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# A Qualitative Inquiry into New Teacher Perceptions of Recruitment Practices of School Leaders in a High Poverty LEA in Southeastern North Carolina

Julian Eldridge Carter

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A Qualitative Inquiry into New Teacher Perceptions of Recruitment Practices of School  
Leaders in a High Poverty LEA in Southeastern North Carolina

By  
Julian E. Carter

A Dissertation Submitted in the  
Gardner-Webb University School of Education  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

Gardner-Webb University  
2017

## Approval Page

This dissertation was submitted by Julian E. Carter under the direction of the persons listed below. It was submitted to the Gardner-Webb University School of Education and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Gardner-Webb University.

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## **Abstract**

A Qualitative Inquiry into New Teacher Perceptions of Recruitment Practices of School Leaders in a High Poverty LEA in Southeastern North Carolina. Carter, Julian E., 2017: Dissertation, Gardner-Webb University, Recruiting/Low-Wealth/Education/Phenomenological/Marketing/Communication/Branding

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to understand the lived experiences of teachers during their job searches for employment in the field of education which could inform recruiters in a rural, low-wealth LEA in southeastern North Carolina of the behaviors they need to display and the strategies they need to employ in order to hire high quality teaching candidates. The study focused on the lived experiences of 13 teachers employed in the district who were considered effective teachers by accountability measures outlined by the state of North Carolina and who had at least 2 years of experience. Research subjects (participants) participated in face-to-face, open-ended, individual interviews. The transcripts were analyzed by the researcher in order to identify themes and then target the essences of the phenomenon in order to get a better understanding of how the participants experienced their recruitment period. The results of the study indicated there were identifiable behaviors, communication methods, and marketing strategies that helped the recruits form positive perceptions of the recruiter and the organization and thus helped them make the decision to work in the low-wealth district studied.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

The 21st century has proven to be a difficult time for southeastern North Carolina educational leaders, especially in the area of human resources. The University of North Carolina General Administration Vice President for Academic and University Programs, Dr. Alisa Chapman, stated in the February 2015 North Carolina state school board meeting that North Carolina is currently struggling with a teacher shortage; and this is best evidenced by the 30% drop in teacher enrollment in North Carolina's public universities at the undergraduate and graduate levels from 2010 to 2015 (Teacher Pipeline Needs a Boost, 2016, p. 2). Finding, recruiting, and hiring great teachers to fill open positions have always been crucial to the operation of schools and never more important than in today's highly demanding educational landscape.

Hiring qualified and highly effective teachers to staff schools is one of the most critical tasks any school administrator can have. Hanushek (2011) stated, "Teachers are very important; no other measured aspect of schools is nearly as important in determining student achievement" (p. 3). To support this, a report by the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (1996) reported that what teachers know and can do is the most important influence on what students learn. This 2-year study supported the belief that quality teaching makes a difference (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996, p. 9).

According to the Center for Public Education, there have been more than two decades of research to support the theory that teacher quality is the biggest determining factor in the success of students (Teacher Quality and Student Achievement: Research Review, 2005). In an article written by this organization, several key studies about the importance of teacher quality have been done by the state of Tennessee and the

University of Texas at Dallas. In the first study done by the Tennessee Department of Education, which was entitled the STAR project, a study was conducted to determine how reduced class sizes affected student growth over 4 years. This research was combined with the Tennessee Value Added Assessment System (TVAAS), which was the first data-tracking system to which measured individual teacher performance according to annual gains in student test scores (Teacher Quality and Student Achievement: Research Review, 2005, p. 1).

According to the article, conclusions drawn by a review of the Tennessee data show small class sizes helped with achievement gains; however, the data showed that students attained a higher rate of success because of a highly effective teacher (Teacher Quality and Student Achievement: Research Review, 2005, p. 2). Conclusions were also drawn that stated the data from the report indicated that positive effects of great teaching were stronger for poor minority students than they were for their white counterparts and that low-income students were more likely to benefit from the instruction than their more affluent peers (Teacher Quality and Student Achievement: Research Review, 2005, p. 2).

Additionally, the report cited a University of Texas at Dallas study that gathered data on 10 million students from 1990 to 2002. A review of this data led to the conclusion that teacher quality differences accounted for the majority of the academic gains seen in the children (Teacher Quality and Student Achievement: Research Review, 2005, p. 2). Students who were with highly effective teachers over a 3-year period as compared to students who were with low-effect teachers over the same time period and found a 34 percentile gain in the students with the highly effective teachers in reading and 49 percentile gains in math (Teacher Quality and Student Achievement: Research Review, 2005, p. 2).

A similar study was conducted by Dr. Thomas Tomberlin, the Director of Human Capital Policy and Research at the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI). In Dr. Tomberlin's study, students who were similar in their academic achievement were compared over a 3-year period. The first group was selected from samples that were gathered after they had been with highly effective teachers for 3 years as measured by Standard 6 of the state's evaluation model which determines teacher effectiveness. The other research group was comprised with similar students who were with low-effect teachers as determined by the same criteria over the same time period. The results indicated the same trends. Students who had been with highly effective teachers showed impressive gains, while the students with the less effective teachers demonstrated an almost equal decline from the mean (T. Tomberlin, personal communication, October 8, 2015).

Research presented by Hanushek (2011) further supported the importance of great teaching. Hanushek reported that the importance of teachers can be seen in the fact that the average gains in learning across classrooms are very different. Hanushek stated that some effective teachers produce bigger gains in student achievement year after year than some of their counterparts in the teaching field. The magnitude of the teaching differences can account for up to an additional 1 and a half years of student growth as compared to one half a year of growth by less effective teachers with equivalent students. He concluded by stating that two students starting at the same level of achievement can differ drastically in their growth in 1 year due solely to the teacher to which they are assigned (Hanushek, 2011, p. 3).

By reviewing the research presented thus far, the effects of good teaching can be seen. If the best variable to getting great student achievement results is great teaching,

there should be no problem moving our children forward in terms of academic success. To illustrate this, it was necessary to review the testing results from North Carolina's 2013-2014 school report card, which is an annual report of the achievement of the students in the state of North Carolina. According to NCDPI, Accountability and Reporting (2015), students in Grades 3-5 scored an average student proficiency rating of 43.9% in reading and 42.3% in math. In the middle schools (6-8) the average scores were 43.9% in reading and 42.3% in math. Finally, in the state's high schools, the biology scores were 45.6%, the math I scores were 36.3% and the English II scores were 51.2% (NCDPI, Accountability and Reporting, 2015, pp. 1-5). These results indicate that many students are not meeting the state prescribed accountability standards. In order to improve these results, changes need to continue.

Recommendations for improvement of the educational process were made by the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (1996) and included get serious about standards for both students and teachers, reinvent teacher preparation and professional development, encourage and reward teacher knowledge and skill, create schools that are organized for student and teacher success, fix teacher recruitment, and put qualified teachers in every classroom (p. 11). The final recommendation to put high-quality teachers in every classroom is essential. Educational human resource directors and principals are tasked with finding highly qualified teachers to fill the open positions that the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) mandates. These teachers should be recruited in a systematic way, ensuring that low-wealth and rural areas have a chance to get some quality employees to make a difference in the lives of the children they serve.

Recommendations for achieving these goals made by the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future included increasing the ability of low-wealth districts to

pay for qualified teachers, insisting that districts hire only qualified teachers, redesigning and streamlining district hiring, eliminating barriers to teacher mobility, aggressively recruiting high-need teachers and providing incentives for teaching in shortage areas, and developing high-quality pathways to teaching for a wide range of recruits (p. 11).

Teachers already working in the state of North Carolina are characterized and quantified by examining student growth on standardized achievement tests that measure both student growth and on-grade-level proficiency (NCDPI, Accountability and Reporting, 2015, p. 12). The measurement for highly effective teachers is defined in the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards as a teacher who

receives a rating of at least “accomplished” on each of the Teacher Evaluation standards 1-5 and receives a rating of “exceeds expected growth” on Standard 6 of the Teacher Evaluation Instrument. The End-of-Course assessments, End-of-Grade assessments, Career and Technical Education Post-Assessments and the Measures of Student Learning provide the student data used to calculate the growth value. (NCDPI, Educator Effectiveness, 2015, p. 6)

In the absence of these measures in recently graduated teacher applicants, a different metric has to be applied. In order to hire high quality teaching candidates who are new to the profession, it is essential that educational leaders understand and have a framework for identifying these new candidates. According to the Federal Program Monitoring and Support division of the NCDPI, NCLB places a major emphasis on the importance of teacher quality in improving student achievement. School districts are required to work with the State Education Agency (SEA) to help ensure that all teachers of core academic subjects and all paraprofessionals meet highly qualified standards (Highly Qualified, n.d.).

The standards for attaining high-quality status require teachers to demonstrate competency by meeting the following criteria: holding a bachelor's degree or higher; holding a full North Carolina State Teaching Certification; and having a major or coursework equivalent to a major (24 semester hours) from an accredited 4-year college(s) or university in the assigned core content area, holding an advanced degree in that content area, holding National Board Certification in that content area, or having passed the Praxis II in that content area (Highly Qualified, n.d.). These criteria are certainly necessary as standards need to be upheld and supported when classifying candidates for initial selection; however, these basic requirements do not always mean that the qualified applicant has the requisite skills to perform in a classroom.

In another study that supports these highly effective teacher characteristics, Walker (2010) studied student perceptions of highly effective teachers, and the results were remarkably similar. According to Walker, the student perceptions of highly effective teachers included the teacher came to class prepared; had a positive attitude about being a teacher; had high expectations for students; was creative in their teaching strategies; was fair; displayed a personal touch and was approachable; developed a sense of belonging in the classroom; made sure students felt welcome and comfortable in the classroom; admitted their mistakes when they made an error; had a sense of humor; gave respect and did not deliberately embarrass students; was forgiving; and finally, displayed compassion and genuinely were concerned about student problems (pp. 3-4). These two studies were very different in their approaches; however, they yielded many of the same attributes.

Recruiting is essential as it can help a district not only fill open positions in a Local Education Agency (LEA), but it can also help address the quality of the teachers

who make up a district. Although there is certainly a shortage of teachers entering colleges and universities in North Carolina (Meyers, 2015), the American Association of State Colleges and Universities reported that the problem is not so much a teacher shortage as it is a misalignment between supply and demand of the teachers being produced in the United States (The Facts – and Fictions – About Teacher Shortages, 2005, p. 2). According to the report, the distribution of teachers is more specific to certain areas of the country including western, southwestern, and southeastern states and especially in urban, low-income, minority, and remote rural schools (The Facts – and Fictions – About Teacher Shortages, 2005, p. 2). To compound this problem, the teacher turnover rate in the state of North Carolina during the 2012-2013 school year was 14.33% (Stoops, 2014). Although this rate is lower than the national average of 15.8% (Stoops, 2014), in many rural North Carolina LEAs, the turnover rates are much higher. In region 4, the turnover rates varied from 11.54-25.55%, underscoring the necessity for recruiting in these hard-to-staff areas (2013-2014 Annual Report on Teachers Leaving the Profession, 2014).

For educational administrators in these areas to overcome this trend, they must be successful in attracting great teaching talent. In order to accomplish this task, these administrators must be able to identify attributes in candidates that make a teacher effective in addition to the basic credentials that are mandated by the state. There are many other attributes that are necessary for a teacher to be effective, and they have been studied extensively. According to research by Stronge (2007), there are many positive attributes that assist teachers in being highly effective. These attributes include assuming ownership of the classroom, providing real world examples, understanding student feelings, admitting mistakes and immediately correcting them, displaying a sense of



humor, and dressing appropriately. Additional attributes include maintaining confidence, trust, and respect; being structured yet flexible; enjoying teaching and learning; finding the win-win solution in student conflict; listening to student questions, comments, and concerns; responding to students with respect in all situations; communicating high expectations consistently; conducting one-on-one conversations with students; treating students equally and fairly; and engaging in positive conversations outside the classroom (Stronge, 2007, p. 116).

### **An Overview of the Research Problem**

A review of the literature lends strong support to the statement that great teaching makes a difference. In order to have great teaching occurring in the classroom, educational leaders must identify and then recruit and hire high quality teaching candidates; however, recruiting high-quality staff in North Carolina is a challenge, especially in rural, low-wealth districts. Currently, two major issues are adversely affecting low-wealth districts. Fewer students are entering the education field in the state, and this is supported by a University of North Carolina Educator Quality Dashboard report (Meyers, 2015). The report stated there has been a drop in enrollment in the state's education programs from 2010 to 2014. In 2010, there were 23,641 students enrolled in public education programs across the state. By 2014, this number had dropped to 17,111 (Meyers, 2015). During the same time period, the University of North Carolina Dashboard reported that new teachers produced by University of North Carolina institutions have decreased from a high of 4,538 in 2010 to 4,070 in 2014 (Meyers, 2015). A smaller pool of qualified candidates from the state makes it more difficult to fill open teaching positions.

Table

*Al Meyers – Director of Teacher Recruitment – University of North Carolina General Administration*

	Initially Licensed Teachers Produced by UNC Campuses							
	2006- 07	2007- 08	2008- 09	2009- 10	2010- 11	2011- 12	2012- 13	2013- 14
ASU	465	475	580	609	552	590	524	529
ECSU	50	56	72	74	79	58	57	54
ECU	737	751	796	799	743	719	726	717
FSU	133	108	141	170	129	105	114	126
NCA&T	87	52	108	94	107	118	110	101
NCCU	141	203	126	130	116	83	88	105
NCSU	320	279	362	313	394	419	462	398
UNC-CH	175	174	190	169	172	177	164	135
UNCA	66	59	72	80	83	41	49	33
UNCC	595	623	566	627	676	707	743	760
UNCG	492	414	451	519	427	475	373	309
UNCP	153	151	122	176	196	198	182	195
UNCW	354	334	396	390	378	375	360	331
WCU	206	273	330	335	322	334	282	239
WSSU	29	31	43	53	62	62	57	38
	4003	3983	4355	4538	4436	4461	4291	4070

Secondly, the dashboard shows that a disproportionate number of University of North Carolina system graduates are selecting jobs in the more-wealthy metropolitan areas, thereby making the problem for rural districts even more difficult (Meyers, 2015). In impoverished districts that do not offer as many social or cultural opportunities but do offer remarkable challenges in terms of the student demographics, it becomes essential that school leaders research, identify, and adapt their human resource practices in order to attract and retain first line quality educators who can positively impact student achievement. In order to do this, it will be essential that leaders focus on the reasons teachers select and work for a district and then perfect the methods they use to attract these teachers. An in-depth understanding of what these teachers look for in a district, how they should be recruited, and especially what characteristics the leaders they choose

to work for possess will enlighten recruiters on how best to land these employees.

### **Statement of the Research Problem**

How can leadership practices that lead to high levels of success in the areas of recruiting be identified and then be used to attract quality teachers to high-poverty/low-wealth LEAs? School districts in the state of North Carolina are experiencing a severe teacher shortage and are resorting to hiring more uncertified teachers to fill their vacant teaching positions (Wagner, 2015, p. 2). Thus, it is logical to assume the problem of finding, identifying, recruiting, and hiring highly qualified teachers who can make a positive impact on learning outcomes for students is becoming an even greater challenge. This is illustrated by Wagner (2015), an education reporter who contributed to the North Carolina Policy Watch. In her article, Wagner stated that North Carolina's shortage mirrors a national trend (p. 1). She quoted Nora Carr, Chief of Staff for the Guilford County School District in North Carolina, who stated, "It's always tough to get science and math teachers, as well as special education teachers. But it's really unusual to see vacancies in the elementary schools" (Wagner, 2015, p. 2). Carr stated that Guilford County was still looking to fill 50 vacancies at the beginning of the 2015-2016 school year. To underscore this problem, Michael Maher, the assistant dean of professional education and accreditation at North Carolina State stated that "We produce far more elementary school teachers than any other kind, so the fact that we are seeing elementary school teacher shortages – that's a serious issue" (Wagner, 2015, p. 2).

Ann Helms of the Charlotte Observer reported that on August 11, 2015, with less than 8 days left until school begins, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools still had 395 teacher vacancies (Helms, 2015, p. 1). In order to fill these vacancies at the beginning of the year, school districts are resorting to hiring substitute teachers, rehiring retired teachers,

and even pulling assistants into full-time teacher positions (Wagner, 2015, p. 2). This problem is exacerbated and is exponentially more difficult for high-poverty districts as teacher graduates from the state of North Carolina are unevenly dispersing to more metropolitan districts (Meyers, 2015). The state pay scale is universal for each district and should make the task of attracting educators to all districts in North Carolina equal; however, due to inequities in funding and candidate preferences, there are major differences in recruiting successes of administrators from LEA to LEA in North Carolina (Meyers, 2015).

The problem of finding, recruiting, and hiring high quality teacher candidates should be viewed from a theoretical standpoint. If great teachers equal student and LEA success, educational human resource departments need to become proactive in their attempts to put great teachers in every room. Methodically studying what makes a person select a school system or school, the characteristics that the recruiters possess, and the methods used needed to land those recruits should be identified, practiced, and repeated. This study will attempt to identify these methods and characteristics by interviewing the pools of recently hired teachers to identify their perceptions of techniques employed by administrators in recruiting and garnering their services.

The feedback from these recently hired employees should inform the practices being used by educational administrators in the area of recruiting and focus their efforts on practices that are highly successful.

### **Deficiencies**

There are deficiencies in the evidence of traits that employers display that make a difference in hiring success. The researcher has found no studies that address educational administrator behaviors that give them an advantage over their peers in the area of

recruiting. More specifically, many of the concepts that will be researched in this study are feelings that allow a person to formulate their perception of the potential employer. Furthermore, there is no information available that combines the behaviors of recruiters with the desire to work in a low-wealth district.

An additional deficiency includes a lack of research studies detailing the shortage of teachers in the state of North Carolina, particularly in the southeastern portion of the state. This is particularly troubling as regardless of how difficult it is to get adults into the classroom, school systems across the state of North Carolina have a small number of vacancies at any given time; however, this is directly related to the research problem. The state allows administrators to place substitutes, poor performing teachers, and lateral entry teachers into the classroom to fill vacancies.

Lateral entry is an “alternate” route to teaching for qualified individuals outside of the public education system. Lateral entry allows qualified individuals to obtain a teaching position and begin teaching right away, while obtaining a professional educator’s license as they teach. (Lateral Entry Teachers, n.d., p. 1).

More important than actual teacher vacancies is the question of the quality of teachers being placed in charge of students. There are no reports that currently detail the effectiveness of teachers by region or state. Additionally, there are no data that compare the quality of teachers in the more affluent areas with the teachers from the southeastern portion of the state of North Carolina. Thus, a challenge will be to determine the relative difference in the quality of teachers from district to district. This can and will create a problem with defining the actual parameters that will define the quality of teachers from one district to another.

**Audience**

This study will be of interest to all administrators who are responsible for recruiting teachers to their districts. It will focus on recruiting high quality teaching candidates in high-poverty/low-wealth districts. It will not be so limited as to exclude other educational leaders looking for great recruiting practices. This research will be of particular interest to administrators in low-wealth areas of the state of North Carolina and, in particular, those in southeastern North Carolina; however, the results of the study will benefit all who seek teaching talent. Additionally, this study will be aimed at legislators, local and state school board members, certification specialists at the state level, and the general public.

This study can affect the recruiting practices of educational administrators. Those who are affected by this study will be administrators who are tasked with hiring and retaining staff for their schools and LEAs. In addition, LEAs will be greatly affected by the positive or negative consequences of the hires they make. LEAs will benefit from high-quality teachers as they will help the districts where they work improve in the area of accountability. These quality teachers will also benefit the communities in which they work by preparing the student populations they work with for higher education and for the world of work. The cumulative effect of better teaching and learning is a more highly trained workforce which can positively affect economic growth and development.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the lived experiences of teachers during their job searches for employment in the field of education which can inform recruiters of the behaviors they need to display and the strategies they need to employ in order to hire high quality teaching candidates. The study focused on

the recruitment process teacher recruits experienced to ascertain and identify which behaviors recruiters displayed that attracted them to work in the LEA they chose. The study also sought to understand why recruits choose one LEA over another to teach, especially a district that is impoverished. Specifically, what practices attracted them to a low-wealth area and what practices sustained their interest and made them contemplate relocating to that area when other LEAs were recruiting them. Finally, what practices, if any, assisted them in making the final decision to work in a high-poverty/low-wealth district. Based on the shortage of teachers and based on the established value of quality teachers, it is important that we teach our central office staff and other administrators the skills necessary to effectively hire high-quality teachers. The information gathered from the study should give administrators the knowledge to complete this very difficult task.

### **Research Questions**

This study attempted to answer the following questions.

1. What are the common identifiable behaviors of recruiters that enhance the opportunity to hire high-quality teachers to low performing, high poverty school systems?
2. What are the common or most identifiable recruiting and marketing strategies recruiters in low-wealth systems use that sustained the interest levels of recruits for a position in a low performing, high poverty school system?
3. What are the most effective communication tools and methods recruiters can use to land high-quality teachers for positions in a low performing, high poverty school system?

## **Background of Research Area**

This study focused on a small rural county in southeastern North Carolina founded in 1779. There are five townships that comprise this LEA. It is made up of an area of 480mi<sup>2</sup> and is located in the sandhill region of North Carolina bordering South Carolina on its southernmost border. The county at its height of prosperity was known for its textile production; railroads; and agricultural production, particularly tobacco. In recent years, the county has suffered dramatically due to the severe loss of textile jobs, the reduction in the size of the rail yard, and the loss of tobacco as its prized agricultural commodity. Currently, the county has a 7.3% unemployment rate. The school system is the largest employer in the county, followed by a chicken processing plant and the hospital, all located in the county seat.

According to the United States Census Bureau's count on August 5, 2015, the county shrank in population from 46,639 in 2010 to its current level of 45,733 which is a -1.9% loss in total population. During this same time period, the state average in population growth was 4.3%. The population is predominantly White at 58.0%, with 31.0% being Black, 3.1% American Indian, 6.3% Hispanic, and roughly 1.1% Asian. The predominant language spoken is English, 93.2%.

Due to the loss of jobs and the high unemployment rate (7.3%), the populous inhabiting the county is very poor. The per capita income reported is \$17,236 a year which is \$8,048 below the state average. The median household income during this time period was \$32,384 compared to the state average of \$46,334. Additionally, the percentage of citizens below the poverty level was 25.9% compared to the state average of 17.5%.

The LEA has not been immune to the economic problems that have faced the



county. As previously mentioned, the county has lost a large majority of its manufacturing base which was in textiles. Additionally, a reduction in the size of the railroad workforce coupled with the loss of agricultural dollars from the production of tobacco has caused a resulting loss of economic prosperity in the area and has severely impacted the educational funding that the county commissioners are able to provide. The LEA consists of 16 schools. There are six elementary schools, four middle schools, four high schools, and a school for special needs children. Each of these schools has a free and reduced percent above 80%, which designates the LEA as a low-wealth district. Local funding for the 7,251 students is \$7,923.47 per pupil. The county supplement that is provided for its teachers is paid by the level of experience and ranges from \$945 to \$1,409. According to NCDPI, School Reporting Section/School Business Division (2011), this LEA ranks 99 of the 113 districts that were reported in average teacher supplement pay among LEAs at \$1,147 a year. The average teacher supplement in the state is \$3,478 (NCDPI, School Reporting Section/School Business Division, 2011).

### **Professional Significance**

This research will help educators who are responsible for recruiting and hiring teachers by identifying patterns of behavior that recruits identify as positive and that could lead them to higher levels of success. If educational leaders know and understand the perspectives of the teachers they are trying to recruit, they can more effectively amend and prepare for the process of recruiting. The objective of this study was to assist educational leaders by providing them with suggestions for changes in their behaviors so they can more consistently land their recruiting targets.

## **Delimitations**

The scope and focus of this study was delimited to include only teachers, rather than all stakeholders (e.g., principals, human resources directors, recruiters) involved in the recruiting process. The participants were also delimited to only teachers who were recruited during the 2013-2014 and the 2014-2015 school years, trained in a traditional teacher prep program, at the time of the study were fully certified, and were still employed after December 2015. Fourteen participants were selected for the study and included both males and females in both early education as well as secondary education.

## **Organization of the Document**

This dissertation is divided into five chapters. Chapter 1 is an overview of the study including the purpose and the research problem with the questions to be answered in the study. Chapter 2 is a review of the available literature pertaining to the history of organized labor recruiting, current hiring practices of human resource departments in the United States, and trends in leadership associated with hiring employees. Chapter 3 includes a description of the methodology utilized to conduct this inquiry. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study, with the concluding fifth chapter presenting a summary of the findings.

## **Definition of Terms**

Many terms will be utilized to craft the results of this study. The following is a list of definitions and terms that will be used throughout this study and should be used as reference when necessary to understand their uses in the field of education.

**Analysis of student work (ASW).** A process to collect data to populate Standard 6 for educators teaching in grades/subjects where there is no end-of-grade (EOG), end-of-course (EOC), Common Exam, or Career Technical Education (CTE) assessment. It

involves the collection of student work to document student growth (Garland, 2013).

**Behaviors.** The way in which one acts or conducts oneself, especially toward others (Behaviors, n.d.).

**High-quality teacher.** A teacher whose performance positively affects student educational outcomes (T. Tomberlin, personal communication, September 27, 2015).

**Highly qualified teacher.** A teacher who holds at least a bachelor degree from a 4-year institution, is fully certificated or licensed by the state, and demonstrates competence in each core academic subject area in which the teacher teaches (NCDPI, Federal Monitoring and Support, 2015, p.1).

**Lateral entry teacher.** A teacher who enters the teaching field by an approved alternative licensure process. These teachers must have a BS or BA degree and a minimum of 24 hours in the subject area in which they are going to teach and must pass state licensing exams (Lateral Entry, 2016).

**LEA.** As defined in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), a public board of education or other public authority legally constituted within a state for either administrative control or direction of or to perform a service function for public elementary schools or secondary schools in a city, county, township, school district, or other political subdivision of a state or for a combination of school districts or counties that is recognized in a state as an administrative agency for its public elementary schools or secondary schools (Local Education Agency, 2016).

**Low-effect teacher.** Teacher whose classroom performance does not positively affect student educational outcomes (T. Tomberlin, personal communication, September 27, 2015).

**Low-wealth LEA.** Counties that do not have the ability to generate revenue to

support public schools (per a legislative formula) at the state average level (NCDPI, Allotment Policy Manual 2007-2008, 2007, p. 69).

**NCLB.** A federal legislation that enacts the theories of standards-based education reform. Pursuant to 20 USCS § 6301, NCLB ensures that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging state academic achievement standards and state academic assessments (No Child Left Behind, 2016).

**North Carolina Educator Evaluation System (NCEES).** The state-mandated instrument for observing teachers to determine administrator beliefs about teacher quality. This model is based on the growth measures of a teacher and is taken at several points each year (NCDPI, Educator Effectiveness, 2015).

**Perception.** A thought, belief, or opinion often held by many people and based on appearances (Perception, n.d.).

**Praxis II content assessments.** A content-area exam accepted for meeting certain endorsement area testing requirements (Praxis II, 2015).

**Praxis subject assessments.** Tests that measure subject-specific content knowledge as well as general and subject-specific teaching skills that are needed for beginning teaching (Praxis Subject Assessments, 2015).

**Recruit.** To hire or enroll or seek to hire or enroll (new employees, members, or students (Recruit, n.d.).

**Recruiter.** An individual who works to fill job openings in a business or organization (Recruiter, n.d.).

**Recruitment.** The process of finding and hiring the best qualified candidate (from within or outside of an organization) for a job opening in a timely and cost-

effective manner. The recruitment process includes analyzing the requirements of a job, attracting employees to that job, screening and selecting applicants, hiring, and integrating the new employee to the organization (Recruitment, n.d.).

**Standard 6.** Measure used by the Human Capital Policy and Research department at NCDPI that measures teacher effectiveness on student accountability performance. This measure classifies teachers according to their students' success on 3 year rolling averages into needs improvement, effective, and highly effective (T. Tomberlin, personal communication, September 27, 2015).

