedback and constructive criticism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Daily communication</td>
<td>• Co-planned lessons</td>
<td>• Modeled teaching and classroom management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Imitated Ms. Andrews</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(RQ3 continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Increased confidence when mentor teacher was supportive</th>
<th>Answered Hannah’s questions</th>
<th>Availability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Answered Hannah’s questions</td>
<td>• Gave teaching and classroom management advice</td>
<td>• Open communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Gave teaching and classroom management advice</td>
<td>• Helped Hannah with job hunting</td>
<td>• Gave Hannah a reference letter</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Confidence increased while student teaching</th>
<th>Actual teaching experience</th>
<th>Not allowing Hannah to teach 10 consecutive full days</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Actual teaching experience</td>
<td>• Implemented self-created lessons</td>
<td>• Received advice and approval from Ms. Coonce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Implemented self-created lessons</td>
<td>• Imitated Ms. Coonce</td>
<td>• Modeled what Hannah should teach</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Different planning and teaching styles</th>
<th>Frustrated with no lesson plans or knowledge of upcoming content</th>
<th>Planned spur of the moment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### Table 12

**Ms. Coonces’ Perspectives Related to Hannah’s Confidence in Teaching**

### Jenna

Jenna student taught at the same school as Hannah and taught the same grade levels (first grade and then fourth grade). Also similar to Hannah, Jenna’s first grade classroom was self-contained, and she taught two classes of mathematics and science with fourth graders. When I asked Jenna why she wanted to be a teacher, she replied,
Honestly, I've always wanted to be a teacher when I was little, and I had a really good experience when I was in elementary school, especially, so I just wanted to, kind of, impact my students' lives like I was impacted.

Jenna seemed to struggle with confidence from the beginning. During her second week of student teaching, she wrote in her dialogue journal,

Today was my first time conducting a language arts, math, and social studies lesson by myself. It didn’t exactly run as smoothly as I had hoped! I felt a bit awkward and uncomfortable when there was silence, and sometimes I would not know what to even say or do. You never think about all of what goes into a lesson plan that isn’t actually written down. I hope to become better and feel more comfortable in front of the class.

When I met with Ms. Copeland, her first mentor teacher, she noted that Jenna needed more confidence in herself while teaching. The second time we met, she said that Jenna still looked to her for approval while teaching, and she had even talked with Ms. Copeland about lacking confidence while teaching. Even though gaining confidence seemed to be hard for Jenna, Ms. Copeland said that Jenna had good rapport with the students and other teachers. Ms. Copeland also noted that Jenna used a calm voice and was able to be herself while teaching.

Jenna’s second placement was in a fourth grade classroom. This classroom was different from her first placement because there were two different classes, each containing 22 students that rotated for half days. Her mentor teacher, Ms. Young, said that although Jenna was very professional and punctual, she lacked confidence. Evidence of this started early in the second placement when Ms. Young asked Jenna if she were ready to start teaching, and Jenna said she wanted to watch the first couple of weeks. Ms. Young told me that she gave Jenna a gentle push when she was not feeling confident about planning and teaching a lesson. Ms. Young said,

I've tried and it's hard for me to dictate to someone, “you need to do this,” but I've tried to do more of that, too, which is hard because she is such a sweet girl, but some days, you know, like, you have to. With designing this lesson, I just told her, “I think you are ready for this. I'm sorry to put you in this position if you are afraid, but I am here to help you if you need it, but I think you should design this lesson yourself.” And that was hard for me to ask her to do, but she rose to the challenge, and I think she did a great job today. Just
also trying to push her a little bit out of her comfort zone to see what she can really do and to let her get that experience now because this is the last time that she will get any type of experience like this.

In an effort to encourage and support Jenna’s confidence, Ms. Young assured her that it was okay to make mistakes while teaching. Jenna began to understand that things did not always go as planned even when you prepare ahead of time. She said, “When things don’t go as planned, I feel flustered and realize that I need a back-up plan.” As Ms. Copeland continued to encourage and support Jenna, she stressed the importance of not always giving negative feedback to Jenna, but letting her know what she did right during her lesson, because she probably already knew what she did wrong. She continued by saying, “A nice way to talk to them is by boosting their confidence, instead of crushing it.” Toward the end of the semester when I talked with Jenna about her confidence, she said,

I feel like I'll probably always struggle with confidence, like, in everything, but I do feel more confident as time passes. It's just natural for you to feel more confident once you are in the classroom every day. I feel more confident when I know the students. I kind of feel more comfortable with the younger kids. Also, because in fourth grade we switch, and so I do feel comfortable with both classes, but I don't feel like I have...I'm not with them the entire day like I was in first grade. I have built a rapport with them, but it is just a little different. I don't know what they did during the day. Like whenever they are going to language arts and social studies, like, I have no idea what they are doing in those subjects at all and so it's kind of hard, like, sometimes they will ask questions and it's a language arts book or something, and I don't even know because that's Ms. M's thing. I think I have a good relationship with all of my students and I do feel comfortable with all of them, but I think just more with my first graders because I was with them all day.

Ms. Young also reported that Jenna was consistent with her classroom management and pacing, but because she was so soft spoken, she struggled to show students she was in charge. The last mentor teacher interview with Ms. Young revealed that confidence continued to be an issue as Jenna struggled with assertiveness. When I asked Jenna about her strengths because of the student teaching practicum, she said,

My strengths have become that, I guess, that I have become more, like, stick to my rules
kind of thing...like, follow through with the rules. I didn't think I would be good with that since it is fourth grade and, like, I don't want to tell them no, but these are the rules. I think my strengths are I stick to my guns, and I tell them, ‘These are the rules, and you need to follow them and you know them,’ not a wavering kind of thing. I think that is one of my strengths.

Jenna’s Clear and Unclear Window confirmed what she said during this interview. She even revealed after each rotation that she was clear about building relationships with the staff and students. However, she also stated she felt more confident if she was told what to do instead of coming up with ideas on her own. She appreciated both of her mentor teachers helping her plan and work through the lessons to make sure that they were age-appropriate. Specifically she stated,

I feel like my mentor teacher [Ms. Young] has helped me with almost everything, and I'm kind of blown away by how much she has been helpful and how much she has supported me by looking over my lesson plans by editing or revising them.

Before one lesson, Jenna told Ms. Copeland that she was nervous about teaching it. Ms. Copeland gave her some suggestions when they sat down and went over it step-by-step. Jenna continued by saying, “I think it's hard because you try to get everything as planned out and as organized as you think possible.”

Even though Jenna’s mentor teachers tried to relieve her anxiety by working closely with her, they both told me they also helped her to make sure that the concepts were taught correctly. Ms. Young told me Jenna planned a lesson on elapsed time that was not grade appropriate. Ms. Young said, “You feel bad because you don’t want to jump in and make them feel like they are not being effective, but you also don’t want the kids to be confused….you can kind of see the look and she might forget to add something that is they key piece to the lesson.” She also said, “But with STAAR tests next week, I have to jump in and make sure that if it is a new concept
that they heard the right information up front.” Ms. Copeland agreed with jumping in for the sake of the test as she said,

I feel bad because I usually jump in a lot, but it’s usually the math, and she is just missing like one little piece, and I try to bite my tongue but I feel like it is just critical that they [the students in the class] know. I kind of felt like, I’ve jumped in quite a little bit because of the time of the year.

Jenna's mentors felt the need to “jump in” not only while she taught, but also to assist with classroom management. Ms. Young said, “If students were getting too loud, or if they were not really listening to her, I felt like I had to jump in.” Ms. Copeland concluded by saying, “You cannot be afraid to tell them [student teachers] something they have done if it has gone wrong, whether it is leaving something out of the lesson or correcting misbehavior.” Both mentor teachers told me advice that they had shared with her. Ms. Copeland told Jenna, “You will learn what I have done correctly, but I also make mistakes too. It is okay to learn from my mistakes.” She later told me that Jenna has seen her “flub up.” She told Jenna “I’m not perfect, I make mistakes. Just because we are teachers and adults doesn’t mean we don’t make mistakes.” Our conversation ended with her letting me know, “I think we do have a big impact on student teachers as we are able to show them what the real world is like and the ins and outs of what life is like as a teacher.” Jenna’s second mentor, Ms. Young, told me she hopes that what she modeled for Jenna in the classroom was positive because she believed that it is “ultimately going to impact her students if she believes that my way is the correct way as that is what she is going to emulate.” She ended our conversation saying, “I am what she [Jenna] sees, so that is going to shape what she believes teaching is.”

Jenna’s mentor teachers not only supported her by working together planning lessons, but with issues outside of the classroom. Jenna said, “A mentor teacher is a role model that will teach me what the college can’t, like real life situations.” She continued by saying, “I'm kind of
blown away by how much Ms. Young has been helpful and how much she has supported me. Just last week I went to the job fair, and she really helped go over my resume."

When talking with Jenna’s mentor teachers before I observed her, both voiced their concern about her lack of confidence. Ms. Copeland said, “She needs to have confidence in herself while teaching,” and “She continues to worry about her confidence.” During her second rotation, Ms. Young added, “She needs confidence,” and “She did all the planning for this lesson, but her confidence….”

I noticed during my first observation that Jenna had students at their desks the entire lesson and she seemed to be frustrated with their behavior. I noted that her body language and tone changed when she said, “Is that clear?” During the second observation, students sat on the carpet while Jenna read a book. The students then proceeded to their seats to write a speech about what they would do as president. Lastly, they cast their votes for class president. Jenna focused on time management during her lesson and set a timer to help her with transitions, which seemed to help her lesson flow. Overall, the last lesson seemed to flow the best of the four. This could be because students were not in their seats for 20 minutes or longer after Jenna’s mini-lesson. They rotated around the room in stations. Surprisingly enough, no students needed to be disciplined during this lesson.

Although Jenna struggled with her confidence while teaching, she began to realize that her lessons went more smoothly when she created a relationship with the students as she “earned their trust, in a way, and we both feel comfortable by having open communication.” Jenna said the more time she spent with her students; the more she got to know them and was able to develop relationships with them with both “trust and open communication.” She realized that during her first rotation, she was able to attain a stronger relationship with her students because
she was with them all day compared to her second rotation, where the students were only with her half a day. In the end, she learned that building relationships was a way to “earn their trust.”

Evidence of issues while teaching and practicing classroom management was revealed throughout her dialogue journal. Jenna was slow to add the dialogue journal to her routine. During the first rotation, she asked Ms. Copeland one question about student reading levels and wrote three personal notes to herself. However, Ms. Copeland wrote seven notes to Jenna during the first rotation. Ms. Copeland started out writing specific comments to Jenna that included, “You did a good job getting ready for math and you explained the steps well,” and “You did well with the reading story since it was your first time.” The next four notes that Ms. Copeland wrote in the journal seemed as if they were for my benefit as well as Jenna’s, as she talked about Jenna in the third person. For example, she said, “Jenna has really improved on her time management,” “Jenna did a good job teaching math,” “Jenna has done a great job of explaining directions and checking with the students to see if they understand what to do,” and “Jenna has had to really keep to the schedule today and has done a great job.” I assume that Ms. Copeland wrote these comments in Jenna’s journal knowing that both Jenna and I would see them. Ms. Copeland knew that I would be evaluating Jenna, but I did not have the daily interaction with Jenna that she did. Therefore, Ms. Copeland may have intended to influence my evaluation of Jenna.

Both of Jenna’s mentor teachers included in the dialogue journals positive feedback and constructive criticism related to their classroom observations. During the second rotation, Ms. Young wrote notes to Jenna about three specific lessons that she observed. Table 13 shows evidence of both the positive feedback and constructive criticism Jenna received.
At the end of both rotations, I asked the mentor teachers how they felt about evaluating Jenna. At the end of the first rotation, Ms. Copeland said she was going to feel good about it and added that Jenna would be scoring really well. Ms. Young said at the end of the second rotation, “I can’t say anything negative about her. She’s been a great student. She’s been wonderful and I do not have a problem evaluating her and giving her honest feedback.” Therefore, although Jenna may not have felt confident about her teaching, both of her mentor teachers felt that overall she did a good job with teaching. However, toward the end of the semester, the least confident of the student teachers still seemed to be Jenna, who told me,

I think I don't feel too comfortable changing it [the lesson] by myself, you know, because I still want to ask, ‘How do you usually do this?’ I didn't write the lesson plan so I feel like if you do write it, you know it. I don't. However, student teaching has helped me open my eyes and just kind of see the real world, real life situations, and just being in the
school environment dealing with real children instead of just reading about it in a textbook.

Table 14 shows Jenna’s themes across data sets related her confidence in teaching, specific factors related to her changes in confidence and how Jenna perceived her mentor teacher influenced her confidence in teaching. Tables 15 and 16 reveal her mentor teachers’ perspectives related to Jenna’s confidence in teaching, factors to which they attributed Jenna’s changes in confidence, and how they perceived their own influence/power over these changes.

Table 14

*Jenna’s Themes Across Data Sets*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| RQ1 (a): How did student teacher confidence in teaching change across both student teaching placements? | • Created relationship with students  
• Relationship with her mentor teacher  
• More advice she received from her mentor teacher  
• Struggled with perfection  
• Lack of student engagement |
| RQ1 (b): To what did student teachers attribute changes perceived in their self-perceived confidence in teaching? | • Built relationships with students  
• Implemented classroom management  
• Over-preparation and planning  
• Actual student teaching experience  
• Relationship with her mentor teacher  
• Grade level and subject taught |
| RQ2: How did student teachers believe their mentor teachers influenced their confidence in teaching during the student teaching placement? | • Gave positive feedback and constructive criticism  
• Imitated mentor teachers style  
• Helped plan lessons  
• Supportive |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 15</th>
<th>Ms. Copeland’s Perspectives Related to Jenna’s Confidence in Teaching</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>RQ3 (a):</strong> How did mentor teachers perceive their respective student teachers’ change in teaching confidence during the student teaching placement?</td>
<td><strong>RQ3 (b):</strong> To what factors did mentor teachers attribute these perceived changes in their respective student teacher’s teaching confidence?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Decreased confidence while student teaching | • Jenna looked over at Ms. Copeland for help during the lessons.  
• Struggled with classroom management  
• Jenna was unsure of lesson content | • Ms. Copeland encouraged Jenna.  
• Looked away  
• Interject while Jenna taught | |
| Increased confidence with mentor teacher interaction | **RQ3 (a):** How did mentor teachers perceive their respective student teachers’ change in teaching confidence during the student teaching placement? | **RQ3 (b):** To what factors did mentor teachers attribute these perceived changes in their respective student teacher’s teaching confidence? | **RQ3(c):** How did mentor teachers perceive their own influence/power over these changes? |
| | • Encouragement from mentor teacher  
• Imitated Ms. Copeland  
• Feedback from mentor teacher  
• Co-planned lessons | | |
| | | | Being available for Jenna  
Modeled lessons  
Gave positive feedback and constructive criticism  
Did not let Jenna teach ten consecutive full days |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 16</th>
<th>Ms. Young’s Perspectives Related to Jenna’s Confidence in Teaching</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>RQ3 (a):</strong> How did mentor teachers perceive their respective student teachers’ change in teaching confidence during the student teaching placement?</td>
<td><strong>RQ3 (b):</strong> To what factors did mentor teachers attribute these perceived changes in their respective student teacher’s teaching confidence?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Increased confidence during the student teaching | • Struggled with timing  
• Struggled with classroom management  
• Jenna was unsure of lesson content | • Encouraged Jenna  
• Gave positive feedback and constructive criticism  
• Co-planned lessons | |
| Increased confidence when she could watch Ms. Young teach during the first rotation | • Jenna imitated Ms. Young | • Gave advice and support to Jenna  
• Role model | |
| Increased confidence when students were engaged | • Built relationships with students | • Allowed Jenna to teach without interruption | |
Leanne was at the same school as Hannah and Jenna, where she taught a self-contained kindergarten class and then had two classes of third graders daily. Her schedule was similar to Hannah’s and Jenna’s in the second rotation, as she taught only two subjects, except Leanne taught language arts and social studies. Leanne’s third grade class set-up was different from those of the other student teachers because the third grade morning class was an inclusion classroom. Students who needed extra accommodations or extra help were placed in this room. Out of the 18 students in the class, nine were inclusion students.

