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Identifiable Factors That Influence Teacher Retention in Four Title I Middle Schools: A Multiple-Case Study

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IDENTIFIABLE FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE TEACHER RETENTION IN FOUR
TITLE I MIDDLE SCHOOLS: A MULTIPLE-CASE STUDY

By
Adair Blanton McKay

A Dissertation Submitted to the
Gardner-Webb University School of Education
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for the Degree of Doctor of Education

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Approval Page

This dissertation was submitted by Adair Blanton McKay 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

IDENTIFIABLE FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE TEACHER RETENTION IN FOUR TITLE I MIDDLE SCHOOLS: A MULTIPLE-CASE STUDY. McKay, Adair Blanton, 2019: Dissertation, Gardner-Webb University.

Student success has suffered a great deal and continues to suffer in the Title I middle school setting. Staffing problems in these schools account for part of the cause. This study examined four Title I middle schools that experience difficulty retaining teachers. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2016), between 2011-2012 and 2012-2013, approximately 8% of teachers moved, another 8% of teachers left the profession, and approximately 84% of teachers stayed at the same school. The percentage of movers from high-poverty schools is double that of movers from low-poverty schools. The goal of this study was to serve as a capacity-building tool for district leaders and school-based administrators. Quantitative and qualitative methods were employed to collect data from teachers at the targeted middle schools in the form of a Job Satisfaction Survey and a focus group. Data were analyzed to draw comparisons between responses to the survey and themes that emerged in the focus group discussion. Findings include the importance of self-efficacy, support of colleagues, and support of administration. The primary finding is that administrative support is the overarching factor influencing teacher retention in these Title I middle schools.

Keywords: teacher retention, job satisfaction, Title I, middle school, administrative support

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Background of the Study

Student success has suffered a great deal, and continues to suffer, in the Title I middle school setting. Staffing problems in these schools account for part of the cause. This study examined four Title I middle schools that experienced difficulty retaining teachers. These four schools have historically underperformed in achievement indicators like End-of-Grade tests and Adequate Yearly Progress measures. There have been vast fluctuations in student performance from year to year, sometimes dropping by 40 percentage points. Because “warm body” teachers or long-term substitutes are common and highly effective teachers frequently decide to seek other employment opportunities, students do not receive the best instruction possible. Student conduct is typically quite poor in classrooms with underprepared instructors, which makes the environment not conducive to learning. Furthermore, one teaching position may be replaced more than once in the course of a school year, thereby subjecting the students to a multitude of teachers, expectations, and instructional delivery methods. Chaos in the classroom environment and upheaval in instruction negatively influence the students’ abilities to demonstrate proficiency on achievement indicators.

Research has suggested that the teaching field experiences high rates of turnover each year, with large numbers of teachers being hired and even larger numbers of teachers leaving the field.

The image that these data suggest is one of a “revolving door” – an occupation in which there are relatively large flows in, through, and out of schools in recent years only partly accounted for by student enrollment increases or teacher retirements. (Ingersoll, 2001, p. 514)

In addition to high turnover rates nationally, an analysis of the 2012 Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) as well as the 2013 Follow-Up Survey indicates that teacher turnover is highest in the southern United States. According to survey data, North Carolina has the ninth highest teacher turnover in the nation (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). This information paints a disturbing picture, nationally and locally.

A study completed by the Alliance for Excellent Education (2014) indicated that 13% of the nation's 3.4 million public school teachers either move or leave every year. Additionally, public schools are at risk of losing young teachers (less than 30 years old). Approximately 40-50% of new teachers leave the profession within their first 5 years of teaching. Furthermore, first-year teacher attrition rates have steadily increased over recent decades (Ingersoll, 2012). Ingersoll (2012) reported that school characteristics play a significant role in teachers who move to a different school and teachers who leave the profession entirely. Teacher turnover in high-poverty public schools is 50% higher than low-poverty public schools, and about two thirds of the teachers who left the high-poverty schools moved to a different school rather than left teaching altogether (Ingersoll, 2001). Ingersoll's (2001) findings are reiterated in Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond's (2017) analysis of the 2012 SASS and the 2013 Follow-Up Survey, pointing to the supposition that teacher turnover will continue to be a serious concern for high-poverty schools.

Research has shown that teacher turnover and attrition have adverse effects on many aspects of school (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005, 2014; Barnes, Crowe, & Schaefer, 2014; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Darling-Hammond, Sutchter, & Carver-Thomas, 2017; Grissmer & Kirby, 1997; Guin, 2004; Horng, Klasik, & Loeb, 2009; Ingersoll, 2003). In particular, student achievement suffers, schools and districts lose

money, teachers who remain develop a negative view of the school climate, and administrators spend an inordinate amount of their time replacing those who leave. These effects are frequently seen in the Title I middle school setting.

Student achievement impact. When teachers continually leave or move to different schools, school-based administrators experience difficulties staffing their schools. “High poverty schools experience a turnover rate of about 20% per calendar year” (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2014, p. 3). A study conducted by Grissmer and Kirby (1997) indicated teacher tendency to migrate to certain districts or schools within a district is based on a combination of pay and working conditions. Higher performing professionals are able to select jobs within districts or schools that boast better working conditions, while lower performing teachers do not have that latitude. Staffing difficulties lead to a problematic attitude among Title I school administrators that any candidate will do; and thus, “districts [or schools] with poorer students will bear the brunt of a disproportionate share of lower-quality teachers” (Grissmer & Kirby, 1997, p. 54).

Although research conducted by Darling-Hammond (2000) yielded findings that “teacher quality characteristics such as certification status and degree in the field to be taught are very significantly and positively correlated with student outcomes” (p. 23), the most readily available candidates are beginning teachers, lateral entry teachers, or long-term substitutes with little to no experience in the classroom. These candidates have the least amount of education and training available since they are coming to the workforce immediately after completing their undergraduate preparatory programs or without having undergone a teacher preparatory program. The Alliance for Excellent Education (2005) stated that

nationally more than 6 million middle and high school students are at significant

risk of dropping out of school.... Students in high-poverty or high-minority schools are in desperate need of expert, high-quality teachers ... yet they are almost twice as likely as other students to have novice teachers. (p. 2)

The Learning Policy Institute (2018) published a guide to understanding teacher shortages, which gave a state-by-state analysis of national data collected in 2016 regarding teacher turnover. According to this information, the national average number of uncertified teachers in low-minority schools is 1.28%, while high-minority schools is 4.75%. Additionally, the national average number of first- or second-year teachers in low-minority schools is 9.93%. The average number of inexperienced teachers in high-minority schools is 17.31%. North Carolina's data exhibit similar gaps between low-minority schools and high-minority schools in terms of uncertified and inexperienced teachers. North Carolina's average number of uncertified teachers in low-minority schools is 2.12%; high-minority schools is 4.29%. North Carolina's average number of inexperienced teachers in low-minority schools is 6.92%; high-minority schools is 11.11%. These troubling statistics speak to the problems that persist in North Carolina's Title I schools. While highly qualified and experienced teachers are a necessary component in student success, too few of them are teaching in high-minority schools.

Darling-Hammond's (2000) "research indicates that the effects of well-prepared teachers on student achievement can be stronger than the influences of student background factors, such as poverty, language background, and minority status" (p. 33); however, Barnes et al. (2014) reported that in some urban school districts, teacher turnover in low-performing schools is double that of high-performing schools. This begs the question of which problem came first: teachers leaving low-performing schools or schools performing poorly because the teachers leave. Either way, the research suggests

that teacher decisions to move schools or leave the profession have an adverse affect on student achievement as well as the students' chances of succeeding in and graduating from school.

Financial impact. Historical data indicate that staffing problems are prevalent throughout the nation. Ingersoll (2003) found that the number of departures due to attrition have been steadily increasing since 1987, and the number of departures due to movement between schools nearly matches that of attrition. Data from The United Federation of Teachers report in 2014 indicated that this trend is continuing (McAdoo, 2014). New York City hired 4,700 new teachers during the 2012-2013 school year; however, 5,458 teachers left that same year. About half of those departures were retirement, but another half of the departures were resignations of teachers who were eligible to return. The report also indicated that the number of these types of resignations has risen through each of the last 4 years. Barnes et al. (2014) conducted a study of teacher turnover in five selected school districts: Chicago Public Schools in Illinois, Milwaukee Public Schools in Wisconsin, Granville County Schools in North Carolina; and Jemez Valley Public Schools and Santa Rosa Public Schools, both in New Mexico. The study revealed that “the cost per teacher leaver ranged from \$4,366 in rural Jemez Valley to \$17,872 in Chicago” (p. 3). Furthermore, at-risk schools (in terms of minority, impoverished populations) experience the highest rates of turnover and thus are forced to spend dollars that could otherwise benefit students on “recruitment, hiring, orientation, and separation” (Barnes et al., 2014, p. 4). Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) pointed out that “in high turnover districts, it is important to consider what else these dollars could buy – including teacher mentoring and learning opportunities to increase effectiveness – if they weren’t being spent on filling the leaky bucket each year” (p. 4).

Barnes et al. (2014) outlined the costs of teacher turnover in terms of the specific activities required in each stage of the replacement process. Recruitment and hiring costs include advertisement; travel to or hosting of job fairs; funding criminal background checks with fingerprinting; and offering incentives like “signing or relocation bonuses, housing and moving allowances, and rent or day care subsidies” (Barnes et al., 2014, p. 2). Orientation costs include funding a comprehensive induction program with training and stipends for mentors, workshops and other professional development opportunities, and paying for substitutes when teachers need to attend training. Separation costs include “removing teachers from payroll and health plans and processing eligible refunds of retirement contributions, paying substitutes to cover for mid-year departures, and conducting exit surveys” (Barnes et al., 2014, p. 1). Barnes et al. (2014) found that teacher turnover can cost school districts an average of \$10,000 per employee and that teachers leave high-poverty, high-minority, and/or low-performing schools at a faster rate than schools without the same challenges. This “means that low-performing, high-minority, and high-poverty schools spend more money on teacher turnover than high-performing, low-minority, and low-poverty schools” (Barnes et al., 2014, p. 90).

Cultural impact. School climate and culture are pivotal pieces of the conversation about teacher retention. In a study of a large, urban school district, Guin (2004), performed case studies of five selected schools in addition to analyzing a variety of district-wide data points including demographics, student performance, teacher turnover, and staff climate surveys. The case study methods involved interviews of principals and teachers at the selected schools. Guin’s findings supported previous research regarding the correlation of teacher turnover to student demographics and student performance. Schools with higher levels of poverty experience higher rates of

teacher turnover and lower performance on standardized measures of math and reading. The study also illuminated how teacher turnover impacts school climate and culture.

Guin (2004) studied district climate surveys spanning a 3-year period and focused on six climate measures: school climate, teacher climate, principal leadership, teacher influence, feeling respected, and teacher interactions. The survey results showed that these climate measures have a significant (with the exception of “teacher interactions”) negative correlation to teacher turnover. The interviews supported the survey analysis and revealed several trends across the five schools. Teachers talk about the ways in which turnover contributes to disruptions in teaching and instructional programming, ineffective professional development, a general lack of collaboration, and feelings of frustration. When turnover is high, veteran teachers express resentment over frequent chaos in classrooms and having to rescue inexperienced teachers from the chaos. Instructional programming loses momentum as schools operate in a circular pattern of continually rebooting initiatives after staff has been replaced. The same professional development opportunities are presented repeatedly so that new staff can have the same experiences as returning staff, thereby rendering those trainings ineffective and stale. Experienced or returning teachers discuss how they assign little importance to investing time and energy into acquainting themselves with new staff on the assumption the new teachers will be replaced yet again the following year – this leads to a breakdown in collaboration and teamwork. Teachers describe the working environment as “on edge,” with an air of uncertainty about what each day will bring. Conversely, in schools where teacher turnover is low, teachers express feelings of stability, trust in their colleagues, and higher levels of satisfaction with their school climate.

The New Teacher Project (2012) group conducted a mixed methods study of four

urban school districts and one charter management organization to examine teacher retention. Data sources for the study included teacher performance measures of value-added analysis or growth, demographics of staff and schools, school achievement data, retention rates by school and district, open-ended survey responses, interviews, focus groups, and district policies and practices. The research group used individual teacher performance data to identify the top and bottom 20% of teachers. When teacher performance data were compared to retention rates and survey responses with a focus on retaining a school's most valuable, high-performing teachers, it was revealed that three of four high-performing teachers reported that school climate or working condition improvement could change their plans to leave (The New Teacher Project, 2012). Furthermore, schools that are able to retain large percentages of high-performing teachers report cultures in which great teaching is prioritized within an atmosphere of trust and respect.

Administrative impact. Site-based administrators like principals and assistant principals are responsible for staffing their buildings; and in schools with high teacher turnover, administrators spend a great deal of time doing so. Horng et al. (2009) conducted a study of how principals spend their time. The study sought to discover what principals do during the instructional day and how principals' roles vary by school characteristics. Principal job tasks were divided into six categories – administration, organization management, day-to-day instruction, instructional program, internal relations, and external relations – with descriptions of activities included in those job tasks. Organization management includes managing staff and staff concerns as well as hiring personnel. The study showed that this specific job task consumes 20% of the instructional day. The only other job task that takes more of the principal's time is

administration (30%), which includes such activities as test administration, student discipline, and paperwork. Although the principal is supposed to be the instructional leader, this study asserted that only 6-7% of a principal's time is spent on day-to-day instruction or instructional programming respectively.

An analysis of how principals' roles vary by school characteristics revealed that middle school principals spend more time on organization management than their elementary or high school counterparts. Additionally, organization management ranks higher than administration in terms of time on task in the middle school setting. These findings suggest that middle school administrators spend a great deal of the instructional day attempting to manage the teachers they have and replace those who leave.