**Student growth.** The amount of academic progress students make over the course of a grade or class (Student Growth, 2016).

**Student proficiency.** At the student-level, meeting proficiency is to have mastered the content sufficiently and be on target for a “college and career” path. It is achieving a Level 3 or Level 4 on the EOG or EOC assessments. Students who score a Level 1 or Level 2 have not met the proficiency standard and are not on trajectory to be college and career ready. For school, district, or state accountability reports, the percent of students who meet proficiency is reported (Frequently Asked Questions, 2013).

**Student teacher.** A college student pursuing a degree in education who teaches in a classroom under the supervision of an experienced, certified teacher (Student Teacher, n.d.).

## **Chapter 2: Review of the Literature**

### **Overview**

This section will review the literature associated with the historical and modern-day view of recruiting teachers and other educational personnel. The research will include recruiting strategies that have been identified as successful in recruiting human capital and will focus on traditional and contemporary recruiting strategies and methods commonly used in the field of education and business. The review will include information on the impact of these recruiting methods and discuss industry-identified changes in techniques that are necessary to be competitive. The review will also discuss grow-your-own teaching preparation programs and the use of incentives to entice teachers to entering the education profession as well as to work in low-wealth districts. Finally, the review will explore research on the topic of the behaviors and recruitment strategies of recruiters as well as marketing and branding strategies that most commonly are associated with success in the realm of recruiting in business and in the education fields.

### **Recruiting**

Recruiting is the process of finding and hiring the best qualified candidate (from within or outside of an organization) for a job opening in a timely and cost-effective manner. The recruitment process includes analyzing the requirements of a job, attracting employees to that job, screening and selecting applicants, hiring, and integrating the new employee to the organization (Recruitment, 2015, p. 1). Recruiting in a historical context “began with the military and dates all the way back to ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome” (Spagnola, 2010, p. 1). In fact, the concept of recruitment dates back to Julius Caesar in 55 B.C., who in that year signed a decree that any soldier who brought another soldier

into the Roman army would earn a 300 sesterii bonus (The History of Recruiting, 2015, p. 2). This decree, which resides in the collections of the British Museum, is the first known example of an employee referral program (Singh, 2008, p. 1).

The field of education has not been sheltered from the difficulties in staffing that have affected the rest of the world. In fact, these difficulties were noted as far back as the mid-19th century. Two factors were said to have caused this first widespread teacher shortages: the creation of the “common” schools, the precursor to modern day public schools, and the first compulsory school law enacted by the legislature in Massachusetts in 1852 which forced children between the ages of 8 and 14 to attend school. Horace Mann, who helped to establish the first common schools, was one of the first to try and address the teacher shortages these schools created and thus became one of the first to help fill teacher vacancies. In 1839, he started the nation’s first teacher preparatory schools called “normal schools.” These schools received their names because the prospective teachers were trained in the “norms” designed to impart to them high levels of teacher expertise (Hansen, 2001, p. 6). Chronic shortages of teachers continued throughout the 19th century (Labaree, 2004, p. 32).

Recruiting has changed dramatically since the days of Horace Mann. In later years, staffing became more structured. The birth of the modern day technical staffing industry is attributed to Harold L. Yoh, who in 1940 created the H.L. Yoh Company “as an effort to help the United States government with the war effort, designing production facilities and manufacturing plants” (Rossi, 2012, p. 3). According to Rossi (2012), “The staffing industry started out primarily to meet the engineering/technical needs of industry for large projects or during periods when a spike in engineering skills was required” (p. 5). Rossi stated that in the 1980s, contract employees who were hired through staffing

companies or job shops began to be replaced by “regular employees” who were identified and hired by human resource departments (p. 6). The following is a review of common modern day recruiting practices of human resource departments.

### **Recruiting Strategies and Human Resources 101**

According to Ryne and Barber’s (1990) recruitment model, four factors affect recruiting employees: (a) contingencies, (b) attraction strategies, (c) attraction outcomes, and (d) human resources practices (p. 289). Whether a human resources recruiter is trying to staff positions in the field of education or in business, they must realize that due to fierce competition for the best candidates, they must engage the candidates like a marketer would engage customers for business (Eddy, 2014, p. 1). Strategic recruiting programs have merits according to Hamman (2005), who stated that exemplary teachers can be hired when the pool of applicants is expanded through recruitment principles (p. 22). These methods change as our culture, our technology, and as organization needs change.

The process of hiring and recruiting manpower services has changed notably over the years and still continues to evolve as technology takes a giant leap forward.

More and more companies are turning to a multi-faceted approach to search for and recruit qualified applicants. (Tarcomnicu, 2013, p. 1)

This section of the review of the literature will look at recruiting attraction strategies which is one of the tenets of Rynes and Barber’s model of recruitment (p. 289).

There are many recruiting strategies human resource departments use for staffing positions within their organizations. Traditional recruiting strategies include but are not limited to newspaper or periodical postings, referrals, and job fairs. In addition to these older methods, human resource departments and their recruiters have begun looking at



newer, more interactive ways to garner the attention they need to begin the recruiting practice with applicants (Medved, 2014, pp. 2-6). Many recruiters have turned to electronic recruiting job boards, corporate career webpages, company websites, social media, and growing their own teachers to staff positions (Center for Educator Recruitment Retention and Advancement, Program Overview, n.d.; Eddy, 2014; Forman-Ortiz, 2013; Medved, 2014). A review of the branding and marketing strategies that are being used by human resource departments for recruiting will give an overview of recruitment processes as well as give current trends in the field of human resources recruiting. Finally, in addition to these strategies, there are many incentive programs currently being used in order to attract and land prospective teachers including growing-your-own teachers (Center for Educator Recruitment Retention and Advancement, Program Overview, n.d.); housing incentives (Connecticut Housing Finance Authority, 2015); scholarship incentives to go into the teaching field (Federal Student Aid, n.d.); and incentives to transfer to low-wealth areas (Sawchuck, 2013).

### **Branding and Marketing an Organization for Recruiting**

Due to the fact that there is fierce competition for the best teaching talent, Lee (2005) stated that

only those districts that identify that they are in a highly competitive hiring environment, and who take aggressive action to compete for the best talent will have the teacher resources necessary to provide excellent educational programs for the students in the future (p. 263).

Lee stated that the superintendent of an LEA must insure that the district is prepared to market teacher positions in a way that sets it apart from other districts with which they are competing. This is done through providing a winning teacher value proposition or,

more simply put, a brand that explains what the district has to offer its employees. This value proposition explains why a teacher would want to work in their district and what makes it different from other districts. Items such as the opportunity to teach in an innovative way; the curriculum used; the opportunity to work in a collegial setting; supportive school and district leadership; competitive compensation and benefits; technology; nice facilities; teaching aids; labs; respect given to the employee by parents and peers; and finally, and a record of excellent student outcomes from teaching all play a part in projecting the brand of the organization (Lee, 2005, p. 265).

Thus, employer branding represents an organization's efforts to promote, both within and outside the firm, a clear view of what makes it different from its competitors and therefore makes it more appealing as an employer to applicants. Organizations are now expanding their efforts to create an employer brand in order to assist their human resource departments in attracting and retaining employees (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004, p. 1). In fact, employer branding is defined as, "a targeted, long-term strategy to manage the awareness and perceptions of employees, potential employees, and related stakeholders with regards to a particular firm" (Sullivan, 2004, p. 1). Sullivan (2004) stated that employment branding can drive recruiting efforts by creating an image surrounding the organization that it is a good place to work (p. 1).

Sullivan (2004) stated that successful employment branding can increase the number and quality of applicants; however, in order for it to be successful, it must be targeted and include eight elements. These include a culture of sharing and continuous improvement, a balance between good management and high productivity, obtaining public recognition, having employees proactively telling great stories about the company, getting talked about in the public sector, becoming a benchmark firm that others want to

emulate, increasing candidate awareness of your best practices, and branding assessment metrics by continuously improving to fit the target audience (Sullivan, 2004, pp. 1-2).

Understanding these principles can help LEAs effectively brand and market their organizations therefore helping them to sell the district to applicants and add value to the organization through their human resource departments (Sullivan, 2004, p. 2). The following human resource strategies for recruitment not only gives the employer a chance to attract applicants but also gives them an opportunity to project their image through branding and marketing their organizations.

### **Career Fairs/Recruiting Fairs**

Career fairs are events sponsored to give a company a chance to meet and screen a large number of potential job candidates for positions within an organization while affording job-seekers the opportunity the same opportunity. These job and career fairs can range from events that are sponsored on college campuses for students about to enter the job market to industry-specific fairs for already established professionals (Career Fair, n.d., p. 1).

Job fairs for educators are attended by human resource personnel and their designees, because they give both the employer and the prospective employee a chance to meet face to face and they are an excellent tool for building relationships with university personnel, get the district's brand out, and see how the recruits react to interview questions. Additionally, these forums give the applicant and the employer an opportunity to trade information and interview for positions; however, often the interviews are for more for informational purposes than for hiring (Tronshaw, 2016, p. 1). Rynes and Barber (1990) cited a Rynes and Bordeau hypothesis: "If in fact organizational representatives have important effects on applicants, it would make sense to ensure that

recruiting representatives possess the right characteristics through selection, training, or some combination of the two” (p. 7). Therefore, selecting the right personnel to attend these fairs can be critical in giving a good impression of the organization.

Depending on the school district’s reputation, its location, and the pay of the state or LEA in which the district resides, these opportunities can be very beneficial to the employer; however, small rural districts can struggle as they are competing with larger districts and metropolitan areas at these fairs because they that can offer more incentives and more activities for these applicants (M. Godwin, personal communication, December 17, 2015).

However, Marty Godwin, human resources director for a small rural district in the sandhills of North Carolina, stated that in many cases, job fairs simply do not yield a good return on the investment in time and money that is spent while attending; and he further believes that the process is not a good business model for his district (personal communication, December 17, 2015). Mr. Godwin stated in his interview that his department has a team that typically attends 10-15 job fairs per year in hopes that his district can recruit highly qualified instructors. Mr. Godwin further stated that job fairs are necessary evils as they give him a chance to target all demographics; however, he feels that there is no way his district can staff all of its needs solely by attending job fairs (personal communication, December 17, 2015).

### **Referral Method**

A referral is a recruitment method in which current employees of a business or organization are encouraged and rewarded for introducing suitable recruits from among the people they know (Referral, n.d., p. 1). Marty Godwin, a human resources director in a low wealth district in the sandhills region of North Carolina believed that word of

mouth referrals are the most successful methods for recruiting employees into his district (personal communication, December 17, 2015). The Aberdeen Research Group supports this belief by reporting referrals are consistently the finest way for employers to effectively staff their organizations. Employee referral programs are useful in that they help the employers find the proper candidates for the positions available. Current employees understand the job role and description of the open position, the organizational environment in which the new employee would work, and the proper cultural fit for the position. Because of this, they are a great recruitment tool. In fact, 77% of organizations invest in employee referral tools (Laurano, 2013, p. 3). This type of program can be problematic, however, as it can lead to a lack of diversity as employees tend to refer employees with similar backgrounds and behaviors. To combat this potential problem, many companies use alumni and key stakeholders to broaden their programs (Laurano, 2013, p. 3).

### **Electronic Job Boards**

Historically, general job boards have served as the backbone of any sourcing function – providing an easy “go-to” site for jobseekers and employers alike (Laurano, 2013, p. 3). According to Tarcomnicu (2013), the internet has helped applicants to search for jobs by going to job board websites. By using these internet portals, applicants can look for job openings that match their skills and capacities and send out resumes to prospective employers at the same time. Job boards or employment-posting websites have helped both the jobseeker as well as the employer, as an applicant no longer needs to go door to door to find job openings (Tarcomnicu, 2013, p. 1). They simply go to a general internet job board and search the listings are that are posted in the comfort of their own homes. These websites are also convenient for employers as they can now

recruit in their offices which means lowered operating expenses for the company (Tarcomnicu, 2013, p. 1).

Although internet sites help to bring in some applicants, the cost of these sites has increased and their effectiveness has begun to diminish, causing organizations to begin to look for new options to replace the “post and pray” model of traditional job boards (Laurano, 2013, p. 3). According to Aberdeen Group research, even though 80% of organizations still leverage job boards in some capacity, nearly 40% of these organizations believe that such places will be obsolete in the next few years (Laurano, 2013, p. 3).

### **LEA/Corporate Career Sites**

Another method to try to source employee talent is the corporate career site which visually disseminates information about a company to prospective applicants and which can be used to put a focus on employment branding and give an organization a competitive advantage in recruiting (Miller-Merrell, 2013, p. 1). Krumrie (n.d.) stated that if companies are not willing to put the time and resources into developing a great career section within its website which promotes the company as a great place to work, potential employees will look to competitors for more detailed information about where they want to work (pp. 1-2). School districts create websites for visitors to instantly access information (Bona, 2009, p. 1). These sites should contain up-to-date information with a variety of communication tools and links to various information including registration forms, news, strategic plans, safety, special events, athletics, district facts, addresses of schools, departments, the board of education, and even an employment section (Bona, 2009, p. 4). In the human resources page, an organization can update personnel vacancies, list job requirements, and give the applicant a link to apply for a job

(Bona, 2009, p. 5); however, it is not enough to put this basic information on a career page anymore; candidates expect more (Forman-Ortiz, 2013, p. 1).

A career page needs to have an easy-to-find link to the page, a clear employment brand, content that defines the organization, and information about why people like to work for the company (Crispin & Mehler, 2013, p. 1). Some other important areas that need to be addressed are video testimonials, information for diverse applicants, links to social media, providing information in a reader friendly format, and how to apply for the job (Crispin & Mehler, 2013, p. 1). According to a survey of Fortune 500 Corporate Career Websites by CareerXroads, first impressions of a site are critical as they have a powerful impact on what people think about a company. A great career page provides pertinent information including evidence that the job and the company are the right fit for an applicant, does a great job describing the job, answers frequently asked questions, and provides salary information (Crispin & Mehler, 2013, p. 2). This works well for the Fortune 500 Company; but getting recruits to find, much less review a career site in a rural district can be problematic. In order for a district to get more hits on its website, it is often necessary to market the district; and a great way to do this is through social media. In fact, Laurano (2013) argued that in order for employers to effectively source top talent, social media should be used (p. 4).

### **Social Media and Networking Sites**

According to Eddy (2014), social recruiting through the use of social media is one of the fastest growing methods for recruiting by employers. In 2010, 82% of recruiters used social media to recruit; and this number grew to 93% by 2014 (Eddy, 2014, p. 2). This medium can be used to help accurately reflect an organization's branding initiatives and communicate the employee referral programs (Laurano, 2013, p. 4). Supporting this

is a Pew Research Center (2014) report which stated that 71% of online adults use Facebook, 23% use Twitter, 28% use Pinterest, and 26% use Instagram (p. 1). Twitter is expected to grow by 4.4 million in 2016, while Facebook is expected to grow by 4.5 million in that same year (Monteiro, 2015, pp. 2-3). Each mode of social media appeals to a variety of demographics, although many persons have accounts on more than one brand of social media. The beauty of some social media platforms is that they are searchable, with some being limited to your followers or friends while others are open to the public. Due to the rise in the use of smartphones, social networking has become so easy that 40% of smartphone users say they access social networking sites from their phones with at least 28% reporting that they access them each day (Pew Research Center, 2014, p. 3).

Social networking is paramount in the recruitment of employees, and its importance to human resource departments and recruiters is illustrated in the 2014 Jobvite Social Recruiting survey which was completed by more than 1,800 recruiting and human resource professionals across a range of industries and regions. This survey reports that in order to reach candidates in the labor market, recruiters must engage candidates like a marketer would engage customers. Because of this, the survey indicates that social media is increasingly becoming the norm, resulting in a social recruiting experience across platforms as diverse as Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, and even photo blogs like Instagram (Eddy, 2014, p. 1). According to the survey, recruiters plan to invest even more in social recruiting (73%) as compared to referrals (63%) and mobile (51%) (Eddy, 2014, p. 1).

According to Jobvite CEO Dan Finnigan,

The candidate experience is paramount in a time of talent scarcity and perpetual



recruiting. Companies need to optimize the recruiting process for mobile to connect with job seekers at every touch point. Offering a seamless experience from the palm of job seekers' hands will make it even easier for them to connect with great companies whenever, wherever and with whatever device they choose. (Eddy, 2014, p. 1)

Social networking sites have risen in popularity and with it their usefulness in the world of recruiting. This is exemplified in the 2013 research by the Aberdeen Group, which reported that social media sites have jumped up to the second most effective source for talent acquisition, just behind referrals (Laurano, 2013, p. 4). In recent years, these websites have become popular vehicles for recruiting, especially with millennials.

The recruiting landscape continues to shift as companies adopt new software, tools, and methods for screening candidates, and millennials join the workforce in increasing numbers, bringing different ideas about what jobs are supposed to be, and how to apply to them. (Medved, 2014, p. 1)

Millions of people use social networking websites every day. These sites' reach is beneficial for both parties. Employers can let millions of people know about their job openings while at the same time giving the jobseekers opportunities they would not have been presented if they had not accessed these social networking websites (Tarcomnicu, 2013, p. 1).

Indeed, because of the numbers of users on social networking sites, social media has become an effective tool for sourcing talent. In fact, according to Eddy (2014), social networking sites have become an industry standard, where 93% of recruiters reportedly used it in 2014 (p. 2); however, these organizations are still trying to mature in their use of them. The most common use of social media for candidates at this time includes

searching for jobs (64%), job post browsing (61%), and uploading a LinkedIn profile to apply for a job (57%; Laurano, 2013, p. 4).

### **LinkedIn**

According to Tarcomnicu (2013), “perhaps the best social networking site for those who wish to get hired is LinkedIn” (p. 1). This website features strong connections with thousands of companies in many different fields; LinkedIn registrant members get the chance to view the numerous job openings from these respected companies (Tarcomnicu, 2013, p. 1). In fact, 22% of the entire adult population of the United States uses LinkedIn (Duggan, 2015, p. 4). Like the traditional method of referring applicants, LinkedIn also fosters employee referrals, as the job posters can communicate easily with their former employees. LinkedIn also helps connect professionals from the same discipline, making the job search a lot easier and faster (Tarcomnicu, 2013, p. 1).

### **Facebook**

Facebook is the most popular social networking site in the world (Statista, 2015, p. 1) and is commonly being used to source staffs around the globe. Many businesses are using this medium in order to market their companies, as it has become the premier vehicle for that purpose (Social Networking Spending Shifts: Facebook is the go-to Destination for Marketers, 2009, p. 1). Facebook has more than 1.4 billion active monthly users worldwide and is visited by more than 156.5 million users in the United States. The popularity of the website has increased exponentially due to the increase in mobile access by its users. Indeed, more than 75% of millennials in the United States who have been surveyed say that they have accessed the mobile application (Statista, 2015, p. 1).

Facebook allows the user to post pictures, respond at length to other persons’

posts or comments, advertise, sell, and more. They pride themselves in being a “network of people” (Bastien, 2010, p. 1), where suggestions are given to the user on possibilities of other Facebook friends. Facebook opens with a newsfeed that proclaims all that your friends have done since you last logged in. Depending on your settings, the public or only your friends may view, share, and comment on your posts (Bastien, 2010, p. 1).

It is also very useful for those who are seeking employment. A Facebook profile enables a company to establish their brand presence and connect with many aspiring jobseekers. Additionally, a company’s employees who also use the social networking website can expand the reach of the company even more by sending out job invites to skilled people they know (Tarcomnicu, 2013, p. 1).

## **Twitter**

Twitter is similar to FaceBook in that you have a newsfeed; but your status updates, or tweets as they are called on Twitter, are limited to 140 characters. Twitter is the fast, quick, and easy method of communicating in real time. According to McMahon’s (2010) description of Twitter, it is a Short Messaging Service (SMS) system which allows users to broadcast tweets, follow users, and allows users to link conversation threads with the use of a hashtag. Hashtags are expressed as #keyword. This platform is searchable, permanent, and public (McMahon, 2010, p. 1).

Tweets might be limited to 140 characters, but they are useful for both jobseekers and employers. Since millions of users log on to Twitter every day, a company can use it to its advantage because it can be presented with a large pool of applicants. By posting tweets, followers and employees can access the link to job openings and file their applications online (Tarcomnicu, 2013, p. 1).

### **Grow-Your-Own Initiatives**

Berry (2007) reported that in a National Board Certified Teachers summit, the participants recognized that a grow-your-own initiative might be one of the best strategies for filling teaching positions in high-needs schools (p. 12). Educational grow-your-own initiatives are attempts to recruit interested individuals into the field of education by offering incentives to work alongside teachers in local schools. After completing their certification requirements if these individuals choose to come back and work in high-needs areas, many are offered incentives such as scholarship repayment, financial bonuses, and other special benefits (Swanson, 2011, pp. 120-121).

According to a study conducted in New York State, 61% of teachers entering the job market from 1999 to 2002 started within 15 miles of their hometown (Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2003, p. 6). Although this seems like an encouraging statistic, it does not necessarily address shortages in rural America. Monk (2007) cited a Gibbs (2000) report that stated rural areas produce a relatively small share of college graduates as compared to urban areas. The lower numbers of college graduates from these areas exacerbates a serious teacher supply problem in rural areas (Monk, 2007, p. 164).

Rural educational teacher recruiters often have a very difficult time filling their school system's teacher needs, because there is such a huge demand for new teachers each year, nearly 200,000 across the country (Buchanan, 2008, p. 2). With so many vacancies across the country, teachers can choose where they want to work; and many of them simply do not want to work in rural areas (Buchanan, 2008, p. 2). Many researchers also believe that there is an uneven distribution of effective teachers in the workforce especially in highly urban and rural areas of the country (Swanson, 2011, p. 119).

There are many reasons that cause teachers to avoid these areas which cause this uneven distribution, including lower compensation in rural areas due to lower fiscal capacity, meeting the needs of highly mobile children of low income migrant farm workers, relatively large numbers of students with special needs and limited English skills (Monk, 2007, p. 155). Another deterrent in attracting and hiring new prospects are the NCLB requirements which often force new prospects to get certifications in multiple subject areas in order to teach (McClure & Reeves, 2004, p. 1).

In fact, McClure and Reeves (2004) conducted a review of the available literature on rural teacher recruitment and retention from 1993-2003. The pair used initial descriptors such as geographic isolation, one-teacher schools, rural areas, rural education, and rural schools to begin to identify studies for review. They then narrowed the search by using descriptors such as faculty mobility, teacher employment, teacher persistence, teacher recruitment, and teacher shortage to identify 43 reports, papers, and journal articles to develop their findings and recommendations (McClure & Reeves, 2004, p. 4).

McClure and Reeves (2004) found that the biggest challenge for rural and urban schools was finding and identifying teachers who were both highly qualified and willing to teaching in hard-to-staff schools, which include rural and highly urban areas serving minority or low-income students (p. 5). The team identified four primary challenges faced by rural school districts in the area of recruiting: lower pay, difficult working conditions, geographic and social isolation, and the NCLB requirements for highly qualified teachers (McClure & Reeves, 2004, p. 5).

In addition to these deterrents are the realities high poverty young teachers often face when coming to these rural districts as well as the geographical and cultural isolation they feel when they arrive (Dwyer, Allen, & Rowland, 2007, p. 79). Many rural districts

have difficulty in attracting licensed teachers due to many rural LEAs' undesirable working conditions, inadequate induction programs, and lower salaries (Chaika, 2006, p. 1). Additionally, rural districts that have farming communities within their auspices often have children of very low paid migrant workers whose transiency poses many difficulties for the schools in which they attend (Monk, 2007, p. 166).

Buchanan (2008) stated that young people tend to go to work in more densely populated areas leaving the rural districts struggling to fill open teaching positions. He gave a great example of this when he quoted Victoria Robinson, a University of Northern Iowa assistant professor who referred to this phenomena by stating that "The city lights, for most young people are blazing too brightly" (Buchanan, 2008, p. 2). Robinson further stated that larger districts can usually get their choice of education school graduates as young teachers tend to gravitate toward densely settled areas to avoid social isolation and gain more leisure activities (Buchanan, 2008, p. 2).

As a way to combat the deterrents to working in a rural district, many argue that schools need to grow their own teachers (Berry, 2007; Dwyer et al., 2007; McClure & Reeves, 2004). Collins (1999) argued that in order recruit and retain teachers to rural districts, recruiters should target, where possible, "candidates with rural backgrounds or with personal characteristics or educational experiences that predispose them to live in rural areas" (p. 2).

McClure and Reeves (2004) supported Collins's (1999) beliefs in their research by stating that recruiting local talent is seen as a strategy with high potential because it results in a teaching candidate pool already familiar with the rural lifestyle and they are already rooted in the community. They further stated that comfort and connectedness help a young teacher to overcome feelings of isolation (McClure & Reeves, 2004, p. 14).

Because of this, many states and districts are now attempting to reshape their methods for recruiting and including grow-your-own programs to staff their schools. Godwin stated that growing-your-own in his district involves “encouraging students with good teaching qualities to pursue teaching as a career and then staying in contact with them” (M. Godwin, Personal Communication, December 17, 2015); however, according to McClure and Reeves, in order to create a program that is successful, a review of rural specific and general literature yielded four effective recruitment and retention practices that shared characteristics. They stated that the practices are strategic, specific to the schools or subject areas that are hard to staff, sustained, and rooted in the community (McClure & Reeves, 2004, p. 2).

Thus, an identified rationale for creating a grow-your-own program is established. This is supported by the Southeast Center for Teaching Quality which cited programs in various southeastern states and identified “developing local talent” as a means to expand the teaching pool of rural districts. Indeed, the authors of this article stated that policymakers should offer programs that will help to develop local young people and adults who already live in areas that are hard to staff (Southeast Center for Teaching Quality, 2001, p. 9).

In order to try to get students to serve in an area, several states are using Teacher Cadet programs (North Carolina Teacher Cadet Program, n.d.; Swanson & Moore, 2006; The Teacher Cadet Program, n.d.; Virginia Department of Education, 2012). The first of these programs that will be reviewed is operated by the Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement (CERRA) and is a secondary recruitment program that targets bright high school students for teacher education (Teacher Cadet Program Wins Dick and Tunky Riley WhatWorksSC Award for Excellence Teacher, 2015, p. 1).

According to Teacher Cadets, the primary goal of the program is to encourage academically gifted students with exemplary interpersonal and leadership skills to consider the teaching profession. It attempts to offer students an insight into the world of teaching and the critical issues that surround the education field (The Teacher Cadet Program, n.d., p. 1). It was piloted in 1985 by four schools in South Carolina; and since that time, nearly 60,000 South Carolina students have participated in the program. The program has expanded into 38 states nationwide (Teacher Cadet Program Wins Dick and Tunky Riley WhatWorksSC Award for Excellence Teacher, 2015, p. 1). According to Wine-Snyder (2015), Director of Pre-Collegiate programs with CERRA, “A unique facet of the program is that it provides the opportunity for schools and districts to identify and recruit ‘homegrown’ teachers and educators, providing a gateway for academically talented students to return to their communities as education professionals” (p. 1).

For rural districts in North Carolina, the Teacher Cadet program is essential. The North Carolina Teacher Cadet Program (n.d.) stated that the program is implemented in cooperation with LEAs across the state and is particularly important to rural and economically distressed counties who have had trouble recruiting with traditional methods (p. 1). In North Carolina, schools use the Teacher Cadet program as a means to identify and groom students for the education field. Recruitment and retention of quality teacher education students of all backgrounds and socioeconomic statuses is a major goal of all colleges and universities. This partnership is therefore an excellent opportunity for achieving that goal (North Carolina Teacher Cadet College Partner’s Handbook, 2013, p. 4-5).