Leanne’s interest in becoming a teacher began when she was in junior high school. When I asked Leanne why she wanted to become a teacher, she replied,

Well, I got to experience doing summer school when I was a junior in high school. So, that was 2008, maybe, at church, and I taught pre-k and kindergarten. I taught for two years, every summer before I went into college and only because my first time there I was ...it was my first time ever teaching a class, and I just loved interacting with the kids and I loved seeing them learn. Basically, I just loved seeing them grow and that I could be of service or to help them grow. So, I thought that was really a humbling situation and like a great thing to do.

Throughout the semester when I asked Leanna how her lessons went, she first replied with a comment about her classroom management. After her first observation, she said, “It went better than I expected. It was hard making sure that everyone was listening and understood what I was saying.” Two weeks later after another observation, the first thing she said to me was, “It was a little harder for classroom management today, for some reason. Maybe I should have explained it better.” Several weeks later, during her second rotation, she replied, “I felt like it went well over all, but it was hard getting kids to stay on task.” Finally, during her last week as a student teacher when I asked how the lesson went she said, “It was rough today, I think, I don't
know why. The class was so hard to manage today for some reason.” She wrote the following questions to her mentor teacher in her dialogue journal:

1. What are your classroom procedures?
2. The first week when school starts…How did you decide on your classroom rules and developing classroom management? How many times of repeating rules/discipline during each day?
3. What has been your most successful classroom management technique?
4. Do you have any major/important tips and advice you would like to share with me as a first year teacher?

However, something that became clear to Leanne at the end of the semester, according to her clear and unclear windows, was that she learned classroom management was smoother when students were actively learning, directions/expectations were clear, and when she built relationships with her students. Leanne believed that in order to maintain discipline in the classroom, developing relationships with her students was essential. She said she noticed that as she and the students began to make connections, they respected her more and took her “more seriously.”

At the beginning of the semester, Leanne’s goal was perfection. In order to obtain this, she worked hard on classroom management and procedures from the start. She used a bell, a clapping pattern, and ClassDojo to grab her students’ attention and to keep them on task. She even modeled or had a student help her model what the class should do independently. However, she struggled with making sure that she asked quality questions and that her students understood the lesson objective. The first time I observed her, she asked questions such as “How many chicks are there?” and “Who do you think ate the food?” and even “Are there rules when we count?” After her first observation, Leanne shared with me that she struggled with creating and remembering higher-level questions. Nevertheless, after our conversation something changed. The next lesson, Leanne not only used higher-level questions, but also she put post-it notes
throughout the read aloud so that she would not forget what questions she wanted to ask her students. As she read the text, her face lit up and she later told me that she felt more confident teaching now that she knew the right questions to ask.

As the semester progressed, she also recognized that it is okay to make mistakes; she could learn from them and strive to do better the next time. She said,

I am much more … or I can handle or accept the fact that I make mistakes more. That's the big thing because I am very, like, I have to get everything perfect, and everything has to be right the first time, and when I did make mistakes, I'd kind of freak out and kind of freeze and kind of tense up and don't blank out. That's my personality, but now I'm more able to accept, like, my own saying that I can make mistakes, and it's okay, and I learn from it and I move on.

Like her students, Leanne said, “She is still developing.” This was clarified when I talked with Ms. Ruffin. She said,

The cool thing about our class is if you mess up in the morning, you get to redeem yourself in the afternoon because you teach it again. This has really helped increase Leanne’s confidence. I don’t have to interrupt her at all while she is teaching, and I don’t have to add to her lessons. She does a fantastic job.

I asked Leanne’s first mentor teacher, Ms. Sproles, if she thought that mentor teachers could influence the confidence of student teachers. She said that if a mentor teacher works with the student teacher ahead of time preparing the lessons and modeling the teaching process, then the student teacher’s confidence level should increase. Ms. Sproles even said, “You can beat them down or you can pump them up; you have to find the middle ground.” Lastly, Ms. Sproles believed she and Ms. Ruffin became role models for Leanne.

I think what I do is what she [Leanne] knows. Then when she gets to Ms. Ruffin, how she teaches will be a little bit of a combination of what I do and what Ms. Ruffin does and what she picks up from her. So, without seeing other teachers on a consistent regular basis, you don’t figure out who you are as a teacher until you have taught several years and just kind of molded yourself into that.
Leanne’s second mentor teacher, Ms. Ruffin, believed mentor teachers could affect student teachers positively or negatively “if you are not willing to communicate and share what you know, and talk a lot.” She then shared the Oreo approach, which she used with Leanne. Ms. Ruffin would make a positive comment, a criticism, and then another positive comment. Ms. Sproles also believed constant communication with the student teacher and giving her choices about how to teach a lesson helped increase confidence. However, she added that mentor teachers could also negatively affect a student teacher’s confidence by not communicating or sharing ideas.

When I asked Leanne about her mentor teachers and how they had helped her during student teaching, she named several different ways. These are summarized in Table 17.

Table 17

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leanne’s Support from her Mentor Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Rotation: Ms. Sproles: Kindergarten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplied necessary materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helped me with planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Said I could contact her at anytime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guided me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gave me the freedom to try new things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answered my questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supported and encouraged me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helped me prepare for interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talked to the principal about me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modeled lessons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gave me advice: stay organized, plan ahead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taught me how to pace and think ahead</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Leanne called her second mentor teacher her “friend,” and when I asked her mentor teacher, Ms. Ruffin, about their relationship, she described it similarly, as “best friends.” Ms. Ruffin told me that they had a good working relationship, and she thought of them as partner-teachers. She ended the conversation by saying she felt they were “equals,” and she did not feel
like she was “over” Leanne. Leanne agreed and said she felt more confident and comfortable in Ms. Ruffin’s classroom because she used language that was easy for her to understand, and Ms. Ruffin’s classroom environment was very active, where everyone had fun and laughed.

Leanne expressed that the better organized or over-prepared she was for the lesson, the easier the instruction flowed, and the more confident she felt while teaching. She continued by saying, I have learned from this experience [student teaching] that I have to sometimes fly by the seat of my pants. I’ve got everything written out from beginning to end and I think realizing that things don’t always go like you have them planned. You have to take what you have and do your best so really being able to practice that has really helped.

“Over-prepared” for Leanne meant that she read her lesson, created an outline, and used post-it-notes to help her remember the lesson content. She continued by saying,

I kind of come up with my own [lesson] format. Like, she [her mentor teacher] tells me what she wants the kids to learn, what the concept is she wants them to get, and what activities, but I feel like I come up with how I teach it more.

However, this was not always the case. At the beginning of the semester, Ms. Sproles said that Leanne tended to repeat the words that she had used while teaching. Ms. Sproles wished that Leanne would teach her own way instead of imitating her. She also reported that when Leanne would look over at her for help during lessons, she would interject to clarify something or even explain something so the students would understand better. However, towards the end of the semester, this rarely occurred. In the end, Ms. Sproles told me,

I've already sent out an email out this morning to Kathy, who is the early childhood supervisor director in the district, saying, “I have a student teacher who is fabulous…if you have principals looking for someone, I have a student teacher from UNT who wants Early Childhood, and she is great.”

Similarly, at the beginning of the second rotation, Leanne’s mentor teacher, Ms. Ruffin, said,

I hear her saying my same words that I say because she repeats them. Every student teacher I’ve had has done it, but I don’t know how to get her to do it her way instead of doing it my way.
When I asked Ms. Ruffin at the end of the semester about Leanne’s confidence, she said, “She found her own way to do things.” Ms. Ruffin also told me that student teachers “should not try to be something that they aren’t, and she [Leanne] hasn’t.”

Table 18 shows Leanne’s themes across data sets related her confidence in teaching, specific factors related to changes in her confidence, and how Leanne perceived her mentor teachers influenced her confidence in teaching. Tables 19 and 20 reveal her mentor teachers' perspectives related to Leanne’s confidence in teaching, factors they attributed to Leanne’s changes in confidence, and how they perceived their own influence/power over these changes.

Table 18

*Leanne’s Themes Across Data Sets*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RQ1 (a): How did student teacher confidence in teaching change across both student teaching placements?</td>
<td>• Followed through with discipline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Engaged her students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Made directions clearer for students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Improved time management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Built relationships with mentor teacher and students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Struggled with perfection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ1 (b): To what did student teachers attribute changes perceived in their self-perceived confidence in teaching?</td>
<td>• Engaged students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Classroom management implementation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Over-preparation and perfection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Actual student teaching experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Suggested and implemented ideas for lessons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ2: How did student teachers believe their mentor teachers influenced their confidence in teaching during the student teaching placement?</td>
<td>• Gave positive feedback and constructive criticism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Modeled lessons and classroom management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Helped plan lessons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Supportive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Ms. Sproles’ Perspectives Related to Leanne’s Confidence in Teaching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ3 (a): How did mentor teachers perceive their respective student teachers’ change in teaching confidence during the student teaching placement?</th>
<th>RQ3 (b): To what factors did mentor, teachers attribute these perceived changes in their respective student teacher’s teaching confidence?</th>
<th>RQ3 (c): How did mentor teachers perceive their own influence/power over these changes?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Increased confidence during the student teaching experience | - Self-created and implemented lessons  
- Actual teaching experience  
- Imitated Ms. Sproles | - Planned lessons together  
- Checked over Leanne’s lessons before she taught  
- Gave positive feedback and constructive criticism  
- Modeled teaching |
| Increased confidence with student engagement | - Better classroom management follow-through  
- Built relationships with students | - Modeled classroom management strategies  
- Tried to not interfere when Leanne taught |

### Ms. Ruffin’s Perspectives Related to Leanne’s Confidence in Teaching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ3 (a): How did mentor teachers perceive their respective student teachers’ change in teaching confidence during the student teaching placement?</th>
<th>RQ3 (b): To what factors did mentor, teachers attribute these perceived changes in their respective student teacher’s teaching confidence?</th>
<th>RQ3 (c): How did mentor teachers perceive their own influence/power over these changes?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Increased confidence while student teaching | - Self-created and implemented lessons  
- Actual teaching experience | - Gave Leanne positive feedback and constructive criticism  
- Taught Leanne how to differentiate for students |
| Increased confidence during mentor teacher interaction | - Daily communication  
- Planned lessons together  
- Gave verbal and written feedback | - Availability  
- Collaboration  
- Allowed Leanne to teach with minimal interruptions |

**Katie**

Katie taught kindergarten during the first rotation and fourth grade in the second rotation.

In kindergarten, Katie taught two classes because it was a dual language class in which students
were taught language and literacy in English and Spanish. The first group of students spoke
mainly English and the second group, mainly Spanish. In the fourth grade classroom, Katie had
three rotations of students and taught only language arts: reading, spelling, and writing. Her
school was the smallest of the three schools but was the most economically diverse.

When I asked Katie why she wanted to be a teacher, she replied,

I told my mom when I was five that I wanted to adopt all the little kids in the world
because I didn’t want any kid to not know what it felt like to be loved. So I’ve stuck with
that my entire life. Ideally, I want to teach for a few years and then eventually look at
getting my Master’s in social work. I’d really like to open up my own advocacy center.
But I know that as a 22 year old graduate from college that is not a realistic expectation
right now. So I was trying to think about what is the best way that I can get in there and
start helping kids and affecting their lives and letting them know that someone cares and
teaching has been that. As soon as I walked out of a class one day, I changed my major
and never looked back. It’s been wonderful. Just getting to see how they grow
emotionally and academically is worth the stress, anxiety, and all of the things that are
not so great about teaching.

I could really see a difference in Katie’s confidence during the semester. At the beginning
of the semester, when I asked how the lesson went, she would say, “I think that it went fairly
well. I know that I did have a few kids off task at different times. There are things that I can
improve on.” At the end of the first rotation, her reply was similar. Katie said, “I think it went
pretty well. For me it is always difficult to juggle stations and doing guided reading.” However,
when we talked during the second rotation when she was teaching fourth graders, her reply was
“I think it went very well. I’m very pleased with how it went.” While discussing the lesson from
the last observation, she said, “I think it went very well. Being able to explain things on so many
different levels helped the students understand the concept. I felt like I accomplished that.” The
difference between her confidence during her first and second rotation was also evident during
our interviews as seen in her comments presented in Table 21.
When I asked Katie which grade level she preferred teaching, she said fourth grade. She told me she was surprised, but she actually preferred the older students. Katie also said she enjoyed seeing the connections the older students made and how they built upon those connections. She then told me she felt she could relate to the older students better and formed relationships with them more easily. Another reason for Katie’s higher confidence during the second rotation might have been the relationships she had with her two mentor teachers. Her kindergarten mentor teacher, Ms. Bridges, said their relationship was a “teacher/student relationship.” She told me that student teachers come in and want to be team members or equals, but that comes later. When I asked Katie’s second mentor teacher, Ms. Griffith, about their relationship she said it was as if they were colleagues and not mentor and student teacher. Ms. Griffith said that Katie was part of the fourth grade team. Although both mentor teachers were over 40, had taught for over 20 years, and had had several student teachers in the past, their philosophies differed when it came to building a relationship with a student teacher.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Rotation: Kindergarten</th>
<th>Second Rotation: Fourth Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kids were off task</td>
<td>Teaching went well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keeping students busy and focused was a challenge</td>
<td>Grade level: Can see progress of the older students and how lessons are built upon each other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everyone can improve on something</td>
<td>Relate content to students and make connections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students lose focus while transitioning</td>
<td>Working on questions that are age appropriate so students understand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Things don’t always go as planned</td>
<td>Able to teach lesson in many ways to explain a topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take what you have and do your best</td>
<td>Students were engaged and understood the lesson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need to be able to multi-task</td>
<td>Content and comfort teaching older students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need to explain directions better</td>
<td>Confidence level teaching and planning and putting it all together is higher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need to be enthusiastic no matter what is going on at home [in her personal life]</td>
<td>More teaching experience helps me to be a better teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using phone to manage time management</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need to work on follow-through with discipline</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 21

*Katie’s Changing Confidence*
From the beginning to the end of student teaching, Katie’s confidence while teaching seemed to grow. Ms. Bridges, her first mentor teacher, said that at the beginning of the semester, Katie imitated her teaching style, and Ms. Bridges felt that Katie was looking for more guidance, which she had not had to give to previous student teachers. She felt that Katie looked over at her often while teaching, looking for approval. Even though Ms. Bridges told Katie, “Student teaching is the time that you can try new and different things and if you fail you still have a little bit of a safety net.” She admitted that not only had there been a few times that she pointed at a student, who was not attentive to the lesson. She also felt like she had to jump in while Katie taught. She said,

There are some parts, like, we don’t have a do over with. We don’t have a catch up on this because I have another partner teacher who we have to keep up with. So, there have been a lot more interruptions that I have done, so I can make sure that kids are getting certain points.

However, towards the end of the first rotation Ms. Bridges said that Katie is “by far one of the strongest [student teachers] I’ve had in quite a while.”