Current response. North Carolina currently has policies and practices that are meant to address teacher attrition; however, local school systems and building-level administrators are responsible for their implementation. Among the aforementioned policies and practices are the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions (NCTWC) Survey, site-based climate surveys, teacher induction and mentorship programs, and various professional development offerings. These particular surveys are aimed at gauging teacher satisfaction and diagnosing deficiencies in the site-based working conditions, while teacher induction, mentorship, and professional development are designed to provide ongoing support. The ultimate goal of these strategies is to increase teacher satisfaction and reduce attrition.

The NCTWC Survey is a satisfaction instrument that is administered every 2 years in the state of North Carolina. In 2018, the statewide response rate was 90.54% (North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions, 2018). In order to increase teacher participation in the NCTWC Survey, some districts incentivize 100% participation by

offering a \$1,000 prize to the first school to receive all responses. Beyond increasing the response rate, North Carolina provides resources for site-based and district leaders to use when analyzing the survey results including how-to guides for using data and facilitator guides with presentations to use with staff. Principals are expected to utilize these resources and the survey analysis for school improvement planning. In 2005, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) published an article (Emerick, Hirsch, & Berry, 2005) that gives recommendations for school-level leaders to follow when reviewing the NCTWC Survey data:

1. Analyze teacher working conditions survey results and have faculty conversations about their implications.
2. Consider specific policy changes and resource allocations that can help individual schools implement strategies that respond to working conditions areas of concern.
3. Incorporate strategies to address teacher working conditions in existing school improvement plans.

According to Schwantes (2018), failure or refusal to acknowledge employees' feelings and share information with them are two of the top indicators of someone with poor leadership abilities. While many take the time to thoroughly address issues that come to light as a result of the NCTWC Survey, administrators remain who choose not to scrutinize the responses with their staff.

Principals and district employees may seek feedback on their performance and school climate from teachers or other staff members. This feedback could be invaluable to administrators who seek to improve their practice. Gonzales (2015) suggested using question stems with a Likert rating scale to gauge the extent to which staff members

agree or disagree with positively worded statements about the principal (Gonzales, 2015). School principals who give climate surveys often analyze the feedback for trend data and make a plan of action for improvement. They may choose to share the feedback results as well as the specific plan of action with staff members.

The North Carolina State Board of Education (2010) Policy Manual reviews the basic requirements of any teacher induction program and mentorship program. Beginning teachers must be assigned a trained mentor; he or she must also receive an orientation and ongoing professional support through the third year of teaching. The quality of the mentor, the orientation, and the ongoing support may vary from school to school or district to district, depending upon how each Local Educational Agency interprets the North Carolina policy. School districts within North Carolina have the autonomy to design their own teacher induction programs. The 10th largest school district in North Carolina has developed a program known as TIPS – Teacher Induction Program for Success. First year teachers attend a multi-day orientation prior to beginning work. First- and second-year teachers are required to meet with their trained mentor at least four times per month, while third-year teachers are required to meet with their trained mentor twice per month. First-year teachers attend training sessions either virtually or face to face once per month. Second- and third-year teachers attend training three times per school year.

The North Carolina State Board of Education (2010) maintains a policy on teacher professional development plans. Teachers must create personalized professional development plans at the beginning of each new school year. These plans may be individual, monitored, or directed based on the previous school year's summary rating form. Individual growth plans are selected by the teacher when that teacher has received

a “proficient” rating on all standards of the evaluation instrument. A teacher may be placed on a monitored plan if he or she received a “developing” rating on one or more standards and a directed plan if the teacher received a “developing” rating on one or more standards and a rating of “not demonstrated” on any standard. The policy indicates the minimum activities in which a teacher on a monitored or directed growth plan should engage. In addition to an outline of professional development plans, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction offers a variety of professional development options. Teachers and administrators may search for and choose any of the online module offerings to complete.

The Purpose and the Problem

Identifying key factors that influence teacher retention in Title I middle schools will help school and district leaders influence teachers to stay. According to Burkhauser (2017), districts with high turnover should assess teacher satisfaction with their working conditions and the impact the school principal may have on teacher perceptions. “If school environment ratings are low, districts should look to the principal as an important player in improving the conditions at the school” (Burkhauser, 2017, p. 13). The focus of this research was factors that site-based and district-level leadership can control and change. The researcher did not address influential factors like teacher preparatory programs, parental involvement, student attitudes, or teacher salary – although they are important determinants of teacher satisfaction and permanence – because administrators have little control over these factors. The research contained in this study was designed to inform administrators and build capacity for them to support teachers, boost teacher efficacy, and influence their attitudes toward teaching in the Title I middle school setting.

The purpose of this study was to identify the key factors that influence teacher

retention in Title I middle schools. It is important to retain teachers in the Title I middle school setting because expert, high-quality teachers are needed to help students achieve success.

Conceptual Base

A study conducted by Shen (1997) revealed that teachers fall into three categories: movers, leavers, and stayers. Movers and leavers include teachers who voluntarily changed schools or left the teaching profession entirely between 1990 and 1992. Stayers include only those teachers who remained at the same school during the 1990-1991 and 1991-1992 school years. The study focused on three main factors that influence whether teachers move, leave, or stay: personal characteristics, school characteristics, and teacher perceptions. Shen's study examined a national sample through the 1991 SASS and the 1992 Teacher Follow-up Survey. Shen conducted a direct discriminant function analysis, "a multivariate technique that identifies the combination or combinations of variables (i.e. functions) that best separate (i.e. discriminate among) groups" (p. 84), to produce quantitative data for the study.

The study's findings can be broken into six categories: experience, salary, attitude, empowerment, school population, and teaching assignment. Teachers with less experience tend to move or leave, while teachers with more experience tend to stay. Teachers with higher salaries are more likely to remain in the teaching profession. Likewise, teachers who have an appreciation for the intrinsic rewards of teaching are prone to remain in the teaching profession. Teacher empowerment – having more influence over school and teaching policies – promotes retention. School populations with high numbers of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch and high-minority school populations saw more teachers move or leave the profession. Shen's (1997)

findings, contrary to previous studies, showed no association between the subject or department to which the teacher is assigned and teacher retention or attrition.

Although the Shen (1997) study is dated, more contemporary information on movers, leavers, and stayers support its findings (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2016). Between 2011-2012 and 2012-2013, approximately 8% of teachers moved, another 8% of teachers left the profession, and approximately 84% of teachers stayed at the same school. Among the movers, most cited personal life factors or school factors as reasons for the move. The percentage of movers from high-poverty schools is double that of movers from low-poverty schools. According to this data set, teachers with 2 years of experience are more likely to move schools than to leave the profession; they are also more likely than their peers to move voluntarily (NCES, 2016).

Research Question

This study sought to answer a singular research question: What are the factors that influence teachers' decisions to retain their positions in a Title I middle school?

Professional Significance

Teachers fall into one of three categories: movers, leavers, and stayers. There is a wealth of research and self-reporting data available concerning the reasons teachers move from challenging positions in Title I middle schools or leave the teaching profession entirely; however, there is a shortage of information regarding what makes them stay. This study sought to uncover and understand the key factors that influence teacher retention in Title I middle schools. The researcher does not comment on teacher preparatory programs, parental involvement, student attitudes, or teacher salary. Rather, the study offers recommendations for high-impact practice and policy changes or improvements that will help site-based and district leadership to keep teachers in the Title

I middle school setting for longer periods of time.

Delimitations

This study took a comprehensive look at the four schools included in the sample, but the results may not be fully applicable to all contexts as they do not give an all-inclusive view into the factors that influence teacher retention across different school districts or states. This study focused on four Title I middle schools in a North Carolina school district. The researcher is a school administrator with the studied district. The researcher did not study any separate or special schools within the school district. This study did not explore why teachers leave or have left already; rather, it sought to understand what will make them persist in the Title I middle school setting.

Definition of Terms

Title I. Part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, it is a federal commitment to provide funds that help level the playing field between low-income students and other students. Schools that are deemed Title I schools have a high population of disadvantaged students who meet the criteria to receive free or reduced price lunches (United States Department of Education, 2015).

Turnover. The number of persons hired within a period to replace those leaving or dropped from a workforce (Merriam-Webster, n.d.b).

Attrition. A reduction in numbers usually as a result of resignation, retirement, or death (Merriam-Webster, n.d.a).

Middle school. Middle school is comprised of Grades 6-8. Students attend middle school after elementary school but before high school.

Organization of the Study

The organization of this research study consists of five chapters. Chapter 1

contains an introduction to the study, the purpose of the study, the problem statement, the conceptual base governing the study, the professional significance of the study, an overview of the study's methodology, limitations of the study, and definitions of key terms. Chapter 2 is a literature review of related studies and empirical research related to the factors that influence teacher retention in the Title I middle school setting. The methodology for this research is detailed in Chapter 3. Methodology for this study is arranged in mini case studies of four Title I middle schools in a large school district in North Carolina. The researcher employed surveys and focus groups to gather pertinent data for this study. Chapter 4 includes data collected through the aforementioned surveys and focus groups. This chapter also contains the findings of the research. Chapter 5 provides a summary of the research results; a discussion and reflection of the findings and their connection to literature and previous research; and the researcher's recommendations for practice, policy, and research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The previously mentioned concept of movers, leavers, and stayers lays the foundation for an exploration of teacher job satisfaction and its influence on teacher retention through the literature guided by the following questions:

1. What is the impact of enjoyment on job satisfaction?
2. What is the impact of self-efficacy on job satisfaction?
3. What is the impact of available support on job satisfaction?

Enjoyment

The literature is replete with information regarding teacher job satisfaction based on working conditions as well as burnout and stress. The available body of work reaches back approximately 30 years. Ma and MacMillan (1999) conducted a study to “examine how teacher professional satisfaction is related to background characteristics and workplace conditions” (p. 39). A teacher questionnaire instrument was used to survey elementary school teachers in New Brunswick, Canada. The questionnaire asked about five components of working conditions as measured by three composite variables, with the dependent variable being teacher satisfaction and the independent variable being background characteristics like gender and years of experience. Results of the study indicated that working conditions are significant determinants of teacher satisfaction and “show stronger effects on teacher satisfaction than teacher background variables” (Ma & MacMillan, 1999, p. 42). Additionally, the following teachers reported higher satisfaction with their role: teachers who have a positive perception of their relationship with building administrators, teachers with better teaching competence, and teachers working within a positive school culture. The 2018 NCTWC Survey results from the Title I middle schools studied in this research coupled with teacher turnover data from those same schools and

more recent studies of teacher satisfaction in the United States validate this pivotal work by Ma and MacMillan.

In an effort to help teachers manage the problems of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and burnout, researchers used two prior doctoral studies to make themed recommendations for promoting happiness (or well-being) among new teachers (De Stercke, Goyette, & Robertson, 2015). Combining the concept of positive psychology with teacher retention and development, the researchers offered 10 approaches to increasing happiness or well-being; these approaches are divided into three main themes: educational advising/orientation, mindfulness, and emotional intelligence. They asserted that taking approaches like practicing thoughtful meditation or training school leaders in using emotional intelligence are powerful ways to keep new teachers in the profession for longer periods of time.

It could be argued that employees who enjoy better working conditions experience more happiness, produce more in their work, and have overall increased job satisfaction. A research team (Oswald, Proto, & Sgrio, 2015) conducted a study of happiness in the workplace as a contributing factor of productivity. The team divided individuals into groups, provided a treatment or intervention to some the groups, and measured subsequent productivity in terms of outputs. The initial productivity of the 713 individuals studied amounted to 20 units each. The treatments or interventions applied were as follows: play a comedy clip before a work task; play a comedy clip before a work task and take measurements throughout the task to measure productivity; provide chocolate, fruit, and drinks before a work task; and compare original productivity to responses on a questionnaire about personal tragedy as a correlation measure between happiness and productivity. The results of this study indicate that the various treatments

improved productivity by two units, or 10-12%. Additionally, analysis of experiment four – questionnaire about personal tragedy – pointed to decreased productivity and fewer attempts among those who reported lower levels of happiness at the outset.

In a study of the factors influencing stress, burnout, and retention of secondary teachers, Fisher (2011) distributed a paper and pencil survey packet to 412 secondary teachers attending professional development workshops. Of those 412 teachers targeted for the study, 385 participated. The survey packet included three instruments: Classroom Appraisal of Resources and Demands (CARD), Maslach Burnout Inventory, and Preventative Resource Inventory. The researcher performed a one-way ANOVA test to analyze the data in an effort to ascertain the difference between stress and burnout levels of new teachers as opposed to experienced teachers. For the purpose of this research, new teachers are defined as having 5 years of experience or fewer, and experienced teachers are defined as having more than 5 years of classroom experience. The findings revealed that both groups exhibited high levels of stress, but less experience is correlated to higher levels of burnout. A multiple regression analysis was performed to establish the impact of stress and burnout on job satisfaction. While both stress and burnout are statistically significant indicators of job satisfaction, burnout was found to have a stronger influence. Additionally, Fisher's findings point to increased stress levels when job satisfaction is decreased.

Cunningham (2015) examined all 43,244 responses to 19 survey items from the 2003-2004 SASS and performed a hierarchical regression analysis to uncover the factors associated with teacher attitudes and perceptions toward job satisfaction. These 43,244 responses represented a national sample of teachers who completed the survey provided by NCES. The independent variables addressed are as follows: salary, administrative

support, student discipline, influence/input, and teacher attitude. Cunningham found that “of all factors explored, teacher attitude accounted for the greatest variance in job satisfaction” (p. 69). These findings were reinforced by a study of the 2007-2008 SASS (You & Conley, 2015), which narrowed the total number of surveyed teachers in the United States by selecting only full-time teachers in secondary level, regular program schools. This sample was further divided into career stages – novice, mid-career, and veteran – before a random sample of 3,000 teachers was chosen from each group. Researchers hypothesized that “the relationship between workplace predictors and teachers’ intention to leave is mediated by teachers’ satisfaction and commitment” (You & Conley, 2015, p. 572) and analyzed teacher responses to the SASS questions using structural equation modeling. For the purpose of this study, workplace predictors are defined as administrative support, teacher autonomy/discretion, social climate/student behavior, and teacher team efficacy. Data indicate that “job satisfaction was a significant mediator across all three groups between four dimensions of workplace conditions ... and intent to leave” (You & Conley, 2015, p. 573).