This program not only helps students to experience the field of education to determine their suitability for the profession, but many counties report that is an



invaluable tool in the preparation of students to become teachers. Additionally, the program's leadership stated that their statistics show that students who grow up in these areas are more likely to return to them after college (North Carolina Teacher Cadet Program, n.d., p. 1). This is great for rural human resource recruiters as they can use the program to begin the imprinting process in an attempt to get these young people to come back and serve. Students are selected for the program at sponsoring high schools and are given classes during their junior and senior years. These students are given the opportunity to learn about a variety of educational levels to find their niche and then do field placements with highly effective teachers within the district (North Carolina Teacher Cadet College Partner's Handbook, 2013, pp. 2-3).

Another grow-your-own program called "Teachers for Tomorrow," based in Virginia, seeks to follow the same pattern of recruitment. According to Virginia Teachers for Tomorrow (VTFT), finding teachers in critical shortage areas and hard-to-staff schools is a sincere problem that must be addressed in Virginia as well as the nation. The Virginia Department of Education website states that in the next 10 years, two million teachers will be needed nationally, while the traditional teacher preparatory programs will only produce a million. The state put forth this program as a means to lessen the divide. During the 2014-2015 school year, 57 school systems offered the program. In this program, high school juniors and seniors interested in teaching are targeted and given classroom training as well as hands-on experience. The state believes that this long-term strategy is an excellent recruiting tool as the benefits of the program are that school systems can identify potential teachers within their ranks and can increase diversity and promote the hiring of local candidates who are more likely to return to the area they grew up (Virginia Department of Education, 2012, p. 2).

In Georgia, the Future Educators of America (FEA) program is being used as well. According to research, participation by students in the FEA program appears to “serve as an important point of convergence vocationally for high school students interested in teaching” (Swanson, 2011, p. 129). Swanson (2011) further stated that there is evidence that grow-your-own teaching programs like the one in Georgia are indeed attracting students who have an increased likelihood of finding satisfaction in the profession. Swanson postulated that students who are encouraged to participate early in the FEA program may discover an interest in the profession and later pursue the career (p. 129). This is in large part due to reversing negative and incorrect perceptions about teaching that can be changed once factual information about the profession is presented (Swanson & Moore, 2006).

In addition to this program, other states have tried and succeeded at growing-their-own teachers. In Shaw, Mississippi, the grow-your-own method for recruiting teachers has been adopted and utilized to stabilize their teaching core. The Shaw school district is a small rural area that was designated as a “Critical Teacher Shortage Area” by the state’s department of public instruction. The district also utilizes a grow-your-own student model whereby they enroll high school students into the “Future Educators Association,” a program similar to the Teacher Cadet program. These students get to visit college campuses when funds are available to learn about teacher preparatory programs (Dwyer et al., 2007, p. 80). These programs are important to rural areas as most of their teachers are raised close to where they teach (Collins, 1999, p. 2). This is true of the Future Teachers Association as it encourages students to consider returning to their hometowns and communities to teach (Lemke, 1994).

However, according to district officials, the most successful strategy they have

used is to encourage residents of their town and others in nearby towns who are interested in teaching to go to school to earn their teaching credentials. In the view of the superintendent, the problem was more of a retention problem than of a recruiting problem, as many out-of-town teachers left after only a few years. These grow-your-own strategies have helped to reduce the teacher turnover rate to only 3% per year (Dwyer et al., 2007, p. 79).

### **Incentives to Recruit Teachers**

Thus far, the review of the literature has focused on basic recruiting methods and marketing strategies to bring teachers into the teaching field. These methods are essential for identifying, recruiting, and employing teachers for not only low-wealth districts but all districts where teachers are needed. Since the early 1980s, many new changes, including the 2001 NCLB mandate from the federal government, have complicated the hiring process due to higher standards for entering the teaching field. Teachers must be highly qualified, meaning they must have received a bachelor's degree, attained full state certification or licensure, and proved that they are knowledgeable in their content areas. These changes have increased the concerns about staffing in high needs schools as it makes it more difficult to staff in rural and urban areas (Wheeler & Glennie, 2007, p. 1).

Due to the failure of states to achieve this prescribed mandate by 2006, the United States government required that each state provide a plan to the United States Department of Education for how they would ensure that all classrooms had highly qualified teachers and that they were distributed evenly among the rich and poor schools. This necessitated the states and school districts to look at alternative strategies for hiring teachers in hard-to-staff areas (Wheeler & Glennie, 2007, pp. 1-2). A renewed interest in incentives was among the strategies chosen to address the problem.

Incentives are defined as items that are offered to a person to help them in the decision-making process (Incentives, n.d., p. 1). According to Prince (2002), incentives can include teacher pay, bonuses, housing subsidies, tuition assistance, tax credits and other monetary incentives to lure teachers to their districts (p. 2). Education researchers have studied the validity of offering these external benefits and many stated that incentives for teaching can be useful in hiring teachers in low wealth rural areas and in fact should be used in order to attract top teaching talent (McClure & Reeves, 2004, p. 2). Berry (2007) gave further support to the importance of inducements by stating that many policymakers recognize their importance and furthermore think that a full range of incentives should be used to attract people willing to tackle challenging areas like teaching. Berry concluded his thoughts on the incentive landscape by stating that incentives create great “curb appeal”; however, they will only be successful if they are based on multiple factors that influence teacher decision-making processes (p. 1).

Prince (2002) reviewed incentive programs that had already been implemented in the United States and cited nine important lessons for legislators and educational specialists that needed to be considered in order for incentives to be effective. These include

1. The incentive has to be large enough to matter.
2. The incentive must be targeted to generate the desired behavior, or the impact will be diminished.
3. Imposing a repayment penalty for failing to uphold the terms of the agreement will increase the likelihood of retention.
4. Spreading out the bonus payments over several years, with the biggest payoff coming in later years, will increase the likelihood of retention.

5. The incentive should be structured so that teachers are not penalized when school performance improves.
6. Incentives should be renewable.
7. More incentives should be designed to attract experienced teachers, rather than new recruits, to high-poverty, low-performing schools.
8. Districts cannot conduct incentive programs alone.
9. Incentive strategies will require substantial reallocation of current resources as well as new money to be effective (Prince, 2002, pp. 33-36).

The following are examples found in the literature that offer a look at what states and LEAs have done and what they are currently doing in the area of incentivizing the teaching profession in order to help their recruiters find and hire teachers for their areas.

### **Loan Forgiveness Incentives**

Since the NCLB mandate, studies into teacher recruitment have consistently recommended incentives. Martin (2010) listed offering loan forgiveness or scholarships as a means to persuade teachers to join a district (p. 40). This recommendation is not new. There is historical evidence that supports the efficacy of scholarship repayment programs and their effectiveness. One such example of this strategy that has been used by states and districts is the Teaching Fellows program once used in North Carolina. In this program started in 1986 by then Governor Jim Hunt, talented young teaching prospects were identified and screened in high school and then given 4-year scholarships to college teacher preparatory programs in return for agreeing to serve 4 years in the state as teachers in order to pay back their scholarships. The program which was run by the Public School Forum ran for over 30 years but was ended completely by the legislature in March 2015. During that time, almost 11,000 students participated and more than 8,500

students graduated and entered the public schools of the state. During the program's history, it was nationally acclaimed. According to Fitzsimon (2015), states around the country are still calling the Forum to ask how to set up programs that mirror the North Carolina Teaching Fellows program for their state (p. 2).

Another example of this program is the South Carolina Teaching Fellows program that was started by the South Carolina General Assembly in 1999 in response to teacher shortages in the state. This program enrolls 200 talented high school students per year and offers them \$6,000 per year in scholarships, up to \$24,000 in total. These teaching fellows agree to work in the state for 1 year for every year he or she receives funding (Center for Educator Recruitment Retention and Advancement, Program Overview, n.d., p. 1). According to 2000-2010 data produced by CERRA, 1,374 teaching fellows have graduated from the program which is a 76.9% graduation rate among those entering the program. Additionally, 998 fellows or 72.6% are currently employed in 74 public school districts around the state. Finally, the programs administrators tout that 569 of these graduates are currently working in geographic critical needs schools as defined by an absolute rating of below average or at risk, a teacher turnover rate of 20% or higher over the last 3 years, and a poverty index of 70% or higher (Center for Educator Recruitment Retention and Advancement, Teaching Fellows Data, n.d., p. 1).

### **Housing Incentives**

Another way districts around the country are attempting to fill teaching positions is to offer housing incentives (Prince, 2002, p. 23). Prince (2002) stated that housing incentives started at the district level but have become popular with states and the federal government as a means to increase teacher compensation by reducing housing costs (p. 23). There are many housing options available including relocation assistance, teacher

housing, reduced or free rent, housing loans and grants, low-interest mortgages, reduce-priced homes, tax credits, and assistance with down payments and closing costs (Prince, 2002, p. 23).

As housing incentives apply to teacher recruitment, Prince (2002) noted there are several advantages to using this incentive.

- Housing incentives are popular with policymakers due to the fact that they view this non-salary method to be a good way to increase their state's competitiveness.
- Recruiters in LEAs can use this as a perk that might not cost the district any money.
- They can help districts with high housing costs overcome the difficulty of home ownership.
- They can help rural areas recruit teachers to come to their areas.
- They connect teachers to the communities they work in and enable them to teach near where they live.
- They can decrease turnover as teachers who purchase a home are less likely to leave.

According to Hoke County Human Resources Director Donna Thomas, within the state of North Carolina, districts such as Buncombe, Dare, Hoke, and Hertford counties are trying to lure new teaching talent to their districts by offering new and affordable housing built through partnerships with the North Carolina State Employee's Credit Union. These districts and their partners have received 0% interest loans for 15 years and have constructed or are in the process of constructing teacher housing complexes (D.

Thomas, personal communication, February 2, 2016).

Hoke County officials recognized that the county had a lack of affordable and acceptable housing options and, due to their high teacher turnover rate, decided that additional incentives were a necessity. With cooperation from the State Employees Credit Union and the Hoke County Education Foundation, the apartments were built. Teachers who could not otherwise afford decent housing now have educational “villages” where they can live comfortably and split the cost of the rent with other teachers. Unfortunately, there is no data at this time that can empirically state that this type of incentive was a causal factor in helping a recruit to determine their final selection of Hoke County as their teaching choice; however, Thomas believed that the apartments “have allowed us to recruit and hire teachers who would not have originally moved to Hoke County to work. Allowing teachers to share the apartments and split the \$700 per month rent has been especially helpful in recruiting teachers from out of town” (personal communication, February 2, 2016).

The idea of providing housing incentives to lure teachers to districts is not a new phenomenon, as states such as California, Connecticut, Mississippi, Maryland, New York, New Mexico, and Washington have all tried to use this approach, however in differing ways (Prince, 2002, pp. 24-28). California has the Extra Credit Teacher Home Purchase Program (ECTP). The state allows agencies such as cities and counties to use California Debt Limit Allocation Committee (CDLAC) tax credits or mortgage revenue bonds to support a program to recruit and retain teachers. The ECTP works by providing a deferred payment junior loan for down payment assistance from \$7,500 to \$15,000, depending on the property location, or 3% of the purchase price, whichever is greater (California Department of Education, California Teacher Recruitment Program, n.d., p.



3). In order to be eligible for this program, a person has to be employed at a school in California that is ranked in the bottom 50% of all of the schools based on the most recent Academic Performance Index (API) and make a commitment to work in a low-performing school for 3 years (California State Treasury, 2014, p. 1).

Connecticut's Teacher's Mortgage Assistance Program loan offers home loan below market interest rates to all public or vocational school teachers who agree to live and teach in a priority or transitional school district. The program is different than the California program as it targets these loans to teachers who are going to be first-time buyers and who will be living in the challenging communities they serve (Connecticut Housing Finance Authority, 2015, p. 1).

In Mississippi, the Critical Shortage Act of 1998 provided incentives to recruit teachers in high-need areas as well (Kieffer & Mader, 2013, p. 2). State officials set into place a housing assistance program called the Mississippi Employer-Assisted Housing Program (H.A.T.) which is a special home loan/grant available to teachers who work in designated geographical shortage areas. The loan is for \$6,000 and assists teachers in paying for closing costs associated with purchasing a home (Mississippi Department of Education, 2012, p. 3). These are just samples of the use of housing as an inducement for recruiting teachers and do not represent all efforts across the country. There are no data that give stakeholders information as to the effectiveness of using housing incentives for teacher recruitment and retention; however, anecdotal information from representatives from states like Mississippi is available. Kieffer and Mader (2013) reported that officials in Mississippi feel the program has had a positive impact in helping place teachers in classrooms in difficult-to-staff districts (p. 2).

David Haslekorn, President of Recruiting New Teachers, a Belmont,

Massachusetts nonprofit, stated that many districts are using housing as a “back door” way of raising salaries. He believed that housing incentives are potentially more effective and in the long run a more lasting solution in recruiting teachers because districts are connecting the teachers to the communities in which they serve. This helps the districts retain teachers while simultaneously building community capital (Galley, 2001, p. 4). Officials like Judy Beaird, the director of recruitment for the Mississippi Teacher Center, believed that by incentivizing the purchase of homes, the state H.A.T. program might “plant” teachers in the area they live. By accepting the money to help with the purchase of their home, teachers agree to teach for a minimum of 3 years. Beaird stated that she felt that this program is successful (Galley, 2001, p. 2). Although there seems to be a great deal of momentum on the use of housing as a viable means to attract teachers to low-wealth districts, there is very little definitive data to prove that it is an effective means of recruiting and retaining teachers according to Sequan Eubanks, teacher recruitment specialist for the National Education Association. “This is a relatively new phenomenon, so we don’t have a whole lot of data on it” (Galley, 2001, p. 1).

Another form of incentives that states and LEAs are using to attract teachers to high-need schools and areas are nonperformance based financial incentives (Wheeler & Glennie, 2007, pp. 1-2). Offering these nonperformance-based incentives including signing bonuses to attract teachers in high-need schools and districts along with difficult to fill subject areas has also been recommended by many researchers (Martin, 2010, p. 40; Wheeler & Glennie, 2007, p. 8). States and LEAs use incentives in a variety of ways including offering bonuses programs to target new teachers; bonuses to target high-need schools; and finally, bonuses to target high-need subjects (Wheeler & Glennie, 2007, p.

2). According to Wheeler and Glennie (2007), the use of targeted incentives could increase an employer's chances in the area of recruiting and retaining teachers in high-need schools and subject areas (p. 5).

In a report by Aritomi, Coopersmith, and Gruber (2009), data from the 2007-2008 Schools and Staffing Survey yielded that 15.4% of school districts in the United States offered pay incentives to attract and retain teachers in fields of shortage. Additionally, 5.7% were offered pay incentives to go and work in less-desirable locations (Aritomi et al., 2009, p. 11). According to the report, there are other popular incentives which districts offer to recruit and retain teachers. The report indicated that 98% of districts offered general medical health insurance, 85% offered dental insurance, and 80% offered group life insurance (Aritomi et al., 2009, p. 10). This multi-faceted approach to incentivizing teaching is nice for the employee; however, financial incentives begin with base teacher pay.

In the United States, during the 2007-2008 school year, the average yearly base salary for teachers with a bachelor's degree and no teaching experience was \$33,600. The same teacher with 10 years of experience had a base yearly salary of \$43,000 (Aritomi et al., 2009, p. 8). The average lowest base salary per district paid to full-time teachers was \$34,000, while the highest base salary paid per district to full-time teachers was \$60,400 (Aritomi et al., 2009, p. 9). These numbers display a huge disparity in teacher compensation from district to district and could play a part in a teacher's selection of a district (Winters, 2009, p. 169).

According to Winters (2009), teacher pay matters with regard to teacher recruitment. Winters stated that intra-state variation in teacher salaries is an important issue for educational policymakers in the United States (p. 157). An article by Blair

(2000) supported this postulation. The state of Oklahoma's education department reported that nearly 1,000 teachers left Oklahoma districts between July and September 1999 in order to pursue higher salaries. A large number of these who stayed in education went to Texas who, at that time, was paying nearly \$6,000 more in base pay than the state of Oklahoma. Incentives are useful; and that point was underscored by Mildred J. Hudson, the chief executive officer of Recruiting New Teachers incorporated in Belmont, Massachusetts. In the report, Hudson stated that districts cannot have too many incentives at this point, but the competition and accompanying pay differentials often undermine the poorest districts and states (Blair, 2000, p. 2).

Indeed, according to Winters (2009), school districts who pay low salaries likely will have a difficult time recruiting and retaining quality teachers (p. 157). Incentives to bolster pay including local teaching supplements have been studied; and according to Winters who cited the work of Manski (1987), higher salaries attract more and better qualified teachers (p. 158). These pay differentials were studied in the state of Georgia using a regression analysis to try and identify reasons local supplements varied from district to district and whether property tax base truly mattered in determining teacher salaries (Winters, 2009, p. 157). In the study, Winters found that local supplements, which are additional income paid above the normal state salary scale, are affected by the average pay in neighboring districts, property tax wealth in a district, property tax base, and teacher education and experience (p. 157). Winters determined in his research that the difference in teacher salaries due to property wealth of an area was only moderate; however, Winter's conclusion supported the idea that dispersion of teachers can be affected by teacher pay when he stated, "Despite state equalization efforts, poorer districts pay lower teacher salary supplements than wealthier districts, which may reduce

their ability to recruit and retain quality teachers” (p. 169).

Additionally, these inequities in teacher salaries across districts may lead to unequal educational opportunities for students as teachers go to more affluent districts (Winters, 2009, p. 157). To combat the problem of unequal dispersion of highly qualified teachers and draw them to more challenging assignments, inducements such as higher pay and incentives are necessary (Prince, 2002, p. 33). According to Prince (2002), most teachers do not choose to work in the most difficult schools, therefore changing the pay structure in these areas is a critical piece to attracting a great staff. Prince cited a March 2000 poll that illustrates this difficulty. This poll of North Carolina teachers yielded the remarkable statistic that 69% of teachers surveyed said they would not voluntarily work in a low-performing school (Prince, 2002, p. 15); however, in a North Carolina Association of Educators (NCAE, 2000) poll done the same year, the organization reported that 75% of North Carolina teachers surveyed said they would consider a move if a bonus was offered.

The problem of getting teachers to sign on to work in a in a low wealth rural district must be solved. The use of monetary incentives could level the playing field to an extent. In fact, research strongly suggests that high quality, already established teachers, measured in terms of college selectivity and expertise, can be hired by unilaterally increasing the pay of a school district (Figlio, 2002, p. 697). A practical example of this strategy working was a proposal by New York City’s United Federation of Teachers (UTF) in 2000. That year, the UTF proposed that the city offer a 15% pay raise for teachers who transferred to schools that were identified as Schools Under Registration Review. This proposal prompted 600 teachers that year to request transfers to serve in the identified schools of high need (Goodnough, 2000).

A more recent study funded by the United States Department of Education called the Talent Transfer Initiative (TTI) showed that incentives can work in recruiting teachers to high-need areas. The study began during the 2009-2010 school year and involved 165 teams of teachers in 114 schools located in 10 districts in seven states. This group of teachers were evaluated using value-added measures to identify the top 20% of teachers in the study group. These teachers were then offered \$20,000 to transfer to a low-performing school and stay there for at least 2 years. The academic results of the students who learned under these teacher transfers were encouraging; however, even though the teachers were offered a large sum to move to these high-need schools, volunteers for transfers during the study were hard to find. Of the 1,500 eligible applicants, only 81 were willing to move to the low-performing schools (Sawchuck, 2013, p. 2).

Some argue that lump sum incentives to teach in difficult areas can be problematic and expensive for the return on the investment. In 1999, the state of Massachusetts began offering \$20,000 Massachusetts Institute for New Teachers (MINT) bonuses to attract new teachers to the state's hard-to-staff areas. Administrators for the program reported that after 1 year, one fifth of all teachers who took the bonus left the classroom and many others transferred to suburban schools (Viadero, 2001, p. 1).

This finding suggests that incentives might be a good way to get teachers interested in a hard-to-staff area and they may even help a teacher to make a decision to sign on to teach; however, if teachers walk away from bonuses, there must be other factors that play an equal or greater role in getting teachers to teach. There are limited data on how effectual inducements are at hiring and retaining teachers in hard-to-staff areas, and legislators are hesitant to fully invest in programs due to this lack of data. An

additional complicating factor is whether money can create predictable behavior among teachers, as good teachers are drawn to the profession by intrinsic rewards and not for the money (Prince, 2002, pp. 5-6).

### **Recruiter Behaviors**

Thus far in this review of the literature, topics such as what recruiting is, what recruiting strategies have been used historically to attract top teaching talent, and what modern strategies are currently being used to attract teachers have been presented. These strategies have included job postings; referrals; job fairs; technology including career portals, social media, and networking sites; growing-your-own teachers; and incentives such as base salary pay, bonuses, housing incentives, and tuition assistance in return for working in high-need areas; however, a thorough review of the literature on the topic of recruiting must include behaviors displayed by the recruiters during the process of attracting and hiring teaching candidates. The following section will review the available literature on these behaviors.

### **Reviewing Recruiter behaviors**

In this section, the researcher will investigate the available literature with regard to the importance of the teacher recruiter. Due to the difficulties rural, low-wealth districts face in recruiting high-quality candidates to the ranks of the teaching field, some have argued that the behaviors the recruiter displays during the recruiting process can make the difference in applicant perceptions of the job for which they are interviewing (Harris & Fink, 1987, p. 778). In fact, the effects of the recruiter on applicant choices have been studied often (Harris & Fink, 1987, p. 765). The following paragraphs explore some of that research.

In a field study done by Harris and Fink (1987), a pre/post design study for

determining the causal effect of the recruiter on applicant perceptions and for controlling variance was conducted as a field study to assess the relationship between recruiter characteristics and applicant judgements of jobs (p. 778). The results of the study support the idea that recruiter characteristics appeared to extend beyond merely affecting applicants' perceived notions of the job attributes. The recruiter's personableness and informativeness have a causal impact on applicant perceptions of the job; and indeed, there was a significant relationship between recruiter characteristics and the acceptance of a job (Harris & Fink, 1987, pp. 778-779). This is supported by Schmitt and Coyle (1976) who reported in their research on applicant decisions in the interview process that there was a significant relationship between recruiter personality and informedness and a perceived increase or decrease in organizational favorability and acceptance of an offer (Schmitt & Coyle, 1976). Finally, the Harris and Fink study yielded that personable, competent recruiters may have a major impact on applicant reactions for employment especially if the recruiter does college applicant interviews early in the recruit's job search (p. 779).

Although the research by Harris and Fink (1987) and Schmitt and Coyle (1976) indicated there is a strong relationship between perceived recruiter characteristics and recruits' acceptance of a job offer, Harris and Fink referenced Rynes and Miller's (1983) study which had mixed results (p. 766). According to Harris and Fink, a review of research conducted by Rynes and Miller where the pair manipulated recruiter characteristics and fixed job attributes to be average, they found that although recruiter characteristics had an impact on perceived job attractiveness, the perceptions that the applicants had of the recruiter did not have a significant impact on applicant decisions to accept a job offer. Harris and Fink discussed another Rynes and Miller study which was



conducted in a laboratory setting where recruiter characteristics and job attributes were manipulated. According to Harris and Fink, Rynes and Miller found that the recruiter had no effect on either perceived job attractiveness or job acceptance (p. 766).

These findings are significant as recruiters sell and articulate the vision of the districts for which they work to perspective applicants during the interview process. Although Rynes and Miller suggested that there is no direct effect between recruiter characteristics on the acceptance of a job, Rynes (1988) reported that a method by a recruiter for marketing a district indirectly can be the signaling that the recruiter uses during the interview (pp. 11-12). Indeed, Rynes suggested that interviewers can influence job choices made by applicants through their ability to make the job seem attractive, and this is often achieved by altering the perceptions of the job indirectly by signaling. This theory used by Rynes suggested that these signaling interviewer behaviors can be interpreted as cues by the applicant as symbolic of the friendliness, competence, and formality of the company's employees (pp. 11-12). Larsen and Phillips (2002) reported that in Rynes's signaling theory, recruiter behaviors along with peers and supervisors may be perceived by applicants as a signal of the organizational climate in which they might join. More concisely stated, signals such as recruiter preparedness might be viewed as signals of organizational efficiency, and extravagances viewed during the recruitment process might be signals of an organization's ability to pay and provide fair compensation (Larsen & Phillips, 2002, p. 350).

This knowledge can be especially important as LEAs and their recruiters attempt to influence applicant job choices in a recruitment interview (Rynes, 1988), usually through their behaviors. Indeed, Goltz and Giannantonio (1995) cited the recruiter characteristic of friendliness as the most important characteristic, and it is often

associated with applicant attraction (p. 109). Goltz and Gianantonio tested the friendliness effect in research where they attempted to determine “the role that applicants’ positive inferences about organizational characteristics played in the relationship between recruiter friendliness and applicant attraction to the job” (p. 109).

The researchers conducted this study in a laboratory setting using 171 undergraduates in a management class. The study involved using 90 students watching a videotape of a friendly recruiter conducting interviews and 81 students watching an unfriendly recruiter. The students were asked to imagine themselves in the role of the applicant they watched on the videotape, fill out a short questionnaire, and be debriefed. The recruiter the students watched was an actor who was videotaped being friendly and also being unfriendly. This recruiter manipulated the experiment by changes in his behavior from one tape to the other; however, the only changes were nonverbal cues and the pitch of his voice (Goltz & Giannantonio, 1995, p. 112).

In the videotape recordings, the friendly recruiter stood up when the applicant entered the room, shook hands, kept eye contact, smiled, did not play with his tie, used a slightly higher pitched voice, and continuously leaned forward toward the applicant. The unfriendly recruiter did not stand when the applicant entered; did not shake hands; played with his tie; only smiled one time; leaned back in his chair; used a lower, more monotone voice; and glanced away from the applicant five times (Goltz & Giannantonio, 1995, p. 112).

The results of the laboratory study were interesting. Subjects viewing the friendly recruiter made more positive inferences about unknown organizational characteristics of the company that the recruiter represented than did the subjects viewing the unfriendly recruiter. There was a significant effect according to the researchers who conducted the

ANOVA on the data gathered. Additionally, subjects viewing the friendly recruiter were more attracted to the employment opportunity than those watching the unfriendly recruiter. According to the researchers, these results were consistent with previous research done on the topic. Finally, analyses were performed to determine if the inferences made by subjects mediated the friendliness-attraction relationship. It was determined that the friendliness of the recruiter on attraction to a job was partially mediated by the subjects' inferences about unknown organizational characteristics (Goltz & Giannattonio, 1995, p. 115).

A Liden and Parsons (1986) field study in which 422 applicants who went through a job interview and then responded to a questionnaire seems to lend additional credence to the Goltz and Giannattonio (1995) research. In their findings, applicants who responded positively to interviewers felt more inclined to accept a position in the recruiting organization; however, this is once again moderated by the perceived job opportunities that the applicants felt were available (Liden & Parsons, 1986, p. 109).

This information about recruiter characteristics needs to be viewed carefully and, according to Larsen and Phillips (2002), should be viewed by reviewing the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) to determine if the applicant is more influenced by organizational factors or recruiter behaviors (p. 347). According to Larsen and Phillips, the ELM model was developed to explain the persuasive process and may be used as a framework for understanding recruiter effects on applicants' perceived organizational effectiveness (p. 348). The ELM model is a theory that describes how individuals are persuaded to form an attitude about an organization. It is based on the theory that applicants process information along a continuum of low and high elaboration (Larsen & Phillips, 2002, p. 349). Elaboration is defined by Petty and Cacioppo (1986) as "the

extent to which a person thinks about the issue-relevant arguments contained in a message” (p. 128).

According to Larsen and Phillips (2002), the ELM theory states that when applicants engage in high levels of elaboration, their attitude toward an organization is formed by the content which they are presented by the recruiter and is done through central processing. In applicants who use low levels of elaboration, processing is done peripherally and results in attitudes being formed that are not based on content provided about an organization but by peripheral cues such as information sources, credibility of recruiter, power, attractiveness, or the characteristics of the message. It is in this realm where recruiters are important. When peripheral processing is used by the applicant, the evaluations they form come from favorable or unfavorable peripheral cues provided by the recruiter (Larsen & Phillips, 2002, p. 349).