During Katie’s second rotation, Ms. Griffith said that although Katie did some of the same things that she would have done during the lesson, Katie also changed or added to lessons to make them her own. While Katie was teaching, Ms. Griffith reported that she never felt she needed to jump in and clarify or add to the lesson. She said, “I feel like she knows what she is doing.” These comments aligned with Katie’s comments summarized in Table 9 that refer to her changing confidence from her first to her second rotation. In the end, Ms. Griffith said, “I think she is top notch all the way. I don’t have any reservations whatsoever. I think she will be really, really good at what she does.”

Based on interviews with the five student teachers, Katie seemed the most confident after her third observation. When I asked her about her lesson, Katie told me that she thought, “It went
really well.” Then she proceeded to tell me how she had taken over and planned language arts and reading for the entire week. She then gave specific details about how she had planned that day’s lesson. Before teaching, she had talked with Ms. Griffith about her ideas for teaching media literacy and persuasive language, and, according to Katie, she let her run with it. However, Ms. Griffith looked over “every little detail of the lesson before it was taught,” according to Katie. Ms. Griffith even checked to make sure that they were age-appropriate and helped her differentiate instruction for students working on different levels. Katie explained how Ms. Griffith had a written system that she used so that “at a glance” she could tell if that student was gifted, needed accommodations, was a low reader, etc. This system helped Katie while planning her lessons. Katie admitted that, because of the upcoming STAAR testing, they “talked through every part of the lesson, discussing students’ strengths, weaknesses, and areas of concern.” Katie noted that she was not allowed to teach writing because the fourth graders would be tested on it.

Katie said both of her mentor teachers were supportive and wonderful and helped push her out of her comfort zone. She continued by describing them “like moms and role models.”

As Katie’s confidence grew over the semester, she realized not everything had to be perfect, as she had thought at the beginning of her practicum. She reflected,

When I walked into that kindergarten classroom that first day, I was terrified. I was terrified that my mentor was not going to like me. I was terrified that my kids were going to be, like, who is she, and not want to do anything. Going into the fourth grade room [her second rotation classroom], I was still nervous, but I knew, “Okay this is my job. This is what I am here to do.” Just my confidence level of my planning and actually teaching the lessons and making sure that things are all put together skyrocketed. I think also my ability to look at things in perspective has changed a lot; not everything really matters. There are some things that matter, but there are some things that don't weigh as heavily. I have developed that ability to go, you know, “if it gets done, it gets done.” There are things that we can do without. I also think that being able to focus on the positive has been one thing that I have been able to develop. I used to strive for perfection all the time and any time I didn't get that perfection, it was like, my heart broke because I did everything I could. So, I think again being able to look at perspective and just to
realize that it doesn't have to be perfect all the time and it's not going to be perfect. It has really developed over time.

Every time I observed Katie, she demonstrated a high level of energy and animation throughout her lessons with both her kindergarten students and her fourth grade group. She spoke slowly and enunciated her words precisely so that students would understand. Katie’s classroom management improved throughout each rotation. During the first rotation, Katie’s first and second observations showed this improvement, as she corrected student behavior nine times in the first observation and only once in the second observation. Similarly, for her second rotation, she corrected student behavior five different times during the first observation and none her second. Also, in each rotation, the second observation revealed a change in her relationship with the students such that correcting behavior decreased. This was evident as she smiled more when she talked to students, and they became more actively engaged. Katie began to find out connections and interests of students that were similar to hers, and students seemed to want to work harder to please her.

This became more evident to Katie when she explained how she made connections and built relationships with her students. Katie said there was a huge difference in the way she related to kindergarteners compared to fourth graders. It was hard relating to the younger students and their interests; however, the older students talked about a movie that Katie had seen, and she connected with them while discussing the movie. Katie described how she connections with her students,

I take mental pictures about what they wear. Do they wear sports jerseys? What can I talk to them about? What do they talk about? Do they talk about pets? Do they talk about their family? Just trying to listen in to those key conversations that they might not be having with me, but could give me a little bit of insight on how they learn. What their interests are.
She concluded, “I really think that I build my relationships with my students very well.” Katie noted that, growing up, she dreamed that one day she would teach the younger children. Student teaching changed her mind. When I asked her why, she said, “I not only can relate to the older students and make connections, but I can see the progress of the older students and how lessons are built upon each other.”

In the end, Katie wrote a note to herself in her dialogue journal saying, “I learned so many valuable teaching, learning, and behavior techniques throughout my observations and collaborations with the entire team.” She ended her note by disclosing that, “Thanks to my time in student teaching, I truly feel more confident in the classroom.”

Table 22 shows Katie’s themes across data sets related to her confidence in teaching, specific factors related to her changes in confidence, and how Katie perceived her mentor teachers influenced her confidence in teaching. Tables 23 and 24 reveal her mentor teachers’ perspectives related to Katie’s confidence in teaching, factors to which they attributed Katie’s changes in confidence, and how they perceived their own influence/power over these changes.

Table 22

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RQ1 (a): How did student teacher confidence in teaching change across both student teaching placements?</td>
<td>• Created relationship with students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• More advice she received from her mentor teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Built relationships with students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Needed perfection while teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ1 (b): To what did student teachers attribute changes perceived in their self-perceived confidence in teaching?</td>
<td>• Engaged students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Classroom management implementation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Over-preparation and perfection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Actual student teaching experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Relationship with her mentor teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Grade level and subject taught</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Ideas accepted by mentor teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ2: How did student teachers believe their mentor teachers influenced their confidence in teaching during the student teaching placement?</td>
<td>• Modeled lessons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Created detailed lesson plans together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Interacted while she taught.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 23

**Ms. Bridges’ Perspectives Related to Katie’s Confidence in Teaching**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ3 (a): How did mentor teachers perceive their respective student teachers’ change in teaching confidence during the student teaching placement?</th>
<th>RQ3 (b): To what factors did mentor, teachers attribute these perceived changes in their respective student teacher’s teaching confidence?</th>
<th>RQ3(c): How did mentor teachers perceive their own influence/power over these changes?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Increased confidence with student engagement | • Created relationships with students  
• Gained students respect | • Corrected students while Katie taught |
| Increased confidence while student teaching | • Actual teaching experience  
• Implemented self-created lessons | • Allowed Katie to teach 10 consecutive days |
| Increased confidence during mentor teacher interaction | • Positive verbal and written feedback | • Added to Katie’s lesson while she taught |

### Table 24

**Ms. Griffith’s Perspectives Related to Katie’s Confidence in Teaching**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ3 (a): How did mentor teachers perceive their respective student teachers’ change in teaching confidence during the student teaching placement?</th>
<th>RQ3 (b): To what factors did mentor, teachers attribute these perceived changes in their respective student teacher’s teaching confidence?</th>
<th>RQ3(c): How did mentor teachers perceive their own influence/power over these changes?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Increased confidence with student engagement | • Created relationships with students  
• Gained students respect | • Left the classroom  
• Refrained from making comments while Katie taught |
| Increased confidence while student teaching | • Actual teaching experience  
• Implemented self-created lessons | • Not allowing Katie to teach 10 consecutive full days  
• Gave verbal advice and approval |
| Increased confidence during mentor teacher interaction | • Verbal and written feedback  
• Co-planned lessons | • Role model  
• Allowed Katie to create and implement lessons |

**Melanie**

Melanie taught a third grade self-contained class during the first rotation and a fifth grade class for the second rotation. Similar to Leanne, in her second rotation, Melanie taught just
language arts and social studies to two different classes. Melanie's second rotation was in fifth grade. Melanie was the oldest of the five student teachers, and when I asked her why she wanted to be a teacher, she said,

I’ve always wanted to be a teacher ever since I was little. I’ve loved my teachers, which was really great, and then I have loved children since I was a child, like, I used to hyperventilate when I saw babies. So, I babysat forever, and I knew that I wanted to work with children, and I specifically chose teaching because I like the ability to build a classroom community aspect. I thought of doing more one-on-one or small groups. I was interested in speech pathology, but I crave creating a classroom with diversity and respect and making them citizens of our classroom and then therefore they will be citizens in the future. I think that is very exciting and intriguing to me.

Melanie loved teaching the older students. She said that her personality and dry sense of humor fit better with the older ones, and she felt she related to them better. She even said, “As I form relationships with the students, they become actively engaged, which equals smoother classroom management.” Melanie confirmed this as she communicated through her clear and unclear windows that having relationships with her students made classroom management easier, which helped her feel more confident while teaching. Her second mentor teacher, Ms. Ganzer, wrote to Melanie in her dialogue journal, “You are truly great at relating to students. You relate to the introverted and/or socially awkward students just as easily as you do the outgoing ones. You are ahead of the game, Melanie!” She ended by telling Melanie, “I sense you’d be at ease in any grade level, but you do seem particularly comfortable in 5th. They love you.” Ms. Ganzer later told me, “Melanie has a good sense of humor and it shows through with her teaching and how she deals with the students.” When I observed Melanie, she had a great rapport with the students from the beginning. She would smile, talk, and joke with students, and it seemed to make them want to work harder for her, but she also knew when to step in and re-focus the class when needed. Melanie later told me that, although she preferred teaching the older students, she
lacked confidence teaching math and science and would rather teach language arts and social studies.

Unlike Leanne and Katie who imitated their mentor teachers, Melanie’s mentor teachers said she showed her own teaching style from the beginning. Melanie described how she and Ms. Waldrop sat down on Friday afternoons to discuss plans for the following week. Ms. Waldrop asked Melanie, “This is what we did last year, what do you think?” Melanie felt Ms. Waldrop was receptive to her thoughts and ideas and gave suggestions Melanie might not have thought of on her own. For example, Melanie wanted her students to work in groups. Her mentor teacher did not put students in groups, so Melanie took a risk and started creating lessons that provided students the opportunity to work together with their peers. Melanie’s philosophy was more hands-on and student centered than Ms. Waldrop’s. Melanie said she felt more confident teaching when she was able to implement more of her own approach. She also noted that planning lessons with Ms. Waldrop and practice teaching helped her gain confidence in herself and taught her how to plan lessons. She continued by telling me, “I mean procrastination has always been my vice ever since early elementary school, like the little kids that are unorganized… I'm like, that's me. So, I am now seeing the fruit of my going home and being prepared.”

During the second rotation, Melanie revealed nervously that she was planning language arts for the entire team. She added it was not “overwhelming pressure, but it has to be perfect.” She continued by describing her student teaching experience, “It’s like real life planning and prepares me to take on the class.” Melanie expressed that she felt she was “doing it all.” Later she would sit down with Ms. Ganzer, who asked, “Okay, what are you unsure of? How do we want to make this? What do you want to do to make it better? Are you comfortable?” Even
though Melanie was planning for the entire grade level, she was worried about failing while teaching. More specifically, she felt she had failed if her students did not understand the content that she taught them because they needed this content for their upcoming STAAR tests. She continued to be stressed about this during her second rotation in fifth grade because the lessons she planned were taught to two classes, and she felt responsible for her students doing well on the test.

With regard to classroom management, Ms. Waldrop reported she learned that she should just leave the room when she felt like she was going to “jump in”. She said, “It is hard though. You have to leave. Even this morning, the table right in front of me was getting rowdy, and I said, ‘I’m going upstairs for a minute.'” Melanie said when Ms. Waldrop left the room she felt pressured to get the class under control. During Melanie’s second rotation, Ms. Ganzer said she felt comfortable leaving the classroom knowing Melanie could handle anything that came up while she was out of the room. Although, Ms. Ganzer tried to step in one time to help with discipline and said,

I sucked in to say something, and she [Melanie] came in and said it before I did, and I was like, ok. I have never had to correct anything that she said [while teaching] or come back later and say, ‘I know you said this, but no….’ never had to do anything like that.

Ms. Waldrop described her role as a mentor teacher as being the one “to show her [Melanie] what was involved in teaching, what to do to plan and develop lessons, and how to work with students.” Ms. Waldrop told me she talked with Melanie and told her, “You might learn some things, but you are going to learn some things that won’t work for you, too.” Ms. Waldrop went on to say her role was not to tell her student teacher exactly what to do but to “give her some ideas and guide her through the teaching process.” This advice was similar to the advice from Ms. Ganzer, who expressed,
You are going to see me do things that maybe you like, but you are going to see me do things that you were like, ‘I would do that differently’ and that’s like, a ding, ding, ding moment, and take it and remember it and apply it to your own classroom.

Another type of advice came from constructive feedback given to Melanie by her mentor teachers. Ms. Waldrop told me she talked with Melanie about the following:

I try to tell Melanie what’s working for her, and if there are a few things that I think she can tweak and fix, then that is something that she could work on. I would never try and tear her down. We would talk it through and see what we can work on.

Melanie told me Ms. Waldrop would jokingly say, “This is your compliment for the day” and then she would say, “You need to work harder on this.” Ms. Ganzer also felt that her role was to guide Melanie through the teaching process, which included not only giving her constructive feedback, but also positive feedback.

When I asked Melanie’s mentor teachers how they felt about evaluating her, Ms. Waldrop said, “Great, she’s done an awesome job! She is someone who has her own style, who is comfortable being herself, and who has a very dynamic personality.” Ms. Ganzer jokingly said,

If I mark her bad, can she stay longer? It is going to be easy to evaluate her. I am truly sad that it is over. I’m excited for her to graduate and see what else is in store for her.

Melanie thought that both of her mentor teachers were always available to collaborate about ideas, lessons, and classroom management strategies. Open communication and feedback were equally important to Melanie. Overall, she felt that both mentor teachers let her be herself but were there for her when she needed them.
### Table 25

**Melanie’s Themes Across Data Sets**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RQ1 (a): How did student teacher confidence in teaching change across both student teaching placements?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Learned to multi-task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Improved timing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Utilized wait time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Perfect lessons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Discipline follow through</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Built relationships with students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ1 (b): To what did student teachers attribute changes perceived in their self-perceived confidence in teaching?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Implemented classroom management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Engaged students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Over-preparation and perfection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Actual student teaching experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Relationship with her mentor teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Grade level and subject taught</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mentor teacher accepted ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ2: How did student teachers believe their mentor teachers influenced their confidence in teaching during the student teaching placement?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Gave positive feedback and constructive criticism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Supportive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Role model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Answered questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Let student teacher teach</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 25 shows Melanie’s themes across data sets related to her confidence in teaching, specific factors related to her changes in confidence, and how Melanie perceived her mentor teachers influenced her confidence in teaching. Tables 26 and 27 reveal her mentor teachers’ perspectives related to Melanie’s confidence in teaching, factors to which they attributed Melanie’s changes in confidence, and how they perceived their own influence/power over these changes.
### Table 26

**Ms. Waldrop’s Perspectives Related to Melanie’s Confidence in Teaching**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ3 (a): How did mentor teachers perceive their respective student teachers’ change in teaching confidence during the student teaching placement?</th>
<th>RQ3 (b): To what factors did mentor, teachers attribute these perceived changes in their respective student teacher’s teaching confidence?</th>
<th>RQ3(c): How did mentor teachers perceive their own influence/power over these changes?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Increased confidence with student engagement** | • Created relationships with students  
• Followed through with classroom management  
• Gained student respect | • Left the classroom to not correct students |
| **Increased confidence when controlled pacing and time management** | • Taught all the content from the lesson  
• Used a timer  
• Planned out the lesson | • Gave verbal and written feedback  
• Co-planned lessons |
| **Increased confidence while student teaching** | • Actual teaching experience  
• Implement and taught self-created lessons  
• Planned lessons for grade level | • Clarified or added to Melanie’s lessons when she taught  
• Allowed Melanie to teach the full ten consecutive days |