The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM, 2017) conducted a study of 600 United States employees from all fields using the SHRM Employee Job Satisfaction and Engagement Survey Instrument. The 600 participants were randomly sampled from the possible individuals who had been employed full or part time at their current organization for at least 3 months. Most notable among the findings was,

The five factors that employees assessed as the leading job satisfaction contributors were respectful treatment of all employees at all levels, compensation/pay, trust between employees and senior management, job security, and opportunities to use their skills and abilities at work. (SHRM, 2017, p. 1)

Using the Purdue Teacher Opinionnaire, Lyons (2017) conducted a quantitative causal-comparative study to examine the effect of Title I designation on morale among math and English teachers. Lyons took a purposeful sampling of all English and math teachers in Grades 6-8 across Virginia. Teachers completed the Opinionnaire, a lengthy survey instrument, anonymously online. Lyons found that the difference between the morale of English and math teachers in Title I schools and non-Title I schools is statistically significant; however, the difference between the morale of English and math teachers in urban, suburban, or rural Title I schools is not statistically significant. Lyons's findings are noteworthy because they are indicative of commonplace dissatisfaction among Title I school teachers, regardless of the particular demographics served within different Title I schools.

Ladd (2011) analyzed the 2006 NCTWC Survey results for elements of working conditions like leadership, expanded roles, time, professional development, facilities, and evaluation. Additionally, responses to a survey question regarding future intentions and actual 1-year departure rates were analyzed to determine the degree to which working conditions are predictive of planned and actual departure. The researcher designed an empirical model to evaluate the planned probability of leaving for an individual teacher in an individual school as a function of the combined working conditions, characteristics of the school, salary, and characteristics of the teacher. The results of this analysis indicated that "teachers' perceptions of working conditions at the school level are highly predictive of an individual teacher's intentions to leave a school" (Ladd, 2011, p. 251).

As previous research has indicated, working conditions influence job satisfaction and, in turn, job satisfaction influences teacher retention. Richardson (2017) further expounded upon this concept with a mixed methods explanatory design study utilizing a

comparison of the 2014 and 2016 NCTWC Survey responses from four selected high schools as well as a focus group interview. Participants were 30 teachers from four high schools within a single North Carolina school district. The researcher examined themes from the focus group in comparison to 2 years' NCTWC Surveys. The focus group produced four themes that promote job satisfaction and four retention themes. The data indicated that the following promote job satisfaction: collegial support and collaboration, exposure to administrative support, commitment to teaching, and salary or incentives. The data indicated that the following promote teacher retention: mission or calling to teach, feeling valued and supported by school administrators, adequate pay and benefits, and collegial cooperation among teachers. A significant outcome of this study was that the job satisfaction themes repeated themselves as retention themes.

Self-Efficacy

Bandura's (1989, 1997) work on efficacy is born from Social Cognitive Theory that posits behavior, cognition, and environment have bidirectional influence over one another. He asserted that individuals learn by doing and observing others. They gain confidence in their personal ability to carry out a task through social cognition. If someone of a similar demographic or perceived skill set is able to successfully complete a task, the individual's confidence to do so should increase. Mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and emotional and physiological states are sources of efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1997).

Self-efficacy and job satisfaction. Teacher confidence and feelings of importance or impact influence their sense of self-efficacy. The literature discusses how teacher self- and collective-efficacy affect teacher job satisfaction. A 2014 study of 121 primary school teachers in Ireland (Reilly, Dhingra, & Boduszek, 2014) examined

teacher self-efficacy beliefs, self-esteem, and job stress as determinants of job satisfaction. Sixty-eight percent of those surveyed responded to the four survey instruments including Fimian Teacher Stress Inventory, Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale, Job Satisfaction Survey, and The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. The study determined that, contrary to other studies, there was no significant relationship between self-efficacy and job satisfaction; however, there was a weak positive relationship between perceived stress and self-efficacy, and data showed that “teachers experiencing greater perceived stress are significantly less satisfied in their jobs” (Reilly et al., 2014, p. 370).

A study of teacher stress, self-efficacy, and job satisfaction among public school teachers in the southeastern United States (von der Embse, Sandolis, Pendergast, & Mankin, 2016) served to elaborate upon the aforementioned findings from 2013. The recent study specifically looked at test stress in relation to self-efficacy and job satisfaction. Researchers administered the following two instruments to 1,242 K-12 public school teachers from 100 districts during the fall and spring of 1 academic year: The Educator Test Stress Inventory (developed by the author) and Teachers’ Sense of Self-Efficacy Scale. Job satisfaction questions were embedded within these instruments. Data were analyzed using a variety of procedures including *t* tests, chi-square tests, structural equation modeling, and bootstrapping method. The results indicated that test stress has a significant effect on job satisfaction, elements of teaching efficacy are positively related to job satisfaction, and “differing relationships of test stress with job satisfaction based upon the type of perceived capability (i.e., efficacy)” (von der Embse et al., 2016, p. 19). As previously noted in the literature, there seems to be a link between job satisfaction and retention. An important recommendation from this particular study was “strengthening teachers’ efficacy may be an important component to helping

educators cope with stressors” (von der Embse et al., 2016, p. 22).

Aldridge and Fraser (2016) used two questionnaires to examine 781 high school teachers’ perceptions of their school climate in relation to their self-efficacy and job satisfaction. One questionnaire focused on environmental factors, and another focused on self-efficacy and job satisfaction. Researchers performed univariate normality and confirmatory factor analysis. They found that principal support, affiliation, and goal consensus all had direct, positive relationships to self-efficacy. Additionally, the results indicated that self-efficacy has a direct, positive relationship to job satisfaction.

Norwegian researchers Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2010) performed a quantitative study using confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modeling to derive results from 2,249 elementary and middle school teachers’ responses to six instruments with a focus on teacher self-efficacy and teacher burnout. Major findings of this study are “both teacher self-efficacy and the two dimensions of teacher burnout were related to teachers’ job satisfaction ... and self-efficacy was predictive of higher job satisfaction” (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010, p. 1064). A theme that emerged from this study was the importance of autonomy and its positive impact on teacher self-efficacy. Wright (2018) conducted a qualitative multiple-case study that reinforced this thematic notion. Wright sought to examine similarities and differences in teacher autonomy at differently structured elementary schools. One was a traditionally structured school, and the other was a teacher-powered school. The traditional school in Florida has a free and reduced lunch population of 85% and supplied seven teachers for the study. The teacher-powered school in Minnesota has a free and reduced population of 21% and supplied six teachers for the study. Methods of data collection included document analysis of faculty meeting or leadership meeting agendas and notes; individual interviews via phone, written

response, or face to face; and observations of autonomy opportunities during curriculum planning meetings at each school. Data analysis procedures included coding, frequency tables, thematic analysis, and categorical aggregation. The findings produced four themes: leadership structure, teacher morale, decision-making, and roadblocks to success. The teacher-powered school was found to have more plentiful opportunities for teachers to lead and engage in school-level decision-making. Data from the teacher-powered school also indicated high levels of collective efficacy, strong feelings of autonomy among the teachers, and positive morale. Conversely, 71% of the teachers in the traditional school reported decreased morale, and all seven teachers discussed having little to no autonomy on “things that matter most” (Wright, 2018, p. 106) within the school. Results of this study pointed to the value in a distributed leadership structure and elevated teacher autonomy in school decision-making as a vehicle for increased efficacy and teacher morale.

In an effort to further explore the implications of their 2010 study, Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2014) again asked elementary and middle school teachers to complete a variety of survey instruments in order to analyze them quantitatively. Specifically, autonomy was shown to have a positive relationship to engagement and job satisfaction with or without self-efficacy as a factor. Teacher self-efficacy was also positively related to engagement and job satisfaction (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2014).

A correlational study comparing teacher perceptions of leadership and efficacy and teacher evaluation scores (Guenzler, 2016) served to reiterate Skaalvik and Skaalvik’s (2014) findings regarding the relationships among autonomy, self-efficacy, and job satisfaction. Guenzler (2016) utilized two modified survey instruments to gauge teacher perceptions of their own leadership and efficacy: Teacher Leadership School

Survey (TLSS) and Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES). Additionally, teachers self-reported their evaluation scores from Standard I and Standard VI on the North Carolina Educator Evaluation System. The researcher tapped into social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter to widely distribute the online survey to teachers from all 115 districts in North Carolina and received 101 responses. Data were collected through a Google Form and were initially analyzed in a spreadsheet format for mean values. Data were also imported into IBM's Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and were analyzed either by using Spearman's rho or the Kruskal-Wallis statistical measure. The results pointed to positive correlations "between all variable sets of the TLSS and TSES" (Guenzler, 2016, p. 100). Similar to the Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2010, 2014) studies, this research indicated that teacher perceptions of recognition influence certain elements of teacher efficacy and that "autonomy and recognition are closely associated with teacher morale" (Guenzler, 2016, p. 125).

Self-efficacy and professional development. In a 2009 doctoral study, Rostan sought to explore the relationship between professional development and teacher efficacy by electronically surveying 73 Title I middle school teachers as well as reviewing field notes, professional development training agendas, and professional development evaluations. An adapted Professional Development Survey Questionnaire was utilized to gather quantitative data. Modifications to the original survey included shortening the number of questions and reducing the number of choices on the Likert scale. The survey responses were analyzed using a Pearson correlation. Findings show a strong positive correlation between professional development, efficacy, and collaboration; however, more training did not necessarily correlate to increased efficacy.

In light of the findings that more training is not always better, Butts (2016)

performed a mixed methods study of Math 1 teachers from an urban school district in North Carolina to discover the kinds of professional development activities that have the highest impact on teacher self-efficacy. To address this topic, Butts surveyed 49 Math 1 teachers using the Teacher Efficacy Scale short form. Twenty-six surveys were returned and used for data analysis. Additionally, the same 26 teachers participated in interviews with the researcher, and student achievement data for the Math 1 end-of-course exam were analyzed. During the interview process, teachers were asked to describe the most meaningful professional development experiences to their self-efficacy. Responses included the following descriptions: “examples with directions on how to implement and teacher leaders to teach teachers” (Butts, 2016, p. 66), sharing, using technology, receiving feedback, and “observe master teachers” (Butts, 2016, p. 67).

Self-efficacy and curriculum and instruction. Ramsey’s (2012) doctoral research on the impact of curriculum changes on teacher self-efficacy employed qualitative methods to code and categorize interviews with a purposeful sample of 12 middle and high school math teachers in Georgia. Interviews were structured, transcribed, and then analyzed. They were completed in one or two sessions at the teachers’ home school. This study followed the implementation of a new secondary math curriculum. According to the interview responses, changes in curriculum caused negative feelings among teachers such as confusion, frustration, stress, and inadequacy. These adverse reactions impacted teacher self-efficacy by causing them to feel powerless, unprepared, and uncertain of their ability to deliver instruction.

A grounded theory study of 15 middle school teachers from four schools in Florida utilized interviews as the primary data collection to investigate the antecedents and consequences of teacher discretion over curriculum (Spittler, 2012). The researcher

asked participating teachers to fill out a demographic questionnaire as well as sit for individual interviews and follow-up interviews. The initial interviews took place at the start of the year and the follow-up interviews took place around spring break. Interview response data were analyzed by coding to create six categories: pre-planning, professional development, curriculum development, new teachers, issues facing teachers, and consequences of teacher involvement in decision-making.

Spittler's (2012) data showed that the participating teachers expressed negative views toward curriculum development at the district and state level, citing that the expectations change too frequently, changes occur without notice, and those who impose the pacing guides are not knowledgeable about appropriate pacing. Although the participating teachers were highly involved in school-based leadership, they acknowledged some possible negative outcomes associated with allowing ineffective or inexperienced teachers to have free reign over classroom curriculum: "bad teachers will simply create bad curriculum" (Spittler, 2012, p. 71). However, the possible positive consequences that emerged through the discussion were closely related to an elevated sense of self-efficacy: satisfaction, ensuring high levels of rigor, using creativity to design lessons that are outside the box, and guaranteeing alignment of curriculum to assessments when the teacher creates both.

The results of these studies tie back to the aforementioned research on the relationship between self-efficacy and job satisfaction as well as the influence of job satisfaction on teacher retention (Aldridge & Fraser, 2016; Guenzler, 2016; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010, 2014; von der Embse et al., 2016; Wright, 2018). Decreased influence over curriculum and instruction leads to decreased teacher self-efficacy, which in turn has been shown to decrease job satisfaction. Teachers experiencing lower levels of job

satisfaction are less likely to retain their current positions.

Self-efficacy and teacher input. In a study of 143 primary school teachers in Greece (Sarafidou & Chatziioannidis, 2012), researchers used a 3-part questionnaire to evaluate teachers' desired versus actual involvement in school decision-making and the discrepancy between the two. Decision-making, for the purposes of this study, was divided into three categories: student issues, teacher issues, and managerial issues. Additionally, researchers measured the relationship of teacher involvement and teacher perceptions of school climate, self-efficacy, and job satisfaction. Upon analysis, the data revealed a discrepancy between a moderate level of actual participation in school decision-making and a high level of desire or willingness to participate. Furthermore, "the higher the teachers' participation in all three domains of school decision-making, the more positive their perceptions of the school climate" (Sarafidou & Chatziioannidis, 2012, p. 177); and "the strongest predictor of teachers' self-efficacy was their actual participation in decisions concerning teacher issues" (Sarafidou & Chatziioannidis, 2012, p. 178). Points taken from a review paper on teacher involvement in school decision-making (Lin, 2014) reinforced these findings. Lin discussed teacher involvement with regard to self-efficacy beliefs saying, "As teachers were given opportunities to participate, the growth of related professional knowledge was required and the self-efficacy would be reinforced hence" (p. 53).