The practical implications of this theory in the area of recruitment are that during early contacts in the recruiting process, many applicants use low levels of elaboration and are more highly influenced by external peripheral factors such as the recruiter. This is due to applicants often having limited information about an organization and therefore not using central processing as much as they use the peripheral processing to formulate their attitudes of an organization (Larsen & Phillips, 2002, p. 349).

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### **Conceptual Framework**

Hiring qualified and highly effective teachers to staff schools is one of the most critical tasks any school administrator can have. Hanushek (2011) stated, “Teachers are very important; no other measured aspect of schools is nearly as important in determining student achievement” (p. 3). Hiring teachers in low-wealth/high-poverty areas in North Carolina is particularly difficult due to lower enrollments of teacher candidates (Meyers, 2015), unequal distribution of graduates to higher socioeconomic areas (Meyers, 2015), less compensation for employees (Winters, 2009, p. 169), and fewer opportunities for social experiences (Buchanan, 2008, p. 2).

This qualitative, phenomenological study was conducted to attempt to understand the lived experiences of teachers during their job searches for employment in the field of education to determine which behaviors recruiters should display and utilize in order to hire high quality teaching candidates in a low-wealth district. More succinctly, it attempted to identify patterns of recruiter behavior that recruits identified as positive which could lead to the recruiter having a higher rate of success in hiring quality educators for their low-wealth districts.

The study focused on the recruitment process teacher recruits experienced up until the moment they were hired. This study attempted to ascertain and identify which behaviors recruiters displayed and which strategies these recruiters employed that attracted applicants to work in the LEA they chose. The study also sought to understand why recruits choose one LEA over another in which to teach, especially a district that is impoverished. Specifically, what practices attracted them to a low-wealth area and made them contemplate relocating to that area when other more affluent LEAs were recruiting

them. A qualitative research method was chosen to allow in-depth interviews of participants to glean critical information that was hoped would help to inform recruiters on best practices. This research study yielded experiential data from new teachers on their lived experiences during the recruiting process.

If educational leaders know and understand the perspectives of the teachers they are trying to recruit, they can more effectively amend and prepare for the process of recruiting. The objective of this study was to assist educational leaders by providing them with the suggestions for changes in their behaviors so they can more consistently land their recruiting targets.

This chapter presented the research design and the methods the researcher utilized to conduct the proposed research. The research questions were presented first followed by the research design and then the setting where the research was conducted. The selection process of the co-researchers was then identified followed by the role of the researcher. Finally, the procedures for collecting the data were delineated along with trustworthiness and ethical considerations the researcher took into account to conduct the study. Finally, the chapter concluded with a summary of the research proposal.

Chapter 3 included the information that explained the decision to use the qualitative phenomenological research method and delineated the research design of the study. The chapter included information about the sample population as well as the selection methods used in order to generate the research sample population, the research design for the project, and the procedures for conducting the study. Additionally, the chapter discussed data collection procedures, methods used to analyze the data collected, and the controls used to assure reliability as well as the validity of the study.

The use of the qualitative phenomenological research method yielded Emergent

Themes (Appendix A) about the perceptions teachers developed about recruiting techniques and the recruiter's behaviors during their recruitment period. This information was then turned into useable procedural and operational methods that could be used to train district administrative staff as well as building-level administrators in the recruiting skills necessary to effectively hire high quality teachers. The information gathered from the study gives administrators the knowledge to complete this very difficult task.

### **Research Questions**

This study attempted to answer the following questions.

1. What are the common identifiable behaviors of recruiters that enhance the opportunity to hire high-quality teachers to low performing, high poverty school systems as compared to more affluent districts?
2. What are the common or most identifiable recruiting and marketing strategies recruiters in low-wealth systems use that sustained the interest levels of recruits for a position in a low performing, high poverty school system?
3. What are the most effective communication tools and methods recruiters can use to solicit high-quality teachers for positions in a low performing, high poverty school system?

### **Research Design**

This study was conducted using qualitative research methods. According to Creswell (2008),

Qualitative research is a type of educational research in which the researcher relies on the views of participants; asks broad, general questions; collects data consisting largely of words (or text) from participants; describes and analyzes

these words for themes; and conducts the inquiry in a subjective, unbiased manner. (p. 46)

Denzin and Lincoln (2005) described this form of research further by stating, “The qualitative researcher studies things in their natural setting, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomenon in terms of the meaning people bring to them” (p. 3). Finally, researchers use qualitative studies to seek meaning, “through the exploration of subjective understandings from participants’ perspectives, the attempt to identify broad categories and common themes, and a commitment to a collaborative engagement with participants” (Shinebourne, 2009, p. 95). According to Creswell (2007), the final report of a qualitative study includes voices of the participants, reflexivity of the person conducting the study, and a complex description and interpretation of the problem being studied and extends the literature and makes a call for further action (p. 37).

The researcher employed narrative research designs to conduct this study. Narrative research designs are qualitative procedures whereby researchers collect and tell stories about individual lives and then write narratives about their experiences (Creswell, 2008, p. 61). This qualitative research design method was chosen specifically so the researcher could explore the lived experiences of new teachers. Specifically, the researcher wished to study new teacher perceptions of recruiter behaviors and strategies these recruiters utilized for pre-employment recruiting utilizing the strategy of phenomenological research.

A phenomenological approach to gathering data was used in this study. Phenomenology is a qualitative research method that was pioneered by philosopher Edmund Husserl. Husserl developed this scientific method to assist researchers in the investigation of human experience and to study their behavior (Wertz, 2005, p. 167). In



phenomenology, the investigator does not make suppositions but focuses on a specific fresh topic and then naively makes questions to guide the study. He finally derives findings that will provide the basis for future research (Moustakas, 1994, p. 47). A phenomenological research study describes the meaning for multiple individuals about their lived experiences centered on a concept or a phenomenon (Creswell, 2007, p. 57). Phenomenology focuses on appearances of things, examines subjects from multiple perspectives seeking to elucidate the vision of the essences of a phenomenon, is committed to the description of experiences not to analyses, and seeks to present vivid imagery about what appears in consciousness during a phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994, pp. 58-59). Using the phenomenological approach gave the investigator a method to research a particular topic with which he has a personal interest and is connected (Moustakas, 1994, p. 59).

The basics for conducting a phenomenological research study as described by Moustakas (1994) start with determining if the phenomenological approach is the best method for conducting the qualitative study. Because this study dealt with teacher perceptions of the recruiters and because the research dealt with the teachers' shared experiences, the researcher deemed that the use of phenomenology would be the appropriate way to gather data and identify emergent themes through the analyzation of the conscious thoughts of the interviewees (Creswell, 2007, p. 60).

Secondly, the researcher recognized the philosophical assumptions of phenomenology including bracketing out their own experiences (Creswell, 2007, p. 61). Brackets are natural scientific theories, hypotheses, explanations, and other conceptualizations of a subject matter (Wertz, 2005, p. 168). The developer of phenomenology utilized the principle that scientific knowledge should start with a fresh

and unbiased description of the subject matter to be studied (Wertz, 2005, p. 167). He used two distinct epoches or abstentions from influences to help the researcher avoid influences that could bias the descriptions gathered. According to Moustakas (1994), an epoche requires the elimination of suppositions and the raising of knowledge (p. 26).

Husserl's first epoche, the epoche of natural sciences, directs the researcher to avoid incorporating brackets and further instructs the investigator to view the phenomena with fresh eyes in a natural attitude without scientific preconceptions (Wertz, 2005, p. 168). This natural attitude is fine for physical scientific research as it simply reports in the straightforward world in which we live; however, to scientifically study and investigate meaning or experience, a transformation to Husserl's epoche of the natural attitude is necessary (Wertz, 2005, p. 168). Husserl's second epoche is a method to take the researcher from the straightforward visible real life, to more subjective lived-through meanings and subjective performances (Wertz, 2005, p. 168). This is best explained by Wertz (2005):

This second epoche and the analyses that follow from it allow us to recollect our own experiences and to empathetically enter and reflect on the lived world of other persons in order to apprehend the meanings of the world as they are given to the first-person point of view. (p. 168)

The researcher utilized these steps in order to analyze the information gathered and write his own Beginning Epoche (Appendix B). The researcher gathered the data through a series of open-ended questions and note-taking. The researcher then reviewed the data which included transcriptions of the interviews and analyzed them looking for significant statements, quotes, or sentences that provided an understanding of the phenomenon experienced by the participants and which Moustakas (1994) called

horizontalization. The researcher then developed clusters of meanings which were used to identify themes through the use of coding (Creswell, 2007, p. 61). The researcher used a coding a memoing template to accomplish this task (Appendix C). The researcher then wrote Textural Descriptions (what the participant experienced; Appendix D) and Structural Descriptions (context that influenced how the recruits experienced the phenomenon they lived through; Appendix E; Creswell, 2007, p. 61). Finally, the researcher used the textural and structural descriptions to develop the essence of the phenomenon (invariant structure) which centered on the shared experiences of the participants (Creswell, 2007, p. 62).

This phenomenological study was designed to identify successful beginning teacher recruits' perceptions of recruiters, their behaviors, and the strategies they employed to recruit the beginning teachers during their job searches for employment in the field of education. More importantly, were there any behaviors or strategies that were employed by recruiters that attracted them to a low-wealth area and made them contemplate relocating to that area when other more affluent LEAs were recruiting them?

According to Husserl (1970), perception is the primary source of knowledge in phenomenology and cannot be doubted (pp. 608-609). Additionally, Husserl (1970) explained that intentions that are united with sensations embody the full concrete act of perception (pp. 608-609). Thus, the study of perceptions that were formed by the recruits as they were being recruited is essential to human resource departments and to the recruiters who work therein. By addressing the perceptions that beginning teachers have about the recruiting and selection process, recruiters can identify specific recruiting strategies and proper behaviors of recruiters. Districts can use this information to develop plans for improving the recruiting techniques of their employees by

understanding the lived experiences and the perceptions new teachers formed as they were being recruited. This study yielded perceptions from recruits as to what techniques could be employed by a district that give the LEA consistent success in the area of recruiting, especially in competing with more affluent districts for high-quality recruits.

### **Target Population**

This study is of interest to all administrators who are responsible for recruiting teachers to their districts. It focuses on recruiting high quality teaching candidates in high-poverty/low-wealth districts. It is not so limited as to exclude other educational leaders looking for great recruiting practices. This research is of particular interest to administrators in low-wealth areas of the state of North Carolina, and in particular those in southeastern North Carolina; however, the results of the study benefit all who seek teaching talent. Additionally, this study is aimed at legislators, local and state school board members, certification specialists at the state level, and the general public.

This study can affect the recruiting practices of educational administrators. Those who are affected by this study are administrators who are tasked with hiring and retaining staffs for their schools and LEAs. In addition, LEAs are greatly affected by the positive or negative consequences of the hires they make. LEA's benefit from high-quality teachers as they help the districts where they work improve in the area of accountability. These quality teachers also benefit the communities in which they work by preparing the student populations with whom they work for higher education and for the world of work. The cumulative effect of better teaching and learning is a more highly trained workforce which positively affects economic growth and development.

### **Sample Population**

This study's sample population included beginning teachers who selected jobs in a rural, low-wealth, Sandhill region LEA in North Carolina during the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years. The sample population demographic information included 14 teachers who held teaching certifications from the universities they attended at the time of hiring and included no lateral entry teachers. The sample included teachers whose ages at the time of hiring ranged from 23 to 39. In this study, there was one participant who was 23 years old, two who were 24, two who were 25, one who was 26, three who were 27, three who were 28, one who was 31, and one who was 39 at the time the research was conducted. There were 12 females and two males identified for the study. The group included one Caucasian male, 10 Caucasian females, two African-American females, and one Hispanic male. Additionally, there was one teacher from Delaware, one teacher from Georgia, one from Kansas, one from New York state, three from North Carolina, and six from Pennsylvania.

### **Procedures for Selecting the Sample and Sampling Method**

In this qualitative inquiry, the researcher sought to develop an in-depth exploration of a phenomenon as discussed by Creswell (2008). According to his research, Creswell (2008) stated that to best understand a phenomenon, the qualitative researcher purposefully selects individuals and sites (p. 213). Purposeful sampling is therefore the research term for qualitative sampling (Creswell, 2008, p. 214). The purposeful sampling method was selected at the research site because it allowed the qualitative researcher to identify and select information-rich participants, which is the standard for selection according to (Patton, 1990, p. 169). In purposeful sampling, the inquirer is able to select individuals because they can purposefully inform the researcher

about the central phenomenon and the research problem in the study (Creswell, 2007, p. 125). Purposive sampling is a nonrandom technique that does not require a set number of participants. The researcher identifies what needs to be known and then finds participants who can provide information about their experiences about a particular phenomenon (Bernard, 2002, p. 189). The researcher selected purposive sampling for this study due to the fact that only the teachers who signed with the research target school district could communicate their motivations for accepting positions as teachers. Their lived experiences and the knowledge they could convey to the researcher as to the effects of various recruiting techniques utilized during the recruitment period before signing were invaluable.

In this study, the researcher utilized the homogenous sampling strategy. According to Creswell (2008), in homogenous sampling, the researcher purposefully samples individuals or sites based on the sample's membership in a subgroup that has defining characteristics. Creswell (2008) further stated that to use this strategy, the researcher has to identify the characteristics and find individuals and sites that possess them (p. 216).

A sample group consisting of all beginning teachers who were in their first or second school year from the district were selected by using the purposeful sampling method. This initial teacher target research sample group was identified by utilizing databases from the beginning teacher coordinators database in the district housed in the human resource department of the LEA. This teacher group were teachers within the beginning teacher cadre during the 2013-2015 school years who were fully certified at the time they were hired. Once this group was identified, the final selection of the teachers was made by analyzing the teacher accountability results of the 2014-2015

school year. Teacher EVAAS reports, which are the annual report for teacher effectiveness in the state of North Carolina, were reviewed and teachers within this sample pool who were rated as Met Expected Growth or Exceeded Growth during the 2014-2015 school year were selected for the study.

The researcher selected this district and this target group for a variety of reasons. The LEA was chosen because of its proximity to the researcher, its designation as a low-wealth district, and its rural status. Additionally, the sample was selected due to the fact that this population was recently graduated and came from a vast geographical area stretching from as far north as New York state and as far south as Georgia. This sample group also represented varied economic and cultural backgrounds. This cross-sectional version of the employed workforce helped to create more diversity within the lived experiences of the group.

Prior to conducting any research, the researcher sought out district-level administration to get Permission to Conduct Research and use Premises (Appendix F) as well as school-based administrators where these employees worked so he could get Consent to Perform Research Interviews on Site (Appendix G). The researcher explained in detail the purpose of the study as well as the goals of the research study and its possible benefits to the district as a whole and to the administrators and their schools. The request for permission included a presentation to the group explaining the methods for conducting the research to ensure that there was full disclosure as to the purpose of the study. The researcher believed that by taking these steps, the schools and the district would be cooperative and even helpful in the process. The researcher did not foresee any issues related to identifying the teacher target group, access to the teacher sample pool for interviews, nor the distribution of materials to the group.

## **Data Collection**

Creswell (2007) stated that the particular approach chosen for a study can oftentimes direct the preferred approach the researcher uses to collect his/her data (p. 130). Because the researcher was interested in learning about the lived experiences of the beginning teachers in this research, a phenomenological study was chosen. According to Creswell (2007), the method for collecting information in a phenomenological study involves primarily in-depth interviews with as many as 10 individuals (p. 131). These interviews were recorded and later transcribed and the data were coded and sorted. Data were also collected by taking field notes on any anecdotal information that was used to inform the study.

## **Instrumentation**

In this paper, the researcher used face-to-face, open-ended Interview Questions (Appendix H) in order to illicit responses from the co-researchers, so he was able to describe the meaning of the phenomenon for the small number of participants who experienced it (Creswell, 2007, p. 131). The use of open-ended questions did not limit participant responses and “establishes the territory to be explored while allowing the participant to take any direction he or she wants” (Seidman, 2006, p. 84). The participants were the sample that met the criteria which included being a beginning teacher working in the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years, who were fully certified at the time of hiring, and who met or exceeded growth according to EVAAS.

Due to the unique nature of this study, the researcher could find no preexisting reliable interview questions for use in the study. Therefore, it was essential that the questions which were used for the interviews had content validity. Creswell (2008) wrote that content validity is the extent to which the questions used and the scores derived from



these interview questions are a representative sample of the possible questions that may have been asked about the content or skills (p. 172). In order to establish the content validity of the proposed questions, the researcher first sent the questions to the dissertation chair for review and suggestions. After receiving this feedback and making alterations, the researcher presented the questions to a group of experts in the field of educational human resources. This expert group consisted of four human resource directors who worked in four LEAs in the same educational region as the district that was targeted for this study. Each of these directors had at least 3 years of experience in their current position. The questions were distributed to these human resource directors who were in charge of recruiting in their districts so they could review them for approval in order to determine the credibility and the dependability of the questions.

In order to illicit the cooperation of these directors, a Consent to Assist in Validation of Research Questions form (Appendix I) was sent to them requesting their help. Once these forms were signed and returned to the researcher, the interview questions were sent to the directors for review. Accompanying the questions was a Question Evaluation Form (Appendix J) which is a checklist with spaces to provide feedback on individual questions. Once the experts made their suggestions, the researcher made alterations to the questions and submitted them to the dissertation committee for final approval.

The instrument that was used to interview the participants and gather the data necessary to begin the data analysis process contained specific questions that were designed to answer one or more of the major questions in the study. The interview questions were constructed so the three sections – Recruiter Behaviors and Characteristics, Recruiting and Marketing Strategies, and Communication – all answered

specific research questions. The researcher used questions 1-7 under the heading of Recruiter Behaviors and Characteristics to answer the research question, “What are the common identifiable behaviors of recruiters that enhance the opportunity to hire high-quality teachers to low performing, high poverty school systems?”

The researcher used questions 1-10 under the heading of Recruiting and Marketing Strategies to answer the research question, “What are the common or most identifiable recruiting and marketing strategies recruiters in low-wealth systems use that sustained the interest levels of recruits for a position in a low performing, high poverty school system?” And finally, the researcher used questions 1-8 under the heading of Communication to answer the research question, “What are the most effective communication tools and methods recruiters can use to land high-quality teachers for positions in a low performing, high poverty school system?”

## **Interviews**

Interviewing was a huge part of this study and was the method for collecting the data used in this phenomenological study. According to Seidman (2006), the root of interviewing is the researcher’s interest in understanding the lived experiences of other people and the meaning they make of those experiences (p. 9). Vygotsky (1987) believed that every word spoken by people as they tell their stories is a microcosm of their consciousness (pp. 236-237). Seidman supported this thought as he wrote that as people tell stories, they are selecting details from a stream of consciousness. He believed that the consciousness of these individuals gives us the ability to access complicated social and educational issues because these issues are abstractions based on the experiences of the people who lived them (Seidman, 2006, p. 7). Thus, listening to and attempting to draw themes from the lived experiences garnered from the teacher interviews were

essential in gathering an understanding for why decisions were made by the recruits. In order to do this, the researcher conducted the interviews in a systematic way.

According to Creswell (2008), in all forms of interviewing, certain steps should be utilized including identifying the interviewees, determining the type of interview to use, audiotaping responses, note-taking, locating quiet spots for the interviews, obtaining consent, being flexible, probing to obtain additional information, and being courteous and professional when the interview concludes (pp. 228-229). The researcher used these steps for the interview process.

After the interviewees were selected, the researcher contacted the principals of the sites where the research was to be conducted and a Consent to Perform Research Interviews on Site Form was distributed to garner permission to interview the teachers at their sites. After permission was granted from the principals, the individuals selected for the sample were contacted and the Invitation to Participate in Research and Informed Consent Form (Appendix K) was distributed. These interviews were conducted after the work day and at the sites where the teachers worked.

Face-to-face one-on-one interviews were conducted. A one-on-one interview is the most time-consuming and expensive method of interviewing and was conducted one person at a time by asking questions and recording the responses (Creswell, 2008, p. 226). In order to ensure that the individuals were comfortable with their settings so they were more ready to share their experiences, the researcher asked the interviewee to select the area where they were most comfortable for conducting the interview. If possible, the interview area was kept quiet and free from distractions (Creswell, 2007, p. 133). The interviewer utilized a recording device as suggested by Creswell (2008), so he could review and transcribe the contents of the interview accurately to search for emergent

themes (pp. 228-229). This was also done so the interviewer was free to take notes.

During the interview process, the interviewer used an interview protocol which is a form used for structuring the interviews and includes a header, interviewer and interviewee, the statement of the purpose of the study, confidentiality information, reminder for participants to sign consent form, the date and time, location of the interview, and finally, the questions with spaces provided to take notes (Creswell, 2008, p. 233).

### **Data Analysis**

Once the data were collected, reviewed, and transcribed, they were thoroughly reviewed for accuracy. The researcher then attached a numerical identifier to each participant so their identities were protected. Once these steps were completed, the researcher began the process of analyzing the data. The steps for a phenomenological study were utilized and a modification of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method was used. The researcher utilized a template for coding a phenomenological study which included the epoche or personal bracketing, significant statements, meaning units, textural description, and structural description (Creswell, 2007, p. 170).

The steps of this analytical approach to the coding process were started by the researcher recognizing the philosophical assumptions of phenomenology including bracketing out their own experiences and biases (Creswell, 2007, p. 61). This was accomplished by the researcher by writing a narrative of the personal experiences he had with the phenomenon so the participants could become the focus of the study (Creswell, 2007, p. 159).

The researcher then reviewed the data which included transcriptions of the interviews and analyzed them looking for significant statements, quotes, or sentences that provided an understanding of the phenomenon experienced by the participants. The

researcher then listed these statements, a process called horizontalization, and treated them all with equal importance. The researcher then generated a list of statements that were both nonrepetitive and nonoverlapping (Creswell, 2007, p. 159). The researcher then developed clusters of meanings or themes by grouping these statements into larger pieces of information (Creswell, 2007, p. 61).

The researcher then wrote textural descriptions (what the participant experienced) and structural descriptions (context that influenced how the recruits experienced the phenomenon they lived through (Creswell, 2007, p. 61). Finally, the researcher used the textural and structural descriptions to develop the essence of the phenomenon (invariant structure) which centered on the shared experiences of the participants (Creswell, 2007, pp. 61-62).

## **Chapter 4: Findings**

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to understand the lived experiences of teachers during their job searches for employment in the field of education which could inform recruiters in a rural, low-wealth LEA in southeastern, North Carolina of the behaviors they need to display and the strategies they need to employ in order to hire high quality teaching candidates. Understanding teacher perceptions of the recruitment process and their perceptions of the recruiters they came into contact with helped the researcher ascertain and identify behaviors recruiters displayed that were attractive to beginning teachers during their recruitment period. The study also sought to understand why recruits choose one LEA over another to teach, especially a district that is impoverished. Specifically, what practices attracted them to a low-wealth area and what practices sustained their interest and made them contemplate relocating to that area when other LEAs were recruiting them. Finally, what practices, if any, assisted them in making the final decision to work in a high-poverty/low-wealth district.

Teachers were asked to reflect on their experiences during the recruitment period leading up to them signing a contract and working with the LEA being studied by participating in face-to-face, open-ended interviews. After transcribing the interviews, the researcher did an analysis of teacher responses as they related to the research questions. This analysis was conducted by utilizing the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method for a phenomenological study and included an initial coding and memoing template for coding a phenomenological study which included bracketing out personal biases, identifying significant statements, meaning units, and writing textural descriptions and structural descriptions of the phenomena experienced by the subjects being studied

(Creswell, 2007, p. 170). This method of phenomenological reduction led to the identification of emergent themes which had been expressed in the form of perceptions by the research subjects. Three themes were identified and were prevalent throughout the data garnered throughout the interview process. These themes were characteristics and behaviors of the recruiter, marketing and recruiting strategies, and communication.

Chapter 4 includes an analysis of data from the textural descriptions and structural descriptions from each of the research subject's interviews. Additionally, the composite textural description (Appendix L) along with the composite structural description (Appendix M) is analyzed to help to create the combined composite of textural and structural descriptions (Appendix N). Finally, a summary of the analysis of the data and a summary of the findings are provided.

### **Research Questions**

This study was designed to identify teacher perceptions of recruiter characteristics, behaviors, their perceptions of identifiable recruiting and marketing strategies, and finally, their perceptions effective communication tools.

1. What are the common identifiable behaviors of recruiters that enhance the opportunity to hire high-quality teachers to low performing, high poverty school systems?
2. What are the common or most identifiable recruiting and marketing strategies recruiters in low-wealth systems use that sustained the interest levels of recruits for a position in a low performing, high poverty school system?
3. What are the most effective communication tools and methods recruiters can use to land high-quality teachers for positions in a low performing, high poverty school system?

This research inquiry was concerned with studying the collective perceptions of the research subjects during their recruitment process to understand the phenomena of the impact of recruiting on decision-making processes for new teachers entering the education field.

### **Participant Summary**

This study was conducted using the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method for phenomenological research. In phenomenology, the researcher interviews subjects to discover their perceptions of an experience. These subjects are called participants by Moustakas (1994, p. 103). In this study, these subjects are referred to as participants. The researcher used face-to-face, open-ended interview questions in order to illicit responses from the participants so he could study and then describe the meaning of the phenomenon experienced by the participants. Fourteen participants were selected by purposive sampling methods and asked to participate by letter. Thirteen of these agreed to participate and were interviewed for this inquiry. This study's sample population included beginning teachers who selected jobs in a rural, low-wealth, sandhill region LEAs in North Carolina during the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years and who were identified as effective or highly effective according to their student achievement reports. All participants signed a release and then were assigned a pseudonym in order to protect their identities for data analysis and reporting purposes.

### **Participant Profiles**

The information about the participants indicate their standing in the LEA at the time of the study. All 13 participants were still employed in the district and were considered effective teachers. All 13 were still teaching in the same school in which they were originally hired to work for in the target district. All of the participants had at least



2 years of experience. Eight of the 13 no longer worked for the recruiter who hired them due to retirements and administrative moves within the district.

### **Interviews**

Research subjects (participants), participated in face-to-face, open-ended, individual interviews. These interviews were all conducted in teacher classrooms at times that were finalized by the participants. These interviews were conducted during the teacher's planning period or after school. An Interview Protocol Form (Appendix O) was utilized by the researcher so each subject was asked the same questions in the same order. The subjects were encouraged to expound and to share their experiences. Interviews lasted from 15 minutes to 40 minutes depending on the responses given by the participants. Each interview was transcribed exactly as they were recorded. Participants were allowed to review the transcripts to ensure their accuracy.

### **Composite of Combined Textural-Structural Description**

In order to conduct and derive meaning from the study, a composite of combined textural-structural descriptions had to be performed. To gain understanding of a phenomena, it is necessary to analyze both the individual textural and structural descriptions of the experiences of the participants and then use that data to construct a composite textural-structural description. Moustakas (1994) stated that the researcher should "construct a composite textural-structural description of the meanings and essence of the experience, integrating all individual textural-structural descriptions into a universal description of the experience representing the group as a whole" (p. 122). In order to identify themes, it is necessary to review Husserl's (1931) thoughts on intentionality. According to Husserl, (1931) intentionality refers to consciousness and to the internal experience of being conscious of something. He believed that the very act of

consciousness and the object of that consciousness were related (Husserl, 1931, pp. 243-244). Husserl (1931) described the noema as the “perceived as such” and the “perfect self-evidence” as the noesis (p. 260). In this study, the noema is the idea of seeking a position as a teacher by the participants and how they may be perceived by recruiters; however, it was not the actual search itself. The noesis in this study is represented by what was real to the recruits as they searched for a position in the field of education and which the recruits were able to describe repeatedly. By reviewing and analyzing the data, clusters of themes emerged stemming from similar statements made by the participants. These themes are described in the next section.