### Table 27

**Ms. Ganzer’s Perspectives Related to Melanie’s Confidence in Teaching**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ3 (a): How did mentor teachers perceive their respective student teachers’ change in teaching confidence during the student teaching placement?</th>
<th>RQ3 (b): To what factors did mentor, teachers attribute these perceived changes in their respective student teacher’s teaching confidence?</th>
<th>RQ3(c): How did mentor teachers perceive their own influence/power over these changes?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Confidence increased with student engagement** | • Created relationships with students  
• Gained students respect | • Ms. Ganzer left the room while Melanie taught so the students would view Melanie as the teacher |

Confidence increased while student teaching
- Actual teaching experience
- Planned lessons for the grade level
- Implemented technology
- Restrained from taking over Melanie’s lessons
- Trust from mentor teacher

Confidence increased with mentor teacher interaction
- Open communication
- Planned and implemented lessons
- Planned together
- Let Melanie teach the full ten days

Cross Case Analysis

Several themes were relevant to the research questions concerning changes in student teacher confidence and factors influencing those changes, including the mentor teacher’s influence. Table 28, similar in format to tables in Lu (2013), provides an overview of the themes and key participants whose expressions supported these themes. Themes are listed in order of frequency, and specific examples per research question are provided after the table.
### Table 28

**Themes and Participants Whose Expressions Supported the Themes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RQ1 (a): How did student teacher confidence in teaching change across both student teaching placements?</td>
<td>• Engaged students</td>
<td>ST: Hannah, Jenna, Katie, Leanne, Melanie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Accurately taught the content</td>
<td>ST: Hannah, Jenna, Katie, Leanne, Melanie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Improved time management</td>
<td>ST: Katie, Leanne, Melanie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Followed through with discipline</td>
<td>ST: Hannah, Leanne, Melanie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ1 (b): To what did student teachers attribute changes perceived in their self-perceived confidence in teaching?</td>
<td>• Built relationship with students</td>
<td>ST: Hannah, Jenna, Katie, Leanne, Melanie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Classroom management implementation</td>
<td>ST: Hannah, Jenna, Katie, Leanne, Melanie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Accurately taught the content</td>
<td>ST: Hannah, Jenna, Katie, Leanne, Melanie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Actual student teaching experience</td>
<td>ST: Hannah, Jenna, Katie, Leanne, Melanie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Relationship with their mentor teacher</td>
<td>ST: Hannah, Jenna, Katie, Leanne, Melanie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Mentor teacher accepts ideas from student teacher</td>
<td>ST: Hannah, Katie, Leanne, Melanie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Grade level and subject taught</td>
<td>ST: Jenna, Katie, Melanie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ2: How did the student teachers believe their mentor teachers influenced their confidence?</td>
<td>• Being supportive</td>
<td>ST: Hannah, Jenna, Katie, Leanne, Melanie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Giving positive feedback and constructive criticism</td>
<td>ST: Hannah, Jenna, Katie, Leanne, Melanie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Role model</td>
<td>ST: Jenna, Katie, Leanne, Melanie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Interactions from mentor teacher while student teacher teaches</td>
<td>ST: Jenna, Katie</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. ST = student teacher.*
Research Question 1(a)

This question asked, how did student teacher confidence in teaching change across both student teaching placements?

As student teachers practiced the craft of teaching and gained experience in maintaining classroom management, their confidence in the classroom increased from the beginning to the end of the practicum as seen in Figure 1, which is based on my asking them their confidence level at the beginning and end of student teaching on a scale of 1 to 10.

![Figure 1. Student teachers’ stated self-confidence before and after student teaching.](image)

Student teacher’s confidence changed across both placements in four areas:

- When students were engaged
- Accurately taught the content
- As time management improved
- When they followed through with discipline
Student Engagement

All five student teachers believed they were more confident when their students were engaged in the lesson. Hannah said, “When I create lessons with technology, the students get excited and want to work with the iPads.” During the second student teacher interview, Katie told me, “The little ones love when they get to work in centers doing hands-on activities. This gives me more time to work with reading groups.” Melanie wanted her students to work in groups, since her first mentor teacher did not do it often. So, when she set up her first activity with students working with their peers in groups, she beamed as she told me how well it went. Although Leanne and Jenna seemed to be the least confident of the group, they were always excited to tell me when lessons went well and invariably, it was during a lesson where students were actively engaged.

Accurately Teaching the Content for the Benefit of the Student Teacher

As these five student teachers came in to the student teaching semester, they brought with them ideas on how to create lesson plans, how to manage the classroom, and how to teach lessons aligned with grade appropriate curriculum. During the first rotation of student teaching, student teachers were concerned with lesson planning, as they re-read over their lessons multiple times, used post-it notes to remind them of important questions to ask during the lesson, and created detailed outlines of their lesson plan to insure that they taught the lesson without error. These all aligned with what they had learned in their college courses, and they felt confident about themselves and their teaching when the lessons were taught how they planned. Student teachers said to me, “It has to be perfect,” “If they don’t understand the lesson, then I failed,” “Things did not go as planned,” “I am so nervous about teaching and the lesson not going as
planned,” “It could have gone better,” and “What should I do if it doesn’t work out?” All five student teachers struggled with teaching the content correctly.

Improving Time Management

Time management is a hard concept for student teachers to master during student teaching. Katie, Leanne, and Melanie struggled with this skill during their first rotations. Melanie talked about needing to learn to multi-task better so that she would be able to finish teaching a lesson on time. Katie said the time would just get away from her while she was working with students in groups. Leanne said, “I plan it all out, but it never goes the way I put it on paper, and so I know I always have to think about the time, but at the same time, I want them to get the lesson.” Ms. Sproles told her to plan ahead, even over-plan so that she did not leave any idle time. Leanne then created an outline of each lesson and, during her second rotation, she said, “I’ve learned to manage my time and think ahead.”

Discipline Follow-Through

Hannah, Leanne, and Melanie struggled with following through with their discipline from the beginning. They would warn students repeatedly and never give out consequences. Leanne said that she was strict and tried not to put up with “much attitude.” However, with so many responsibilities in the classroom, she sometimes let her students get away with disruptions in order to keep the lesson going. She shared with me at the end of the semester that she still was unclear about implementing “good classroom management from the first day of school.”

When I first observed Hannah, she had to stop ten different times due to classroom management issues. During the second rotation, there were no issues at all. On one occasion, she warned a student and, after the warning, he received a consequence. When I talked with her about it later, she felt that she had formed relationships with her students and they respected her
more, even when she delivered a consequence. Melanie told me that she and Ms. Waldrop tried
doing different call-backs with students for classroom management, but it did not seem to work.
For example, she would say “class” and the students would all say “yes.” “It’s the same results.
The students stop and listen and then start talking again.” She continued to tell me, “I need to
research and think about my philosophy of taking recess away. I realize it is effective, but it's
really hard for me to take that away.” The next semester, the same issues continued until Melanie
decided to implement ClassDojo (an electronic discipline system), and she told me that the
students were responding well. “Dojo helped my kids understand my expectations, and now I’m
not afraid to deliver consequences electronically because I can give positives and negatives.”

*Research Question 1(b)*

This question asked, to what did student teachers attribute changes in their self-perceived
certainty in teaching?

Student teachers attributed changes in confidence in teaching to the following:

- Building relationship with students
- Classroom management implementation
- Accurately teaching for the benefit of the classroom students
- Actual student teaching experience
- Relationship with their mentor teacher
- Ideas being accepted by their mentor teachers
- Grade level and subject taught

The first five themes were extracted from data of all five student teachers. Analysis of student
teachers related to RQ1 (b) is described below.
Building Relationships with Students

Student teacher confidence rose across both student teaching placements as the student teachers built relationships with their students. They became more confident with their classroom management and teaching. Table 29 details the participant, data source, and examples from the data related to building relationships with students.

Table 29

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Data source</th>
<th>Examples from data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hannah</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>“Building a classroom community is the most important thing.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DJ</td>
<td>“The best thing is for me to create a relationship with my students so they are having fun.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jenna</td>
<td>CUW</td>
<td>“It’s important to build and develop relationships with the students.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>STI</td>
<td>“You have to build a rapport with them. I think I have a good relationship with the students.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>STI</td>
<td>“Making connections with the students makes the lesson and classroom management run smoothly.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katie</td>
<td>STO/SC</td>
<td>During her observations, Katie related to students on a personal level. She laughed and had a connection and they respected her.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>STI</td>
<td>“Making connections with the students makes the lesson and classroom management run smoothly.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leanne</td>
<td>STI</td>
<td>“Classroom management is smoother when students are actively learning…and when I have a relationship with my students.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melanie</td>
<td>CUW</td>
<td>“Through relationships with the kiddos it makes classroom management that much easier.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DJ</td>
<td>“Note to self: Building a relationship with the students from the beginning helps the day run smoother which equals a more confident me.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. DJ = dialogue journal, STI = student teacher interview, CUW = Clear and Unclear Windows; STO/SC = student teacher observation/supervisor comments.

Dialogue journals, student teacher interviews, clear and unclear windows, and student teacher observation notes all contributed examples from all five student teachers related to the theme building relationships with students. These teacher/student relationships facilitated classroom management because students were actively engaged. As the students remained on-task, the student teachers became more confident and relaxed in the classroom. Four of the five
student teachers were unclear about forming relationships with the students in the classroom
before student teaching began. However, by the end of the first rotation, all five understood how
relating to the students contributed to the flow of their day and their confidence with
implementing classroom management and teaching.

Classroom Management Implementation

As relationships with students and confidence worked together for the student teachers,
implementing classroom management gained importance and was the next major theme. Based
on the data, I defined classroom management as ensuring that the lesson runs smoothly without
disruptions. Preventative measures that are part of classroom management include having a
discipline system in place and consistently following it, creating smooth transitions from one
activity to the next, maintaining pacing and timing during the lesson, and encouraging student
engagement. The first question I asked the student teachers during each interview was “How do
you think the lesson went?” Table 30 shows the exact evaluative words or phrases used by each
student teacher and, invariably, the first thing they talked about pertained to what I interpreted as
classroom management. Table 31 shows student teachers’ interview transcripts. These transcripts
show indicator phrases linked to changes in student teacher confidence related to classroom
management struggles. These struggles were prevalent throughout the practicum.
Table 30

Student Teacher Summary Comments about Observed Lessons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>First Observation</th>
<th>Second Observation</th>
<th>Third Observation</th>
<th>Fourth Observation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hannah</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Well</td>
<td>Well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jenna</td>
<td>Didn’t go</td>
<td>Better</td>
<td>Well</td>
<td>Okay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katie</td>
<td>Fairly well</td>
<td>Pretty well</td>
<td>Very well</td>
<td>Very well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leanne</td>
<td>Better than expected</td>
<td>Harder today</td>
<td>Well overall</td>
<td>Rough day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melanie</td>
<td>Okay</td>
<td>Okay</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 31

Indicator Phrases Showing Changes in all Five Student Teacher’s Confidence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>First Placement</th>
<th>Second Placement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Timing is off</td>
<td>Relationships built with students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenging keeping students busy and focused</td>
<td>Clear expectations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need follow through with classroom management</td>
<td>Able to multi-task and manage the classroom behavior while teaching a small group</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard to manage the whole group</td>
<td>Using my phone to track time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need to work on pacing and time management</td>
<td>Lesson went great</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students off task</td>
<td>Students were excited</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always repeating myself</td>
<td>Students were engaged</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constantly correcting students</td>
<td>Lesson was exciting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitions are hard</td>
<td>Connections were made</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need practice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not comfortable changing or adding to the lesson without the mentor teachers approval</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nervous</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not confident</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worried about teaching the content correctly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In fact, Katie said,

For me, it is always difficult to juggle stations and do guided reading because I always want to focus so much on my kids [in my guided reading group] that need that guidance… I've started to realize that I cannot do that fully. I always have to be considering what is going on in the room and with 20 kids, it's hard. I think my guided
reading lesson went very well; however, I think managing the other stations could have gone a little bit better.

Jenna, at the end of her second teaching rotation, responded to the statement: “Tell me about your strengths as a result of your student teaching practicum.” She said, “I think my strengths are I stick to my guns, and I tell them, ‘These are the rules, and you need to follow them and you know them,’ not a wavering kind of thing. I think that is one of my strengths.” All five student teachers struggled with classroom management implementation throughout their student teaching practicum; however, as they built relationships with students and “stuck to their guns,” their classroom management improved and they felt more confident in their teaching.

Accurately Teaching for the Benefit of the Classroom Students

Issues of over-preparation and perfection became most evident to me during the second rotation when the student teachers worked with upper elementary students. During the interviews, student teachers expressed concerns about different aspects of their lessons not going as planned, which interfered with their desire for teaching without errors. Jenna told me at the end of the practicum, “I think it's hard because you try to get everything as planned out and as organized as you think possible.” Leanne struggled with this at the beginning of the semester, but toward the end she realized that it was okay to make mistakes and said, “I can make mistakes, and it's okay, and I learn from it and I move on.” Melanie said, “I plan for the other teachers, so whatever I decide to do, all of fifth grade is doing, and not that that's like overwhelming pressure, but that I was, like, it has to be perfect.” Katie believed that her confidence in teaching grew over the semester, and she realized that not everything had to be perfect. She reflected,

I used to strive for perfection all the time and any time I didn't get that perfection, it was like, my heart broke because I did everything I could. So, I think again being able to look at perspective and just to realize that it doesn't have to be perfect all the time and it's not going to be perfect. It has really developed over time.
Although Hannah did not specifically say the word “perfection,” she did talk quite a bit about making sure the lesson content was taught correctly. She said, “It's like, I stress out about it because there is the STAAR testing coming up and if they [students] don't understand it and they don't tell me, then how am I supposed to know?” Although all five student teachers were concerned with perfection while teaching, Hannah stressed about the upcoming STAAR test, Melanie worried about planning for the entire team, and the other three struggled with trying to find that balance where making mistakes were okay.

As the semester progressed, the goal of teaching the lesson accurately changed as state-mandated testing approached. Then student teachers wanted to teach their lessons perfectly for the sake of the students’ test scores. Mentor teacher interactions became more prevalent at this point, as the mentor teachers needed their students to learn the curriculum correctly so that they could pass the upcoming tests. Mentor teachers added to their student teachers’ lessons if they felt that an important piece of the curriculum had been omitted or if students were off task. In sum, student teachers first strived for perfection within their teaching for their benefit and then for the benefit of the students.

Actual Student Teaching Experience

The value of the actual student teaching experience was visible throughout the data. All five student teachers discussed how student teaching had increased their confidence in the classroom and helped solidify what they had learned in their prior education courses. When I asked them, “How is your student teaching experience helping you become a better teacher?” their responses were similar. Collectively they felt that student teaching was a/an…

- Real life experience
- Time to reflect, try new ideas, and get feedback
- Place to make mistakes and learn from them
- Experience that opened their eyes
- Way to deal with students and situations instead of just reading about them

More specifically, comments related to each student teacher's practicum experience and how it helped them grow as teachers are listed in Table 32.

Table 32

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Teacher</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hannah</td>
<td>“It is so much more than they actually teach you in class. You hear about it, learn about it, but you just need to experience it.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jenna</td>
<td>“The real world and real life situations.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katie</td>
<td>“Really being able to practice teaching…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leanne</td>
<td>“In school it was all knowledge and not a lot of experience, so all the thoughts about teaching was in my head and becoming a teacher was in my head, but now I am getting hands-on experience.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melanie</td>
<td>“It’s real-life teaching and planning.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All five student teachers chose student teaching as a factor affecting their confidence. They considered it a time to take what they had learned from their college experience and put it into real-life teaching practice.