Lacey (2015) reinforced the findings from Sarafidou and Chatziioannidis (2012) in a qualitative study of middle school teachers, administrators, and parents regarding perceptions of middle school teacher empowerment. Individual, open-ended interviews with 18 teachers, three administrators, and six parents took place in one Mississippi middle school. The questions for the individual interviews were developed by the

researcher. Teacher participants described empowerment as self-assurance and confidence to carry out the work of teaching; they also talked about empowerment in association with job satisfaction. Administration described an empowered teacher as one who is motivated and self-sufficient, while parents thought empowered teachers would be the leaders in the school. A significant idea that emerged from this study was that teacher empowerment can come from administrative support, self, or others. Teachers differ in the sources from which they derive feelings of empowerment. Another of Lacey's important findings was that empowerment is discouraged when teachers are not involved in decisions. Finally, the data indicated that teacher empowerment, regardless of its source, has a direct influence on teachers' organizational commitment. In other words, when teachers feel empowered at their current school, they are likely to remain there (Lacey, 2015).

Available Support

Research by Phelan (2010) included a study of similarities and differences between human resource practices among four school districts in New York. Phelan examined these districts' particular human resource practices in relation to teacher retention in those school districts. Through collective case study employing document review and interviews with district employees like the superintendent, human resource manager, a principal, and a teacher, Phelan made some striking discoveries about the support systems associated with high teacher retention rates.

Contrary to common assumptions, "Omega," the district with the lowest teacher retention rate also boasted the lowest percentage of students on free and reduced lunch as well as the highest starting teacher pay and highest student performance data; therefore, the researcher drew conclusions that the rate of teacher retention had more to do with the

supports that were offered in the other three districts than with the generally healthy economic or academic conditions in Omega district. The results of the interviews were coded and categorized into five themes that impact teacher retention: screening and selection, induction or orientation, professional development, performance evaluation, and unique cultural factors.

In the screening and selection category, higher teacher retention was associated with active involvement by the Board of Education in the hiring process. When hiring decisions rested solely with the building administrator, teacher retention was lower. A specific piece of induction and orientation that produced high rates of teacher retention was the act of assigning beginning teacher mentors in the same content area. One district with high teacher retention rates reported that their district professional development offerings are driven by teacher requests. The superintendent of one district with low retention reported that the performance evaluation instrument can be overwhelming for new teachers. Finally, another district pointed to a high rate of building administrator turnover during the period of the study as one reason for its low teacher retention.

The themes from Phelan's (2010) study that are also found throughout the body of literature regarding the impact of support systems on job satisfaction and teacher retention are new teacher induction and orientation programs as well as a site-based culture of support for all teachers.

Induction and orientation support. The North Carolina Board of Education (2010) set forth policies regarding the minimum requirements for a new teacher orientation and induction program. Although each Local Education Agency (LEA) must submit plans for its beginning teacher support program annually and the Department of Public Instruction reviews these programs every 5 years, districts are given a great deal of

latitude when designing the scope and content of the beginning teacher induction program. Every induction program will at least support beginning teachers for 3 years with a formal orientation, mentor support, and observations and evaluations.

In addition to the basic North Carolina requirements of a teacher induction program, recent research has uncovered some specific practices that directly influence new teachers' decisions to retain their positions. Ingersoll (2012) found that comprehensive packages of support systems and activities, rather than isolated experiences or bits and pieces of a program produce a greater probability of new teacher retention. In fact, the "likelihood that beginners who received this package would leave at the end of their first year was less than half of those who received no induction activities" (Ingersoll, 2012, p. 50).

An action research study of school-level support systems provided to new teachers at a Title I middle school in Florida (Knutowski, 2014) gave fresh insight into the kinds of experiences new teachers value. Within the school where she serves as an instructional specialist, the researcher studied six teachers with 1-3 years of experience through a needs-based assessment, formative assessments, personal journals, and teacher interviews. A combination of the existing supports plus additional systems put in place by the researcher for the purpose of this study "made it impossible for teachers to be isolated" (Knutowski, 2014, p. 71). Among the most successful strategies were frequent teacher input into the professional development offerings, special trainings just for new teachers, and regular support meetings with mentor teachers. The results indicated that support from multiple people including the mentor and administrators, rather than a prescribed program, garnered success for this system at this particular school.

Wills (2014) chose to examine the influence of the mentoring experience on

beginning elementary and secondary teachers' decisions to remain in teaching through the lens of organizational socialization using a qualitative, case study design. The study focused on 12 of the possible 25 teachers in elementary, middle, and high schools with 5 years or less of experience in the chosen rural, K-12 Floridian school district. Of the 12 subjects who agreed to take a survey, six of them also agreed to participate in individual interviews with the researcher. Wills additionally interviewed district personnel about the mentorship program.

The study revealed that the most beneficial mentoring activity was the opportunity to work directly with the mentor. Mentors contributed to the new teachers' support system by conferencing with them, performing informal observations with meaningful feedback, and modeling best practices. Participants agreed that school leadership supported the entire mentoring process, and five of the 12 new teachers reported that the mentor program directly influenced their decision to remain in teaching (Wills, 2014).

Culture of support. In a mixed methods case study of urban school teacher retention focusing specifically on the impact of collaboration, Blye (2012) surveyed 29 teachers from a large district in California. Blye utilized a survey instrument, two focus groups, and individual interviews to collect data for this study. The data revealed that the majority of staff are satisfied with their positions with no intent to move or leave. Ninety percent of the staff reportedly viewed collaboration as a form of professional learning, and there was a strong positive correlation between survey questions about job satisfaction and those about learning opportunities provided to staff. There existed a negative correlation between teacher perceptions of ability to meet in small groups and teachers who considered moving to other schools; additionally, there was a strong

positive relationship between time to plan and collaborate and job satisfaction. The results indicated that collaboration increases the likelihood that a teacher will remain at his or her current site.

The 2014 Minnesota Teacher of the Year wrote an opinionated article to school leaders from the teacher perspective, challenging them to accept as fact that the retention rate at one's school speaks to the quality of leadership at that location (Rademacher, 2017). Rademacher (2017) cautioned principals against relying on systems and curricula one might purchase to make schools successful and to focus on supporting teachers instead. Additionally, Rademacher acknowledged that it is hard work to show appreciation for, listen to, and reward teachers, but school does not happen without them.

As a result of participatory action research involving interviews and a focus group, Richardson (2014) uncovered ways in which school leaders may create conditions that make teachers want to retain their positions. The study examined motivators for teachers to leave or stay and also what school leaders can do to foster retention. The researcher is the co-principal of an urban Title I middle school where six teachers with varying years of experience agreed to participate in the voluntary study. Throughout the interviews and focus group, teachers frequently referred to distrust in leadership, negative school climate, and lack of principal support as reasons why teachers leave their school. Conversely, they talked about things administrators could do differently: being transparent and honest, providing teachers with support in terms of student discipline or parent issues, fostering effective professional learning communities, following through on promises, and demonstrating accountability. Another theme that emerged from the qualitative data analysis was that teachers want to be treated as valuable members of the school community.

A group of researchers (Boyd et al., 2011) completed a voluntary survey of 4,360 first-year teachers in New York City in 2005. In 2006, the same respondents received a follow-up survey – one for teachers who returned a second year and another for teachers who left teaching after their first year in the profession. The group measured movers, leavers, and stayers through multinomial logistic regression. Eighty percent of the teachers remained at the same school, 10% moved to a new school, and 10% left teaching. Six school contextual factors were identified: teacher influence, administration, staff relations, students, facilities, and safety. Of these factors, administration was the only one that significantly predicts teacher retention decisions, as reported by 40% of the participants.

Participants in a study of how teacher perceptions of principal leadership behaviors affect retention included 114 teachers from six public schools in Atlanta, Georgia (Melvin, 2011). The researcher utilized an online format of the Teachers' Perception of Principal Leadership produced by the Atlanta Federation of Teachers. Melvin (2011) hypothesized that teachers who were determined likely stayers would rate the principal more highly on the leadership scale than likely leavers. A significant finding of this study is “for every point increase in the overall leadership score, teachers were five times more likely to return to their current job” (Melvin, 2011, p. 65).

Using an instrument called “Audit of Principal Effectiveness” to survey all 529 certified, middle school teachers from all 13 Title I middle schools in a particular district, Johnson (2011) was able to study teacher perceptions of leader behavior as it pertains to nine factors: organizational direction, organizational linkage, organizational procedures, teacher relations, student relations, interactive processes, affective processes, instructional improvement, and curricular improvement. A few characteristics of the

principal and the teachers affected how teachers would perceive the principal. All of the following resulted in higher ratings of principal effectiveness: teacher age (older), number of years working for the principal (fewer), and principal teaching experience (more).

In order to “analyze and measure the association between principal leadership practices and teacher morale in urban schools” (Norwood, 2016, p. 41), Norwood (2016) conducted a nonexperimental quantitative correlational study of 101 of 150 possible teachers at four schools. Norwood employed the Purdue Teacher Opinionnaire and the Leadership Practices Inventory to collect data. In this particular study, there were differences among the principals’ leadership practices but no significant difference among teacher morale at the different schools. This was contrary to what the researcher hypothesized but led to a possible assumption “that there are other factors contributing to low teacher morale and not solely the leadership practices of the principal” (Norwood, 2016, p. 86).

While site-based leadership practices can contribute to low teacher morale, site-based leadership turnover is another factor to consider. Lopez (2015) set out to conduct a qualitative, phenomenological case study regarding the effects of frequent administrator turnover on morale or culture. Lopez interviewed nine tenured teachers across one school district; she intended to conduct a focus group, but the teachers were unwilling to participate. Lopez also achieved triangulation of data through document review. A number of negative themes, thoughts, and feelings about administrative turnover emerged from the interviews: disruptive, uncertainty, everchanging vision, frustration, leaderless, lack of trust, fearful, poor relationships, and communication breakdown. Teachers observed that these conditions lead to low morale and a resistant culture in which people

are unwilling to try new things or get on board with a new leader for fear that he or she will not remain.

Summary

This chapter focused on literature regarding the relationship between job satisfaction and enjoyment, efficacy, and support systems available to teachers. The impact of job satisfaction on teacher retention was also discussed. The literature provides a wealth of common themes regarding job satisfaction.

Job satisfaction is related to working conditions. Additionally, “the relationship between workplace predictors and teachers’ intention to leave is mediated by teachers’ satisfaction and commitment” (You & Conley, 2015, p. 572; Ma & MacMillan, 1999). Another theme is the impact that job satisfaction has on teacher retention. While teachers’ perceptions of workplace conditions influence job satisfaction, teachers’ levels of job satisfaction or dissatisfaction are predictive of teachers’ intentions to leave a school. Furthermore, factors that teachers identify as promoting job satisfaction have also been identified as factors that influence retention (Ladd, 2011; Richardson, 2017; You & Conley, 2015).

Literature indicates a positive relationship between self-efficacy and job satisfaction. In particular, increased self-efficacy predicts higher job satisfaction (Aldridge & Fraser, 2016; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010; von der Embse et al., 2016). The literature also reveals a common theme regarding teacher autonomy and its benefits as a vehicle for increased self-efficacy and improved teacher morale (Guenzler, 2016; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2014; Wright, 2018).

The need for support systems is well documented throughout the literature on job satisfaction and retention. For beginning teachers in particular, the importance of

mentorship emerges as a significant theme (Ingersoll, 2012; Knutowski, 2014; North Carolina State Board of Education, 2010; Phelan, 2010; Wills, 2014). In addition to support for beginning teachers, the literature is replete with findings that support from school administrators is instrumental in influencing teacher job satisfaction and retention decisions (Boyd et al., 2011; Rademacher, 2017; Richardson, 2014).

While there are many common themes woven throughout the fabric of this literature review, the literature on self-efficacy and available support highlights two glaring contradictions. First, Reilly et al. (2014) yielded findings that there is no significant relationship between self-efficacy and job satisfaction. This result is not supported in any of the other literature reviewed. Second, in Norwood's (2016) study, findings indicated there were differences among principal leadership practices but no significant difference among teacher morale at the different schools. This result is inconsistent with other literature, which asserts that principal support and leadership has a significant impact on teacher morale.

Tolliver (2018) conducted a quantitative study comparing job satisfaction of Title I teachers to that of non-Title I teachers in North Carolina. The researcher analyzed 2016 NCTWC Survey results along with North Carolina School Report Cards for four schools – two were designated as Title I and two were not. The sample size included 110 individual responses from the teachers at these four selected schools, and *t* tests and chi-square tests were conducted to determine statistical significance of responses. Results indicated that Title I designation has a negative impact on job satisfaction. Teachers from the Title I schools reported lower job satisfaction in four areas of the NCTWC Survey, equal job satisfaction in two areas, and higher job satisfaction in only one area.

Chapter 3 discusses the methodology for the study. The researcher employed a

mixed methods mini case study design to answer the research question: What are the identifiable factors that influence teacher retention in Title I middle schools?

Chapter 4 presents the results of the completed mixed methods study in written and visual formats. The results are compared to the body of literature from Chapter 2 to determine if the findings are consistent with previous research. Chapter 5 discusses specific parallels or contradictions between the study's findings and literature.