### **Themes**

As the researcher, I used the comments of the participants in order to support my selection of the themes. Representative samples of these statements were used to report the research.

### **Research Question 1**

In order to discuss themes, it was necessary to use participant statements from their interviews to support the themes identified. Representative samples were selected for this purpose.

Research Question 1 was, “What are the common identifiable behaviors of recruiters that enhance the opportunity to hire high-quality teachers to low performing, high poverty school systems?” This question was designed to solicit information about how the teachers in the study perceived their recruitment process with particular attention given to their perceptions of recruiter behaviors and their personal characteristics.

**Recruit perceptions of recruiter behaviors.** In reviewing the statements from the interviews, the themes from participant perceptions of recruiter behaviors were identified. Behaviors such as making the recruits feel wanted, the responsiveness of the recruiter, being supportive of the recruit during the recruiting process, and the characteristic interpersonal skills of the recruiters were not only evident but, according to the data gleaned from recruit perceptions, were statistically important. These behaviors were seen as positive signs that the recruiters were not only interested in them, but the recruits believed the recruiters would display these behaviors after they were hired.

A major theme derived from the analysis of the data was the value recruits placed on feeling wanted. Eleven of 13 participants, or 92% (Figure 1), mentioned this recruiter behavior. The ability of a recruiter to make a recruit feel special and make them feel they are wanted was crucial to many of the participants as they made their choices of where to teach. The teachers had very different experiences during their recruitment period; however, each of them had a desire to be wanted. In this research, 11 of the 13 participants discussed how the recruiter drew them in by this simple but effective act.

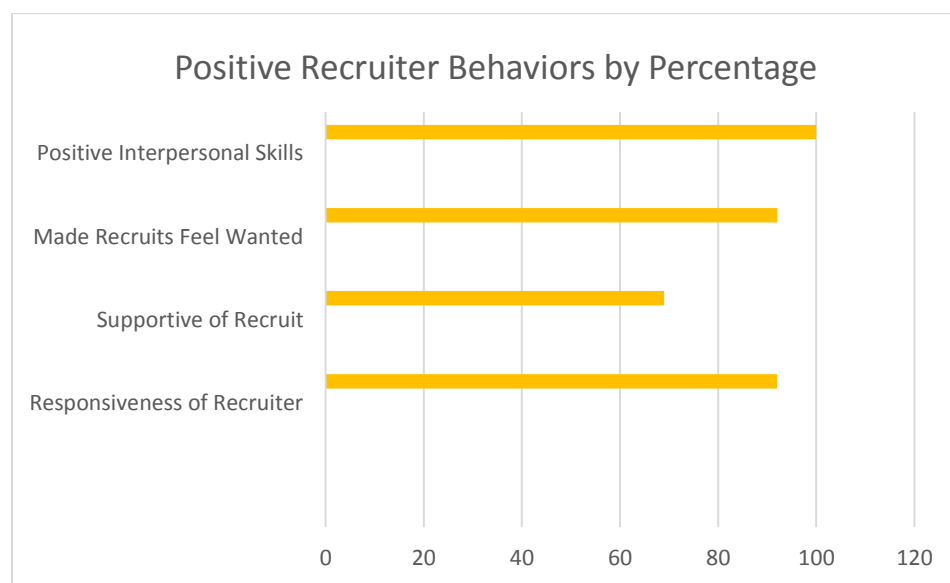
Angela Barton recalled how her recruiter made her feel:

Well I noticed quickly down south that they want to show how they need you and the recruiter that hired me almost felt like a second dad. He was always there to support me, to say the right things and to get me to come here to Rowland County. He knew that I had a math degree, and there wasn't that specific opening for me, but he suggested that if I get certified in science, that I could have a classroom of my own. With that, he built my confidence up, and he slowly pulled me in with just telling me how much they needed me and what I can do and how my personal background can be used in the classroom.

This sentiment was echoed repeatedly in this research. Rebecca Simmons discussed the anguish she felt over trying to find a job and how the feeling of being wanted was refreshing:

I was contacted almost immediately after I applied for the job which showed to me, that the principal was eager to talk with me about what was going on. It was very nice to hear that somebody wanted me as an educator because I did struggle with that when I graduated from college.

The feeling of being wanted was important psychologically, but it was also described in a functional way by Theresa Bishop. Her experience with her recruiter left her feeling wonderful about the opportunity to grow as a teacher: “I felt like I was talking to somebody that really wanted to not only help me professionally but wanted to help me personally when I came down to do my job.”



*Figure 1. Positive Recruiter Behaviors by Percentage.*

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Equally as important to the participants was the recruiter behavior of responsiveness. Ninety-two percent of participants also perceived the responsiveness of

the recruiter as important in the recruiting process (Figure 1). Penny Hardwick recalled her interactions with her recruiter. “I obviously had a lot of questions and she (the recruiter) worked at answering them as quickly as she could, which was actually within the day or the next day.” This sentiment was echoed by Sandra Gardner who recounted,

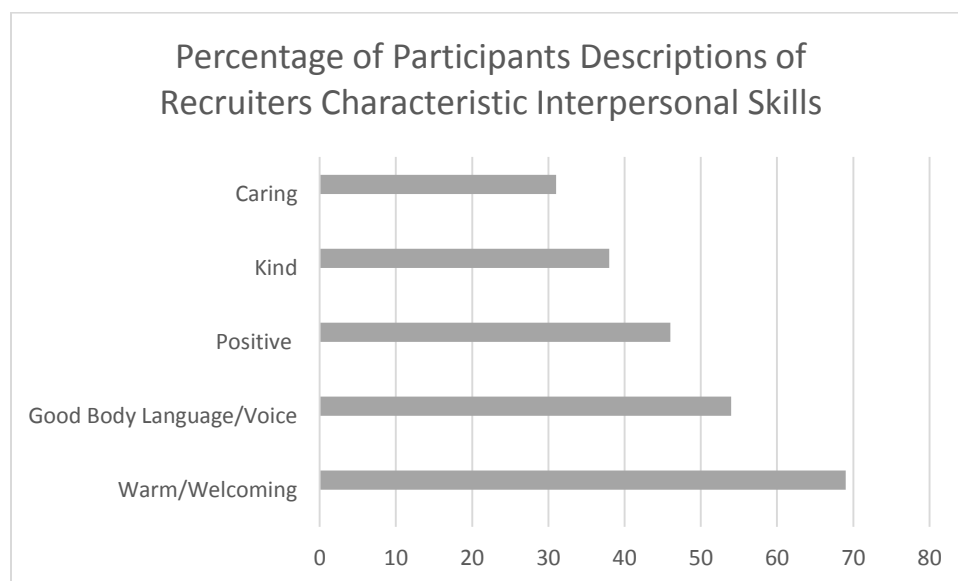
I remember as soon as I contacted the school, about a half hour later I received a phone call from the recruiter. Pretty quickly after that I received a call from the principal. They were interactive right off the bat.

Responsiveness is remembered as an important theme to these recruits as it signaled good interactions between the recruiter and the recruit.

Participants also cited the support given to them by the recruiters as having made a difference in their recruitment. Tammy Parks remembers her feelings during her recruiting period with regard to the level of support she was looking for. Nine of 13 participants, or 69%, reported their recruiter was supportive of their needs during the recruitment period (Figure 1). “That was one of the main things I was looking for, to know that wherever I went, I was going to be supported.” Tammy Parks went on to say that she found the group that interviewed her to be very supportive of each other which she felt was important. When Angela Barton was asked how the behavior of her recruiter helped enhance her willingness to work in a low-wealth district, she cited the recruiter’s willingness to support her: “He (the recruiter) was always there to support me and to say the right things to get me to come to Rowland County.” Angela Barton spoke of support in a general way, whereas Theresa Bishop spoke of the support she received from her recruiter in specifics: “They (the recruiter) did provide a lot of support when you’re moving down here.” Theresa Bishop recalled that her recruiter had helped her with a realtor in the area the day she signed her contract when she visited the school. That

helped her to move straight into her “place” the day she moved into town. She said this cut down her stress dramatically.

As participants reflected on the recruitment period, the individual characteristics of the recruiters with whom they interacted emerged as a major theme in the recruiting process and were expressed as interpersonal skills. Each participant was able to identify positive interpersonal characteristics their individual recruiter displayed during the recruitment process which helped to shape their perceptions of the recruiter (Figure 1). The participants perceived their recruiters’ characteristic interpersonal skills as caring, kind, positive, having displayed positive body language or voice, and being warm/welcoming (Figure 2). The recruits perceived these characteristics to be positive signs that the recruiters were not only interested in them but that their kindness would be displayed after they were hired. One participant inferred these characteristics as signals that they would be alright if they moved to the district: “I felt like even though I don’t know anybody there now, I feel like I’m going to be welcomed with open arms, and it’s going to be okay.”



*Figure 2.* Percentage of Participants Descriptions of Recruiters Characteristic Interpersonal Skills.

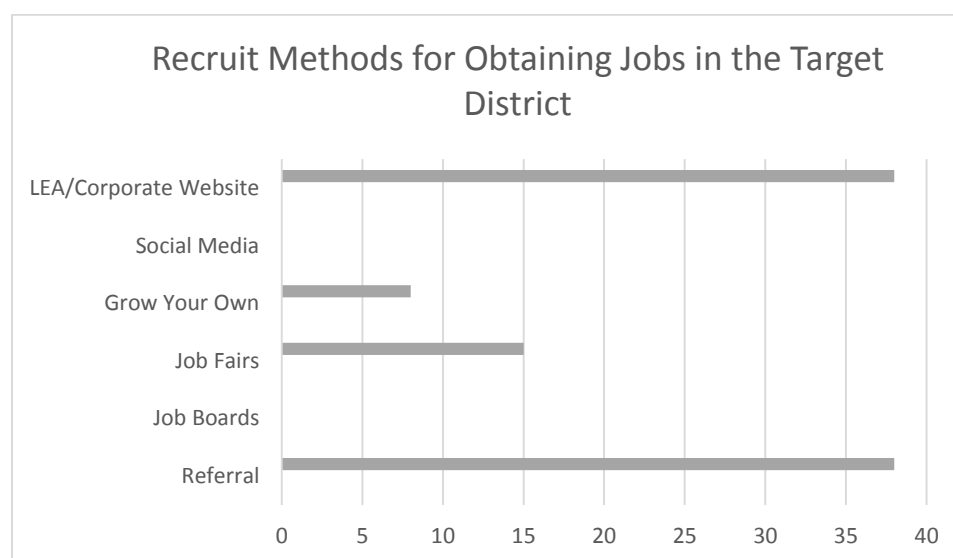
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## Research Question 2

Research Question 2 was, “What are the common or most identifiable recruiting and marketing strategies recruiters in low-wealth systems use that sustained the interest levels of recruits for a position in a low performing, high poverty school system?” This question was designed to solicit data which could elucidate the most effective methods for recruiting teachers to the target LEA as well as identify the most effective marketing strategies which the district employed in the recruiting process for these teachers.

**Recruit perceptions of recruiting methods.** In our review of the literature, I identified six major methods of recruiting employees. These included career fairs, the referral method, electronic job boards, LEA/Corporate career sties, social media, and grow-your-own initiatives. The participants in this study expressed their perceptions about the methods they encountered while they were job searching/being recruited by the

target district and identified the method they perceived eventually led to their hiring. According to the participants, none successfully utilized social media to leverage a position in the target district (Figure 3). One participant, or 8%, was “grown” by the target district; and two participants, or 15%, were hired as a result of meeting their recruiters at job fairs (Figure 3). More importantly, five participants, or 38%, identified the referral process as the means for getting their jobs as well as five participants, or 38%, who identified the LEA corporate website as the means they used for identifying and then obtaining their positions in the target district (Figure 3).



*Figure 3.* Recruit Methods for Obtaining Jobs in the Target District.

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**Recruit perceptions of marketing strategies.** Marketing strategies were pulled out and gleaned from the recruiter interviews. According to the participants, the most important of these was the recruiters’ abilities to show the recruits how they could make a difference with the children in which they would potentially be working. According to the participants in the study, 85% mentioned this marketing strategy (Figure 4). Adam Gathings said that his recruiter challenged him to change children’s lives. He recalled



being asked by his recruiter if he wanted to get a cushy job up north, “or do you want to come down here (Rowland County) and make a difference.” Adam Gathings went on to say how he always wants to make a difference, so that challenge really appealed to him. Penny Hardwick mentioned how the recruiter seamlessly wove the topic of making a difference into their conversations: “I think she (the recruiter) just did a really great job of explaining how rewarding it would be working in a lower income school.” Angela Barton said her recruiter appealed to her personal need to help children by telling her, “how much they needed me and what I could do and how my personal background could be used in the classroom.”

Participants also identified the level of support they received or were promised as a major reason for signing with the target district. Sixty-nine percent of the participants mentioned the importance of this marketing strategy during the course of their interviews (Figure 4). A great example of the feelings of the participants was Thomas England who expressed his perceptions of the promise of support he received during his recruitment period. Thomas England mentioned the professional development the recruiter promised him and the additional training he would receive from the central office. Equally as important to Thomas England was the overall support. This was expressed by the majority of the participant group and included not only physical help but emotional support in dealing with the fears a first-year teacher has before starting a position. Thomas England candidly expressed his feelings by saying,

For me, once again, it was just the help. Just knowing the administration was going to be there to be like a safety net, help out, be there in a way to support me, provide resources that would be helpful or instrumental to my success that would directly benefit my students. I think that was the biggest thing.

Another great marketing tool that was used by the target LEA was the strategy of inviting recruits for visits to the district, to the schools, and the areas in which they would be working. Fifty-four percent of the participants mentioned the importance of the recruiters hosting the recruits (Figure 4). In fact, Jennifer Laslow said her recruiter asked her to come down so she could see the area before she signed to make sure it was right for her. Jennifer Laslow recalled the recruiter asking her to visit. He said, “Come on down. Let’s show you a visit. We’ll give you a place to stay when you come down here if you want to visit. We’ll have people show you around town.” Jennifer Laslow said the experience helped to sway her decision to join the recruiter.

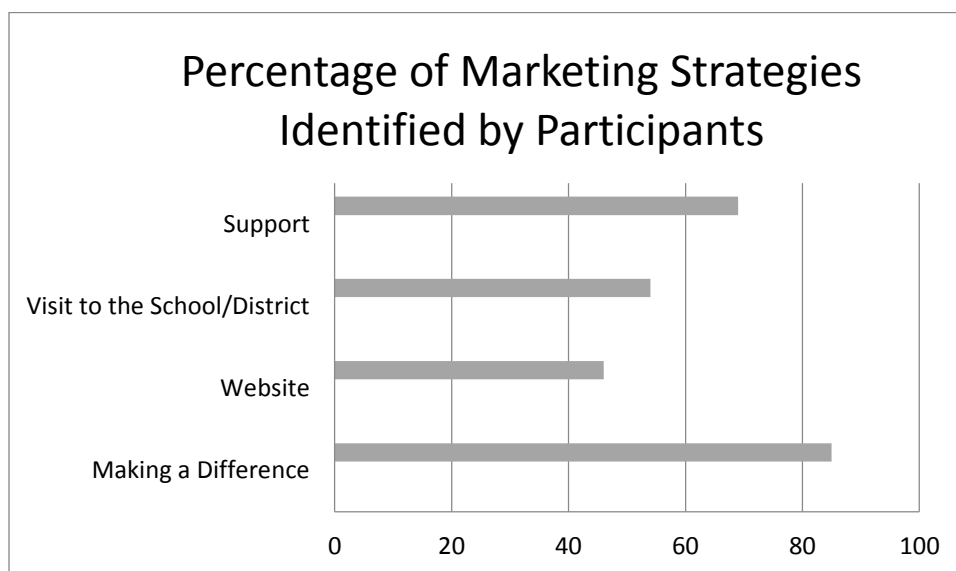
Angela Barton said her visit to the target district was crucial as well. She felt the personal interaction on her visit was important. During her visit, the recruiter took time out to show her the area and lend her some support. “The recruiter took us out to look at the area and to look at different houses, which is very nice to know when you move eight hours away that they will help you find somewhere to live.” The best example of this marketing strategy came from Theresa Bishop. She said the number one thing that really stuck out in her mind even before she signed a contract was the recruiter saying, “Come down here and tour the area first, I’m not going to let you sign a contract before you actually see this place for yourself because I don’t want you to be down here and be stuck.” Theresa Bishop said she felt the invitation was important because she said many districts just want to hire you and once you have signed they do not truly work to help the recruit. Bishop stated her recruitment process and visit were not at all like that scenario. “I came down, I toured the school, I had lunch with all of the summer staff, my mom and I met the realtor.” Theresa Bishop went on to say she got a good feel for Rowland County and the surrounding areas and that really made a difference to her.

The final marketing strategy which was statistically important to the participants was the LEA website. Six of the participants, or 46%, stated that the website was a tool used by the district that helped in the recruiting process. Kerri Hightower used the website for discovering what the district and the school was like:

I went online. I went to the Rowland County website and went to some of the individual school's webpages. I believe some of them have school rankings or ratings that you can search, and I think I read a few comments too. People had a lot of good comments about Findley Elementary from what I was looking at.

Marketing strategies were difficult for the participants to recall in many instances.

Participants remember their experiences; however, in many cases, the marketing strategies used by the district were either nonexistent or were not noticed by the recruit.



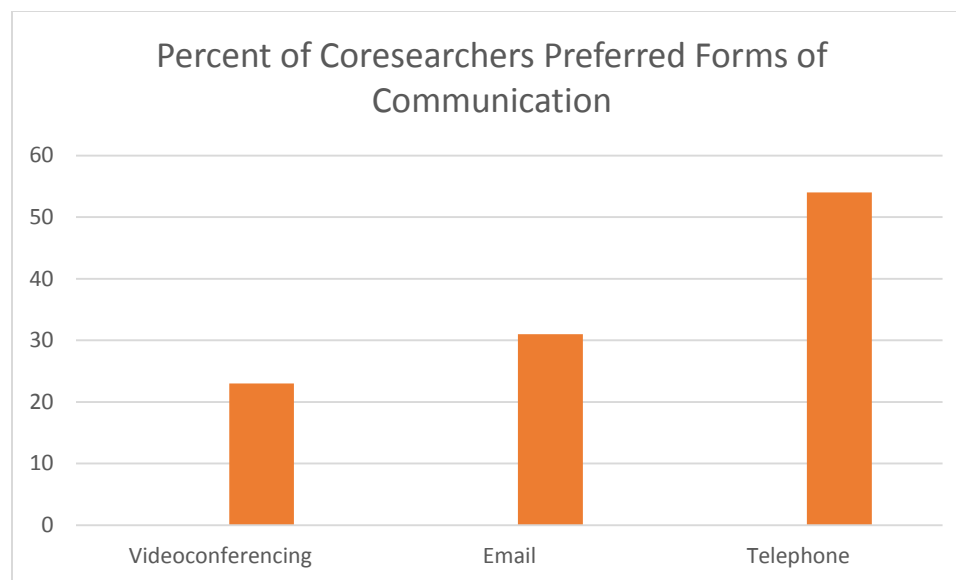
*Figure 4.* Percentage of Marketing Strategies Identified by Participants.

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### **Research Question 3**

Research Question 3 was, “What are the most effective communication tools and methods recruiters can use to land high-quality teachers for positions in a low performing, high poverty school system?” This question was designed to illicit responses that could help identify forms of communication as well as methods and strategies that could be employed by recruiters in order to refine communication practices. This section delved into forms of communication, teacher perceptions of social media, positive communication characteristics, and communication characteristics that affected the decision making of the participants.

**Teacher perceptions of the most favorable forms of communication technology used during their recruiting process.** Participants mentioned communication tools which they used during the recruiting process for the LEA in which they signed. The forms of communication varied. As participants contemplated their favored forms of technology used during their recruitment process, three distinct forms were identified. Participants stated that they had used videoconferencing, email, and the telephone as their preferred forms of communication tools. The group varied in their perceptions of which forms of technology were their most favorable. Three of the participants, or 23%, preferred videoconferencing; four of the participants, or 31%, preferred email; and seven, or 54%, preferred the telephone (Figure 5).



*Figure 5.* Percent of Participants Preferred Forms of Communication.

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**Teacher perceptions of social media in the recruiting process.** All 13 participants were asked about the importance of social media in the recruiting process to the target LEA. Each respondent declared that social media played no part in the recruitment process. Although one participant stated they had created a social media account with one form of social media, they stated that they never used it in the recruitment process. The lack of any social media being used by this entire group of participants is evidence that technology for this group was not nearly as important as interpersonal communication.

**Positive communication characteristics and behaviors.** One of the themes derived from participant interviews was the importance of communication. Positive communication characteristics were identified in the research and included the recruiter responded quickly to me, there were consistent open lines of communication, and communication was easy and not awkward.

According to six of the 13 participants, they found their recruiter was very

responsive to all of their communications (Figure 6). Penny Hardwick best described this recruiter communication behavior by saying,

I emailed her Monday night and first thing Tuesday morning she had already responded. Once I received the job, I obviously had a lot of questions and she worked at answering them as quickly as she could, which was actually usually within the day or the next day.

Another of the participants, Tammy Parks described this trait as well by saying,

She replied fast, I didn't have to wait very long to get a response if I had questions about anything, even after I was offered the job and hired and I was trying to get everything in place. She always responded to any questions I had very quickly.

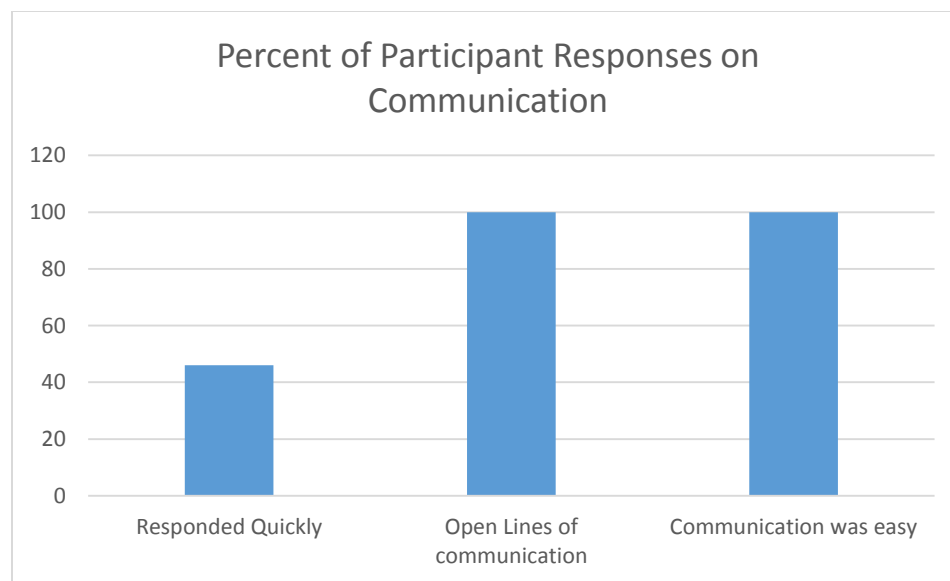
All 13 participants stated there were open lines of communication between themselves and their recruiter (Figure 6). The recruits felt comfortable contacting their recruiter to ask questions and get answers. One participant described her communication with her recruiter as open and said she felt comfortable calling her recruiter whenever she needed something. According to Angela Barton, "It (communication) was just open with contact through calling or email or text."

Finally, all 13 participants indicated that communication with their recruiter was easy and not awkward (Figure 6). Each of the participants felt that the recruiter was approachable and the conversations in which they engaged were seamless and smooth. Participant Rebecca Simmons stated,

It (communication) was very easy. It was very easy and it flowed very quickly. If I had a question I reached out to her, if she had a question she reached out to me, so I was never very unclear about what was going to happen next in the process.

Participant Thomas England commented on the same topic by saying,

I think it (communication) was easy. It was very smooth. I don't think, for me, it didn't feel awkward. When I was talking to the recruiter, I just felt it was very smooth and it was almost like a normal conversation. I didn't feel pressure to try and talk so there wouldn't be silence.



*Figure 6.* Percent of Participants Responses on Communication.

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### **Research Questions Answered: Research Question 1**

“What are the common identifiable behaviors of recruiters that enhance the opportunity to hire high-quality teachers to low performing, high poverty school systems?” The participants reported how they perceived the recruiter during their recruitment period. Emergent themes that were identified through the data analysis of participant perceptions were the common identifiable behaviors of recruiters as well as their characteristic positive interpersonal skills. Participant perceptions of their recruiter’s characteristic interpersonal skills included being kind, positive, caring, warm/welcoming, and having displayed positive body language and/or voice. These

characteristics were consistently mentioned by the participants in their interviews and helped shape participant perceptions of the behaviors displayed by the recruiters.

According to the research, the common identifiable behaviors of recruiters which helped persuade the participants to work in the low-wealth LEA studied were making the recruits feel wanted, the responsiveness of the recruiter to the needs of the recruit, the support the recruiter provided, and the characteristic positive interpersonal skills.

### **Research Questions Answered: Research Question 2**

“What are the common or most identifiable recruiting and marketing strategies recruiters in low-wealth systems use that sustained the interest levels of recruits for a position in a low performing, high poverty school system?” Participants interviewed reported the methods they felt were instrumental in acquiring their positions in the target LEA. One believed she received her position via a grow-your-own situation. In addition, two participants found employment through career fairs. None of the participants who received their positions by grow-your-own or by job fair represents a statistically important number as all of them fall far below 30%; however, LEA corporate websites and referrals both represent 38% of the methods for hiring among the study group.

The marketing strategies used by the low-wealth district in this study which were identified through the analysis of the data of perceptions of the recruits include how they can make a difference (85%), the level of support the recruit was offered or received (69%), scheduling recruit visits to the district (54%), and the LEA website (46%).

### **Research Questions Answered: Research Question 3**

“What are the most effective communication tools and methods recruiters can use to land high-quality teachers for positions in a low performing, high poverty school system?” Participants interviewed reported the most effective communication tools



(types of technology) used by the recruiters were videoconferencing, email, and the telephone. Communication tools cited by the participants were videoconferencing, email, and the telephone. All of these communication tools were important. Many of the participants used one or all three in the recruitment process; however, seven of the 13 participants identified the telephone as the most important tool they used during recruitment. Sandra Gardner identified the telephone as the most important piece of technology she used by saying,

I think the first phone call that I received was the thing that got me very excited.

They seemed excited, which made me excited. I think that first phone call right away definitely made me want to come here more than anything else.

Jennifer Laslow described her preference for communication tools differently:

I think phone conversations were probably more effective for me because (of) the fact that you're taking the time to pick up the phone and talk to me and have a conversation, not just here's the things I want to know about you or I want you to know. It was more personal.

For the purpose of reporting what was perceived by the recruits, methods will be considered the communication characteristics employed by the recruiters. The strategies of responding quickly to recruit inquiries, keeping open lines of communication, and having the ability to communicate in a manner where conversations flowed and the recruiter seemed approachable for communication were critical in the perceptions of the participants.

## **Summary**

In this chapter, the results of the study of 13 beginning teacher applicants searching for jobs was reported. This group of participants all experienced the recruiting process and received jobs. Each of the participants was interviewed in order to get their perceptions of the process in which they encountered. Though the use of phenomenological research processes, emergent themes were extrapolated.

The perceptions of the participants were crucial, and their comments were used extensively to give life and meaning to this study and to give a true depiction of their lived experiences. Through the interview process and the analyzation of the data, the themes of recruiter behaviors and interpersonal skills, the marketing strategies employed, and communication technologies and behaviors of the recruiters emerged.

The participants were all able to discuss their recruitment period and recall it vividly. They were able to describe their recruiters, the methods and strategies those recruiters employed, and their feelings about each. This phenomenological study yielded the importance of a multi-faceted approach to the recruiting process and highlighted the differences in the experiences of the individual participants.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion**

### **Summary of the Findings**

According to research, hiring qualified and highly effective teachers to staff schools is one of the most critical tasks any school administrator can have. Hanushek (2011) stated, “Teachers are very important; no other measured aspect of schools is nearly as important in determining student achievement” (p. 3). Hiring teachers in low-wealth, high-poverty areas in North Carolina is particularly difficult due to lower enrollments of teacher candidates (Meyers, 2015), unequal distribution of graduates to higher socioeconomic areas (Meyers, 2015), less compensation for employees (Winters, 2009, p. 169), and fewer opportunities for social experiences (Buchanan, 2008, p. 2).