Suggested and Implemented Ideas

Not all five student teachers expressed that suggesting and implementing ideas was influential to their confidence. Expressions from four of the five student teachers indicated that suggesting and implanting ideas positively influenced their confidence. For example, Melanie and Katie were both excited to tell me they had planned the lesson that I had just observed them teach. They felt as if their mentor teachers trusted them enough to let them both plan the lesson and then teach it. Melanie continued by telling me that she not only taught that lesson, but she planned for the entire grade level team. It seemed that Leanne felt the same when she said, “My mentor teacher gave me some materials, but then I was able to come up with the questions and
the ideas for the lesson on my own.” Hannah shared that during her second rotation she was able to implement technology ideas that Ms. Coonce was not ready to try on her own. Ms. Coonce later told me, “Hannah not only learns from me, but I can learn the latest technology ideas from her, too.”

Grade Level and Subject Taught

Three out of five student teachers mentioned that their confidence increased or decreased depending on which grade level and subject they taught. During student teaching, three student teachers realized they enjoyed teaching older students rather than younger ones. Although Melanie preferred the older students, she said she lacked confidence teaching mathematics and science and would rather teach language arts and social studies. Melanie and Hannah both said their personalities fit better with the more responsible older students because these student teachers wanted more flexibility while teaching and fewer disciplinary issues. They felt younger students needed constant reminders of the class rules, whereas the older students knew the expectations. Hannah continued to tell me she felt more confident teaching the same lesson twice in the older grade level because she knew she could teach it in the morning, receive feedback from her mentor teacher, and then tweak it for the afternoon class. Katie also preferred teaching the older students, even though growing up; she had dreamed that one day she would teach the younger children. Student teaching changed her mind. When I asked her why, she said that she related to the older students and enjoyed seeing their eyes light up as she taught. Jenna had a different view. She talked about how she enjoyed teaching in the lower grades because there was a lot of repetition that made first grade easier to teach. Although Leanne did not tell me which grade level she preferred, she did say,
Preparation, for example, in kindergarten… the kids did the same concepts every day, but we did it differently every day and so there was a lot of prepping each day. But, in 3rd grade, it is very routine based and practice, practice, practice.

Relationships with Their Mentor Teachers

Lastly, all five student teachers agreed that their relationships with their mentor teachers increased their confidence in teaching. However, they shared with me that their mentor teachers affected their confidence both positively and negatively. This theme served both as an answer for RQ1b and more specifically, for RQ2, as seen in the following section.

**Research Question 2**

This question asked, how did the student teachers believe their mentor teachers influenced their confidence?

While analyzing data, I found that four main themes emerged related to how student teachers believed their mentor teachers influenced their confidence. Behaviors that most affected their confidence included the mentor teachers being supportive, being role models, giving positive feedback and constructive criticism, and providing interaction while the student teacher was teaching.

**When Mentor Teachers Were Supportive**

Evidence of mentor teacher support appeared during the student teacher interviews as seen in Table 33. Overall, student teachers were more confident when their mentor teachers were supportive in helping them plan their lessons, listening to their ideas, and answering their questions. However, Hannah’s mentor teacher, Ms. Coonce, frustrated her when she would not plan with her. She told me that Ms. Coonce would “fly by the seat of her pants a lot.” Hannah did not feel confident about her teaching because she was given ideas or lessons at the last minute.
Table 33

Evidence of Mentor Teacher Support per Rotation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>First Rotation</th>
<th>Second Rotation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hannah</td>
<td>• worked on lesson plans together</td>
<td>• let me watch what she did in the morning so I could imitate it in the afternoon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• answered questions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• gave me advice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• let me attend meetings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• listened to my ideas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jenna</td>
<td>• planned lessons together</td>
<td>• looked over my resume and gives me ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• calmed me when I’m nervous</td>
<td>• looked at my plans for my observations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• encouraged me to try new things</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katie</td>
<td>• helped me find my strengths and weaknesses</td>
<td>• helped me understand how to find students strengths and weaknesses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• allowed me to try new things</td>
<td>• looked over my lessons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• helped me step out of my comfort zone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leanne</td>
<td>• provided teaching materials</td>
<td>• provided teaching materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• helped me plan lessons</td>
<td>• answered my questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• answered my questions</td>
<td>• suggested teaching strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• allowed me to use my own classroom management system</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• talked to the principal about me</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melanie</td>
<td>• listened to my teaching ideas</td>
<td>• helped me plan lessons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• planned lessons together</td>
<td>• answered questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• included me in parent meetings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• included me in team planning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mentor Teachers as Role Models

According to four of the five student teachers, in addition to being supportive, mentor teachers were seen as role models. Mentor teachers became role models from day one by showing the student teachers how to implement classroom management strategies while delivering instruction. Katie said, “I feel like they [her mentor teachers] have taught me so many life lessons, academically and non-academically, and really served as great role models as to how good teachers should be in the classroom.” Melanie said Ms. Waldrop was the team leader and modeled “how to work with a team and communicate with her teammates.” Leanne told me her mentor teacher was “someone that I can imitate my teaching style from.” Four of the student...
teachers felt they benefitted by observing their mentor teacher teach the first block of students before taking over instruction with the second block of students.

Positive Feedback and Constructive Criticism

Another theme that surfaced from the data related to mentor teachers giving positive feedback and constructive criticism to their student teacher. However, only two student teachers mentioned this as a way that their mentor teachers influenced their confidence. Interestingly enough, seven of ten mentor teachers recorded positive feedback and constructive criticism in the student teacher/mentor teacher dialogue journals after watching their student teachers teach.

Comments from Mentor Teachers during Instruction

The last theme related to how mentor teachers influenced the confidence of student teachers came from Jenna and Katie. They both mentioned that interactions with their mentor teacher while teaching had a positive influence on their confidence. Since Jenna was the least confident of the five student teachers, any help or advice she received from her mentors made her feel more confident. Katie felt uplifted during the first rotation as she looked toward Ms. Bridges for help and guidance, but, during the second rotation, Ms. Griffith didn't interact with Katie because Katie said, “I’ve found my niche.”

Mentor Teachers’ Perceptions of Student Teacher Confidence

The next research question and sub-questions relate to the mentor teachers' perceptions of the student teachers' confidence and how the mentor teachers perceived their own influence/power on these changes. Three main themes emerged while analyzing data related to the following questions.
Research Question 3(a), (b), and (c)

This research question asked: (a) how did mentor teachers perceive their respective student teachers’ changes in teaching confidence during the student teaching placement?; (b) to what factors did the mentor teachers attribute these changes?; and (c) how did mentor teachers perceive their own influence/power on these changes?

Table 34

*Research Questions Related to Themes and Mentor Teachers’ Perceptions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ3 (a): How did mentor teachers perceive their respective student teachers’ changes in teaching confidence during the student teaching placement?</th>
<th>RQ3 (b): To what factors did mentor, teachers attribute these perceived changes in their respective student teachers’ teaching confidence?</th>
<th>RQ3(c): How did mentor teachers perceive their own influence/power on these changes?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increased confidence while student teaching</td>
<td>Practiced teaching</td>
<td>Left the room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Imitated mentor teacher</td>
<td>Allowed student teachers to teach without interaction during lessons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Implemented teaching ideas</td>
<td>Modeled lessons and classroom management strategies for student teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased confidence with student engagement</td>
<td>Provided verbal and written positive feedback and constructive criticism</td>
<td>Constant communication and observation of student teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Built relationship with students</td>
<td>Modeled what good teaching looks like</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Followed through with discipline</td>
<td>Interfered with student teacher's lessons</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student respect</td>
<td>Provided support</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pointed at students</td>
<td>Left the room</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left the room</td>
<td>Talked with students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most mentor teachers believed student teachers became more confident when students were engaged, through interactions with their mentor teacher during instruction, and during the act of teaching. Themes related to mentor teachers' perceptions of their student teachers’ confidence are presented in Table 34.
Student Teachers’ Confidence Increased during Student Teaching

According to the mentor teachers, student teachers’ confidence increased during their student teaching experience at three junctures:

1. During practice teaching
2. When the student teacher imitated her mentor teacher
3. When the student teacher created and implemented lessons

All mentor teachers believed the student teaching experience influenced their student teachers’ confidence in teaching. Table 35 shows comments made by each mentor teacher related to her student teacher's confidence expressed during their student teaching experiences.

All 10 mentor teachers believed their student teachers watched how they managed the classroom and imitated some, if not all, of their management and/or teaching practices. Ms. Coonce said that she and Ms. Andrews were Hannah’s role models when they showed her what good teaching looked like and how to implement classroom management strategies.

Table 35

Mentor Teachers Comments on the Student Teaching Experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mentor Teacher</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Andrews</td>
<td>“She looks very relaxed and comfortable while she teaches.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridges</td>
<td>“Student teaching is the place where she has gotten to try new things and where she can feel a part of our team.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coonce</td>
<td>“Student teaching is where she can make mistakes and learn from them.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copeland</td>
<td>“Student teaching teaches lets her put what she learned in college into practice. This experience has helped her grow.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ganzer</td>
<td>“She is a natural when she uses technology into the lesson.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Griffith</td>
<td>“Student teaching has prepared her for her own classroom.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruffin</td>
<td>“She’s found herself in the classroom.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sproles</td>
<td>“I think she is gaining confidence every day while she is teaching.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waldrop</td>
<td>“Her face lit up when she was able to implement ClassDojo and she told me that she learned about classroom management in school, but it was so much different than actually practicing it.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young</td>
<td>“Even though I pushed her out of her comfort zone, the more she teaches the more confident she seems.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
She also said, “I teach in the morning and Hannah imitates what I do in the afternoon.” This occurred with four of the five student teachers. With state mandated tests only a few weeks away, mentor teachers wanted the content to be taught correctly, so they each had their student teachers watch them deliver instruction during the first class of students and then imitate it with the second group.

Mentor teachers perceived that student teachers’ confidence increased when they were more consistent with classroom management. Mentor teachers discussed how student teachers learned to follow routines, accomplish smoother transitions, improve timing and pacing of lessons, and become more consistent with discipline. Examples of these milestones included how Katie started using a timer, Leanne wrote notes to herself to keep on track, and Hannah told Ms. Copeland, “Although I still have to repeat myself and correct students, I think that my classroom management is getting better.” Eight mentor teachers believed that student teacher confidence increased when they created and implemented their own lessons. For example, Hannah felt confident during her first rotation when she created a lesson involving students working in groups, but felt less confident during her second rotation when she and Ms. Coonce either planned last minute or not at all. Hannah felt she was always waiting to see what the next lesson was about and could never plan ahead or even create her own lessons. Ms. Coonce did admit, “I am a very much fly by the seat of my pants. I see a moment and grab it. I plan in my head constantly.” On the other hand, Katie’s eyes lit up when she told me, “I planned out reading and Language Arts for the entire week.” She described every detail from her observation lesson and how she came up with the ideas. Clearly, she was very proud of herself, as she could not stop smiling while telling me. Although Ms. Ruffin, tried to get to plan and teach a lesson on her own,
she came back with question after question, so in the end they really co-planned her observation lesson. Leanne lacked the confidence to plan independently.

*Student Teachers’ Confidence Increased during Student Engagement*

Nine mentor teachers described how much more smoothly the lesson and classroom management went when the student teachers formed relationships with the students. This connection also served to increase their student teachers’ confidence. Ms. Andrews explained, “She has already built that relationship with the students, that foundation, and she seems more confident to try new things with them.” Ms. Bridges thought that Katie had “bonded with the kids” and Ms. Griffith said, “She knows the students so well she is able to create lessons around their interests, which makes them excited about learning and her excited about teaching.”

Another example came from Ms. Waldrop when she said,

> Melanie is a really funny girl. She has a good sense of humor and I feel like that really shows through with her teaching and her dealings with the students. She has a huge heart for them and it shines through. I have one little boy who needs a lot of help and a lot of love because he doesn’t always make it easy on you and she has such a good relationship with him.

Student engagement with instructional activities increased when student teachers formed relationships with their students, followed through with discipline, and gained their students' respect.

Seven out of ten mentor teachers believed that following warnings with consequences directly resulted in increased student engagement, which improved the confidence of their student teachers. Ms. Sproles knew that this was a concern of Leanne’s, so they talked about it. Ms. Sproles had Leanne watch how she managed the classroom for a couple of days. The she told Leanne she could change the system to work for her needs. When I asked Leanne after each observation how her lesson went, she would talk about how the students were acting but said
little about whether they had grasped the concept. To her, when students were following the rules, then the lesson went more smoothly. Therefore, she made sure to clearly explain the classroom procedures to her students and then adhere to the plan. Jenna, on the other hand, was soft-spoken and unsure of herself as a teacher. Both of her mentor teachers, Ms. Copeland and Ms. Young, encouraged her to consistently follow her classroom management plan. For example, during an observation, one student got up to blow his nose and then five students needed a tissue. Right after that, several students went to the restroom. When we discussed this later, she said she was looking for ideas on how to stop these behaviors during her lesson. She admitted that she struggled with wanting the students to like her and did not really want to say anything that might cause them not to. Ms. Andrews and Hannah discussed the issue of managing student behavior, and she told her, “If you build relationships with students, they will respect you and it will help you with your classroom management.” Ms. Andrews told me that at the beginning of the semester Hannah, too, struggled with calling out students for fear of their not liking her.

*Mentor Teachers Interactions with Student Teachers*

Mentor teachers interacted with student teachers during their lessons in various ways. The mentor teachers struggled with the impact of interacting with the student teachers while they were teaching. Mentor teachers provided student teachers with positive feedback and constructive criticism, and they modeled teaching and classroom management strategies.

All ten mentor teachers recognized their own influence/power on their student teachers' confidence when they interfered with their teaching. The mentors discussed the struggle of deciding whether to take back control of the class during instruction to address a classroom management issue or to contribute to a discussion. Not one mentor teacher thought twice about this.
With regard to interfering with the delivery of instruction, several mentors said they did it for the sake of the upcoming state mandated test. One said, “She just left out one part that I needed to speak up and clarify that point,” and another, “I would hold up a white board giving her clues of what to say,” and “I feel bad because I usually jump in a lot, but again it's usually the math, and she just is missing like one little piece, and I try to bite my tongue but I feel like it is just critical that they know” and even “It's hard because you have to be in the room monitoring and watching her and the kids, but if you are in the room you are tempted to...so I try and stay in a little corner.”

When I asked Hannah how she felt when her mentor teacher stepped in while she was teaching, she said, “Sometimes it just makes me feel like I'm not explaining it correctly, and when she does it too often, I don’t feel good about myself as a teacher.” Concern about preparing students adequately for state mandated tests also affected the amount of time student teachers had 100% of the teaching responsibility. Several mentor teachers did not see any harm in teaching the first block and letting the student teacher teach the second one at a point in the semester when the student teacher was supposed to be teaching ten consecutive days. Another example was seen when one mentor teacher was teaching the 45-minute writing block at the end of the day.

With regard to interfering for the sake of behavior management, mentor teachers would interfere during the student teacher’s time of full possession of the classroom. Ms. Waldrop told me that she had to leave the room to make sure that she did not say anything. Ms. Bridges gave a student the “evil-eye.” Ms. Griffith said she “just kinda pointed when she needed Katie to address a student.” Ms. Ruffin said, “I have to correct behavior because those kids are harder to
reach.” In sum, Ms. Ganzer said, "I think if it [jumping in] became a habit then it would be, I think, that could wear down a student teacher’s confidence."