Additionally, the researcher utilized existing research along with this study's findings to make specific recommendations for policy, practice, or further research.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Overview

Chapter 3 discusses the methodology for the proposed study. The researcher employed a mixed methods mini case study design to ascertain the factors that influence teacher retention in Title I middle schools. To collect quantitative data, the researcher utilized a Job Satisfaction Survey (Bilz, 2008) that focuses on the impact of working conditions, self-efficacy, and support systems for teachers. Survey responses were given in a Likert rating scale format ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Responses were analyzed for the percent of teachers who agree with each statement given. The qualitative data were collected through a voluntary focus group consisting of three teachers representing one school participating in the study. Questions for the focus group drew upon the literature, addressed elements from the Job Satisfaction Survey, and sought to answer the research question: What are the identifiable factors that influence teacher retention in Title I middle schools?

Participants

The researcher conducted mixed methods mini case studies at four Title I middle schools in a suburban school district in North Carolina. The district is among the 10 largest school districts in the state of North Carolina. The schools included in the research were Beta Middle School, Gamma Middle School, Sigma Middle School, and Upsilon Middle School. Schools Beta, Gamma, Sigma, and Upsilon represent the regular Title I middle schools in the district; the researcher did not include any separate or special schools in the study.

School Sites

Beta, Gamma, Sigma, and Upsilon Middle Schools experience teacher turnover at

a similar rate to the national average of 20% annually. All three schools have enjoyed slight reductions in teacher turnover since the 2014-2015 school year. Table 1 shows the teacher turnover trend data for the schools. It should be noted that during this time, Beta Middle School, Sigma Middle School, and Upsilon Middle School each experienced a change in leadership.

Table 1

Teacher Turnover Trends, 2014-2017

School	16-17	15-16	14-15	3-Year Average
Beta Middle	17	11	23	17
Gamma Middle	26	29	32	29
Sigma Middle	21	12	23	19
Upsilon Middle	16	11	16	14

Beta Middle School is located in a rural area and serves approximately 530 students. The racial composition of Beta Middle School is 59% Caucasian, 25% African American, 12% Hispanic, and 4% Other. Ninety-nine percent of the students at Beta Middle School receive free and reduced lunch benefits. According to the North Carolina School Performance Grade formula, Beta Middle School met growth in 2018, with 41.5% proficiency.

Every 2 years, teachers in North Carolina are afforded the opportunity to provide anonymous feedback on their working conditions through the NCTWC Survey from The New Teacher Center. The survey gives affirmative statements regarding nine aspects of working conditions: time, facilities and resources, community support and involvement, managing student conduct, teacher leadership, school leadership, professional development, instructional practices and support, and overall satisfaction. Teachers use a Likert agreement scale to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with the given statements. Responses are analyzed at the state level, and the results are reported

back to the public in terms of “percent agree,” which accounts for all respondents who chose “agree” or “strongly agree.” Higher percentages indicate higher levels of satisfaction (NCTWC, 2018). Table 2 shows the average of NCTWC Survey results for Beta Middle School from the years 2014, 2016, and 2018. The results indicate a drop in satisfaction ratings over time, from 80% overall satisfaction in 2014 to 48% overall satisfaction in 2018. Beta Middle School experienced a change in leadership over the course of the time period indicated in this table.

Table 2

Beta Middle School NCTWC Survey Results: 3-Year Average

Category	Percent Agree
Time	56
Facilities and Resources	80
Community Support and Involvement	69
Managing Student Conduct	65
Teacher Leadership	69
School Leadership	71
Professional Development	72
Instructional Practices and Support	83
Overall Satisfaction	65

Gamma Middle School is an inner-city school serving approximately 660 students. The racial composition of Gamma Middle School is 50% African American, 24% Caucasian, 19% Hispanic, and 7% Other. Ninety-eight percent of students at Gamma Middle School receive free and reduced lunch benefits. According to the North Carolina School Performance Grade formula, Gamma Middle School exceeded growth in 2018 with 51.1% proficiency. Table 3 shows the average of NCTWC Survey results for Gamma Middle School from the years 2016 and 2018. The results from 2016 and 2018 are quite similar, and the lack of results in 2014 is indicative of an 18% response rate, which is too low to report. Gamma Middle School experienced a change in leadership

over the course of the time period indicated in this table.

Table 3

Gamma Middle School NCTWC Survey Results: 2-Year Average

Category	Percent Agree
Time	54
Facilities and Resources	82
Community Support and Involvement	67
Managing Student Conduct	70
Teacher Leadership	64
School Leadership	68
Professional Development	66
Instructional Practices and Support	84
Overall Satisfaction	58

Sigma Middle School is a large inner-city school whose population consists of nearly 800 students. The racial composition of Sigma Middle School is 42% Caucasian, 36% African American, 18% Hispanic, and 4% Other. Ninety-seven percent of Sigma's students receive free and reduced lunch benefits. According to the North Carolina School Performance Grade formula, Sigma Middle School exceeded growth in 2018 with 47.6% proficiency. Table 4 shows the average of NCTWC Survey results for Sigma Middle School from the years 2014, 2016, and 2018. The results indicate an increase in satisfaction over time from 67% overall satisfaction in 2014 to 90% overall satisfaction in 2018. Sigma Middle School experienced two changes in leadership over the course of the time period indicated in this table.

Table 4

Sigma Middle School NCTWC Survey Results: 3-Year Average

Category	Percent Agree
Time	64
Facilities and Resources	84
Community Support and Involvement	62
Managing Student Conduct	70
Teacher Leadership	79
School Leadership	79
Professional Development	78
Instructional Practices and Support	84
Overall Satisfaction	78

Upsilon Middle School is a small inner city school serving just over 300 students. The racial composition of Upsilon Middle School is 48% African American, 23% Caucasian, 21% Hispanic, and 8% Other. Ninety-nine percent of Upsilon's students receive free and reduced lunch benefits. According to the North Carolina School Performance Grade formula, Upsilon Middle School exceeded growth in 2018 with 42.5% proficiency. Table 5 shows the average of NCTWC Survey results for Upsilon Middle School from the years 2014, 2016, and 2018. The results indicate that satisfaction peaked in 2016 and has decreased slightly. Upsilon Middle School experienced a change in leadership over the course of the time period indicated in this table.

Table 5

Upsilon Middle School NCTWC Survey Results: 3-Year Average

Category	Percent Agree
Time	72
Facilities and Resources	81
Community Support and Involvement	70
Managing Student Conduct	73
Teacher Leadership	86
School Leadership	88
Professional Development	89
Instructional Practices and Support	93
Overall Satisfaction	94

In North Carolina, persistently low-performing schools are eligible to apply for state reform intervention through the Department of Public Instruction. There are different reform models including restart, transformation, turnaround, and closure. Upsilon Middle School is currently in its second year of state turnaround reform with a School Improvement Grant of approximately \$1.9 million over the course of 5 years. According to the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (2018), the following strategies should be utilized to realize turnaround reform:

1. Replace the principal.
2. Rehire no more than 50% of the staff.
3. Implement strategies to recruit and retain staff.
4. Provide ongoing job-embedded professional development.
5. Adopt a new governance structure.
6. Implement a vertically aligned instructional program.
7. Promote continuous use of data (including formative, interim, and summative).
8. Provide increased learning time.

9. Provide appropriate community services and supports.

School Improvement Grants are awarded in amounts between \$50,000 and \$2,000,000 per year for each school the state intends to serve. Upsilon Middle School uses some of that grant money to provide incentives to its staff. There is a stipend of \$6,000 to each teacher per year during the life of the grant. Additionally, perfect attendance is incentivized financially.

Data Collection

Methods for gathering data included a survey that was distributed to every teacher and a focus group with selected teachers. The survey examined factors that potentially hold great importance in the effort to retain teachers. Factors the researcher explored included teacher enjoyment in the current position, personal efficacy, and the support systems in place. To achieve the desired data collection, the researcher used the Job Satisfaction Survey (Appendix; Bilz, 2008) developed by Dr. Julie Bilz for her own doctoral research. The survey was validated prior to its original use and publication. The researcher obtained Dr. Bilz's permission to use her survey instrument. Surveys were voluntary and anonymous for participants, and the data were collected in an online format to maintain confidentiality.

The focus group composition was also voluntary. Participants who filled out the online survey instrument had an opportunity to state whether they would like to participate also in a focus group. The researcher achieved data triangulation in this study by two means: data source triangulation and methodology triangulation. Data source triangulation entails using evidence from different types of data sources. The researcher accomplished this by studying employees at four Title I middle schools with different demographic compositions. Methodology triangulation is combining two methods to

gather data. The researcher triangulated methodology by using a survey and focus groups to gather data. Data triangulation validates and verifies the research findings by cross-referencing multiple groups and data sets. This assisted the researcher in drawing powerful conclusions about retaining teachers in the Title I middle school setting.

Maxwell (2012) stated that qualitative research depends upon purposeful sampling – “particular settings, persons, or events are deliberately selected for the important information that cannot be gotten as well from other choices” (p. 235). The researcher employed purposeful sampling to select four Title I middle schools with key differences in their student populations including population size, racial composition, and community makeup. Maxwell went on to discuss threats to and tests of validity in qualitative research design. In addition to triangulation, he suggested testing for comparison and generalization particularly in multisite studies. In the instance of implicit comparison, Maxwell encouraged multisite studies. The researcher must utilize the literature regarding typical cases along with personal knowledge of a phenomena to ascertain the distinctions found therein. Internal generalization is key to qualitative research, meaning that the results drawn from the small sample population should be applicable to the case as a whole. External generalization is important to a certain extent, and this study sought to make some external generalizations to Title I middle schools and to practice or policy that could be adjusted in order to retain teachers in that setting. “The generalizability of qualitative studies usually is based, not on explicit sampling of some defined population to which the results can be extended, but on the development of a theory that can be extended to other cases” (Maxwell, 2012, p. 246).

According to Yin (2014), “the case study is used in many situations to contribute to our knowledge of individual, group, organizational, social, political, and related

phenomena” (p. 4). The case study is a suitable method when the researcher seeks to explore that which is happening currently in a given context. Although multiple-case study design requires a considerable amount of time and effort to complete, multiple-case design results are more compelling than those of a single-case study design because the results must be replicated across cases. The multiple-site mini case studies presented in this research achieved external validity through replication logic – recreating the findings in more than one context (Yin, 2014).

Data Analysis

In order to analyze the data collected through this mixed methods design, the researcher employed quantitative data analysis procedures for the job satisfaction survey responses and qualitative procedures for the focus group. Because the job satisfaction survey is designed as a Likert agreement scale, the researcher converted the responses into quantitative data prior to analyzing them. For the purposes of this study, the researcher converted the Likert agreement scale responses to percentages. Percentages of strongly disagree, somewhat disagree, neither disagree nor agree, somewhat agree, and strongly agree were calculated by dividing the number of categorical responses by the total number of participants and multiplying by 100. This procedure allowed the researcher to ascertain which elements of job satisfaction may be more influential to teacher retention.

The qualitative methods used to analyze focus group data included thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and micro-interlocutor analysis (Onwuegbuzie, Dickinson, Leech, & Zoran, 2009). Thematic analysis procedures included reviewing the focus group transcriptions to generate initial codes. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), “Codes identify a feature of the data...that appears interesting to the analyst” (p.

18). After codes were developed, the researcher set about identifying themes as well as theme levels. To assist in this process, the researcher employed such strategies as mind maps and theme tables for organizing themes appropriately (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher also utilized micro-interlocutor analysis in addition to thematic analysis (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009). Micro-interlocutor analysis allowed the researcher to document individual focus group members' contributions or lack thereof to the group discussion. Such detailed analysis of responses helps stay the researcher from overgeneralizing the group consensus. The researcher employed a data collection tool, seen in the Figure, in which codes indicate individuals' levels of consensus.

Focus Group Question	Member 1	Member 2	Member 3	Member 4	Member 5	Member 6
1						
2						
3						
...						

The following notations can be entered in the cells:

A = Indicated agreement (i.e., verbal or nonverbal)

D = Indicated dissent (i.e., verbal or nonverbal)

SE = Provided significant statement or example suggesting agreement

SD = Provided significant statement or example suggesting dissent

NR = Did not indicate agreement or dissent (i.e., nonresponse)" (p. 8)

Figure. Matrix for Assessing Level of Consensus in Focus Group.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to identify key factors that influence teacher retention in Title I middle schools. The research contained in this study is designed to inform administrators and build capacity for them to support teachers, boost teacher efficacy, and influence their attitudes toward teaching in the Title I middle school setting. This chapter includes a report of the data gathered through the Job Satisfaction Survey in conjunction with selected responses from the focus group. Additionally, this chapter illuminates the various themes present in the data and an analysis of how the focus group data affirm findings from the survey.

Participants

The Job Satisfaction Survey developed and validated by Dr. Julie Bilz (2008) was utilized to gauge the satisfaction levels of teachers currently serving in the Title I middle school setting. The researcher coordinated with the principals of Beta, Gamma, Sigma, and Upsilon Middle Schools to distribute the Job Satisfaction Survey to their respective staffs. The survey window remained open for 4 weeks from December 17, 2018 until January 11, 2019. The researcher left the survey window open for an extended period of time due to the winter holidays falling within the window. Upon returning from winter break on January 2, 2019, the survey had collected 16 responses. The researcher called upon principals to send out the survey link a second time and ultimately gleaned 41 responses. This equates to a response rate of approximately 30%.