Despite these difficulties, the low-wealth district which was studied has hired many successful high-quality teachers. Understanding the perceptions of these participants who have been hired in this low-wealth district is essential to understanding why they selected to work where they did. As such, the researcher developed and conducted this qualitative, phenomenological study in an attempt to understand the lived experiences of teachers during their job searches for employment in the field of education to determine which behaviors recruiters should display and utilize in order to hire high quality teaching candidates in a low-wealth district. More succinctly, it attempted to identify patterns of recruiter behavior that recruits identify as positive which could lead to the recruiter having a higher rate of success in hiring quality educators for their low-wealth districts.

The study also focused on the recruitment processes of marketing and communication the participants experienced up until the moment they were hired. By conducting this study, the researcher attempted to ascertain and identify which behaviors

recruiters displayed and which strategies these recruiters employed that attracted applicants to work in the LEA they chose, especially a district that is impoverished. Specifically, what practices attracted them to a low-wealth area and made them contemplate relocating to that area when other more affluent LEAs were recruiting them. This inquiry had three questions which were answered.

1. What are the common identifiable behaviors of recruiters that enhance the opportunity to hire high-quality teachers to low performing, high poverty school systems as compared to more affluent districts?
2. What are the common or most identifiable recruiting and marketing strategies recruiters in low-wealth systems use that sustained the interest levels of recruits for a position in a low performing, high poverty school system?
3. What are the most effective communication tools and methods recruiters can use to solicit high-quality teachers for positions in a low performing, high poverty school system?

The findings of this inquiry show that there are common identifiable behaviors that enhanced the opportunity to hire high quality teaching candidates. These behaviors were gleaned from the perceptions of the participants and included making the recruits feel wanted, the responsiveness of the recruiter, being supportive of the recruit during the recruiting process, and the characteristic interpersonal skills of the recruiters. These behaviors and characteristics were seen as positive signs that the recruiters were not only interested in them but would be displayed after they were hired. Secondly, there are identifiable recruiting methods which the target LEA used to hire high-quality employees and included referrals and the LEA/Corporate websites of the district. Additionally, recruiters in the low-wealth system studied used some very successful

marketing strategies for recruitment; and these methods included the support supplied and promised to the recruits, participant visits to the district, the LEA website, and the hope the participant could make a difference in the lives of the children in which they would be working.

Finally, the communication tools identified as most helpful in the recruiting process were the telephone and email. Communication methods (characteristics) identified by the participants included responding quickly, having open lines of communication, and the communication being easy between the participant and the recruiter.

### **Discussion of the Findings**

There is a significant amount of research on the processes involved with recruiting employees to an organization. Rynes and Barber's (1990) recruitment model discussed in detail applicant attraction strategies which is the cornerstone of this research. In their work, they mention three distinct means for increasing attraction success: improving recruitment practices, altering employment inducements, and targeting nontraditional applicants (Rynes & Barber, 1990, p. 291). This research project focused heavily on understanding what recruitment practices, behaviors, and strategies were utilized by the recruiters in the target district in order to improve the attraction success of the LEA's recruitment representatives. In Rynes and Barber's research practices, they mentioned four dimensions of recruitment strategies that have been hypothesized as being important to recruitment success; and they include organizational representatives, recruitment messages, recruitment sources, and recruitment timing (pp. 291-294). In this research, each of these areas was addressed by the perceptions of the participants.

Chapter 4 presented the analysis of the data produced from the interviews of the

participants of the study. Through careful phenomenological reduction, I was able to identify emergent themes with regard to recruiter behaviors, marketing strategies, and communication methods which had been expressed through the perceptions of the participants.

With regard to these themes, the behaviors of the recruiters were paramount. Harris and Fink (1987) as well as Schmitt and Coyle (1976) indicated in their studies that there is a strong relationship between perceived recruiter characteristics and a recruit's acceptance of a job. Data concerning the perceptions of the participants in this study about the recruiters they encountered while trying to get a job in the target LEA show that indeed the behaviors were important to them as they made their decisions. In this study, the participants perceived the positive behaviors of the recruiters as signs they could thrive in the environments in which they would be working. This perception is in line with the signaling theory of Rynes (1989) discussed by Larsen and Philips (2002). In the Larsen and Philips report on the Rynes study, they stated in the signaling theory, recruiters' behaviors, along with peers and supervisors, may be perceived by applicants as a signal of the organizational climate in which they might join. The importance of each one of the traits which was identified in the study in helping the recruit make a decision as to where they would work cannot be measured; however, statistically important behaviors such as possessing and displaying positive interpersonal skills, being supportive of the recruits, being responsive to the needs of the recruits, and making them feel wanted were all mentioned as behaviors the recruiters possessed which helped the recruits to make the decision to work in the low-wealth district studied.

Data concerning the methods for recruiting participants were reviewed as a part of question two. Sullivan (2004) stated that successful employment branding can increase

the number and quality of applicants and should include eight elements. These include a culture of sharing and continuous improvement, a balance between good management and high productivity, obtaining public recognition, having employees proactively telling great stories about the company, getting talked about in the public sector, becoming a benchmark firm that others want to emulate, increasing candidate awareness of your best practices, and branding assessment metrics by continuously improving to fit the target audience (Sullivan, 2004, pp. 1-2). It is for this reason that the methods of recruiting were researched in this study. Understanding these principles can help LEAs effectively brand and market their organizations therefore help them to sell the district to applicants and add value to the organization through their human resource departments (Sullivan, 2004, p. 2). In the review of the literature, career fairs, referrals, social media, LEA/Corporate career sites, electronic job boards, and grow-your-own initiatives were all mentioned as methods for making contact with applicants. Each of these methods for recruiting should be considered as an opportunity to project the image of the LEA through branding and marketing their organizations. In the target district studied, the only statistically important methods for making contact and then hiring a candidate were LEA/Corporate Career Sites and referrals. The fact that referrals are among the best ways the district has been able to make contact with the participants is not surprising. As previously mentioned, the Aberdeen Research Group reported that referrals are consistently the finest way for employers to staff their organizations (Laurano, 2013, p. 3). Thirty-eight percent of the participants in this study stated they became a part of the organization by first being referred to the target district by an acquaintance. This fact is important and should not be overlooked by the target LEA. As previously reported by the Aberdeen Research Group, 77% of organizations are investing in referral programs.

The participants felt methods of making contact is important and should be considered in light of the success the district has already experienced in the area of referrals.

The other statistically important method for making first contact was the target LEA's Corporate/Career websites. Again, 38% of participants identified this method as the way they made first contact with the target district and got their jobs. This is interesting and statistically important as 80% of the participants who identified this method came to the district from 400 miles away or farther. This would indicate that the websites have an impact on the perceptions of the participants about the organization as they reviewed the sites and sought employment.

Understanding the statistically important methods for making contact and eventual hire is critical; however, equally important is the data which elucidate the areas of weakness in the recruitment program of the target LEA. Berry (2007) reported that in a National Board Certified Teachers summit, the participants recognized that a grow-your-own initiative might be one of the best strategies for filling teaching positions in high-need schools (p. 12). Other methods used by the district were also weak. In this study, only one participant, or 8%, studied was hired in this fashion. Additionally, only two, or 15%, were hired as a result of job fairs. Finally, the target district used social media to recruit employees. This is in keeping with Eddy's (2014) report in which 93% of recruiters used social media to recruit (p. 2); however, not a single participant perceived social media as having had any impact on their hiring.

This study elucidated four major perceptions by the participants about marketing strategies that helped them make decisions to work in the target district. These marketing strategies clearly represent a brand which district officials have promoted. Lee (2005) stated that the superintendent of an LEA must insure that the district is prepared to



market teacher positions in a way that sets it apart from other districts with which they are competing. This is done through providing a winning teacher value proposition or, more simply put, a brand that explains what the district has to offer its employees. This value proposition explains why a teacher would want to work in their district and what makes it different from other districts. Items such as the opportunity to teach in an innovative way, the curriculum used, the opportunity to work in a collegial setting, supportive school and district leadership, competitive compensation and benefits, technology, nice facilities, teaching aids, labs, respect given to the employee by parents and peers, and a record of excellent student outcomes from teaching all play a part in projecting the brand of the organization (Lee, 2005, p. 265).

In the target district, it is apparent through this study that incentives and compensation and benefits are not reasons employees choose to work there, as competing LEAs can do more financially than the target district; however, participant perceptions of the levels of support they received during their recruitment period and what they were promised going forward were high. Sixty-nine percent of participants mentioned this as important to them during their recruitment. Many of the participants mentioned the level of support they received as crucial during their recruitment period.

Another important marketing strategy utilized by the district were LEA websites. In fact, they were the most important technological marketing tool perceived by the participants in this study. Forty-six percent of the participants stated these sites were important in helping them to understand more about the district and what it had to offer. This supports the perceptions of the participants who used the district website to make first contact. These individuals first learned about the district through the website which marketed the schools and the district and then through the digital integration of

communication within these sites to make contact.

The emergent theme of being invited to the school district for a visit to learn about the area and the district was very important and was a very successful marketing strategy, according 54% of the participants. Having members of the staff of the sponsoring school present for lunch, meeting with realtors, going through contracts, seeing their potential classrooms, and the employers simply taking time out of their schedules helped participants who were invited down to feel welcome and put them at ease.

The final and statistically most important emergent theme derived from the perceptions of the participants was the ability of the recruiter to make the participants feel they could make a difference in the lives of the children they would be serving. Eighty-five percent of the participants mentioned this important strategy as a reason they were attracted to the district.

In the area of communication, the communication tools used by the target LEA were easily identifiable. In the research portion of this study, the participants discussed the communication tools they found were most helpful in their recruitment process. Mentioned in the research were the recruitment tools of social media, electronic job boards, and corporate/career websites. According to Eddy (2014), social media is one of the fastest forms of communication being used today and has increased in its use from 82% in 2010 to 93% in 2014 (p. 2). Not only has this medium increased in popularity among recruiters, the Aberdeen Research Group reported in 2013 that it was the second most effective method for recruiting, just behind referrals. In the target district, this was simply not the case. None of the participants perceived this medium to have any impact on their recruitment and subsequent hire by the target district. Although the target district

does use social media in its recruitment plan, it is evident that this method for recruitment thus far has not been effective for the district.

Equally as ineffectual is the use of electronic job boards. The target district does not use this medium to recruit and therefore is in line with the Aberdeen Research Group which stated that even though 80% of organizations still leverage job boards in some capacity, nearly 40% of these organizations believe such places will be obsolete in the next few years (Laurano, 2013, p. 3). Rowland County does not use this method, and none of the participants in this study utilized it either.

Participants in this study overwhelmingly believed the best communication tool was the telephone (54%). Participants in the study mentioned the ease of communication associated with a form of technology, its intimacy, and the importance of the recruiter taking the time to use a more personal form of communication when contacting them. The other statistically important form of communication used by the district the participants perceived was useful was email. Thirty-one percent of participants believed this form of technology was easy to use and helped them to maintain effective communication with the recruiter.

With regard to communication methods (communication characteristics of recruiters), three themes emerged as perceptions derived by the participants as positive. These included responding quickly to the participant (46%), having open lines of communication (100%), and the communication or conversations being easy between the participant and the recruiter (100%). These communication characteristics were all prized by the participants and were helpful in their decision-making processes.

## **Implications**

Implications for best practices in the recruiting process became evident during this study. With regard to recruiter characteristics, the participants felt that being warm and welcoming, caring, kind, positive, and displaying positive body language and voice were traits the recruiter who hired them displayed during their recruitment interactions. Recruiter behaviors which were evident to the participants during the recruitment process to the target district included displaying positive interpersonal skills, making the recruits feel wanted, being supportive of the recruits, and the responsiveness of the recruiter to the recruit. These characteristics and behaviors speak to the importance of selecting the proper representatives for recruiting applicants to a low-wealth district. Soft skills and attentiveness to the recruits are essential skills which recruiters to this area should master to become even more successful at landing great recruits. These findings also have implications for district-level administrators. Selecting principals who possess these skills may lead to more successful schools due to the ability of the principal to attract a higher quality teaching staff.

With regard to the study on the methods utilized by the district as well as the recruits for being hired into the target LEA, the use of referrals was statistically important and corroborated the Aberdeen Research Group who reported referrals were the most effective means to staff organizations (Laurano, 2013, p. 3). Due to this fact, it may be beneficial for the target LEA to invest in an employee referral program. The other most effective way for employees to learn about and make contact with the employer in which they signed was the use of LEA/Corporate websites. After analyzing this data, it became evident the quality of the school district LEA/Corporate website is paramount not only for disseminating information to the general public but for recruiting. Thirty-eight

percent of participants identified this method for finding employment and this statistically important method needs to be maintained properly due to the significance it plays for staffing the school district. This method's importance to the target LEA also needs to be reviewed further by district officials as the number and the high quality of the participants who were hired by this method are surprising. This method relies heavily on participants reviewing websites and contacting employers themselves in order to begin the recruitment process. The quality of the website could, and apparently did, have an impact on participant decisions to go forward with contacting the target LEA; however, the initial discovery of the district's website by the participants should be reviewed to see what processes in place led participants to find the site or determine if the discovery was serendipity. This could help district officials and their employees enhance their sites to further improve in the area of recruitment.

Statistically important marketing strategies used by recruiters included the level of support offered to the recruits during the recruiting process, the school website, visits to the districts, and being told by the recruiter how the participants could make a difference in the lives of the children with whom they would be working. These marketing strategies should be shared with all members of the organization before they begin their efforts to recruit in order to pass on best practices.

The communication methods that were preferred by the recruits were email and the telephone. The telephone was the most popular method by nearly two to one as participants liked the more personable approach. Recruiters should make sure to use this more personal form of communication whenever possible. Characteristics identified as statistically important by recruits included responding quickly, having open lines of communication and making the communication flow easily, and not pressuring the

recruits. These characteristics all indicate a recruiter's interest in a recruit which further confirms the importance of making a recruit feel wanted.

### **Limitations**

This study is limited to the perceptions of 13 participants who signed in a low-wealth district. I believe these teachers were more willing to participate due to the fact they had good experiences during their recruiting process and, more importantly, their thought processes and responses may have been governed by the reality that some still worked for their recruiter; however, though the researcher was explaining the protocols for the protection of identities, there might always be questions and worries from the perspective of the participants.

Another concern is the sample size of the target group. I believe that through extensive analyzation of the transcript interviews, I was able to bracket the statements of the participants. I further believe that through the construction of the structural and textural descriptions as well as the composites derived from both, I was able to capture the essence of the recruiting phenomena experienced by the participants. Although time and time again the responses seemed to be similar, it is unknown if this group is large enough to represent the larger teaching cadre of the school district.

Finally, my personal biases with regard to the recruiting process, or my epoche, has been a constant concern. By following protocol established by Moustakas (1994), I feel this limitation has been mitigated to a large extent; however, constant vigilance in this area and much reflection has led me to rethink and rewrite and some portions of the findings so the experiences of the participants is the final product of this study. It is unknown to what extent my personal bias played in the final conclusions.

## **Recommendations for Future Research**

This inquiry into recruitment for a low-wealth LEA was conducted utilizing employees still working in the district who were considered to be effective teachers. Additionally, these employee experiences in recruiting with the target LEA were no more than 2 years old. The entire process from introduction to the recruiter until the applicants were hired was studied to see if there were characteristics/behaviors, marketing strategies, and forms of communication which would help recruiters to more effectively hire employees to low-wealth districts. The perceptions of the recruits yielded information about recruiter behaviors and characteristics which they found to be attractive, marketing strategies that enhanced a decision to sign with a recruiter as well as communication methods that recruits found helpful.

An area of future research which I feel might add to the body of knowledge is the perception of being wanted and needed. Several of the participants stated that for the first time, they were made to feel desired as educators and people. A mixed methods comparative research study could be conducted about attraction strategies that dealt with the differences in marketing strategies. This comparative study could be used in order to study the differences in recruiting success of recruiters who utilized a strong emphasis on the psychology of recruiting focusing on making recruits feel wanted and giving them a sense of belonging as compared to traditional strategies of simply branding and showing the recruit what the district has to offer.

This study has also yielded information that 69% or nine of the 13 participants identified themselves as coming from rural backgrounds. Collins (1999) argued that “candidates with rural backgrounds or with personal characteristics or educational experiences that predispose them to live in rural areas” should be sought out to work in

rural areas (p. 2).

Because of the belief that teachers from rural areas are more likely to serve in those areas, more research needs to be done to target student recruits from those areas. Interestingly, all 13 participants in this study indicated that social media was in no way used to secure their teaching positions. Quantitative research could be conducted to compare the use of social media for job searches between participants who identified themselves as from rural backgrounds or from urban backgrounds. This research could lead to an understanding of the levels of sophistication with technology between these two subgroups to see if even more light could be shed on causal reasons for decision-making acceptance in rural or metropolitan areas.

Finally, a potentially enlightening phenomenological study I think recruiters as well as LEAs could benefit from is to begin to look at the training of education graduates in college with respect to working with low-wealth students. In this study, it would be interesting to be able to identify the specific characteristics new graduates bring to an organization including students graduating from these programs who display a great knowledge of diversity, great knowledge of high-need homes, of differentiated curriculum, of parenting skills necessary to reach high-poverty children in low socioeconomic areas as compared to those new graduates who did not come from programs that address and focus on these areas. Researchers could look at these training preparation programs and the knowledgebase the graduates from these programs have for working with students from low-wealth areas. They could then interview and analyze data from recruiters as to how they interacted with these different students and how student backgrounds affected their decision-making processes with regard to hiring.



## Summary

This study was an attempt to capture the lived experiences of participants as they attempted to gain employment through the recruitment process in a low-wealth LEA in southeastern North Carolina. It also was carried out so the author could identify successful recruiter behaviors, successful communication techniques and technologies, and the most successful marketing strategy characteristics for hiring candidates for a low-wealth district in rural North Carolina. This study accomplished that task by shedding light on the journeys of these individuals and sharing their experiences with the recruiters they encountered. The interactions these participants had with their recruiters is invaluable information for recruiting and should be shared with all recruiters so they know what processes, behaviors, characteristics, and technology will assist them in the hiring of high quality teaching candidates in the future, especially for a low-wealth district in southeastern North Carolina.

This qualitative research yielded positive information about the perceptions the participants had about the positive characteristics displayed by the recruiters as well as their positive behavioral attributes. Additionally, it shed light on the methods in which these participants obtained employment and what they perceived were the most successful marketing strategies employed by the target district. Finally, this research identified the perceptions of the participants with regard to the most effective communication tools and techniques employed by their recruiters. The individual stories and anecdotal information gleaned through the interviews of the participants in this study are invaluable in gaining an understanding of why these participants voluntarily chose to work in a low wealth teaching environment which some consider to be difficult. Educational leaders need to be apprised of this study and organize or reorganize their

recruiting processes including websites, technology, marketing strategies, and the proper selection and training of recruiters to attain optimal success in the area of recruiting quality teaching staff. Embracing the perceptions of the individuals who lived the experience is not only a smart decision but one which is a necessity in combating the teacher shortages that plague low-wealth areas in the state of North Carolina.

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Appendix A  
Emergent Themes

### Emergent Themes

- I. Recruiter Behaviors/Characteristics
  - A. Recruit's perceptions of recruiter characteristics
  - B. Recruit's perceptions of recruiter behaviors
- II. Recruiting Marketing/Branding strategies
  - A. Recruit perceptions of recruiting methods
  - B. Recruit perceptions of recruiting strategies
- III. Communication
  - A. Teacher perceptions of the most favorable forms of communication technology used during their recruiting process.
  - B. Teachers perceptions of social media in the recruiting process
  - C. Positive communications characteristics and behaviors

## Appendix B

### Beginning Epoche



December 27, 2016

In July of 2013, I was made the principal at the largest middle school in our LEA. At the end of that first year I had to replace ten teachers, which represented over twenty percent of my staff. The school was not a family unit. Although I had seen some improvements, overall, the culture was still not good. I knew that the staff would watch closely how I filled the spots that were open that summer. Fortunately, I had a very good grasp on who was leaving and or retiring. Because of this knowledge I had been recruiting since March of that school year and I had many great leads. I felt that I had very little chance of filling all of my open positions with great, first line, quality teachers if I only worked in the state of North Carolina. I had branched out and done job fairs in North Carolina, Virginia, and Pennsylvania. My assistant principals and I did nearly fifty interviews to hire the staff that went into the classrooms that fall. I was simply amazed at the quality of the educator's we were able to hire.

During that time I was working towards my EDS in Educational Leadership and I decided to study recruiting. I felt that there had to have been something in the way I recruited that got me the wonderful results that I felt we had achieved. I pondered this a great deal. Was it the persistence, the sheer numbers of applicants that we talked to, the characteristics of the recruiter, the behaviors of the recruiters, the communication techniques, or was it simply luck or the circumstances of the people we were trying to hire?

That year I accepted a position as the Human Resources Director in that same LEA. During the spring of 2015, I used the same techniques for the district that I had used to hire my staff the previous year. Again, I felt that I was accomplishing great things. The burning question however, was how? I reviewed the hires we had made by

each school and principal and realized quickly that some recruiters were much better than others. I felt that there had to be more than just good fortune that made one recruiter more successful than another.

Although I felt good about the teachers I had helped to hire, we were still missing out on some fantastic recruits and so I decided to study recruiting techniques to see if there were ways to improve the success rates we had in hiring. Each time I felt that we had a good grasp on what would make us successful, we would have a set back with a teacher. The methods were always the same, however, we getting drastically different results depending on where a teacher came from and what their life experiences were. Was this a phenomena? How could we get great teachers to come to a very rural low-wealth LEA where there were few if any incentives, a large population of low socio-economic students, and very few social activities for the teachers to become involved with? My biggest biases were believing that tenacity, our use of technology, and the characteristics the recruiters were displaying towards the recruits were making all the difference.

These biases often lead me to have more questions than answers. Why is our rate of hire so high in other states and so low in North Carolina? How do I pinpoint what actually is helping these young people decide to work here? How do I train our principals to become better at recruiting? What can I learn from the principals? Finally, I thought, what can I learn from the recruits? Surely they can give me more data than the principals I was working with. These are just some of the many questions I pondered while deciding how to conduct this study.

## Appendix C

### Coding and Memoing

## Descriptive Codes

\*To start the coding process, I chose an interview at random and began some descriptive coding. Here are some of the codes that emerged.

### Interview of the Participant

Numbered/Descriptive Codes	Comment/Quotes
1. Recruiter characteristics/behaviors	<p>Theoretical Framework</p> <p>Participants all indicated that the recruiter and their behaviors made a difference in their decisions to join the district. “I guess his behaviors and the way he was there always asking me questions if I needed help or if there was anything else he could do for me or if I had any questions, that kind of gave me comfort, because I knew if I came to this county, I was going to have my struggles as a first year teacher but I was definitely going to have a few more struggles it being a low economic school, I knew I would have someone like the recruiter who was there to help me.”</p>
2. Recruiting Marketing Process	<p>Participant’s processes for job searches varied dramatically. Several applicants used several methods to search for positions. One remarked, “I applied online and went to career fairs where I heard from another teacher there was a position open at the school.”</p>
3. Branding and Marketing Strategies	<p>Rowland County was really the first county to really take interest in me. I don't know if that considers a brand but being interested in a candidate as an educator definitely helps me to pursue the job.</p>

4. Incentives	The participants indicated the low-wealth district offered little or no incentives. "They offered a lot in terms of getting me set up in Rowland County. There was no money or exchanging of that or any offers that way, but they did provide a lot of support. When you're moving from another state that's really, really important."
5. Willingness to work in a low wealth district	Many participants did not consider the fact that the district was low-wealth to be important. However, one commented, "The fact that it was so welcoming and I felt automatically based on the way that they were talking and wanting to get to know me and asking those personal questions....made me feel like "okay that's a place I could go to and that I could consider home."
6. Communication	The participant recalled, "If I had a question I reached she reached out to me, if she had a question she reached out to me so I was never very unclear about what was going to happen next in the process." This immediate feedback was crucial.
7. Social Media	All thirteen participants responded that social media was not important in their recruiting process. All participants indicated, "I didn't use any social media." Although one said she set up an account on one medium, she said, "I created a LinkedIn account, which has my online everything, I do have a profile on teachers to teachers, but I didn't use."
8. Most effective communication	When participants were asked what was the single most effective communication method the responses varied. However,

	<p>the group indicated that response and customer service were the key. The most poignant response was made which summed up the group, "I think number one will be face to face mostly because you can see facial expressions and I think those are important." Regardless of the method of communication nothing was more important than open lines of communication and fast response times.</p>
<p>9. Communication Affecting Decision-Making to Work in Low-Wealth District</p>	<p>Participant said her decision to sign with Rowland County was influenced by the recruiter's actions. "The fact that she kept contact and was easy to talk to through email or phone or whatever shows that she really wanted me here. I might not have gotten that in a bigger or wealthier district."</p>

Appendix D  
Textural Descriptions

**Penny Hardwick.** Penny is a third year teacher from a northern state who had a love of teaching from a young age. Penny grew up in a very rural area and shortly after graduation, tried to get a job in the areas she was from. She wanted to stay up north where she was from, but found that employment was difficult to attain. She was considering substituting when she was called by a friend who had taken a job in the LEA being studied. She researched the school that was looking for a teaching candidate by using the internet. Penny contacted the principal of the school by email on a Monday and by Tuesday morning the principal had contacted her back. They set up a Skype interview and she interviewed with the principal. Penny says that immediately you could tell that the principal was positive, was very supportive, honest and was driven to help her students. Penny stated that her principal's efforts to, "paint the school and the town in a great light," and the supportive nature of the school's staff made her willing to work in a low-wealth district.

Penny also went on to say that the principal's driven nature rubbed off on her and made her want to work as hard as the principal. She repeated that honesty, being positive and being goal oriented and driven are characteristics she noticed about her recruiter during the recruiting process. Although Penny could not identify any marketing strategies used by the LEA she signed with, however, she did like the website and used it to help learn about the school district. Penny stated that she was offered no incentives in her recruitment period and she didn't utilize any social media. For her, communication was done through email primarily and then was interviewed using Skype. Penny said that communication was good with her principal and further stated, I had a lot of questions, and she worked at answering them as quickly as she could, which was usually



within the day or the next day. I think she did a really good job of communicating through the whole process.”

**Angela Barton.** Angela is a third year teacher from a northern state. Her hometown, as she describes it, “is more on the urban side,” with the demographics of the town being roughly 50/50 white to black. She said there is also a large Hispanic presence. Angela states that she loves children and has always been drawn to them. She is especially gratified by the lightbulb moment children get when they first understand something. Angela noted that early in the recruitment process, the recruiter she signed with, quickly showed me how much the school needed me. He was immediately like a second dad and was always there to support me. The recruiter said the right things to get me to come. “He built my confidence up and he slowly pulled me in by telling me how much they needed me and what I can do and how my personal background can be used in the classroom.” Angela stated that the characteristics of the recruiter that really stuck with her were caring, helpful, understanding, and the eagerness to know more and to want more.

Angela was drawn to work in a low wealth district by the recruiters efforts to show her how she could be an asset to the underprivileged children she would be working with. She stated that the characteristics of the recruiter that stuck with her the most was his willingness to show how much he needed her and how much she would make a difference with the children. She said that was very persuasive.

Angela said that during her job search she uploaded resumes in her home state and also went to between 10-15 districts handing out resumes. In the LEA she signed with she used the website that she said was a very easy to use and she felt it was a great marketing strategy. She said she considered it to be a “one stop shop’ where all the

information was clearly listed and she could see all of the schools. She said many districts' websites weren't set up that way. She did not use social media while she was being recruited. She was not given any incentives to sign, but she did say that a great perk that could be considered an incentive for signing with a low-wealth district was that the school she signed with was a Title I school and that her student loans could be repaid after five years.