While mentor teachers believed that they influenced their student teachers in the classroom as they modeled how to be teachers, the mentors also believed they influenced their student teachers’ confidence when they gave positive feedback and constructive criticism. All 10 mentor teachers stated in interviews that they believed they could influence the self-confidence of their student teachers by giving positive, constructive feedback. Ms. Copeland said that a nice way to talk to them is by “boosting their confidence, instead of crushing it.” Another way to look at it came from Ms. Ruffin when she explained, “I do the Oreo approach, like, positive, here's a correction, and here is another positive.” Others suggested, “Empowering them,” “Building them up,” and even “Being their cheerleader.” Ms. Waldrop said,

I try to tell Melanie what’s working for her, and if there are a few things that I think she can tweak and fix, then that is something that she could work on. I would never try and tear her down. We would talk it through and see what we can work on.

Ms. Ruffin believed that mentor teachers could affect student teachers positively or negatively “if you are not willing to communicate and share what you know, and talk a lot.” Ms. Copeland was careful with her comments to Hannah as she told me, “If I have to say anything to Hannah, I try to start with the positive, and then I do always try to give her something that she can change and work on.” Ms. Sproles said, “You can beat them down or you can pump them up; you have to find the middle ground.”

Feedback from mentor teachers also took the form of advice and approval. Katie’s first mentor teacher, Ms. Bridges, felt Katie expected more guidance and affirmation than she was used to giving. Although Katie’s confidence had grown, “there were a lot of looks over that surprised me. I’m not sure if she wanted my approval or what.” In a similar light, Leanne’s
mentor teacher, Ms. Sproles, told me she interpreted Leanne's puzzled expression as her cue to interject and help during a lesson. These nonverbal requests for assistance diminished among all student teachers as the semester progressed. Ms. Waldrop described her role as a mentor teacher as being the person to show “her [Melanie] what was involved in teaching, what to do to plan and develop lessons, and how to work with students.” Ms. Andrews saw her role as someone who “gives advice and shares every little piece of what teaching is all about.” Ms. Ganzer saw herself as a guide who gave feedback. With this in mind, all ten mentor teachers gave advice to their student teachers before they taught, especially prior to the lessons I observed as their supervisor. Mainly, mentors made sure the material was age appropriate, that the lesson flowed, and most importantly, that content was not omitted. As student teachers looked to their mentor teachers for approval or advice, their mentors were willing to share their expertise.

Half of the mentor teachers felt that their influence increased student teachers’ confidence when the student teacher watched their mentor teachers deliver instruction and implement classroom management techniques. Ms. Coonce said that as she taught, Hannah watched her, took notes, and, later, imitated things she said when she taught. She added, “I just model every little piece of my day for her.” Both of Melanie’s mentor teachers said they modeled cultivating relationships with students. Ms. Sproles noticed that Leanne was imitating her style of teaching and repeating the same words she said. Ms. Young explained that she modeled what the real teaching world is like. She said, "You learn strategies and techniques in the college classroom, but you do not fully get it until you are in the actual school system and you can watch other teachers and then try it on your own." She ended our conversation saying, “I am what she [Jenna] sees, so that is going to shape what she believes teaching is.” Ms. Coonce summed it up by
commenting, “We make a really big impact as we are showing them [student teachers] the ins and outs of what life is like as a teacher.”

Mentor teachers perceived that student teachers’ confidence increased during the actual student teaching experience, while implementing self-created lessons, and while imitating their mentor teachers. According to mentor teachers, confidence also increased when students were engaged as the result of relationship building efforts and when student teachers followed through with discipline and gained student respect. Lastly, mentor teachers believed that interacting with student teachers while they taught, providing supportive feedback, and modeling sound teaching practices and classroom management strategies increased their student teachers' confidence in teaching.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>STI</th>
<th>MTI</th>
<th>STO</th>
<th>DJ</th>
<th>CUW</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>RQ1 (a): How did student teacher confidence in teaching change across both student teaching placements?</strong></td>
<td>Engaged students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Struggled with perfection</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Improved time management</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Followed through with discipline</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RQ1 (b): To what did student teachers attribute changes in their self-perceived confidence in teaching?</strong></td>
<td>Building relationship with students</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Classroom management implementation</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Overpreparation and perfection</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Actual student teaching experience</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Relationship with their mentor teacher</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ideas are accepted by their mentor teacher</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grade level and subject taught</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RQ2: How did the student teachers believe their mentor teachers influenced their confidence?</strong></td>
<td>Interactions while student teacher teaches</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Giving positive feedback and constructive criticism</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Being available for open communication and collaboration</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Being a role model</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RQ3 (a): How did mentor teachers perceive their respective student teachers’ changes in teaching confidence during the student teaching placement?</strong></td>
<td>Confidence while student teaching</td>
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<td>Confidence with student engagement</td>
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<td>Confidence with mentor teacher interaction</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>RQ3 (b): To what factors did mentor teachers attribute these perceived changes in their respective student teachers’ teaching confidence?</strong></td>
<td>Practiced teaching</td>
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<td>Imitated mentor teacher</td>
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<td>Implemented teaching ideas</td>
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<td>Relationships with students</td>
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<td>Follow through with discipline</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Mentor teacher provided verbal and written positive feedback and constructive criticism</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>RQ3 (c): How did mentor teachers perceive their own influence/power on these changes?</strong></td>
<td>Modeling how to be a teacher</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Giving positive feedback and constructive criticism</td>
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<td>Restraining from taking over the class</td>
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*Notes. STI = Student teacher interviews; MTI = Mentor teacher interviews; STO = Student teacher observations; DJ = Dialogue journals; CUW = Clear and unclear windows*
Table 36 shows a matrix of the major themes from the research questions and the sources for data triangulation. This table shows how multiple sources of data including participants' voices were used to triangulate the data for this study. Sources of data collection included student teacher interviews, mentor teacher interviews, student teacher observations, dialogue journals, and clear and unclear windows. Each theme is corroborated by at least two sources of data, and in several cases, three or more sources. Creswell (2002) states, “Triangulation is the process of corroborating evidence from different individuals, types of data, or methods of data collection” (p. 280). Because of this, the accuracy is supported because the information drawn from the data does not depend on one single source, participant, or data collection process.

Summary

While painting a clear picture of the student teacher participants and their mentor teachers, I discussed the data related to student teacher confidence. The results of this study suggest that student teachers’ confidence changed during their practicum experiences, and many factors influenced that change, including their mentor teachers. Student teacher interviews, mentor teacher interviews, student teacher observations, dialogue journals and student teacher Clear and Unclear Window reflections provided data. All five data sources proved effective in explicating student teachers' confidence. In the next chapter, I provided a summary and conclusions from the findings, implications related to past research and how this study informs further research, the importance of the study, and recommendations for further research.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This collective case study addressed the confidence in teaching of five student teachers and factors related to observed changes. I investigated changes in the confidence of student teachers using a thematic analysis approach and analyzed data collected through interviews of student and mentor teachers, observations, dialogue journals, and clear and unclear windows. Experiences of the participants were examined through the lens of Lave and Wenger’s situated learning theory. Five student teachers, active in the same school district in north central Texas, and their mentor teachers consented to participate in the study. The research questions guiding the study were:

1. How do student teachers perceive their confidence in teaching during student teaching?
   (a) How did student teacher confidence in teaching change across both student teaching placements?
   (b) To what did student teachers attribute changes in their self-perceived confidence in teaching?

2. How did student teachers believe their mentor teachers influenced their confidence in teaching during the student teaching placements?

3. How do mentor teachers perceive their student teacher’s confidence in teaching during student teaching?
   (a) How did mentor teachers perceive their respective student teachers’ changes in teaching confidence during the student teaching placement?
   (b) To what factors did mentor teachers’ attribute these perceived changes in their respective student teachers’ teaching self-confidence?
   (c) How did mentor teachers perceive their own influence/power on these changes?
In this chapter, I interpreted the findings presented in Chapter IV as they are related to this research and further research. I also discussed the contributions to the field, its implications, and recommendations for further research.

**Interpretation of Findings**

I studied changes in student teacher confidence while teaching and factors which influenced these changes, specifically noting the effects of the mentor teacher on the confidence of the student teachers. Findings from this study indicated that the five student teacher participants exhibited changes in confidence in their teaching throughout their student teaching experiences. Results revealed that many factors played a part in these changes. Student teachers shared that the student teaching experience, student engagement, and relationships with their mentor teachers contributed to their confidence in teaching. Similarly, the mentor teachers believed that student teachers’ confidence was influenced by the student teaching experience and student engagement. However, mentor teachers believed that their interaction with the student teachers also contributed to their confidence. The following section summarizes and interprets the major findings of the study by research question and relates these findings to previous research.

**Research Question 1**

The first research question was two-fold, asking how student teachers’ confidence changed during the practicum semester and what factors contributed to these changes. Data collected from all five relevant sources (student teacher and mentor teacher interviews, observations, dialogue journals, and clear and unclear windows) were analyzed to answer this research question and sub-question. Student teachers’ confidence changed throughout the semester specifically (a) during their actual teaching experience, (b) when students were
engaged, and (c) when the student teacher had a relationship with the mentor teacher. The third answer is examined in detail within the findings for research question two (RQ2).

Student Teacher Confidence while Student Teaching

All five student teachers indicated that the student teaching practicum itself contributed to their changing confidence. According to Lave and Wenger’s situated learning theory (1991), having an experience could alter opinions or beliefs about any phenomenon. During the student teaching experience, five student teachers started in a peripheral role of participation through observation and gradually assumed leadership of hands-on classroom management and instructional strategies under the guidance of their mentor teachers. Student teachers became co-learners with other educators (classroom teachers) to develop their professional knowledge and practice as they learned to teach. The five student teachers in this study took part in the community of practice of student teaching as a way to gain access into the teaching world.

Goodnough (2009) states,

Student teachers need to be supported, through formal and informal structures, in negotiating meaning and learning with all members of a community of practice, in developing an understanding of the goals of the community, and in adopting and contributing to the shared repertoire of teaching (p. 295).

In other words, a goal of a student teacher is to understand what it takes to become a full practitioner (Lave & Wenger, 1991), and the student teaching process helped these five student teachers understand the nuances of teaching. As seen by Graves (2010) in a study of relationships between student teachers and their mentor teachers, the student teaching practicum became a way for student teachers to put theory into practice and to exercise decision making, albeit with the supervision of a mentor teacher. Therefore, if future teachers are to be effective, they must work in settings where they can practice what they have learned.
As discussed in the previous chapter, while student teaching, classroom management was a concern of all five student teachers from the beginning of the practicum, specifically in the area of discipline. This was similar to findings of Goh et al (2009), who noted that even though classroom management was a concern for student teachers, their confidence increased when they maintained classroom order, which led in turn to effective lessons. During my interviews with the student teachers, student teachers each associated how their lessons went with how well the students behaved during the lessons. For example, during the first seven-week teaching rotation, when students were off task or were in constant need of redirection, student teachers felt less confident in their abilities to “control” the classroom. However, during the second seven-week teaching rotation, student teachers felt they communicated expectations more clearly and with more consistency, which they felt helped their classrooms run more smoothly. Not only was increased confidence expressed during face-to-face interviews during the second rotation, but mentor teachers also shared evidence of their student teachers’ growth in confidence as they continued to teach and manage the classrooms. Student teachers did not ask as many questions or make as many comments related to classroom management during the second half of the student teaching practicum compared to the first seven weeks. In fact, classroom management comments in the student teacher/mentor teacher dialogue journals decreased from 42% to 26%. Student teachers’ clear and unclear windows changed similarly. At the beginning of the semester, student teachers’ lack of confidence about implementing classroom management strategies was evident in numerous comments about this issue, but as the semester progressed, they became concerned with other issues such as parent conferences or meetings related to students who needed special services.
All five data sources supported the finding that all five student teachers experienced increased confidence in their teaching when student behavior and daily routines were under control. This finding was consistent with Darling-Hammond and Baratz-Snowden (2005), who noted that most student teachers begin student teaching with minimal teaching experience and a lack of complete understanding of classroom management. According to Kaufman and Moss (2010), classroom management continues to be a topic of ongoing concern for teachers, with beginning teachers perceiving it as their most serious challenge. Fives, et al. (2007) even went so far as to state that failure to resolve management issues could lead to teacher burnout.

Besides handling classroom management while teaching, student teachers revealed two additional areas about instruction related to confidence in their teaching. Specifically, these were the degree to which they had planned and prepared their lessons and their desire for teaching the lesson without error. This phenomenon about student teacher confidence related to teaching a lesson perfectly or without error, while teaching was not reported in other studies.

For the student teachers in this study, seeking perfection represented two different goals, depending on the time of the school year. Over-planning was the primary indicator of seeking perfection. First, during the first rotation, student teachers over-planned for the sake of teaching the content correctly. Second, during the second rotation, student teachers wanted to teach the content correctly for the sake of the upcoming state mandated tests. Fear of not teaching the lesson content correctly became an overwhelming concern for the student teachers as the semester progressed. This was especially evident when several student teachers created lessons for a whole team of grade-level teachers. Each student teacher expressed concerns about accurately teaching the content in order to adequately prepare students for upcoming state mandated testing. Student teachers explained that knowing they were delivering the subject
content accurately increased their confidence in themselves as teachers. Student teachers, in fact, over-prepared lessons while striving for perfection and, in the end, their confidence increased.

The student teachers realized that the more they planned and prepared for upcoming lessons, the more smoothly the lessons flowed. Utilizing note taking and post-it notes, rereading the material, and practicing the lessons at home before they taught helped student teachers become more confident while teaching. When I interviewed the student teachers about planning and preparation, all described help and guidance they received from their mentor teachers. According to Lave and Wenger (1991), a person learns through a contextualized experience in which he or she is completely actively participating. As the semester progressed and student teachers helped their mentor teachers or grade level teams plan lessons, the student teachers’ sense of ownership in the lessons grew. This in turn gave them confidence while teaching because they knew they had helped to create a lesson plan for use by others. This phenomenon was also seen in Atjonen’s (2012) study of 201 student teachers. Although this was strictly a quantitative study, utilizing a questionnaire, results indicated that over 27% of participants believed that they were having a good mentoring experience if their mentor approved of instructional strategies and encouraged new initiatives.

I found that student teachers’ confidence in teaching also fluctuated depending on the subjects they were teaching and their knowledge of that content. During their student teaching experiences, they began to reflect on how comfortable they were teaching specific subjects to their students. These findings align with those of studies related to the teaching of mathematics or science (Charalambou et al., 2008; Tairab, 2010). The student teachers' comfort level while teaching also varied according to which grade level they taught. Another variable was their reasons for this comfort or lack of it. Student teachers’ thoughts included: “I do less planning for
the older students than the younger because I teach the same lessons in the morning and the afternoon,” “I enjoy being able to see and hear the connections that the older students have to the lesson,” and “There is less discipline with the older students so I have to correct students and repeat myself less with them.” Connections between planning and classroom management seemed to influence student teachers’ thoughts about which grade levels seemed best aligned to their individual interests and personalities.

Many areas of the student teaching experience affected the confidence of student teachers as they taught. While some findings related to student teacher confidence were perhaps to be expected, such as confidence related to classroom management and the grade level and subject taught, confirming those factors was important. One finding, however, seemed absent from the field of research related to confidence in teaching within a community of practice. This included learning about student teachers’ desires to teach without error and the additional stress put on teachers by state mandated tests. This stressor concerned both the mentor teachers and student teachers as both felt the need to teach the content accurately to insure student success.