The researcher sought to select a focus group that is representative of each school in the study by allowing 10-12 participants, with a minimum of two participants from each school. Twelve teachers responded to the survey stating that they would be willing

to participate in the focus group. Only one teacher from Gamma Middle School volunteered for the focus group. A follow-up communication was sent to the teachers at Gamma Middle School to solicit additional volunteers, but none replied. Google Calendar invitations were sent to the 12 focus group volunteers indicating the date, time, and location where the focus group would take place. Five teachers confirmed their attendance; three teachers came to the focus group. These three teachers were all associated with Upsilon Middle School. The focus group discussion lasted 58 minutes, during which time the researcher took field notes, engaged in micro-interlocutor analysis of participation, and kept a record of how much time the participants spent talking about each topic.

Data Analysis

The 41 responses to the Job Satisfaction Survey were analyzed for the percentage of agreement or disagreement to each survey item. All survey items are worded positively, meaning that agreement with the statement is indicative of higher satisfaction levels. Table 6 shows the total percentages of responses. Disagree type responses include somewhat or strongly disagree. Neutral responses include neither disagree nor agree. Agree type responses include somewhat or strongly agree. The overall majority of agree type responses indicates that the teachers who took the survey are experiencing greater levels of satisfaction in their current positions. Based on the tone of the focus group and remarks that were made, the researcher understood that the focus group participants are currently quite satisfied in their positions and plan to retain those positions.

Table 6

Job Satisfaction Survey Response Totals

Response Type	Percentage
“Disagree” Type Responses	27.3
“Neutral” Type Responses	13.1
“Agree” Type Responses	59.7

While conducting the focus group, the researcher utilized a micro-interlocutor analysis matrix to record individual focus group members’ contributions or lack thereof to the group discussion. The researcher used codes within the matrix to document verbal indications of agreement or dissent including sounds or words as well as nonverbal indications of agreement or dissent like nodding of the head or other such body language. Micro-interlocutor analysis of the focus group responses reveals an overall consensus among focus group participants. For every focus group question, each participant contributed at least one significant example. The second prompt to focus group question 7 regarding the support of colleagues only garnered a significant example from one respondent. There was very little disagreement among the focus group members throughout the discussion. For most questions, the two respondents who were listening to the third speak indicated agreement through verbal or nonverbal cues multiple times throughout the third person’s answer. Throughout the course of the focus group, the participants seemed to develop their own norms for how the focus group should proceed. Micro-interlocutor analysis notes indicate an unspoken norm that the participants should take turns speaking in much the same order each question, beginning with the respondent to the researcher’s left and working clockwise around the table.

The survey questions were divided into seven categories that correspond to the focus group questions: enjoyment, efficacy, professional development, curriculum and

instruction, teacher input, support from colleagues, and support from administration. In order to analyze the survey data by theme, the researcher focused on questions related to one theme at a time. For the 10 questions regarding enjoyment, the percentage for each category (disagree, neutral, and agree) was calculated by adding all of the responses in the category for the individual survey questions related to enjoyment and dividing by the total number of responses to report the percentage in each category by theme. Table 7 presents information on how teachers responded to the 10 survey questions regarding enjoyment.

Table 7

Percentage of Job Satisfaction Survey Responses by Category: Questions Regarding Enjoyment

Disagree	Neutral	Agree
38%	11%	45%

More participants disagreed with Questions 8 (adequate and appropriate time is available for planning), 10 (I can complete school related activities such as grading papers, planning lessons and meeting with colleagues during school time), 23 (student disruptions are minimal), and 33 (teachers have reasonable class sizes to meet the educational needs of all students) than agreed. Question 10 in particular received the lowest percentage of agree-type responses for this theme. These results were slightly outweighed by a large percentage of agreement with four other statements. Question 35 (my job provides steady and secure employment), for example, received 90% agree-type responses. This is consistent with the overall 7% majority of agree-type responses.

The first focus group question was, “how does your level of enjoyment or satisfaction at your job affect your retention decisions?” Teachers spent 5 minutes and 40

seconds discussing this topic. A respondent stated, “I think when I wake up in the mornings, it’s got to be somewhere I really enjoy going to and that’s what helps make my decision.” Other respondents agreed and spoke at length about enjoying their students, their coworkers, and their administrators. A respondent commented that “It’s imperative – if I’m not happy, I’m leaving.” Micro-interlocutor analysis of responses to the first focus group question revealed that one respondent provided two significant examples of how enjoyment affects her retention decisions, to which the other respondents indicated agreement either verbally or nonverbally. The other two respondents each gave one significant example for this question. The level of agreement to the questions regarding enjoyment is consistent with the overall level of agreement to all survey questions, indicating that survey participants are experiencing satisfaction. The focus group comments expand on the survey data by providing affirmation that enjoyment influences overall satisfaction and retention.

For the two questions regarding self-efficacy, the percentage for each category (disagree, neutral, and agree) was calculated by adding all of the responses in the category for the individual survey questions related to self-efficacy and dividing by the total number of responses to report the percentage in each category by theme. Table 8 presents how teachers responded to the two questions regarding self-efficacy.

Table 8

Percentage of Job Satisfaction Survey Responses by Category: Questions Regarding Self-Efficacy

Disagree	Neutral	Agree
12%	12%	76%

While the summary results were that 76% of respondents agreed with the

statements about efficacy, it is noteworthy that Question 36 (I get a feeling of accomplishment in my job) only had 5% disagreement. Consistent with the average percentage of agree-type responses within the theme, this remarkably low number indicates that the vast majority of teachers gain a sense of self-efficacy from their teaching assignment at a Title I middle school.

The second focus group question was, “how does self-efficacy (your confidence in your own ability to do your job well) affect your retention decisions?” Teachers spent 6 minutes and 34 seconds discussing this topic. A respondent talked about the confidence she gains from coworkers. She stated, “It’s still a learning experience, and that’s why I love the teachers that I work with because they help me. It has helped me to listen to others and learn and be confident as I progress year after year.” Another respondent discussed the confidence that she could gain if she had another teacher to plan with like people in other subject areas, saying, “I do feel valued in the building ... everyone is helpful, but it would be nice to have that for myself.” A respondent spoke about her need to feel valued and the administrator’s role in that: “Administrators have got to have my back for me to feel like I have value in that building, particularly with the student population that we work with ... I need to feel like I matter.” Micro-interlocutor analysis of responses to the second focus group question reveals that the first significant example given by a respondent received no response from the other participants; however, the second and third significant examples were met with multiple verbal and nonverbal indications of agreement from the other participants. The positive focus group responses confirm the survey data, which indicates a high level of satisfaction in regard to self-efficacy.

For the five questions regarding professional development, the percentage for

each category (disagree, neutral, and agree) was calculated by adding all of the responses in the category for the individual survey questions related to professional development and dividing by the total number of responses to report the percentage in each category by theme. Table 9 presents how teachers responded to the five questions regarding professional development.

Table 9

Percentage of Job Satisfaction Survey Responses by Category: Questions Regarding Professional Development

Disagree	Neutral	Agree
21%	27%	52%

The theme of professional development had the highest percentage of neutral-type responses than any other theme. Consistent with the average number of neutral responses to the survey, Questions 26 (teachers are given time to share their ideas from professional conferences they have attended) and 27 (teachers are able to help determine the content of professional development) gleaned large percentages of neutral-type responses, 32% and 34% respectively; also of note is Question 28 (overall, I am satisfied with the professional development offered at my school) having the highest percentage (59%) of agree-type responses within the theme of professional development.

The third focus group question was, “how does professional development influence your retention decisions?” Teachers spent 4 minutes and 31 seconds discussing this topic. Respondents commented that training is important for them. A respondent spoke about the necessity of training in a Title I school saying, “I think that is one of the key elements of teaching is professional development. You’ve got to have it ... it’s vital for a Title I school, vital.” A respondent discussed the administrator’s expectations of

teachers and the role that professional development plays in those expectations: “If that’s your expectation, for me to feel proficient at my job, please train me.” Another respondent shared a different perspective as a teacher who recently left private schools. She said,

A big part of why I left private schools ... was to make sure I was growing as an educator.... That was a big push for me to get out of that and come back into the public school system. We’ve had plenty of training.

Micro-interlocutor analysis of responses to the third focus group question reveals agreement among the participants. Similarly to the previous question, one respondent offered a significant example, to which the other participants did not respond. The second and third examples given did, however, receive several indications of verbal or nonverbal agreement. The focus group responses indicating the desire for professional development and the satisfaction gleaned from receiving the desired amount of professional experiences serve to reiterate the survey results.

For the nine questions regarding curriculum and instruction, the percentage for each category (disagree, neutral, and agree) was calculated by adding all of the responses in the category for the individual survey questions related to curriculum and instruction and dividing by the total number of responses to report the percentage in each category by theme. Table 10 shows how teachers responded to the nine questions regarding curriculum and instruction.

Table 10

Percentage of Job Satisfaction Survey Responses by Category: Questions Regarding Curriculum and Instruction

Disagree	Neutral	Agree
35%	9%	54%

Five of the nine survey questions within this theme were met with disagree-type responses that were greater than or equal to the agree-type responses; however, Questions 6 (I have the chance to try out new ideas) and 19 (student learning is my school's number one goal) received a large number of agree-type responses and outweighed the others. The analysis of individual questions in this case is somewhat inconsistent with the overall majority of agree-type responses shown in the thematic analysis.

The fourth focus group question was, "how does curriculum and instruction affect your retention decisions?" Teachers spent 4 minutes and 47 seconds on this discussion. Two respondents contributed most to this topic; they both talked about a teacher who has considered leaving the district due to curriculum. There was a great deal of negative discussion regarding some district-level facilitators and the lack of resources available to particular subject areas, with the word frustration being used 10 times. A respondent said, "I think you'll find teachers getting frustrated and 'Why should I stay? I'm not getting any help' ... I think it makes a huge difference." Micro-interlocutor analysis of responses to the fourth focus group question reveals that two respondents shared significant, negative examples about curriculum and instruction. The remaining respondent contributed very little to the discussion, while the other two espoused their discontent, yet followed with a positive example that she had experienced. This positive example received no response from the other two participants. The data seem to indicate that the majority of teachers taking the Job Satisfaction Survey were not experiencing that same level of frustration as was discussed in the focus group.

For the five questions regarding teacher input, the percentage for each category (disagree, neutral, and agree) was calculated by adding all of the responses in the category for the individual survey questions related to teacher input and dividing by the

total number of responses to report the percentage in each category by theme. Table 11 shows how teachers responded to the five questions regarding teacher input into school decisions.

Table 11

Percentage of Job Satisfaction Survey Responses by Category: Questions Regarding Teacher Input

Disagree	Neutral	Agree
26%	16%	58%

While the summary results of the questions regarding teacher input into school decision-making were that 58% of respondents agreed, a noteworthy item within this theme is Question 11. Seventy-eight percent of respondents agreed that members of the school improvement team are elected by teachers. This is consistent with a focus group response associated with this theme that the respondent feels a strong sense of input based upon her service as a member of the school improvement team.

The fifth focus group question was, “how does your level of input into school decisions influence your retention decisions?” Teachers discussed this topic for 3 minutes and 21 seconds. Respondents talked about needing to have a voice and know that the administration has listened to them. A respondent celebrated the fact that she is on the school improvement team and has the opportunity to voice any concerns or ideas through that avenue. A respondent said, “It’s important to me ... to feel that I’ve been listened to legitimately, and that they (the administrators) see that a change does need to be made, and they trust us enough to make that decision.” Micro-interlocutor analysis of responses to the fifth focus group question reveals that one participant’s significant example was met with an abundance of agreement from the other two respondents. They

offered verbal and nonverbal indications of agreement throughout the example. Respondents in the focus group mentioned having a voice and helping to reach solutions a total of 10 times. The content of the focus group discussion indicates that the participants feel satisfied with their current level of input. This affirms the survey results that the majority of participants in the survey are experiencing satisfaction in that area.

Table 12

Average Job Satisfaction Survey Responses: Questions Regarding Support of an Orientation, Induction, or Mentor Program

Disagree	Neutral	Agree
NA	NA	NA

There were no survey questions that directly related to support from an orientation, new teacher induction, or mentorship program; however, the researcher added a specific focus group question about this area of support. The researcher asked, “how does the support of a teacher induction, orientation, or mentor program affect your retention decisions?” The researcher felt this was an important item for discussion because the body of literature regarding support systems that influence teacher retention includes a great deal of information about orientation, new teacher induction, and mentor programs. Although this topic does not appear independently in the survey, previous research indicates that the subject of support should include an examination of support specifically for beginning teachers. Participants spent 4 minutes and 53 seconds discussing this topic. Micro-interlocutor analysis of responses to the sixth focus group question reveals that one respondent’s example was met with dissent from another participant. Although the other participant agreed with statements about mentorship, she openly disagreed with positive remarks about the district’s induction program.

Respondents agreed that the new teacher induction program for success (TIPS) offered by the district was not helpful to them as a Title I teacher because the strategies offered were not appropriate for their students. A respondent said, “I don’t have fluffy kids. I don’t have fru-fru children. I have street smart; I have hard ... the TIPS stuff for me was not helpful”; however, all teachers talked extensively about the positive aspects of having a strong mentor. Throughout the discussion, mentors were mentioned 11 times. A respondent made the remark, “Well me as a new teacher, having a good mentor is major for me.... The encouragement, even when things are not going well, just motivating me and talking to me.... Especially for Title I schools, it’s just necessary.”

The focus group discussion regarding mentorship serves to reinforce the literature about the importance of mentoring experiences. Wills (2014) chose to examine the influence of the mentoring experience on beginning elementary and secondary teachers’ decisions to remain in teaching through the lens of organizational socialization using a qualitative case study design. The study revealed that the most beneficial mentoring activity was the opportunity to work directly with the mentor. Mentors contributed to the new teachers’ support system by conferencing with them, performing informal observations with meaningful feedback, and modeling best practices. Participants agreed that school leadership supported the entire mentoring process, and five of the 12 new teachers reported that the mentor program directly influenced their decision to remain in teaching (Wills, 2014).