When asked about the communication she stated that she was Skyped by her recruiter for her interview. She recalls coming down to check out the area and being taken around by the principal to look for houses. She stated, "open line of communication where we could call him whenever we needed something as big as just venting or something of can you come kill this bug in my house. It was definitely just open with contact through calling or email or text." This "call me anytime," motto on the phone was the most effective form of communication and helped her to make a decision to work in a low wealth LEA as it was comforting to not only her, but to her parents.

**Jennifer Laslow.** Jennifer is a third year teacher from a rural town in a northern state who always believed that teaching would be a highly rewarding career and an occupation where connections could be made with children. Jennifer talked about how she wanted to help inspire students to do good things and learn and grow. She stated that she always knew that she wanted to graduate and move south.

Jennifer stated that the behaviors and strategies that the recruiter used that stuck out in her mind were first the face-to-face interaction which she called, "huge." She was surprised that the recruiter was the principal and that he had driven from North Carolina all the way to her state. "That stood out a lot to me, as well, that they really personally care, and they want to handpick the people that are going to work there." Additionally,

Jennifer mentioned the follow through. She recalls that the recruiter did what he said he would do as far as responding, emailing, setting up Skype interviews, it never left her guessing what would happen next. She felt comforted by the fact that she could trust the person and didn't have to interpret what was going to happen next, the recruiter was straightforward.

Other behaviors that she was attracted to were how, "everything was upbeat, positive and very personal." Jennifer stated that the recruiter tried to get to know her as person and this contrasted from other districts she had talked to on her job search. She said she experienced a warm and welcoming atmosphere and shared some laughs. She said that because of how welcoming the recruiter was she felt she could make the giant step of moving south. Jennifer said that working in a low-wealth district was never a consideration or a determining factor in job selection.

During her job search Jennifer had prepared resumes and cover letters and decided to go to a huge job fair at her school. She stated that she was wanting to go south so she had researched schools that would be at the fair and went specifically to the ones she chose. She said that the booth of the recruiter she signed with was very attractive and she considered to be a marketing tool. However, she felt that the principal there was the best branding tool you could have as it showed the personal care you might expect in that school. Jennifer was not offered any incentives to sign with the school.

Jennifer did not use social media for her job search but stated that there a variety of communication methods, including face-to-face, Skype, email, by phone. She felt the phone conversations were the most important because the recruiter took the time to call and have a conversation. Although there were no specific communication methods that

helped Jennifer to make a decision to come to the low-wealth LEA she chose, she does say that all of the personal conversations had an impact on her decision.

**Theresa Bishop.** Theresa is a third year public school teacher in North Carolina. She is from a very affluent but rural town in a northern state. Theresa taught for two years in South Korea after she graduated from college. She said she always loved being in school. She said that she loved the social aspect of school and while in school she realized that teaching was not just about the academics, but also about being a part of a community. “I think that’s what I like and enjoy about teaching, it’s a stepping stone to really helping an area, a place.”

Jennifer started her recruitment process by uploading her information to Teachers to Teachers and online recruiting site. She said she got a few calls but she liked how she got information for the district and used that to contact principals directly. Theresa said, “I feel like recruiting websites can be so mind boggling and there are so many of them.” She said that sending out resumes were most effective for her.

Jennifer said that the recruiter she worked with during her recruitment period had great charisma, a big booming voice, and you could tell through the phone that he was excited about getting her information. She said that when she visited the recruiter stood to talk, leaned forward, gave her welcoming behaviors, really wanted to get to know her and what she was going to bring to the school. The recruiter conveyed that he didn’t want the job to be an eight hour a day job, he wanted you to know the area and the environment in which she would be teaching. He was straight forward and gave no sugary lies which she found appealing. She said that people try to root through the false to find the facts and the recruiter did that. The recruiter’s honesty about the demographics, the income, and the area was an important behavior when trying to attract

teachers. The recruiter's behavior was something that Theresa found appealing and helped to go to work in a low-wealth district. Honesty, openness, and the excitement he had for the job and for what the school could do for kids was apparent and his positive behavior was noted in the process.

The marketing strategy used by the recruiter that stood out the most to Theresa was something that the recruiter said. "Come down here and tour the area first, I'm not going to let you sign a contract before you actually see this place for yourself, because I don't want you to be down here and be stuck down here." She said that was nice because a lot of districts would just get you to sign a contract and wipe their hands clean. She said she came down, toured the area, ate lunch with the summer staff, visited towns nearby, and the principal went through the contract step by step. Again, she states the honesty made a big difference. She said although she was offered no incentives, she was provided a lot of support by the recruiter, including setting up realtors to make sure that she had a place to stay when she first got to town.

Theresa said that communication was easy and that she felt she was talking to someone who not only wanted her professionally, but wanted to help me personally. Her favorite form of communication used by the recruiter was email, but the phone calls made her very comfortable. She stated that the principal communicated to her, "We have a lot of work to do, it's not going to be an easy job but we do want to make a difference." Theresa said that really stuck with her and helped her to decide to move to help make that difference.

**Sandra Gardner.** Sandra is a second year veteran to the district being studied. She is from a northern state and grew up in a tiny, very rural town. Sandra prides herself in differentiating her lessons to get the most out of her students each day and says the

demographics of this district are vastly different from where she grew up. “We are about ninety-eight percent Caucasian. I think I had maybe two students that I graduated with were half black.” She recalls she has always wanted to be a teacher and help people.

“Teaching, I felt like that was the best way to help young people and help them grow and hopefully help the world become a better place because they have to learn when they’re young.”

Sandra recalled her recruitment period and said because she was graduating in the middle of the school year she knew she would struggle getting a position. She said she put in applications to substitute and then contacted her advisor from college and told her she wanted to move south. Her advisor gave the contact information to the school system and she contacted the recruiter by email. She said the recruiter contacted her back after about a half an hour. She said the principal also called soon thereafter. She says the recruiters helped her to schedule a visit where she observed some classes and talked to the administration. She says everyone was welcoming, always happy, and they made her feel excited. They also made her feel like she was wanted there. “To feel that you are wanted is definitely a good thing.” She said the only incentive she was offered during her recruitment was by an assistant principal for reimbursement of a master’s program she wanted to go into. She later found out the program no longer existed.

Sandra said the recruiter shared some videos with her on social media about the school like sports videos or teachers in the classrooms and it seemed like a fun atmosphere in which to work. She further stated she loved the excitement in the voices of the recruiters and she simply didn’t care whether it was a low-wealth district or not. She stated the communication was very good. I knew that this was a real thing and I was in constant contact with someone from the school throughout my visit and in the weeks

that I was preparing to move. They were in constant contact with me.” She says the most important form of communication she used was the telephone. She stated when she got the first phone call the recruiter seemed excited and that got her excited. “I think that first phone call right away definitely made me want to come more than anything else.”

**Thomas England.** Thomas is a third year teacher who is from a very rural town in the south which had a demographic that consisted of a majority Caucasian population with the remaining population being African American with a few Hispanics. Thomas said he went off to school to become an aerospace engineer, but switched to finance. Because he was good at math he tutored high school students in college. He really enjoyed the work with the students and changed his major to secondary math education.

Thomas said that when he thinks about the characteristics and behaviors of his recruiter he says the main attribute displayed by the recruiter was that he was very interested in me. He said that that was the biggest difference in his recruiter and some others from larger counties. Although he received brochures from districts he was interested in, he felt when it was presented by a person it meant a lot more to him. He said his recruiter was able to maintain his attention while speaking to him and others at the same time. He said the recruiter also followed up the next day and asked him to come by the school to check it out. He said the recruiter would contact him and ask if he needed anything or if he could answer any questions for him. Thomas said this behavior made him feel comfortable. He also said the recruiter wore professional attire and was clean shaven which left a great impression. “If he takes the time to be professional in the way he dressed, to care about what people perceive of him, then he took his job seriously and that’s something I like,” remarked Thomas. Additionally, Thomas said when he was

talking to the recruiter it felt like talking to someone who could one day be an employer. “I could feel there could be a professional relationship there.”

Thomas said the recruiter’s behaviors made him more willing to work for a low-wealth area as the recruiter was always asking if he had any questions. This gave Thomas the comfort level and the confidence he needed to work in a low-wealth low-socioeconomic school. He said, “I knew I would have someone like the recruiter who was there to help me or offer any help because he was doing it now.”

Thomas recalled his recruitment period and the different things he did to find employment. He said he went to job fairs and also went to the North Carolina education website and viewed openings for jobs in different districts. Thomas said he went to the job fair at his college and spoke to the larger districts he had selected from the website, but also talked to the recruiter who hired him even though he didn’t know they had any positions. He found out from the recruiter there was a position and he applied and was later hired. Thomas does not recall a brand or marketing strategy employed by the district in which he was hired. He remembers seeing the posters and the banners at the job fair for the schools in the LEA being studied, however, that is all he remembers.

Thomas said that the recruiter told him what the school and the district had to offer, how he would be supported, and how he would receive professional development and this impressed him. He stated, “Just knowing that the administration was going to be there to be like a safety net, help out, be there in any way to support me, provide any resources that would be helpful or instrumental to my success that would directly benefit the students, I think that was the biggest thing.” Thomas said he doesn’t remember talking about incentives.



Thomas said that communication between the recruiter and himself was smooth, easy, and it never felt awkward, which was a signal for him. The face-to-face talks just felt like a conversation. Although he didn't use social media in his job search, he did use email and the telephone to communicate. However for him, face-to-face communication was the most important way to communicate as it allowed him to see facial expressions which he thinks is critical. He also believes that this face-to-face communication signaled good things from the recruiter, "Once again, that said a lot that he was willing to take the time to sit down with me and talk to me about the steps or talk to me about the information." Thomas says he did a phone interview with a bigger district that was his first choice, but he felt the conversation was very awkward, and because of the lack of one-on-one communication he eliminated them from his list.

**Rebecca Simmons.** Rebecca is a third year teacher from metropolitan area in a southern state. Her hometown was a very high income area with schools that were very successful and which had high test scores. The students at the school were roughly fifty percent Asian and fifty percent Caucasian. Rebecca said that from first grade to seventh grade she was in special education. She said that she did not like to go to school because she was a poor reader and was three levels behind until about the eighth grade. Rebecca remarked, "I decided to become a teacher because I wanted to do something purposeful and teaching was one of the first things that came to my mind."

Rebecca said that she started her job search she went to job fairs and applied online. Later she was referred to the school she signed with by a friend. She said she did go online and check out the school website to look for information on the county, the socioeconomic status of the population and the test scores for the school. Rebecca said when she first talked to the recruiter they were very open to listening to her, was very

energetic, and was open to some of her suggestions for what she wanted to do in her classroom. Rebecca said after she applied she was immediately called by the recruiter. This made her feel wanted as an educator, something she had not felt from others prior to her contact with the recruiter that hired her. She noticed the environment was very welcoming, she felt at home and the staff was great. “It was definitely an environment I wanted to be in based off the perceptions I had of the school so far.”

Rebecca said she noticed the principal was very professional when she spoke, shook her hand, and she noticed the recruiter’s relaxed body language which Rebecca took as a signal the recruiter was comfortable with her. Rebecca said she talked about behavior on her interview with her recruiter she felt like she knew how discipline would be at the school. She said the recruiter told her the student’s behavior was good despite the low-income area they came from and Rebecca felt convinced the recruiter would assure the behaviors would not negatively impact her classroom.

Rebecca couldn’t think of any marketing strategies that made her choose her current LEA, however, she liked being sought by a recruiter that liked her as an educator. She said she was not offered any incentives on her job search and didn’t use social media. Rebecca said the communication between the recruiter and she was easy and flowed quickly. Rebecca remarked that she felt wanted, “I felt desired as a teacher, I felt very welcome when I came to the school.” Additionally, she stated the recruiter got right back to her when she had a question which meant a lot to her. Rebecca said she used the phone and email to communicate, however, the phone was used more often. When she was asked about what communication methods affected her decision to work in a low-wealth district, she said, I know looking at the website, just seeing all of the things that

they do in the community, not just in the school, definitely influenced me to take the job.”

**Adam Gathings.** Adam is a third year teacher from a northern state. He came from a suburban/rural area that had a mix of different races and ethnicities. Adam describes his town as a, “pretty nice, quiet type of town where everybody goes to the football games on Friday nights.” He said he decided on a career in education when he was in the seventh grade because he was inspired to help people the way a teacher mentor had helped him.

Adam said he began his job search at home and quickly realized getting a job there would be very difficult. After two and a half to three years of substituting and trying to get a job he decided to expand his search. He decided to go onto a national database to put out his resume and cover letter. He said he put out many applications all across the country and then he waited. He also went to job fairs but again he had no success. He describes the process of trying to get a job in his state as very political.

Adam described the recruiter he worked with as very kind, oozing with confidence and almost fatherly. Adam knew the area was low-wealth but said the recruiter was what brought him to the school. “I had five or six different job offers from all around the country and because of this man, that is why I am here.” Adam said the recruiter was almost like the physical representation of the kind of environment in which he would be working and the recruiter was very straightforward telling him he was looking for the right person to help his students. Adam spoke about the recruiter during his recruitment period and the level of support he hoped to get by saying, “He made it clear, both with his words and his body language. It was very open and inviting.”

When asked about marketing strategies used by the recruiter that hired him Adam said that the way the recruiter offered to help him get a place to live was important. He

also talked about another support system in place at the school, the Academic Coach that was there which could support him in his efforts to improve instructionally, specifically understanding the standards. According to Adam the recruiter told him there was a person that could help him to understand the curriculum and improve. “Coming into it, potentially teaching a subject I never taught before, that was gold to me. That was something that I didn’t hear any other school offer that was interviewing me.”

Adam said he was offered incentives by other LEAs. One school offered to pay all of his moving expenses, a flight for him and his girlfriend, and three months free rent. Another school system offered the use of a beach house until he could find a place to live. The LEA he signed with only offered to pay his supplement up front to help with his moving expenses. That was enough coupled with the supports he perceived were available.

Adam said communication was very open. He said he experienced a strange occurrence when he tried to Skype with the recruiter he signed with. The interview team had a hard time getting the videoconferencing to work and he helped to fix the problem. He said that made him feel good and brought up a topic that was dear to him, technology. He said, “The attempt was made to make it seem like they were keeping up with the times and using the technology.” He recalls that as a pivotal moment. Although he liked the medium, videoconferencing, however he said face-to-face contact was most important.

**Stephanie Campbell.** Stephanie is a second year teacher who was previously a teacher assistant for ten years. She is from a southern rural town in a district that borders the LEA in which she now works. The demographics of the town in which she grew up in and currently lives are very similar to her current system. She decided on a career in

education as a way to spend more time with her children at home. “I was in retail and was a manager so I was missing out on a whole lot as far as my kids were concerned. I came into the education field in order to have the same hours as my children and me being able to be home with them.”

Stephanie says the recruiter she worked with in her recruitment period was very kind, persistent and friendly. She said she can’t recall any characteristics or behaviors which made her more willing to work in a low-wealth district, nor were there any marketing strategies that set the recruiter apart from any other recruiter. She said during her recruitment period she spoke with several curriculum specialists at the central office level in her current district and they led her to an assistant director who she spoke with. She said she spoke to a representative from another district by phone but wanted to stay close to home. She recalls she really didn’t do a job search. She was already working at the school where she is currently working and the position opened up and she was hired. She could not recall any marketing strategies or anything else that set the district she signed with apart from others, she was offered no incentive, and she did not use social media to search for a job.

Stephanie recalls that communication with her recruiter was wonderful and she received a great deal of help getting settled into her classroom. She says the lines of communication are always open and she used face-to-face communication when she contacted her recruiter.

**Tammy Parks.** Tammy is a third year teacher in the LEA that is being studied. She is from a rural town in North Carolina and grew up the grandchild of two former educators. Because of her grandparents’ background she always had a little push to go into the

education profession. Tammy confessed that when she started doing internships for college she got hooked on elementary education.

Tammy says that the recruiter called her and invited her to come down for an interview where she was interviewed by the principal and a group of peers. A couple of hours after the interview she received a call from the principal offering her the job. She said that the recruiter was very persistent, consistent and friendly. She said the principal was very laid back and the environment was very friendly, warm and inviting. “I definitely picked up on a family atmosphere between her and her colleagues that she had me interviewing with, so that’s really what drew me in was I could tell that everybody was a family. Everybody was really close. That was what made me interested in working here.” She said the behaviors displayed by the principal that made her interested in signing with the recruiter consistency and the principal contacting her back quickly after her interview. She said she didn’t care it was a low-wealth district, she simply wanted to help children. She said that she came from a rural, low-wealth, low-income area and that she decided when she became a teacher that she wanted to work in an area like that so she could give back. She dismissed the notion that the recruiter’s behaviors had anything to do with her decision to work in a low-wealth area, “What made me want to work for them didn’t really have to do with the demographic of the area.”

Tammy said when she started her job search she used the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction’s website and looked for job openings. She said that she put her resume’ in the system and waited. She was contacted by two systems and interviewed with both. Tammy said she really enjoyed the atmosphere at the school, the way the principal had the team interview her and the way the team interacted with each other. She said she could tell they would all support each other, which was important to

her, that she be supported. Tammy said that she was offered no incentives during her job search.

Tammy stated that communication was fairly easy and that her recruiter replied to her questions very rapidly. She said that she did not use social media during her job search. She felt that the most effective means of communication with her was email because the recruiter was so easily accessible. Tammy concluded her interview by stating that communication was pivotal in her decision and the fact that the recruiter, “was easy to talk to through email or phone or whatever shows that she really wanted me here. I might not have gotten that in a bigger or wealthier district.”

**Valerie Givens.** Valerie is a third year teacher in the LEA that is being studied and was raised in that area. She is from a small rural town and claims that teaching is her calling and passion in life. She states that she did a lot of substituting in the area and that the district principal’s respected her and the work she did for them. She recounts that she was already wanting to work in the district and was called in for an interview by one of the principals of the district. During the interview, “I felt respected, very welcomed. It felt like home when I walked into the environment.” She said that the recruiter seemed excited she was there and the questions asked in the interview were very positive which made her feel that she knew what kind of school they were going to be. Valerie stated she was told that that the district was low-wealth. She stated that she wanted to work in that kind of environment. Valerie stated that she could tell as she walked around the school the students were treated with respect.

Valerie said that when she started her job search she went online but that the LEA website was not very user friendly and was somewhat difficult to find what jobs were available. She stated that she already knew people working in the district so she asked

around for availability. She said that she graduated in December and took a job outside the district because nothing was available in the district in which she wanted to work. She said getting a job in the area was easy and because of this she wasn't heavily recruited. She said that she was not offered any incentives to take a position. She further states that she never really saw a brand or marketing strategy in the LEA she signed with.

Valerie stated that communication was primarily by phone and it was clear every step of the way. "It was never hard to get in touch with anyone I needed to speak with." She states this was very important because she was offered two other jobs she could have chosen. In fact Valerie says she had given a verbal commitment to go to work in another district, but because the recruiter in the LEA where she signed pursued her the most she changed her mind. She stated that she didn't use any social media in her job search. She stated the telephone was the most important piece of technology used during her recruitment and this was because of the ease of contact. Valerie said the recruiter's persistence and the fact she felt wanted are what stands out in her recruitment period.

**Kerri Hightower.** Kerrie is a veteran mid-western teacher who has worked in the LEA studied for two and a half years. Kerri says she came from a suburban school district that was ranked very high in the nation and whose population was upper middle class and primarily white. She says she has always loved working with children, especially one on one. She says she gets a lot of joy from teaching a child that they can use for the rest of their lives.

Kerri says her situation is unique in that her husband had taken a job in the area and she had to find a job in that area. She says she researched the schools in the area and them. The recruiter that she signed with was the first to contact her, responding very quickly. Kerri described her recruiter as very warm and enthusiastic and she stated, "you



could she had very high standards of her school.” Kerri remembers the principal selling the school to her, she stated, “It was like, here’s why my school is so great. Here is why T.G. Hamilton is wonderful.” Kerri stated that the principal exhibited other behaviors and strategies that were important. According to Kerri she started teaching at the school in the middle of the year. Even before she started working, the principal helped her with the process for getting her North Carolina teaching license and had a veteran teacher at the school reach out to her to let her know what her class was doing during Thanksgiving and Christmas. This gave her confidence as she felt like she already knew her class before she got there. Additionally, the principal took her out to lunch and showed her the town. Kerri says this made the whole process less scary. She also said that some personal characteristics she noticed about the recruiter were that she dressed well, kept her hair nice, was well poised, acted like a professional, and had a nurturing personality. She said the recruiter’s behavior and characteristics influenced her to work at the school because she could tell the recruiter loved the school and the community. Additionally, Kerri states she knew the principal had worked with this demographic, and felt if the principal she could work with low-income students then she could.

Kerri says she was not offered incentives, but she knew she would be given the opportunity to do professional development. Additionally, Kerri says she did not use social media. She said that the school did not necessarily have a brand or marketing strategy that she could identify other than they made her feel needed. During the recruitment period she and the principal emailed and did webcam interviews. She stated that one time she did a webcam interview with the principal and another time did one with a team of the teachers at the school where she could ask questions. She characterized communication between her and the principal as consistent. She says the webcam was

the best technology used during her recruitment period. She said her recruiter's quickness in responding to her made her choose the school.

**Jessica French.** Jessica is a third year public school teacher in the LEA that is being studied. Jessica worked for five years as a private school teacher up north before coming south and joining public school. Jessica says her hometown is very rural and the demographics of her hometown are very similar to her current system. She says that she started out as a pre-vet major but later switched to education. Due to the fact that she has a hearing impairment and a cousin who is mentally disabled Jessica says that she strives to make a difference with her students, especially those that are struggling.

Jessica stated that the recruiter she worked with was very calm and relaxed. She was very worried that the recruiter would not consider her because she was pregnant a time. The recruiter assured her that her condition would have no bearing on whether she would get the position. She says the fact he wanted to interview her anyway showed he wasn't tensed with the situation. She describes the recruiter as kind, caring and understanding. Jessica recalls once the principal offered her the job he paired her with a teacher already working at the school. She said this has been very helpful to her. Additionally, the recruiter was extremely helpful and at any time she had a question he would help her. Jessica further describes the recruiter's body language as mellow and mentioned that she felt comfortable around him based on his body language.

Jessica said all of these things were important, however, she was going to take the job no matter what. "I have spent five years constantly since I graduated college in 2010, searching for a job and this was my last year finding a job. If I didn't get a public school job, I was quitting." She said the recruiter's behaviors did not influence her to work for a low-wealth district. In fact, she did not know this was a low-wealth district.

When Jessica was asked about how she conducted her job search she said that she put in applications on-line from New Jersey to Florida and that was all she did. She stated she did not remember a marketing or branding strategy used by the district. The only thing she could remember what she was made to feel like part of a family and the recruiter did not judge her for being pregnant. Jessica went on to say that she was not offered any incentives except for the supplement paid up front to help her cover the cost of moving.

Jessica says she was originally interviewed via Skype and believes that medium was most effective form of technology she used in her recruitment period because she could hide her nervousness. “He couldn’t see my nerves and my twiddling hands and the anxiousness,” she said. Jessica mentioned communication was rare after she was offered the job and came in the form of emails. She said she did not use social media in her job search. Finally, Jessica described how she was offered three other jobs in North Carolina in wealthier districts right after he offered her the job but declined them because of the comfort level she felt with the recruiter she signed with.

Appendix E  
Structural Descriptions

**Penny Hardwick.** Penny's desire to get a job immediately and to start her career is the structural element that accounts for the experience she had. She had always believed she had no chance to get a position in her hometown until it was, "willed to her." She had made plans to substitute until she received a call from a friend who had accepted a position in the target district. In fact, Penny had not begun her job search at the time she was referred by her friend. She said she emailed the recruiter on Monday, was interviewed by Skype on Wednesday and was hired on Friday.

Penny's willingness to accept an offer over ten hours from her home was due in part to the research she did on the school and the area on the internet. However, she was most taken by the recruiter who responded to her questions quickly, was positive and was driven to succeed.

**Angela Barton.** Angela's perception of the recruiter and the feelings of being wanted are the structural elements that account for the experience she had while being recruited. Angela stated, "I noticed quickly down south that they want to show you how they need you." She said this tactic was very persuasive for her as she was told how she could make a difference in her students' lives. Angela said this was important to her. She knew the target LEA was a low-wealth system but because she was told by her recruiter how much she could affect these student's in a positive way she was more willing to join the district.

Angela also was very positive about her recruiter and said the characteristic that was most noticeable was caring. She said the recruiter was almost like a second dad and was helpful and understanding. Angela mentioned the recruiter took her around to look for houses which she said was an important step as her home was eight hours away. Finally, the communication between the recruiter and the recruit was open all the time by emailing or text. She said the most important form of communication in her hiring was

the recruiters', "Call me anytime," motto. Her decision to work in the district was influenced by this open line of communication. "It was more comforting to know that being eight hours away from everybody I know, it was nice to know that he was only a phone call away. Not only was it comforting for me, but it was comforting for my parents."

**Jennifer Laslow.** Jennifer's desire to move south after graduation and the connection she made with the recruiter are the structural elements that account for the experience she had while searching for a job. "I always knew I wanted to look for a school in the south and move south after college graduation. That's where I directed most of the searches for a job." She said she attended a job fair and her first interaction with the recruiter from the target LEA was face-to-face which she describes as, "huge for me." She said the fact the recruiter was the principal and not a retired teacher or delegate was important. Jennifer said the fact the recruiter drove eight hours north to handpick his staff showed he personally cared and that stuck out in her mind.

Additionally, Jennifer said the follow through by the recruiter was also important and she liked the fact the recruiter did what he said he would. She said trust in the willingness of the recruiter to not keep her guessing was comforting. The straightforward manner the recruiter displayed made the whole process much easier. Jennifer said, "everything was very upbeat and positive and very personal, wanting to know who I was as a person. Not just where did you go to school? What do you think about this? What do you think about that? Trying to get to know me as a person also stood out a lot, especially in contrast to many of the other schools I'd talked to." She further described the recruiter as warm and welcoming and said she said the two even shared some smiles and a few laughs. Jennifer said her willingness to go so far away was in part due to the

fact that she felt like even though she was moving away from home she would be welcomed at the school with open arms which made her believe she would be okay. She was not concerned about the district being low-wealth because the recruiter was so personable. “It got eliminated from my mind as a factor and wasn’t really something that impacted whether I wanted to work here or not.”

Jennifer was asked if there were marketing strategies or a brand that helped her to make her decision. She said the booth where she met the recruiter was visually attractive and stood out. However, what stood out most to her was that the principal was there himself recruiting. She said, “If you consider that to be a brand as far as we put the personal care in, we want to handpick who our people are, not just send delegates,” then that was what stood out.

**Theresa Bishop.** Theresa’s perceptions of the recruiting period that influenced her decision to sign in the target district were based on the charisma and the honesty of the recruiter, and the desire to make a difference. Theresa said she taught in another country right out of college and after two years decided to move back to the United States. She said she sent her information to the target district’s principals and her recruiter called her first. Theresa describes the recruiter as very charismatic with a big booming voice. She recalls the recruiter was very excited about the information he had received about her and the work she had already done. “The body language was very welcoming and definitely he was very interested and really wanted to know me and know what I was going to bring to the school, which made a difference,” she said.

In addition to the charisma, Theresa said the recruiter was very honest with her. She recalled something the recruiter told her in the recruiting process which she said stuck out, “You’re going to have one really good class, two middle classes and one really

bad class. This is what it is.” She said he laid out the facts and didn’t sugar coat anything. “When he did recruit it’s not like a bunch of sugary lies. It was straight forward and I think that’s a major characteristic that people look for, they try to root through the false and try to find the facts.” Theresa said the honesty about the income, the area in which she would be working, and the demographics of the town were important.