Student Teachers' Confidence Increased as Students became Actively Engaged

From the aforementioned data, I found that as student teachers continued to practice teaching they became more confident. They noticed that their lessons went more smoothly if their students were actively engaged, and this seemed to link their confidence while teaching to classroom management. This link often became apparent when I asked at the beginning of each interview, “How do you think the lesson went?” I found their responses always referred to a situation related to classroom management instead of to an instructional aspect of their lesson. Taskin’s (2006) study of 32 student teachers indicated that student behavior in the classroom was an important factor influencing their teaching practice. Those student teachers shared their
perceptions that their classes were easier to teach when the students participated and were actively engaged. Student teachers in that study felt when students were participating and engaged in the lessons, they were showing respect, which led to a positive teaching experience. Although those student teachers taught only once a week and were in different classrooms each time, their perceptions of their student teaching experience showed, similar to this study, that if the students were engaged, the student teachers’ teaching confidence improved.

According to my findings, students became actively engaged when student teachers created relationships with them. According to Kauchak, Eggen, and Carter (2008), in a productive learning environment where trust between the students and teachers is evident, management is nearly invisible, and student learning can take place. As in that study, my student teachers realized that forming relationships with the students helped their lessons run smoothly. As they learned more about their students (such as their likes and dislikes), they were better able to relate to them and find things in common that they could discuss. Forming relationships with their students enabled student teachers not only to get to know their students on a personal level, but also to converse with them in ways that led to mutual respect and trust, which in turn decreased behavioral concerns. In sum, all five student teachers’ confidence changed as they student taught. As previously noted in Figure 1, student teachers’ self-stated confidence before and after student teaching was related to their actual teaching experiences (particularly regarding classroom management and instruction), their perceptions of the challenges of the grade level and subject taught, and their relationships with students as they became engaged in learning.

Research Question 2

The second research question asked how student teachers believed their confidence in teaching was influenced by their mentor teachers. To answer this question, I collected and
analyzed data from 20 student teacher interviews. Since student teaching lasted only 14 weeks, student teachers participated in their mentor teachers’ classrooms for only a small portion of the school year. Despite the limited time spent together, student teachers needed support from their mentor teachers as they guided their student teachers through an ongoing learning experience. This is described by Schlager and Fusco (2003) as “a process of learning how to put knowledge into practice through engagement in practice within a community of practitioners (p. 206).” In other words, professional growth for student teachers requires engagement and dialogue with a community of like-minded peers, which is considered both a social and self-critical experience. Evidence from this study showed that student teachers' confidence in teaching changed when mentor teachers supported them and when the mentor teacher gave them positive feedback and/or constructive criticism related to instruction or classroom management.

Student Teachers’ Confidence Increased with Mentor Teacher’s Feedback

From the perspective of student teachers, the student teaching experience is one of the most valued components of their preparation to become a teacher. Dobbins (1996) suggested that performance is one of the biggest concerns of student teachers related to student teaching; therefore, when student teachers received positive feedback and felt optimistic about their teaching, there seems to be a direct positive impact on with their teaching performance. Therefore, receiving positive feedback and constructive criticism from their mentor teachers helped increase the student teachers’ confidence as they moved from the peripheral role of observing their mentor teacher to full participation.

All five student teachers in this study believed that receiving feedback from their mentor teachers helped them become better teachers. They were able to take what their mentor teachers told them and apply it to future lessons. This is similar to the findings of Sayeski and Paulsen
(2012), who posited that student teachers appreciate receiving positive, specific, and constructive feedback, which includes ways to improve their classroom instruction and classroom management. Atjonen (2012) agreed, and even went as far as to say that both positive and critical feedback from a mentor teacher helped to boost the student teacher’s confidence and development as a future teacher. However, Fantozzi (2013) revealed that after mentor teachers observed their student teachers, mixed feeling arose from the student teachers related to the mentor teachers’ comments. Student teachers felt that if the lesson went well then they were considered good teachers, but, if not, it would be a blow to their confidence in teaching.

Student Teachers Need Support from Their Mentor Teachers

Evidence from this study suggested that mentor teachers influenced student teachers by being supportive in many ways. This support included:

- Planning lessons
- Co-teaching
- Allowing the student teacher to teach
- Continuous communication
- Answering questions
- Giving advice

These factors were consistent with Sayeski and Paulsens’ (2012) student teacher evaluations of their mentor teachers. On the other hand, McNay (2010) reported that the main concern voiced by the student teachers in her study came from lack of time to collaborate which was associated within consistent communication and lack of feedback, which led to decreased confidence among these student teachers. Russell and Russell (2011) summed up a mentor teacher’s role as being one who demonstrates a sense of responsibility for providing guidance and support to their
interns while “allowing them to gain autonomy in the classroom by gradually giving them an opportunity to build confidence in their own teaching” (p. 27).

Research Question 3

The third research question considered mentor teachers’ views related to student teacher confidence and how mentor teachers perceived they contributed to that confidence. These findings were based on data from the mentor teacher interviews. Mentor teachers and student teachers believed that student teachers' confidence changed with student engagement and with the actual student teaching experience. However, student teachers believed that having a relationship with their mentor teacher influenced their confidence, while the mentor teachers believed that interacting with their student teacher influenced their confidence.

Student teachers perceived their mentor teacher interactions with them as a form of support. However, mentor teachers perceived this interaction differently. Mentor teachers believed that adding to their student teacher’s lesson, correcting a group of students, or suggesting action related to discipline while the student teacher was teaching, affected their student teacher’s confidence. Mentor teachers expressed how difficult it was to refrain from interrupting while their student teachers were teaching, whether classroom management or instruction was the issue. Although mentor teachers attempted to give their student teachers the tools they needed to be successful in the classroom by modeling good teaching and classroom management techniques and by giving frequent, constructive feedback, the mentor teachers could not give up full control of their classrooms.

Osunde (1999) shared that although student teachers have studied about classroom management strategies, until they actually get into the classroom and practice these strategies, they really are unsure about what to expect. Aligned with this perspective, mentor teachers
expressed that as the student teachers became more consistent in their classroom management, they seemed more confident while teaching. One reason the mentor teachers felt the need to interject during lessons or to help “control” the students may have been so that the student teachers could be more successful while teaching. It seemed that the mentor teachers believed the confidence of the student teachers would be boosted more by the stronger teaching performance enabled by correction or interruption from the mentor teacher, than by allowing the student teachers to proceed on their own in what the mentor teachers viewed as problematic situations.

During the student teachers’ second rotation, one concern that continued to surface in the mentor teacher interviews was the upcoming state mandated tests taken by third through fifth graders. Mentor teachers knew that student scores were a reflection of their teaching. Therefore, when the student teachers were actually teaching, their mentor teachers needed to make sure that the content was taught correctly and within the mentor teachers’ timeframe so that all content associated with the state standards was included. In the second placements, four of the five mentor teachers did not allow their student teacher to teach the full ten consecutive days required by the university student teaching program. Instead, the mentor teachers in the intermediate grades taught the first block of students each day and then allowed the student teacher to teach the second block, with the mentor teacher within earshot insuring that the content was taught accurately. It seemed to me, the mentor teachers unknowingly set boundaries, which influenced the amount of time and the content their student teachers were able to teach. This could be described as detrimental because the mentor teachers limited or prevented student teacher access to the full range of teaching experiences, and hence to opportunities for learning within the framework of student teaching.
From the student teacher interview data, it was clear that the mentor teachers influenced their student teachers. Interviews with mentor teachers showed that they contributed to their student teachers’ confidence (based on the success of instruction and classroom management) as they worked together in the same community of practice. As student teachers moved from the periphery to the center of teaching, their confidence waivered as the struggle with their mentor teachers for control of the classroom became real. Mentor teachers did not always realize that they had the ability to make or break the student teachers’ perceptions of their experiences and their confidence by what they said and how they reacted and responded to their student teachers while they taught. Evidence from this study showed that the intermediate mentor teachers interjected comments during the student teachers’ lessons and even held up white boards with comments on them to make sure that the content was presented precisely and clearly to the students as it was defined in the state standards or in the state test blueprints.

Similar situations occurred when classroom management issues arose. While the student teachers were teaching, the mentor teachers often stood proximally to a table of students who were too loud, gave disruptive students the “evil eye” if they were not fully engaged in the lesson, or pointed to a student so that the student teacher could take control of the situation. Although one might think this could bother the student teachers, most of the time, the student teachers were glad for the help and extra pair of eyes provided by the mentor teachers because they were focused on the lesson content and did not always stop to correct inappropriate student behavior. Student teachers were typically grateful for mentor teacher correction of content, as well. All in all, when the student teachers taught and their mentor teachers interjected or added to the lesson, the student teachers said they did not mind because they wanted to make sure that
the students were getting the right information, which seemed to align with their need to make sure that the lesson content was “perfect.”

Rajuan, et al., (2007), however, shared different results. These researchers found that when their mentor teacher participants corrected student behaviors or added to the lesson, this was perceived by student teachers as not only interrupting the flow of the lesson but as evidence that the mentor teachers did not believe in them. Although Aydin, et al. (2012) believed that a student teacher’s experience in working with a mentor teacher could lead to different outcomes regarding confidence in the student teacher, the pairing of two individuals influences the student teacher’s classroom experience and effectiveness during student teaching. In sum, McNay (2004) suggested that awareness of the flow of power in the student teacher/mentor teacher relationship is imperative to improving the student teaching experience even though this will continue to be a struggle as shared power continues to be problematic.

Contributions to the Field

This study has the potential to contribute to the field of teacher education because it investigated teacher candidates’ confidence during the student teaching practicum through multiple data sources that included both the student teacher and mentor teacher perspectives. Many studies related to student teachers’ confidence are strictly quantitative in nature, utilizing questionnaires or surveys filled out by the student teachers (Goh, et al, 2009; Iqbal & Mahmood, 2010). Other studies consider just the student teacher perspective (Ambrosetti, 2010; Sayeski & Paulsen, 2012; Turley et al., 2006) or just the mentor teacher perspective (Kahn, 2001; McNay & Graham, 2007; Russell & Russell, 2011). For this study, student teacher observations, student teacher interviews, mentor teacher interviews, dialogue journals between the student teacher and
mentor teacher, and clear and unclear windows contributed to a well-rounded expansion of the literature available on student teachers’ confidence.

Research has shown that student teaching is the most influential experience for teacher candidates. This experience includes the support of a mentor teacher who encourages and provides feedback that helps the student teacher gain confidence in the practice of teaching (Morehead et al., 2008). In the ebb and flow of the relationship between the student teacher and mentor teacher, the student teacher is influenced in ways that affect his or her teaching confidence. Given this, those associated with the student teacher practicum should completely understand the mentor teacher’s influence on the student teacher’s ability to become a full participant in the classroom. According to Anderson’s study (2007), most mentor teachers did not acknowledge the potential they had to influence student teachers; however, they did express a sense of responsibility for helping their student teachers grow to become teachers. My study suggested that mentor teachers have a profound and multifaceted impact on student teachers in that the mentor teachers set participation boundaries for the student teachers that shaped the actions and beliefs of their student teachers. Both parties recognized these boundaries not as much as limitations on the student teachers, but as desirable practices for assuring higher student achievement on state standardized tests. Nevertheless, mentor teachers realized that many of their actions, including feedback and constructive criticism, formal and informal evaluations, and recommendations helped to form the future teaching of their student teachers and could affect the student teachers’ confidence. Some mentor teachers went to great lengths to assure that their “corrections” of student teachers were unobtrusive, and one mentor teacher even removed herself from the classroom to avoid interfering with the student teacher. However, this was rare among
the mentor teachers in this study, most of whom, with the collusion of their student teachers, assumed advise-giving for the sake of student achievement a prerogative.

The findings of the study indicated that mentor teachers struggled to relinquish full control of the classroom to student teachers even as the student teachers tried to gain membership within the community of practice. This was seen as a power struggle as only one could “be in charge” at a time. One study by Anderson (2007) discussed the influence or power that mentor teachers have over student teachers. Knowing that the mentor teachers evaluated their student teachers at the end of the practicum, the student teachers in Anderson’s study wanted to make sure to comply with or to imitate the teaching and classroom management procedures used by their mentor teachers. McNay’s (2004), quantitative study of mentor teacher influence, was similar to Anderson’s in its finding that student teachers felt a bad experience was one in which their mentor teachers always wanted their ideas and opinions to be implemented. However, these studies did not consider the impact on student and mentor teachers of state-mandated testing, which is often discussed in the news and among educators. No other studies that I have found acknowledge this issue as related to the mentor teachers’ power or influence over the content taught or the way it is taught as a reaction to high-stakes testing. A unique context stems from the geographical location of this study, which includes a state (Texas) within a well-established culture of high-stakes standardized testing.
Understanding the structure of the University of North Texas (UNT) student teaching program related to other studies becomes an issue as other studies might reveal the length of time students are student teaching, however they do discuss their student teachers’ pacing guide which includes the actual teaching time for student teachers. See Figure 2 for the UNT pacing guide. Within this study, as student teachers moved towards week six and seven of student teaching, they took on more teaching responsibilities and eventually full control of the classroom. Full control was allowed when the mentor teacher let the student teacher teach without interrupting while the student teacher taught.

**Figure 2.** Student teachers’ pacing guide.

In addition, I believe that the student teachers’ struggles for perfection [teaching the lessons’ without error] had an effect on their confidence in teaching. Concerns about lack of perfection were evident in the student teacher and mentor teacher interviews as well as the dialogue journals and clear and unclear windows. Other studies have shown that student teachers wanted to please their mentor teachers in order to pass student teaching (Anderson, 2007), they
wanted to have their mentors appreciate their efforts (Sayeski & Paulsen, 2012), and they wanted to be supported by their mentor teachers (Turley, et al., 2006), but what about the student teacher's struggle to teach the “right way”? Past studies did not seem to relate the struggle for perfection (teaching that proceeds according to plan) to student teacher confidence. An important aspect of gaining confidence in teaching that arose from this study was the necessary recognition by student teachers that, although planning is desirable and helpful, a teacher's confidence must also arise from responsiveness to students on a moment-by-moment basis.

Implications of the Study

Over time, our understanding of student teachers’ confidence has evolved. Early conceptions emphasized the roles of the student teacher and the mentor teacher as related to student teacher confidence. Findings from this study refined these understandings in ways that could be useful to mentor teachers, student teachers, and student teacher supervisors. One implication of these findings is the need for student teacher supervisors to serve as mediators who facilitate clear expectations of the student teaching experience between the student teacher and mentor teacher. This occurs by discussing issues of mentor teacher influence and student teacher perfectionism with both parties. However, with the importance of state mandated testing within the public school system, the struggle of student teachers to move from a peripheral to a full-fledged member of the community role must become an ongoing concern during student teaching. Full-fledged teachers are responsible for the performance, progress, and overall academic achievement of their students. Whether student teachers’ confidence in teaching can reach an appropriate level when they are shielded from assuming this responsibility must be questioned. In addition, it is possible that the traditional model for a student teaching practicum
is insufficient preparation for teaching in a school system when high value is placed on teaching that seems to depend on student acquisition of very particular knowledge.

In order to maximize learning for student teachers, student teacher supervisors should provide mentor teachers with appropriate training in how to provide support and guide in ways that enable student teachers to develop their teacher identities. As a result, student teachers are enabled to become participating members of the classroom community and, longer-term, of the teaching profession.

Recommendations for Future Research

Further research is needed to substantiate this study’s findings about student teacher confidence during the practicum semester as viewed from both the student teacher and the mentor teacher perspective. Recommendations based on findings from this research offer a perspective that is centered on understanding student teachers’ changing confidence and factors, which influence that change.

After analyzing the data collected for this study, I suggest that future researchers might want to expand this study in the following ways.