For the three questions regarding the support of colleagues, the percentage for each category (disagree, neutral, and agree) was calculated by adding all of the responses in the category for the individual survey questions related to the support of colleagues and dividing by the total number of responses to report the percentage in each category

by theme. Table 13 shows how teachers responded to the three questions regarding support from colleagues.

Table 13

Percentage of Job Satisfaction Survey Responses by Category: Questions Regarding the Support of Colleagues

Disagree	Neutral	Agree
8%	10%	82%

An analysis of individual survey items within this theme indicates a high level of consistency between the agree-type responses represented in all three questions.

Question 37 (I feel comfortable discussing educational issues with my colleagues) had zero disagree-type responses. This is the only question within the survey to receive zero of any response types.

The seventh focus group question was, “how does the support of your colleagues affect your retention decisions?” Teachers talked at length about this topic and spent 11 minutes and 18 seconds discussing it. A respondent made the initial statement, “I have to get along with who I teach with. I just have to. I have had situations where I did not, and I very much considered leaving and they left first.” Themes throughout this discussion were harmony and professionalism, mentioned 14 and 10 times respectively. A respondent talked about her principal’s insistence that the professional learning communities (PLCs) operate autonomously and support one another without outside direction. When the discussion got slightly off track, the researcher asked a secondary probe. The probe was, “what do you all think about [Respondent’s] first statement that there have been times that she considered leaving when she could not have that strong, supportive relationship?” Other respondents said they agree with her and have felt that

way in the past. Micro-interlocutor analysis of responses to the seventh focus group question reveals that each participant offered two significant examples on this topic. They agreed with one another about the importance of positive peer relationships or support from colleagues and wanted to share a number of stories about those relationships. Following the secondary probe, only one respondent provided a significant example to answer the probe, and a second respondent indicated agreement. The amount of focus group discussion about the importance of collegial support is echoed in the vast majority of agree-type responses to the survey. Survey participants indicate a high level of satisfaction in this area, and the focus group responses suggest that the participants are currently satisfied with the support they gain from colleagues.

For the six questions regarding the support of administration, the percentage for each category (disagree, neutral, and agree) was calculated by adding all of the responses in the category for the individual survey questions related to the support of administration and dividing by the total number of responses to report the percentage in each category by theme. Table 14 shows how teachers responded to the six questions regarding support from administration.

Table 14

Percentage of Job Satisfaction Survey Responses by Category: Questions Regarding the Support of Administration

Disagree	Neutral	Agree
11%	10%	79%

While the overall results of the questions related to this theme were 79% agree-type responses, there were three questions that stood out as having an overwhelmingly positive response. Questions 29 (the principal has confidence in the expertise of the

teachers) and 30 (teachers are able to talk openly about frustrations and worries with the principal) each received 88% agree-type responses; Question 31 (I feel respected by the principal) received 85% agree-type responses. These individual results are consistent with the thematic analysis and are indicative of some desired traits or behaviors among administrators in Title I middle schools.

The eighth focus group question was, “how does the support of your administration affect your retention decisions?” Teachers spent 3 minutes and 20 seconds succinctly stating the importance of administrative support. Micro-interlocutor analysis of responses to the eighth focus group question reveals that all respondents answered immediately and in unison. Each participant offered a significant example, which received indications of agreement from the others. Respondents commented that administrative support is “everything.” All respondents agreed to this summary. Themes presented throughout this discussion were visionary leadership and respect. A respondent’s first statement captures the consensus of the group:

If you can’t look up to your administrator as your leader, if you can’t respect them, if you can’t feel that they are moving the school and the children and the staff in the right direction, then I can’t be part of that. You have to feel like your administrator has it all together and it’s somebody that you can look up to.

The researcher also asked the focus group the following: “Of the things we have talked about today, is there one that stands out and affects your retention decisions more than others?” Participants spent 6 minutes and 14 seconds discussing this topic. Respondents agreed that administrative support was the one thing that affects retention decisions more than others. A respondent said, “Your administrators are the ones that really – they’re the biggest people that would make me stay. Because people come and

go but your leader is what will keep you there.” A respondent talked about the administrator setting the school’s tone and culture as well as sharing in teachers’ excitement. A respondent confirmed that she has left a school due to administrative issues in the past, saying, “I mean I loved the people I worked with – it wasn’t about the people I worked with – but you had to have somebody at the helm that was truly leading.” Micro-interlocutor analysis of responses to the ninth focus group question reveals that all participants agree vehemently with statements that administration is the most important factor in Title I middle school teacher retention. One respondent’s first example was met with a total of 25 indications of agreement, either verbal or nonverbal, from the other participants. This is by far the most agreement displayed throughout the focus group discussion. Most of the survey participants agreed with statements about the support of their administration, suggesting high levels of satisfaction in that area. The focus group participants talked extensively about how much they enjoy their principal, and the focus group responses affirm the survey data.

Finally, the researcher gave participants the opportunity to discuss anything that had not been asked about that would affect their retention decisions. During the 5 minute and 53 second discussion of this question, teachers mentioned love for the Title I population of students and relationships with students 11 and 15 times respectively.

Throughout the discussions surrounding various questions and themes of teacher retention, the participants routinely talked about the administrator or the administrator’s role. The only questions in which administrators were not specifically mentioned were Question 4 regarding curriculum and instruction and Question 6 regarding the support from a teacher induction, orientation, or mentor program; however, administrators assign mentors to beginning teachers, so all of the discussion surrounding the value of

mentorship has an indirect relationship to administration. This finding, coupled with the participants' answers to Question 9, that administrative support is the overarching factor affecting retention, indicates that the school administration plays a significant role in Title I middle school teachers' retention decisions.

The body of literature pertaining to teacher retention includes references to the importance of all of the themes presented in the Job Satisfaction Survey and the focus group. Results from this study suggest that some of these themes are less influential than others. Enjoyment as evidenced by general working conditions, professional development, curriculum and instruction, and teacher input into school decisions did not emerge as the elements of job satisfaction that most influence teacher retention among the participants. Some individual questions pertaining to these areas garnered somewhat dichotomous responses from the participants. For example, five of 10 questions within the theme of enjoyment received a greater percentage of disagree-type responses than agree-type; however, a few questions with extremely high agree-type responses negated the contradictory results. The same is true for individual questions within the theme of curriculum and instruction.

As previous research has indicated, job satisfaction influences teacher retention. Richardson (2017) expounds upon this concept with a mixed methods explanatory design study utilizing a comparison of the 2014 and 2016 NCTWC Survey responses from four selected high schools as well as a focus group interview. Participants were 30 teachers from four high schools within a single North Carolina school district. The researcher examined themes from the focus group in comparison to two years' NCTWC Surveys. The focus group produced four themes that promote job satisfaction and four retention themes. The data indicate that the following promote job satisfaction: collegial support

and collaboration, exposure to administrative support, commitment to teaching, and salary or incentives. The data indicate that the following promote teacher retention: mission or calling to teach, feeling valued and supported by school administrators, adequate pay and benefits, and collegial cooperation among teachers. A significant outcome of this study is that the job satisfaction themes repeated themselves as retention themes.

Within the survey data, three themes emerged as having the vast majority of the respondents agree: efficacy (76% agree), support of colleagues (82% agree), and support of administration (79% agree). The focus group data also produced three themes as having been discussed for the longest period of time: efficacy (6 minutes and 34 seconds), support of colleagues (12 minutes and 27 seconds), and support of administration (9 minutes and 34 seconds). The consistency between the level of job satisfaction evident in the survey results and the amount of time spent discussing these specific themes during the focus group points to a conclusion that these factors are significant influences on teacher retention in Title I middle schools. Chapter 5 will include a discussion of the literature related to this data, the conclusions that were drawn, and the researcher's recommendations based on the results of this study.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Overview

Previous research (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Ingersoll, 2001) has indicated that Title I middle schools experience difficulty retaining teachers. Among the aspects of school that are negatively impacted by high teacher turnover rates are student achievement, finances, school culture, and administrative duties. Identifying key factors that influence teacher retention in Title I middle schools will help school and district leaders influence teachers to stay. The purpose of this study is to identify those factors.

This study sought to answer a singular research question: What are the factors that influence teachers' decisions to retain their positions in a Title I middle school? It followed a mixed methods mini case study design. To collect quantitative data, the researcher utilized a Job Satisfaction Survey (Bilz, 2008) that focuses on the impact of working conditions, self-efficacy, and support systems for teachers. Survey responses were given in a Likert rating scale format ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Responses were analyzed for the percent of teachers who agree with each statement given. The qualitative data were collected through a voluntary focus group consisting of three teachers representing one school participating in the study. Questions for the focus group drew upon the literature and addressed elements from the Job Satisfaction Survey.

Limitations

This study was limited by three key factors. First, the researcher is a school administrator within the studied district. It is possible that teachers did not feel comfortable responding to the survey or focus group because of perceived repercussions.

Second, the timing of this study proved to be poor. The survey window included winter holidays, and the focus group date occurred after the middle school semester change.

The aforementioned factors contributed to a third limitation of a low response rate. The survey response rate was approximately 30%, with 41 of an estimated 140 possible responses. The focus group originally had 12 volunteers, six of whom confirmed their attendance at the scheduled meeting, yet there were ultimately three participants.

Additionally, the three participants were assigned to the same school.

Discussion of Findings

The results of the study reveal a consistency between themes that garnered the most agreement from respondents to the survey and themes that focus group participants spent the most amount of time discussing. When compared to the micro-interlocutor analysis of these themes, the data suggest that the focus group respondents were in agreement regarding these topics. Survey questions about self-efficacy received an average of 76% agree-type responses, and the focus group discussion about self-efficacy lasted 6 minutes and 34 seconds. All focus group participants offered a significant example on the subject of efficacy. The researcher recorded 16 indications of agreement and no indication of dissent, either verbal or nonverbal, during the discussion. Survey questions about the support of colleagues received an average of 82% agree-type responses, and the focus group discussion about support from colleagues lasted 12 minutes and 27 seconds. All focus group participants provided at least two significant examples on the subject of support from colleagues. The researcher recorded another 16 indications of agreement and no indication of dissent, either verbal or nonverbal, during the discussion. Finally, survey questions about support of administration received an average of 79% agree-type responses, and the focus group discussion about support from

administrators lasted 9 minutes and 34 seconds. All focus group participants gave a significant example on the subject of support from administration. The researcher recorded 24 indications of agreement and no indication of dissent, either verbal or nonverbal, during the discussion. In addition to this consistency, the study results suggest that administrative support is the overarching factor that influences teacher retention in Title I middle schools. Micro-interlocutor analysis of the responses to the question about the factor which most influences teacher retention indicates that all focus group participants offered at least one significant example stating that administration is the key factor. The researcher recorded 47 indications of agreement and no indication of dissent, either verbal or nonverbal, during the discussion.

Findings regarding self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is among the three themes that emerged as a shared element between the survey and the focus group. The number of participants who agreed with positive statements about self-efficacy in relationship to job satisfaction, the micro-interlocutor analysis indicating agreement among the focus group participants on this topic, and the duration of time spent talking about the importance of self-efficacy to teacher retention decisions make this finding significant to the study. This finding serves to answer the research question by providing one significant factor that influences teacher retention in Title I middle schools. Within the theme of self-efficacy, the survey contained two questions. One of those questions (I get a feeling of accomplishment in my job) received 5% disagree-type responses. This low number was achieved by just two respondents answering in that fashion. As previously stated through research, higher job satisfaction is a predictor of retention. Aldridge and Fraser (2016) affirmed these findings with their research on the relationship between self-efficacy and job satisfaction. Aldridge and Fraser used two questionnaires to examine 781 high school

teachers' perceptions of their school climate in relation to their self-efficacy and job satisfaction. One questionnaire focused on environmental factors and another focused on self-efficacy and job satisfaction. Researchers performed univariate normality and confirmatory factor analysis. They found that principal support, affiliation, and goal consensus all had direct, positive relationships to self-efficacy. Additionally, the results indicate that self-efficacy has a direct, positive relationship to job satisfaction.

Findings regarding support of colleagues. Support of colleagues is among the three themes that emerged as a shared element between the survey and the focus group. The number of participants who agreed with positive statements about support of colleagues in relationship to job satisfaction, the micro-interlocutor analysis indicating agreement among the focus group participants on this topic, and the duration of time spent talking about the importance of collegial support to teacher retention decisions make this finding significant to the study. Additionally, a specific statement from the focus group discussion stands out as an indication that the support of colleagues is highly influential to teacher retention decisions. A respondent said, "I have to get along with who I teacher with. I just have to. I have had situations where I did not and I very much considered leaving." This finding serves to answer the research question by providing one significant factor that influences teacher retention in Title I middle schools. Within the theme of support from colleagues, the survey contains three questions. One question (teachers have time to collaborate with other colleagues concerning educational issues) received 71% agree-type responses, while the other two questions (I feel comfortable discussing educational issues with my colleagues; overall, I am satisfied with my relationship with my colleagues) received 88% agree-type responses. The question regarding comfort discussing educational issues with colleagues was the only question

within the survey to receive zero disagree-type responses. This finding is consistent with the body of literature regarding support of colleagues.

In a mixed methods case study of urban school teacher retention focusing specifically on the impact of collaboration, Blye (2012) surveyed 29 teachers from a large district in California. Blye utilized a survey instrument, two focus groups, and individual interviews to collect data for this study. The data revealed that the majority of staff were satisfied with their positions with no intent to move or leave. Ninety percent of the staff reportedly viewed collaboration as a form of professional learning, and there was a strong positive correlation between survey questions about job satisfaction and those about learning opportunities provided to staff. Blye's study revealed that there exists a negative correlation between teachers' perceptions of ability to meet in small groups and teachers who consider moving to other schools; additionally, there is a strong positive relationship between time to plan and collaborate and job satisfaction. The results indicate that collaboration increases the likelihood that a teacher will remain at his or her current site.