Finally, Theresa said she was inspired to do more by the recruiter’s desire to do big things for children. She said the recruiter communicated to her the job ahead of her would be hard and as a group the school had a lot to do. She said the recruiter effectively conveyed the idea that he wanted to make a difference in the lives of the children they would be working with and he needed her to help. “I think that really stuck out with me and I think that really moved me to really make a difference and come.”

**Sandra Gardner.** Sandra’s perceptions of the recruiting period that influenced her decision to sign in the target district were based on her feelings about the responsiveness and excited feelings she got when she talked with the recruiters and the fact she felt wanted. Sandra said she talked with one of her professors who referred her to the district. Once she contacted the district she received a call within a half an hour. She said she worked with the district recruiter as well as the school principal. Sandra says the team was interactive from the start and helped schedule a visit to the school where she observed classes and discussed all of her concerns about moving so far from home to accept a position. Sandra said, “they were all just extremely excited and made me feel intrigued about the opportunity. Honestly, they made me feel like I was actually wanted here which was one of the main selling points.” Sandra said she was unconcerned about the district being low-wealth. She said the recruiters shared sports and teaching videos



that had been taken in the district which helped to influence her decision. Sandra stated, “That just made me feel like this was a fun atmosphere to be in. It really didn’t matter whether it was low-income or not to me.”

**Thomas England.** Thomas’s perception that the recruiter who hired him was a true professional who was responsive to his needs and who really wanted him were the most important factors in his decision to go to work in the target district. Thomas said the district in which he signed was not one of his first choices. He had decided to try to go to work in some larger districts in the state of North Carolina, however, this changed after a meeting with the recruiter who signed him. Thomas said he met the recruiter at a job fair and his first impression of the recruiter was very positive. He said the recruiter was dressed very professionally and this was a signal that the recruiter took his job seriously. He also took this as a cue the recruiter would help him professionally whenever possible. “I guess the attire told me that he took his job seriously. He was going to offer any help of any professional development, any type of resources I needed to be able to succeed in the job,” said Thomas.

The other factor that helped to solidify Thomas’s decision was the feeling given by the recruiter that he wanted Thomas. Thomas said he met the recruiter at a job fair and immediately he felt more connected with him than other recruiters. He said the recruiter who hired him was more personal in his approach to recruiting. He was able to hand out materials to candidates about the school as well as have a more personal conversation. Thomas said he didn’t get that feel from the recruiters from the larger districts. Thomas indicated those recruiters did not have the time to talk to all of the candidates because so many were trying to talk to them. Thomas recalled the recruiter who hired him and their interactions, “The main thing was he was interested in me. I feel

like his focus was on me. I think that was the biggest difference between the recruiter who hired me and especially some of the bigger counties.” Thomas said this behavior from the recruiter continued throughout his recruitment period. “I guess it was just mostly the whole constantly contacting me to make sure that I was comfortable going through the process because it was a new process for me so I wasn’t an expert or anything.”

**Rebecca Simmons.** Rebecca’s positive perception of her recruiter and the fact that she felt desired as an educator were the structural elements that accounted for her experience during her recruitment period. Rebecca said she applied to the target district and was contacted by the recruiter, which is now her principal, almost immediately. Rebecca said she struggled with the fact that she had not felt wanted as an educator prior to contact with the recruiter she signed with. Rebecca said when she had her interview the recruiter communicated well, spoke professionally, was energetic, shook her hand, and displayed positive body language. These traits indicated to Rebecca the recruiter was comfortable with her, which made her more relaxed in her interview.

Rebecca repeated numerous times in the interview that she was thrilled someone was interested in her. She did not have many districts recruiting her at the time and the attention given to her by the recruiter in the target district was important enough for her to move over five hours from home to work. “Roland County wanted me as opposed to other schools that didn’t want me. Their willingness to hire me even though I didn’t have as much experience as other teachers that earned my same position was definitely a big turn on to get me to come here.”

**Adam Gathings.** Adam’s perceptions of his experience were influenced heavily by his inability to get a job near his home, but most importantly the relationship that was formed

between himself and his recruiter. Adam described his early job search by stating he looked for approximately three years for a position near his home. He described the search near his home as very political. Adam said, “No matter how good your connections were, somebody always had better connections.” He busied himself substituting but was not satisfied with having a new class each day, and was particularly keen on having his own room. He decided to register on a national database for teachers and soon was interviewing.

Adam said he really loved the interaction he had with the recruiter who hired him describing him as almost fatherly. He describes the recruiter as talkative, oozing with confidence, friendly and very honest. He stressed this several times and said the recruiter was like an uncle you hadn’t seen in a long time and one who displayed positive body language and verbal communication. Adam believed the recruiter to be very welcoming and he described him as, “Johnny on the spot,” when it came to getting back to him with answers to his questions. Adam said the interview felt more like a conversation and not an interview and he said the interviewer made it clear he would have to work hard for the children at the school. Adam summed up the reason he chose the district, “I had probably five or six job offers from all around the country and because of this man, that’s why I’m here.”

**Stephanie Campbell.** Stephanie’s perception of her experience was formed by the ease in which she received her position. She was working as a TA in the school in which she was later hired. She knew her recruiter and was in contact with him while she was in school to become a teacher. Stephanie said her recruiter was a good communicator, very kind and very persistent. She said she felt really good coming into the district because there was a lot of information available to her since she was already working at the

school. Although Stephanie looked at a position in another district she never seriously considered it because she didn't want to have to travel a greater distance each day.

**Tammy Parks.** Tammy's perception of her experience during her job search was influenced by the behaviors and the characteristics of her recruiter as well as her perception that the school had a family atmosphere. Tammy said she started her job search by going to the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction website to look for job openings. She put her resume in the system and sent it to four districts. She then narrowed her search even more and went out to schools in which she was really interested and personally delivered her resume. Stephanie said she was called to an interview by the recruiter who hired her and immediately like the school and the staff. She said the principal had created a warm and inviting atmosphere. "I definitely picked up on a family atmosphere between her and the colleagues that she had me interviewing with. So that's really what drew me in was I could tell that everybody was a family. Everybody was really close. That was what made me interested in working here." Additionally, Stephanie said that she really enjoyed the close interactions of the interview team and this was a signal to her that she would receive the support she was looking for. Stephanie also mentioned the principal was very consistent and got back to her very quickly after the interview which made the process easy for her. Stephanie spoke of her recruiter and said, "She replied fast. I didn't have to wait very long to get a response if I had questions about anything even after I was offered the job and hired and I was trying to get everything in place. She always responded to any questions I had very quickly."

**Valerie Givens.** Valerie's perception of her experience during the recruiting period was formed by her feelings of being at home and being wanted. Valerie was from the LEA where she signed and was very familiar with the schools in the district. In fact Valerie

had changed her career choice after attending some college. While substituting she went back to school and got her teaching degree. She felt very comfortable with the recruiter who hired her because she had worked with him before and was familiar with him. Additionally, she said repeatedly that when she interviewed with the recruiter she signed with she felt welcomed and respected. Valerie made several statements indicating how the recruiter made her feel including, “I felt wanted,” and “I felt like I was their number one candidate.” Valerie said she had made a name for herself through her student teaching and substituting work experiences and was offered positions in other districts, but she really wanted to stay where she felt more comfortable.

**Kerrie Hightower.** Kerrie’s perception of her experience was heavily influenced by the recruiter’s characteristics and strategies and the need to take a job since her husband had been transferred to the area. Kerrie said she came to the area to visit schools prior to her family’s move and reached out to several schools. The recruiter at the school she signed with contacted her first. Kerrie spoke of the recruiter and said, “She seemed very enthusiastic, very warm, and you could tell she had very high standards of her school.” Kerrie recalls the recruiter had a staff member reach out to her which she felt was a wonderful strategy. The staff member sent her pictures and other information about the class and what the students were doing in class. Kerrie said the principal recruiting her acted as a professional and had a very nurturing personality. She further stated, “It felt like she was in it for the children and for the group of individuals that are teaching the kids. I could tell that she cared about this community and the teachers that were willing to work every day.” Kerrie had some trepidation about how she would fit in working with the demographics at the school. However, after meeting the recruiter she felt better. “I felt like if she can fit in there, I would be able to fit in there.” Finally, Kerrie made her

decision to work the school based on the fact that she could work with all socioeconomic groups and because of the quickness of the responses in communication with the recruiter.

**Jessica French.** Jessica's perception of her experience during her recruitment period was formed by her extreme desire to get her own classroom to begin teaching and the characteristics of the recruiter. Jessica had tried unsuccessfully for over three years in the area where she lived to find a job teaching. Finally, she decided she would move if she could find a job. She began filling out applications online from New Jersey to Florida. During this portion of her job search she filled out over 150 applications. Jessica recalls she told her husband this was her last year trying to find a teaching job and that she was going to, "put all my eggs in the basket and go for it." She was contacted by the recruiter and did an interview. Jessica said the recruiter was very calm, relaxed, caring, understanding and offered help each time she had a question or a concern. She said he gave her the name of one of the staff members she could contact who could help her if she needed anything. Jessica said she was offered three jobs in North Carolina in wealthier districts right after she was offered the position with the target LEA. Ultimately, Jessica made the decision to take the job with the recruiter because of how she felt about the recruiter. "I think if anything, it was the comfort level that I had when I came down here. He didn't make me feel like an outsider or anything."

## Appendix F

### Permission to Conduct Research and Use Premises

August 1, 2016

Re: Julian E. Carter

To whom it may concern,

I am aware that Mr. Julian E. Carter will be conducting confidential research interviews on some of our campuses in our district during the month of September 2016. This research is for his dissertation at Gardner-Webb University. I understand that he will be interviewing employees of our district on school grounds after the school day ends. I approve this research.

Sincerely,

Superintendent



## Appendix G

### Consent to Perform Research Interviews on Site

September 5, 2016

Principals,

My name is Julian E. Carter and I am a human resources director and doctoral student at Gardner-Webb University. I am currently writing my dissertation and I am preparing to conduct my research.

The purpose of this study is to understand the lived experiences of teachers during their job searches for employment in the field of education which can inform recruiters of the behaviors they need to display and the strategies they need to employ in order to hire high quality teaching candidates.

I will be conducting a study that will involve one or more of your teachers and I am requesting to come onto your campus in order to conduct interviews with these teachers. These interviews will be held after work hours and will not require any involvement or preparations on your part. I have received permission to conduct this research from your LEA superintendent. If this poses a problem or presents a distraction to your educational environment, please feel free decline and I will make other arrangements for interview settings.

I would appreciate your permission with this request.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Julian E. Carter

Please sign in the appropriate area below.

---

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give my permission for Julian E. Carter to conduct research interviews in my building after school.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, do not give my permission for Julian E. Carter to conduct research interviews in my building after school.

Appendix H  
Interview Questions

## **Interview Questions**

### **Personal background Information**

1. Please introduce and then describe yourself.
2. Please describe your hometown giving geographic as well as demographic information.
3. Thinking back to the period when you were deciding on a career, what perceptions about life and more specifically of the educational field led you to decide on a career in the educational field?

### **Recruiter Behaviors and Characteristics**

Recruiting behaviors are those things that a recruiter does while he/she interacts with which you can pick up on while they interact with you that affect your perception of them.

1. What did you perceive were the behaviors the recruiter who hired you exhibited while you conducted your job search?

Recruiter characteristics are those things potential employees notice about the recruiter that make him/her an individual and affect your perception of them.

2. What did you perceive were the characteristics of the recruiter who hired you exhibited while you conducted your job search?
3. How did the recruiter's behavior enhance your willingness to go to work for a low-wealth district?
4. How did the recruiter's characteristics enhance your willingness to work for a low-wealth district?

### **Recruiting and Marketing Strategies**

1. Tell me about the process you used for your job search including the methods you used to look for employment.
2. Did the recruiting entities you signed with have a brand or a marketing strategy that set themselves apart from other districts which explained what they had to offer you? If so, what interested you the most?
3. Incentives are inducements that recruiters offer potential employees in order to get them to sign with their organization. Were you offered incentives by recruiting entities during your recruitment period, and if so, what were you offered?

### **Communication**

1. Describe communication in regards to your recruitment period with the recruiter you signed with.
2. Describe your use of social media if any in your job search.
3. Please tell me what forms of communication used by the low-wealth recruiter who hired you were most effective.
4. How, if any did the recruiter communication methods affect your decision to work in a low-wealth LEA as compared to a more affluent one?

## Appendix I

### Consent to Assist in Validation of Research Questions

Mr. \_\_\_\_\_,

My name is Julian E. Carter and I am the Executive Director of Human Resources for Rowland County Schools. I am enrolled in the Doctor of Education program at Gardner-Webb University, and I am currently writing my dissertation. My dissertation topic centers on recruiting behaviors and strategies of HR directors/recruiters for low wealth districts in the state of North Carolina. More specifically, what behaviors, activities, or strategies did recruiters employ that attracted new teachers to their districts. My research will be qualitative and I will employ a phenomenological approach to collecting data. This will allow me to conduct interviews to learn about the lived experiences of the new teachers as they were being recruited. It is hoped that this study will help to inform recruiters and human resource employees of best practices in order to improve the quality of their teaching corps through quality hiring practices. This research is specific to the phenomenon that is occurring in my geographical area. In order to conduct my research I have to schedule interviews of recently hired teachers. In my research I have found no studies that replicate this work. Therefore, I will develop the questions for this study as I can't find any questions to address this problem that would address my research questions. **In order to do this I have to validate the questions I've written by experts before the research phase begins.**

I'd like to ask if you will participate in helping me to develop a valid set of questions. If you agree to help, please sign the consent form below that states that you are willing to help in this process. I will then send a set of questions for you to review. If you feel the questions address the areas that I'm studying then simply write a statement that you think the questions are valid in your professional opinion and email it back to me. If you see any questions that you do not feel will help me understand the recruiting process from the beginning teacher's viewpoint, please feel free to scratch them out or add to them. If you will send any corrections to me via this email, I will make corrections and send them back out to the group one last time for validation. If you can help me I would greatly appreciate your time. If you can't help, just let me know. Thank you so much in advance for any help with my study.

---

I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree to help review the questions sent from Mr. Carter in order to establish their validity so that he might conduct his research on educational recruiting practices.

Signed, \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix J  
Question Evaluation Form



Please check if the question is appropriate for the study described in the accompanying email. If not appropriate, please offer suggestions for revision of the question. When thinking about these questions, keep in mind these questions: Is it asking what it needs to ask? Could there be any misconceptions?

<p><b>Recruiter Behaviors and Characteristics:</b>  Recruiting behaviors are those things that a recruiter does while he/she interacts with you which you can pick up on that affect your perception of them.</p> <p>1. What did you perceive were the behaviors the recruiter who hired you exhibited while you conducted your job search?</p>		
<p>Recruiter characteristics are those things potential employees notice about the recruiter that make him/her an individual and affect your perception of them.</p> <p>2. What did you perceive were the characteristics of the recruiter who hired you exhibited while you conducted your job search?</p>		
<p>3. How did the recruiter's behavior enhance your willingness to go to work for a low-wealth district?</p>		
<p>4. How did the recruiter's characteristics enhance your willingness to work for a low-wealth district?</p>		
<p><b>Recruiting and Marketing Strategies</b>  1. Tell me about the process you used for your job search including the methods you used to look for employment.</p>		

<p>2. Did the recruiting entities you signed with have a brand or a marketing strategy that set themselves apart from other districts which explained what they had to offer you? If so, what interested you the most?</p>		
<p>3. Incentives are inducements that recruiters offer potential employees in order to get them to sign with their organization. Were you offered incentives by recruiting entities during your recruitment period, and if so, what were you offered?</p>		
<p><b>Communication</b> 1. Describe communication in regards to your recruitment period with the recruiter you signed with.</p>		
<p>2. Describe your use of social media if any in your job search.</p>		
<p>3. Please tell me what forms of communication were used by the low-wealth recruiter who hired you.</p>		
<p>4. How, if any did the recruiter communication methods affect your decision to work in a low-wealth LEA as compared to a more affluent one?</p>		

## Appendix K

### Invitation to Participate in Research and Informed Consent Form

A Qualitative Inquiry into New Teacher Perceptions of Recruitment Practices of School  
Leaders in a High Poverty LEA in Southeastern North Carolina.

A Doctoral Dissertation Study

Julian E. Carter

Gardner-Webb University

You are invited to participate in a research study about new teacher perceptions of recruitment practices of school leaders. You have been selected due to your status as a beginning teacher (BT) who began their career during the 2013-2014 or 2014-2015 school years, who was fully licensed by the state in which they went to college and who attained an overall state rating in EVAAS of Met Expected Growth or Exceeds Expected Growth as reported for the 2014-2015 school year. This study is being conducted by: Julian E. Carter, a student in the School of Education at Gardner-Webb University.

**Background information**

The purpose of this study is to understand the lived experiences of teachers during their job searches for employment in the field of education which can inform recruiters of the behaviors they need to display and the strategies they need to employ in order to hire high quality teaching candidates.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:

Participate in an audio-taped interview to be conducted at a location of your choice during the month of November, 2016.

Review a transcription of your interview including the questions asked of you and your responses for accuracy.

**Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study**

The risks associated with participating in this study:

This study is experiential and is research that is being conducted to help inform recruiting practices for low wealth districts in southeastern North Carolina. Due to the nature of this study, there is very little risk on your part. The risks that are associated with this study will be limited to your participation in a verbal interview that will be recorded which will focus on your perceptions of the recruiter or recruiters that managed your recruitment. Participants in this study may be discussing former or current administrators at the district or school level. As such, conflicts between the administrators and the participants may arise due to the perceptions of the recruiter by the participant. The interviews that will be conducted will be recorded and later transcribed for researcher evaluation. The recordings will be secured on an external hard-drive that will be locked in a secure location at the home of the researcher. The recordings and transcriptions will be destroyed at the end of the study and no administrators will have any access to them.

The participants in the study will give their perceptions of the recruiting process focusing primarily on the recruiting behaviors that the recruiter's exhibited and the strategies they employed that helped the participants to make their decision for employment. The information shared by the participants will help the researcher to make conclusions based on themes that will be drawn out of the interviews.

The benefits to participation are:

There are no direct benefits to participants associated with this study. However, the themes garnered by this study can be used by recruiters to inform their recruiting strategies and be used by human resource departments to train or select recruiters that

demonstrate successful behaviors which in the future might help to land highly effective employees. The suggestions that the participants help the researcher to generate may assist educational leaders in their efforts to improve their human resource activities.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you agree to participate and then feel any discomfort with your decision or the process associated with the study, you are free to end your participation at any time. There will be no compensation for your participation, likewise, it will cost you nothing to participate in the study. The decision to participate or not, will in no way affect your professional career or the relationship you have with Rowland County Schools or Gardner-Webb University.

**Confidentiality:**

The participant's identities and the information that is gathered for this study will remain confidential. For the purpose of this study, you the participant will be given a pseudonym to protect your identity. To maintain security, your pseudonym will be utilized in your interviews, in the transcriptions and in the dissertation itself. All information, interviews and data will be stored in a locked storage container at the home of the researcher. No one other than the researcher will have access to the data or information gathered at any time. Upon completion of the study and defense of the dissertation, the researcher will then store the materials for a minimum of five years. After the five year period the transcribed materials will be destroyed using a shredder and all digital data will be thoroughly erased to ensure confidentiality.

**Contacts and Questions:**

The researcher conducting the study is Julian E. Carter. If you have any questions, you are encouraged to contact him.

**Debrief Statement:**

The purpose of this study has been thoroughly explained prior to your participation. However, if you have concerns about your rights or how you are treated, or if you have questions, want more information or have suggestions, please contact:

Dr. Jeffery S. Rogers  
IRB Institutional Administrator  
Garnder-Webb University  
Boiling Springs, NC 28017  
Telephone: 704-406-4724  
Email: [jrogers3@gardner-webb.edu](mailto:jrogers3@gardner-webb.edu)

**Statement of Consent:**

I have read and I understand the information in this Consent form. I have been given the opportunity to ask any questions that I have of this study and have received answers to my questions. I consent to participate in this study.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Researcher: \_\_\_\_\_



## Appendix L

### Composite Textural Description

Each of the participants in this study spoke to the characteristics and behaviors of the recruiters they signed with during their recruitment process. First contact with the recruiter the participants signed with varied dramatically and included job fairs, working as substitutes or teacher assistants for the recruiters, internet job boards postings, and personal email. Each of them recalls the positive interactions they had with their recruiters. The characteristics and behaviors included; professional, kind, caring, responsive, upbeat, warm, welcoming, personal, supportive, fatherly, positive, honest, helpful, understanding, persuasive, straight forward, professionally dressed, good communicator, friendly, persistent, inviting, enthusiastic, and understanding. These behaviors and characteristics were perceived by many of the participants as signals of what it would be like to work in the target district or school. Additionally, many of the participants alluded to the fact that the behavior of the recruiters signaled to them they were wanted and respected as educators, a longing many shared.

Ten of the thirteen participants describe their childhood homes as rural, a fact that should not be discounted when understanding why they would sign with a small low-wealth district. Additionally, seven of the thirteen said the behaviors of the recruiter may have had an impact on their decision to work in a low wealth district. Although seven said that the characteristics and behaviors of the recruiter may have had an impact on signing to work in a low wealth district, none said that this was the sole reason they signed. In fact, several of the teachers said they intended to work in a low-wealth rural district because that is the type of area they were from.

The participant's perceptions of a visual brand in the target LEA were non-existent. Not a single recruit can remember any symbols which they could consider a brand. However, many of the recruits discussed marketing strategies such as recruiters

helping them find homes, explaining to the recruits why the district needed them, making them feel like a part of a family, offers of support, touring the town with the recruiter so they could help to sell the town to the recruit, offer of repayment of master's, recruiter being the principal and not just a representative, and community involvement activities. These varied perceptions offer no recognizable marketing strategy promoted by the district.

The participants all used some form of communication tools in their searches, including telephone, email and videoconferencing. However, only one of the thirteen mentioned they used social media in any appreciable way during their recruitment period. In the case of these recruits, the personal touch was most important. In fact, the speed with which the recruits received information and return communication from the recruiter was a very positive factor in their decisions to accept positions. This phenomena was interesting as it indicates an attention to detail and was a cue to many that the principal would be supportive once they arrived. The recruits' perceptions of the communication process were heavily affected by face to face communication. Whether it was through videoconferencing or in person face to face was the preferred method for communication.

Appendix M  
Composite Structural Description

The participants in this study all had different life experiences growing up which help to influence their perceptions of the recruiting process. Each of these participants had different motivations for joining the teaching ranks. Once they completed their preparation programs each had to use their experiences and knowledge to make decisions on their future employment by sifting through their options and choosing the best fit for them. The participant's decisions were influenced in many cases by characteristics and behaviors of the recruiter. Many saw these characteristics as cues of what they might experience once they took a position at a particular site. The teachers' perceptions of the recruiters and the recruiting processes they experienced in this inquiry sometimes impacted their own personal feelings and influenced how they personally were made to feel. The participant's perceptions about this time period in their lives yielded the core themes of good communication, feelings of being wanted or needed, being a part of a family atmosphere, and finally, the recruiter's being caring, responsive, and honest.

## Appendix N

### Combined Composite of Textural and Structural Descriptions

All participants in this study have one thing in common, they are teachers. These participants have striven to become productive citizens who want to make a difference in the lives of children and have all worked hard to get the appropriate certifications in order to participate in one of the most noble careers in which a human being can be associated. Each of these teachers has had a different path to their current positions. Although the perceptions each have on the recruiting process, the recruiters in which they interacted, and the strategies they encountered differ, each story sheds light on why they accepted positions in the target LEA.

Each of the participants in this study formed relationships with their recruiters and in many cases this relationship along with the strategies these recruiters employed were the basis for the decisions they made to accept their positions. While there is no silver bullet when it comes to recruiting, each of them speak to the positive feelings they had about the recruiter and many of the recruiting strategies they encountered. The perceptions formed about their recruiting journeys were based on their experiences. These experiences were all very unique and individualized to their search and were influenced by previous knowledge and experiences as well as other factors such as the area they grew up, their ethnic background, the demographics they were used to living in, desperation, personal insecurities, and a desire to make a difference in the lives of children.

This list is not comprehensive however, it gives the researcher a chance to ponder the very convoluted process of recruiting and the thought processes individuals searching for jobs use. The recruiter's actions in the recruitment process are critical as many recruits interpret actions of the recruiters as cues to their personalities and their leadership styles. However, no one path to success in this area can be utilized. Since each person

recruited has his own background and life history, it is essential that recruiters think of them as very different and the approaches used should reflect a desire to know each person and what makes them special. All teachers want to be recognized as individuals. Differentiation is now a hallmark to any educational setting and these participants are no different in the way they should be treated. All people have a desire to be wanted and made to feel valued. The perceptions expressed by the participants in this study have supported this notion and their importance cannot be overlooked.



Appendix O  
Interview Protocol Form

Project: A Qualitative Inquiry Into New Teacher Perceptions of Recruitment Practices of School Leaders in a High Poverty LEA in Southeastern North Carolina

Time of Interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Position of Interviewee:

**Purpose of Study:**

The purpose of this study is to understand the lived experiences of teachers during their job searches for employment in the field of education which can inform recruiters of the behaviors they need to display and the strategies they need to employ in order to hire high quality teaching candidates.

**Individuals selected:**

You have been selected due to your status as a beginning teacher (BT) who began their career during the 2013-2014 or 2014-2015 school years, who was fully licensed by the state in which they went to college and who attained an overall state rating in EVAAS of Met Expected Growth or Exceeds Expected Growth as reported for the 2014-2015 school year.

**Confidentiality:**

The participant's identities and the information that is gathered for this study will remain confidential. For the purpose of this study, you the participant will be given a pseudonym to protect your identity. To maintain security, your pseudonym will be utilized in your interviews, in the transcriptions and in the dissertation itself. All information, interviews and data will be stored in a locked storage container at the home of the researcher. No one other than the researcher will have access to the data or information gathered at any time. Upon completion of the study and defense of the dissertation, the researcher will then store the materials for a minimum of five years. After the five year period the transcribed materials will be destroyed using a shredder and all digital data will be thoroughly erased to ensure confidentiality.

**Interview Length:**

Approximately 30 minutes

Have interviewees read and sign the consent form.

Turn on and test the tape recorder.

## **Interview**

### **Personal background Information**

1. Please introduce and then describe yourself.
2. Please describe your hometown giving geographic as well as demographic information.
3. Thinking back to the period when you were deciding on a career, what perceptions about life and more specifically of the educational field led you to decide on a career in the educational field?

### **Recruiter behaviors and characteristics**

Recruiting behaviors are those things that a recruiter does while he/she interacts with which you can pick up on while they interact with you that affect your perception of them.

1. What did you perceive were the behaviors the recruiter who hired you exhibited while you conducted your job search?

Recruiter characteristics are those things potential employees notice about the recruiter that make him/her an individual and affect your perception of them.

2. What did you perceive were the characteristics of the recruiter who hired you exhibited while you conducted your job search?
3. How did the recruiter's behavior enhance your willingness to go to work for a low-wealth district?
4. How did the recruiter's characteristics enhance your willingness to work for a low-wealth district?

### **Recruiting and Marketing Strategies**

1. Tell me about the process you used for your job search including the methods you used to look for employment.

2. Did the recruiting entities you signed with have a brand or a marketing strategy that set themselves apart from other districts which explained what they had to offer you?

If so, what interested you the most?

3. Incentives are inducements that recruiters offer potential employees in order to get them to sign with their organization. Were you offered incentives by recruiting entities during your recruitment period, and if so, what were you offered?

### **Communication**

1. Describe communication in regards to your recruitment period with the recruiter you signed with.

2. Describe your use of social media if any in your job search.

3. Please tell me what forms of communication used by the low-wealth recruiter who hired you were most effective.

4. How, if any did the recruiter communication methods affect your decision to work in a low-wealth LEA as compared to a more affluent one?

Thank the interviewee for participating in the study.