(a) A similar study might take place in the fall semester instead of the spring semester to see if the results align with those of this study. During the spring semester, the power struggle between the mentor teacher and student teacher may be more highly visible because of the closer proximity of state testing. I believe that placing student teachers in primary grades (K-2) during the second rotation of the spring semester of student teaching might also help to alleviate the power struggle of the mentor with the student teacher, as these grade levels are not as impacted by state mandated tests. Studying student teachers whose primary grade placements came after upper grade placements in the spring semester might have led to different results.
(b) In addition to observing student teachers, a researcher might also want to observe mentor teachers to add to study data. This might provide a way for the researcher to see possible connections between the student teachers’ teaching and the mentor teachers’ teaching. Does the student teacher imitate the mentor teacher, or is the student teacher able to step out and try new instructional strategies? How is the independence of the student teacher recognized and acknowledged by the mentor teacher? The data generated by the mentor teacher observations might lead to dialogues with student teachers that tap into different aspects of their confidence than were uncovered in this study.

(c) A study in which the concepts of perfectionism and classroom control that emerged from this study were discussed in advance of the practicum experience with both the mentor teachers and student teachers might lead to interesting results. Making these concepts visible to both parties from the beginning of the practicum might lead mentor teachers to realize the control they have over student teachers and to wonder if this control contributes to the student teachers’ needs for perfection while teaching.

(d) The scope of this study was limited to one suburban school district in a metropolitan area of north Texas, so expanding it to urban and rural districts or to a variety of states could lead to different results.

(e) Future researchers might be interested in student teachers’ confidence while teaching as related to the years of teaching experience of the mentor teachers. All of the mentor teachers in this study had considerable experience both as teachers and as mentor teachers for student teachers. Are student teachers more confident when working with mentor teachers who have more (or less) teaching experience?
(f) Additional questions could be added to the mentor teacher interviews related to their own confidence in teaching. How did the student teachers perceive that the mentor teachers’ confidence affects their student teachers’ confidence?

Conclusion

This study investigated five student teachers’ confidence in teaching guided by the situated learning perspective. Findings showed that student teachers’ confidence changed throughout the student teaching practicum. From a “situative perspective,” learning can be said to occur whenever individuals interact. Thus, for the purpose of this study, learning occurred through interactions between student teachers, mentor teachers, and the students in their classrooms. Factors that influenced changes in confidence included the actual hands-on classroom teaching experiences of the student teacher, the mentor teachers’ contributions, and student engagement as the student teacher developed rapport with the students.

Unique to this study, findings included evidence of nuances in student teachers’ perfection seeking and the nature of the influence or power struggle between student and mentor teachers. More specifically, in this study, student teachers began the student teaching process with knowledge from their own K-12 classroom teachers and from their college teacher education courses. From this knowledge the student teacher participants had learned how to how to create lesson plans, how to manage discipline, and how to interact with students---all without practice in actual classroom settings where they could exercise these strategies. Armed with their accumulated knowledge, the student teachers’ goal in the beginning was to teach each lesson exactly as written, typically by the student teacher in advance of the lesson. Preparations for teaching often involved over-planning lessons, which the student teachers saw as ensuring
success for the students. Successfully presenting the lesson *as planned* contributed to their confidence in teaching.

It was generally during the second rotation that student teachers recognized the connection between student engagement and learning success. This realization led to increased confidence in teaching, but it also tended to reduce the extent to which student teachers’ lessons were taught exactly as planned. As student teachers started forming relationships with their students, they realized both increased engagement and greater responsiveness of their teaching to student interests and needs. This required that the student teachers let go of their initial definition of perfection, teaching the lesson as planned, in favor of a more student-oriented and flexible ideal.

This study also uncovered new aspects of how the mentor teacher played an important role in the development of the confidence of the student teacher around the “correct” teaching of content. Mentor teachers set participation boundaries for student teachers during the student teaching practicum and, at times, resisted releasing full teaching responsibility to the student teachers. This resistance on the part of their mentors contributed to my recognition of a different aspect of perfection sought by student teachers. Both the student teachers and their mentors feared the consequences for the students if a topic was taught incorrectly from the perspective of the stated and implemented standards on which the state assessments were based. For Texas, state mandated tests or State of Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) begin in third grade and measure the academic performance of students in the areas of reading/language arts, math, writing, science, and social studies. These tests, aligned to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) learning standards, define what Texas students should learn in every grade. Students’ STARR scores are determined by how well they have mastered grade-specific skills.
Because of state mandated testing and as the assessment dates approached in the second rotation, the mentor teachers often assumed responsibility for teaching the first group of students while their student teachers watched and took notes. Afterwards, the student teachers taught the same lesson to the second group of students. While the student teachers were teaching, the mentor teachers struggled to relinquish control of the classroom to the student teachers. With the students’ test scores weighing heavily on the shoulders of the mentor teacher, insuring that the lessons are taught correctly and that students not only retain, but understand the content became a concern for these mentor teachers. This need for teaching without error continues to become a concern for teachers, as Texas is considering using student performance on standardized assessments to evaluate teacher effectiveness. Since Texas sets high standards for all students, the same is expected for teacher performance. Therefore, student teachers’ confidence increased as they taught the lesson content correctly with the help of their mentor teachers. This in turn was for the sake of the students’ test scores even though this limited the student teachers’ autonomy and opportunity to experience fully the role of the teacher during student teaching.
APPENDIX A

STUDENT TEACHER DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY
Student Teacher Demographic Survey

Please put an “X” next to the correct answer.

I have read and understood the potential risks of this study and my right not to participate or to withdraw from the study. My questions about the study have been answered.

___ Yes
___ No

In which of the EC-6 programs are you enrolled?

___ EC-6 Generalist
___ EC-6 Generalist with ESL

Which best describes your age?

___ 22 or less
___ 23-29
___ 30-39
___ 40+

What is your gender?

___ Male
___ Female

What is your ethnicity?

___ African American
___ Latino
___ White (Anglo)
___ Asian
___ Native American
APPENDIX B
MENTOR TEACHER DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY
Mentor Teacher Demographic Survey

Please put an “X” next to the correct answer.

I have read and understood the potential risks of this study and my right not to participate or to withdraw from the study. My questions about the study have been answered.

___ Yes
___ No

How long have you been teaching?

___ 0-5 years
___ 6-10 years
___ 11-15 years
___ 16-20 years
___ 20+ years

Which best describes your age?

___ 22 or less
___ 23-29
___ 30-39
___ 40+

What is your gender?

___ Male
___ Female

What is your ethnicity?

___ African American
___ Latino
___ White (Anglo)
___ Asian
___ Native American
APPENDIX C

STUDENT TEACHER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
Student Teacher Interview 1

1. How do you think the lesson went today?
2. From a scale of 1-10, how confident do you feel being in a classroom?
3. What part of the lesson was challenging?
4. What type of support did you receive prior to teaching the lesson?
5. What expectations do you have of your mentor teacher?
6. How many minutes a day are you teaching?
7. How many subjects are you teaching a day?
8. Why did you decide to become a teacher?
9. How is your student teaching experience helping you to become a teacher at this point?

Student Teacher Interview 2

10. How do you think the lesson went today?
11. In what ways have you changed as a result of your student teaching practicum?
12. What do you think influenced that change?
13. How many minutes a day/subjects are you teaching?
14. If you had an opportunity to teach the first seven weeks again, what would you do differently?
15. What do you feel you have learned from your mentor teacher?
16. What type of support do you feel you received from your mentor teacher during the last 7 weeks?
17. Did you feel like this was your classroom?
18. In what ways were you able to change or add to the lessons?
19. In what ways were you able to implement a classroom management system that you thought worked best?

20. Tell me about your strengths as a result of your student teaching practicum.

21. What factors contributed to those strengths?

22. In what areas do you feel you still need to improve, and why do you think so?

**Student Teacher Interview 3 (this is the 2nd rotation)**

23. How do you think the lesson went today?

24. How do you feel about teaching _________ grade instead of _________ grade. (or one subject over another)

25. What was your role in planning the lesson for today?

26. What would you change or not change?

27. What part of the lesson was challenging for you?

28. What type of support did you receive from your mentor teacher before the lesson?

**Student Teacher Interview 4 (2nd rotation)**

29. How do you think the lesson went today?

30. What would you do differently if you were to teach it again?

31. What would you change or not change?

32. Tell me about the kinds of support you received in the first and second student teaching practicum.

33. In which classroom were you the most comfortable (1st or 2nd rotation) and why?
34. Tell me about your strengths that you developed as a result of your student teaching practicum.

35. In what areas do you feel you still need to improve, and why do you think so?

36. How could you have learned more in your student teaching experience?
APPENDIX D

MENTOR TEACHER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
Interview Questions for Mentor Teacher: First Interview

1. What is your role as a mentor teacher?
2. Describe the process to “groom” your student teacher.
3. Where you asked to be a mentor teacher or did you volunteer? How do you feel about your role as a mentor teacher?
4. Have you had student teachers in the past? What was this experience like for you?
5. Do you think that mentor teachers have impact over their student teachers? In what ways?
6. Do you think that mentor teachers can influence the self-confidence of their student teachers? If so, how?

Interview Questions for Mentor Teacher: Second Interview

7. How would you describe your role as a mentor teacher?
8. How would you describe your relationship with your student teacher?
9. What might you do differently (next semester or next year) if you have a student teacher in the future?
10. Describe your teaching style. (a) Did you model this for your student teacher? (b) Do you feel that your student teacher imitated this style?
11. Were you able to give your student teacher full control of the classroom for 10 or more days during the semester? How did you feel when your student teacher was teaching? Was there any interaction during the lesson?
12. How would you describe your student teachers’ experience? What would you have done in place of the student teacher?
13. Do you feel that your student teacher was able to be himself/herself while they were teaching? In what ways?

14. Did your student teacher suggest a different teaching style that you did not want him/her to implement? Please elaborate.

15. Describe how you felt about evaluating your student teacher.

16. Do you have anything else to add?
APPENDIX E

CLEAR AND UNCLEAR WINDOWS
At this point, what do you think that you have gotten out of student teaching?

* Clear windows: What makes sense? vs. Unclear windows: What you think that you have missed or do not understand and where do you still need clarification?
APPENDIX F

CLEAR ANDUNCLEAR WINDOWS COMMENTS FROM STUDENT TEACHERS
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Teacher</th>
<th>Before Student Teaching Clear Reflections</th>
<th>Before Student Teaching Unclear Reflections</th>
<th>End of 1st Rotation Clear Reflections</th>
<th>End of 1st Rotation Unclear Reflections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hannah</strong></td>
<td>Routine Questioning Organized</td>
<td>Classroom management Being afraid to make mistakes Thinking on my feet Balance between discipline and wanting to be liked</td>
<td>Open-ended questions Building community is the most important thing Have to be flexible It’s okay to make mistakes Your attitude reflects your classroom Relationships are key</td>
<td>Classroom management PBL (problem based learning) Integrating technology into multiple subjects Hiring process Professional learning days Parent conflicts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jenna</strong></td>
<td>Already familiar with students Great relationship with mentor teacher Pacing How I feel being the one in front of the room teaching (lack of experience) Lesson planning Classroom management</td>
<td>Relationship with students Feel more confident in front of room/teaching Classroom management: discipline/organization</td>
<td>Time management How to accept the power of the classroom Feel more confident if told what to do instead of coming up with things on my own Being flexible with a lesson</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Katie</strong></td>
<td>Organization and prep Expectations Schedule Responsibilities Instructional strategies Relationship with students and mentor Balance/boundaries Classroom management</td>
<td>Classroom management Keeping demands Open communication (students, parents, teachers, admin.) Prioritize Praise and success Connections (cross curricular) Importance of equality Transitions that are effective</td>
<td>Referrals RTI ARDs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leanne</strong></td>
<td>Attendance Classroom management in Kindergarten Classroom management for 3rd grade</td>
<td>Classroom management styles lesson planning (teachers team teach/cooperate to create</td>
<td>Meeting parents about behavioral issues, RTI, ARDs, etc. ARD meetings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expectations for professionalism (dress appropriate, polite, respectful, attitude, etc.)</td>
<td>How much “power” I would have in the classrooms</td>
<td>lesson plans and I’m also able to create my own as long as it fits the objectives</td>
<td>RTI The “business” side as an educator Relating to students with home-life issues Inclusion classrooms The limits of teacher grants and support from school for classroom or other educational purposes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Classroom management Ability to assist children when they needed help on problems (math) and how to not tell the answers How to use open-ended questions Developmental readiness of third grade How to present new concepts</td>
<td>Classroom management (as a whole) Pacing my lesson and being flexible throughout Assess individual student needs How to encourage discussion (open-ended Bloom’s questions) in small groups</td>
<td>Challenging kiddos (behavior) Finding a balance between classroom management and relationship How to assess students’ needs while I’m teaching How to transition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melanie That I needed to be open and flexible with the mentor teacher’s needs How to talk and to relate with kiddos</td>
<td>Student Teacher Beginning of 2nd Rotation Clear Reflections</td>
<td>Beginning of 2nd Rotation Unclear Reflections</td>
<td>End of Student Teaching Clear Reflections</td>
<td>End of Student Teaching Unclear Reflections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hannah Confident in the technology Confident that I can present the material</td>
<td>Classroom management Creating lessons for gifted and talented students</td>
<td>How to use technology wisely in the classroom To discuss and ask questions when it comes to planning</td>
<td>Parent/teacher night not sure how to conduct one How to document for RTI</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jenna</td>
<td>Feeling more confident because I feel used to teaching in front of 1st grade (first rotation) Familiar with students</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Having to switch gears from 1st grade to 4th grade Difficult material/content (only science and math) Ipad Giving attention to all students – mix of students (special ed, etc.) Accommodations</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Important to build/develop relationships with students, team and staff Students come first It takes a lot of patience, hard work, dedication and time to be a teacher. Not as easy as people make it out to be. Always make yourself presentable Always be professional</td>
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<td></td>
<td>I wish I had more time. I always feel like there was so much more to experience I wish I had gotten to see more of the “planning” process How to confront/deal with parents As a first year teacher, I feel like I don’t really know where to start…setting up classroom, handling new situations, lesson plans. Etc.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Katie</th>
<th>Schedule View of classroom management Expectations Subject area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Timeline (STAAR) Student relationships Differentiation Teaching responsibilities Time management Technology integration Lesson planning Classroom management Collaborative teamwork</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|       | The type of budget teachers are given to prepare a classroom. What academic resources are provided by the district? What are the yearly professional development requirements? Can you request for a
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Leanne</strong></th>
<th><strong>How agenda flows daily</strong></th>
<th><strong>Teachers must be prepared for lessons and they should not be afraid of trial and error.</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>The level of expectations for students</strong></td>
<td><strong>I learned that classroom management is smoother when students are actively learning and directions/expectations are clear. Students will respect you when you show that you care for their well-being and their interests. Making mistakes is ok. Teachers can’t always be perfect, but we should always strive to be better, and learn from our mistakes. Like students, teachers are always (still developing)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Melanie</strong></td>
<td><strong>Classroom relationships with kiddos</strong></td>
<td><strong>How to motivate the kids without belittling them</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>How I want to classroom manage my kiddos. I realize that through relationships</strong></td>
<td><strong>Timing: how to time out how long some things are going to take them.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to pace the kiddos through the subjects</td>
<td>How to break up and meet with kiddos in small groups effectively daily</td>
<td>With the kiddos it makes classroom management that much easier. How to decipher technology use in my classroom. Using technology different presentations, apps, and programs to supplement my curriculum. The relationship I want to have with my co-workers and especially with administration. Utilizing read alouds in my classroom DAILY!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
REFERENCES


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Fantozzi, V. B. (2013). “Oh God, she is looking at every little thing I am doing!” Student teachers’ constructions of the observation experience. *Current Issues in Education, 16*(1), 1-12.