Findings regarding support of administration. Administrative support is among the three themes that emerged as a shared element between the survey and the focus group. The number of participants who agreed with positive statements about support from administration in relationship to job satisfaction, the micro-interlocutor analysis indicating agreement among the focus group participants on this topic, and the duration of time spent talking about the importance of administrative support to teacher retention decisions make this finding significant to the study. When asked, "How does the support of administration influence your retention decisions," the focus group respondents answered immediately and in unison. They stated "It's everything." When asked, "Of the things we have talked about today, is there one that influences your

retention decisions more than the others,” the focus group participants agreed that the support of administration is the overarching factor that influences their choices to return. This finding serves to answer the research question by providing one significant factor that influences teacher retention in Title I middle schools. The data and the literature indicate that the support of administration is critical to teacher retention decisions.

A group of researchers (Boyd et al., 2011) completed a voluntary survey of 4,360 first-year teachers in New York City in 2005. In 2006, the same respondents received a follow-up survey – one for teachers who returned a second year and another for teachers who left teaching after their first year in the profession. The group measured movers, leavers, and stayers through multinomial logistic regression. Eighty percent of the teachers remained at the same school, 10% moved to a new school, and 10% left teaching. Six school contextual factors were identified: teacher influence, administration, staff relations, students, facilities, and safety. Of these factors, administration was the only one that significantly predicts teacher retention decisions.

The Importance of Administrative Support

Although each theme presented in the Job Satisfaction Survey and the focus group questions has some value in promoting and determining teacher retention in Title I middle schools, the importance of administrative support is the primary finding of this study. Administrative support was found to be inherent in all other themes. The focus group data indicated that regardless of the theme under examination at the time, the participants found a way to mention administrative support in some way during the discussion. Administrative support is the common thread that binds enjoyment, self-efficacy, professional development, curriculum and instruction, teacher input, and other support systems together.

Within the theme of support from administration, the survey contains six questions. Four of these questions received agree-type responses in excess of 80%. These questions pertain to principal behaviors like displaying confidence in and respect for teachers as well as taking a personal interest in teachers' accomplishments and providing a listening ear. The data indicated that these specific behaviors, when displayed by the school principal, increase teacher job satisfaction and influence retention in Title I middle schools. This finding is consistent with the literature regarding leader behavior and its influence on teacher retention.

Participants in a study of how teachers' perceptions of principal leadership behaviors affect retention included 114 teachers from six public schools in Atlanta, Georgia (Melvin, 2011). The researcher utilized an online format of the Teachers' Perception of Principal Leadership produced by the Atlanta Federation of Teachers. Melvin (2011) hypothesized that teachers who were determined likely stayers would rate the principal more highly on the leadership scale than likely leavers. A significant finding of this study was, "for every point increase in the overall leadership score, teachers were five times more likely to return to their current job" (Melvin, 2011, p. 65).

Implications for Practice

The purpose of this research was to ascertain identifiable factors that influence teacher retention in Title I middle schools with a focus on factors that district or site-based leaders could control or change. Due to the primary finding that administrative support is the overarching factor that influences teacher retention in Title I middle schools, the implications presented include strategies for leader development and best practices for leadership.

School district leaders can influence teacher retention in Title I middle schools

through focusing on leader development for those schools. This means providing ongoing professional development opportunities to the leaders who are already placed at the helm of Title I middle schools. Baruti Kafele (2015), an educational consultant and renowned expert in the field of educational leadership, asserted, “Successful school leadership requires ongoing professional development as well as consulting with peers in your school and district” (p. 62). Ongoing professional development for school leaders may include experiences that are spread out over time rather than condensed into a short workshop format (Prothero, 2015), thus the researcher recommends that school districts provide professional experiences specifically designed for Title I middle school principals in a small group format on a monthly basis. This could be accomplished during regularly scheduled principal meetings with the superintendent and senior leadership. Examples of experiences offered in these monthly meetings may include targeted presentations from current district leaders, retired Title I middle school leaders, current Title I middle school leaders teaching their peers, or an outside speaker with pertinent experience. Based on data from the researcher’s work, themes of these sessions may include the following: addressing and improving staff morale, empowering teachers, driving the school’s professional development trajectory, working with the Curriculum and Instruction department as the instructional leader, ensuring teacher input in school decisions, strengthening the school’s mentor program, fostering collegial support, and the importance of administrative support to teacher retention. The suggested ongoing sessions for Title I middle school principals would ensure that these important leaders receive valuable professional experiences at each principal’s meeting throughout the school year.

District leaders should design a leadership selection process with teacher retention

in mind. When considering new leadership for Title I middle schools, the data from this study indicate that district personnel would be wise to consider the leadership behaviors that the prospective candidate displays. In light of the finding that questions regarding specific leadership behaviors received high levels of agreement on the Job Satisfaction Survey and these same behaviors were discussed in the focus group, it follows that these behaviors are important to teacher retention. One way to assess a leader's behavior and its compatibility with teacher retention is to examine the NCTWC Survey results from the leader's current school. Part of the leadership selection process should then include this behavior assessment.

This study, in conjunction with previous literature (Knutowski, 2014; Wills, 2014), suggests that mentorship is an invaluable experience for teachers. The same emphasis should be placed on mentorship for new principals who have been placed at Title I middle schools and for experienced principals who are newly placed at these schools. One school district in the southern United States has instituted a principal mentorship program, which utilizes retired administrators as well as a network of current administrators in similarly situated schools. Mentors visit frequently and conduct private meetings, observations, and walk-arounds during these visits. Mentees express positive feelings about this program ("Mentoring new administrators," n.d.).

School principals can influence teacher retention in Title I middle schools by focusing on best practices for leadership within those schools. The data from this research study indicate an interconnectedness of the principal to how teachers experience school. This is evidenced by the focus group discussion and the participants' insistence on talking about the school administrator regardless of the theme presently being examined. Additionally, the focus group discussion in this study suggested that the

principal directly influences teacher retention decisions. Principals who adhere to best practices for their leadership behavior are likely to increase teacher satisfaction and thereby influence teacher retention. Servant leadership is a model that mirrors the behaviors explored through the Job Satisfaction Survey.

The term servant leadership was coined by Greenleaf (1977). Through his musings on a particular piece of literature, Greenleaf reached the conclusion that “the great leader is seen as servant first, and that simple fact is the key to his greatness” (p. 19). Greenleaf went on to elaborate that

A new moral principle is emerging which holds that the only authority deserving one's allegiance is that which is freely and knowingly granted by the led to the leader in response to, and in proportion to, the clearly evident servant stature of the leader. (p. 20).

In light of this definition, which Greenleaf asserted, it is the leader's responsibility to earn the trust, respect, and compliance of those whom they wish to lead. The servant leader does not demand subordination; instead, the organization's followers willingly dedicate themselves to following. This willingness has much to do with “the care taken by the servant first to make sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served” (Greenleaf, 1977, p. 22). The servant leader adopts a self-last attitude, which makes devotion to the followers evident.

After many years of studying Greenleaf's (1977) writing about servant leadership, Spears (2010) developed a comprehensive list of 10 characteristics which servant leaders embody: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of the people, and building community. These characteristics can be easily applied to the concept of educational leadership. The first

four characteristics of listening, empathy, healing, and awareness speak to the qualities of a reflective practitioner and her ability to build trusting relationships within the organization. The final six characteristics – persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of the people, and building community – sound much like the ideal visionary leader who takes the organization to new heights with the full support of the followers within the organization. A key characteristic mentioned here is that of persuasion. According to Spears, the servant leader builds consensus within the group and convinces members of the group rather than coerces them using her positional authority (p. 28). This is perhaps the hallmark of servant leadership: People follow because they want to – because they trust the leader and believe in her vision, not because the leader said so.

In a study of teacher retention and satisfaction with a servant leader as principal, Shaw and Newton (2014) ran a correlation using three variables: principals' levels of servant leadership behaviors as perceived by teachers, level of job satisfaction among teachers, and intended retention rate among teachers. Data were gathered through surveys of 234 teachers across a state. The findings of the study support the conjecture that teachers will likely remain in their positions and feel more satisfied when the principal is a servant leader. There was a significant positive correlation between perception of principals' levels of servant leadership and job satisfaction as well as teachers' intended retention (in education and at their current school).

Recommendations for Future Research

While the researcher still believes that the mixed methods mini case study design was the correct choice for this study, the limited number of participants in both phases of the research presents a challenge. More credibility could be given to the findings if the

study were replicated with a higher response rate to the quantitative phase and no fewer than six participants in the qualitative phase. A replication study is recommended when “the replication study if carried out has the potential to empirically support the results of the original study, either by clarifying issues raised by the original study or extending its generalizability” (“Replication Study,” 2009, p. 2)

In addition to a replication study, several opportunities for future research present themselves as a result of this study’s findings. A mixed methods study of identifiable factors that influence teacher retention in other Title I middle schools outside of the targeted district could serve to reinforce the findings from this researcher’s work. Participants in this study reported reasonably high levels of job satisfaction and discussed the importance of administrative support to retention decisions. Although the methodology need not be a true replication in this instance, future research including different middle schools may produce similar findings.

Another mixed methods study of identifiable factors that influence teacher retention in all Title I schools within a district could also validate the findings from this study. This recommended future research would include teachers from elementary schools as well. An investigation of the data produced by such a study may reveal commonalities or dissimilarities between factors that are important to elementary school teachers in comparison to secondary school teachers.

Recommended quantitative studies for future research include leader behaviors or leader qualities that influence teacher retention in Title I middle schools. Because the participants in this study reported high satisfaction with support from administration and an overarching importance of administrative support, a study that details the specific behaviors that leaders may display which will influence teacher retention is needed.

Previous research has suggested that administrative support coupled with leadership style is highly influential on teachers' retention decisions (Learning Policy Institute, 2017). A future study on key components of leadership style would serve to inform district and site-based leadership.

Additionally, the researcher recommends an investigation of factors that may motivate or entice administrators to accept and retain a position as the principal of a Title I middle school. This exploration may reveal desired benefits, compensation packages, or support systems that would appeal to prospective school leaders.

Conclusions

The notion of movers, leavers, and stayers (NCES, 2016; Shen, 1997) in which the number of movers from high-poverty schools is double that of movers from low-poverty schools gives rise to the need for this study on factors that influence teacher retention in Title I middle schools and possible future studies to include all Title I schools. Although movers do not leave the profession entirely, they do leave Title I schools at an alarming rate. Ebbing the flow of movers is vital to increasing the quality of the teaching force in Title I middle schools. The findings of this study serve to affirm previous research that discusses the importance of job satisfaction, self-efficacy, collegial support, and administrative support to teacher retention decisions. The primary finding of this study, that administrative support is the most important factor influencing retention decisions, suggests that a district-level focus on leader selection for Title I middle schools along with ongoing professional development and principals' focus on their own leadership behaviors may positively influence teacher retention in those schools.

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Appendix

Job Satisfaction Survey

Job Satisfaction Survey

This anonymous survey is being conducted as part of a doctoral research study on teacher retention in Title I middle schools. Participation is voluntary. Please answer the following questions about the conditions at your school and your current job satisfaction.

1. Teachers decide what curriculum to teach.
 - a. Strongly disagree
 - b. Somewhat disagree
 - c. Neither disagree or agree
 - d. Somewhat agree
 - e. Strongly agree

2. Teachers determine the pace of the curriculum.
 - a. Strongly disagree
 - b. Somewhat disagree
 - c. Neither disagree or agree
 - d. Somewhat agree
 - e. Strongly agree

3. Teachers decide how to teach the curriculum.
 - a. Strongly disagree
 - b. Somewhat disagree
 - c. Neither disagree or agree
 - d. Somewhat agree
 - e. Strongly agree

4. Teachers can add to or delete the curriculum.
 - a. Strongly disagree
 - b. Somewhat disagree
 - c. Neither disagree or agree
 - d. Somewhat agree
 - e. Strongly agree

5. Teachers are free to use any teaching strategy they see fit in the classroom.
 - a. Strongly disagree
 - b. Somewhat disagree
 - c. Neither disagree or agree
 - d. Somewhat agree
 - e. Strongly agree

6. I have the chance to try out new ideas.
 - a. Strongly disagree
 - b. Somewhat disagree
 - c. Neither disagree or agree
 - d. Somewhat agree
 - e. Strongly agree

7. Teachers have time to collaborate with other colleagues concerning educational issues.
 - a. Strongly disagree
 - b. Somewhat disagree
 - c. Neither disagree or agree
 - d. Somewhat agree
 - e. Strongly agree

8. Adequate and appropriate time is available for planning.
 - a. Strongly disagree
 - b. Somewhat disagree
 - c. Neither disagree or agree
 - d. Somewhat agree
 - e. Strongly agree

9. Interruptions during class by office personnel, school leadership, and/or others is kept to a minimum.
 - a. Strongly disagree
 - b. Somewhat disagree
 - c. Neither disagree or agree
 - d. Somewhat agree
 - e. Strongly agree

10. I can complete school related activities such as grading papers, planning lessons, and meeting with colleagues during school time.
 - a. Strongly disagree
 - b. Somewhat disagree
 - c. Neither disagree or agree
 - d. Somewhat agree
 - e. Strongly agree

11. Members of the school improvement team are elected by teachers.
 - a. Strongly disagree
 - b. Somewhat disagree
 - c. Neither disagree or agree
 - d. Somewhat agree
 - e. Strongly agree

12. Teachers determine the textbooks and supplemental materials they use in their classrooms.
 - a. Strongly disagree
 - b. Somewhat disagree
 - c. Neither disagree or agree
 - d. Somewhat agree
 - e. Strongly agree

13. Teachers are involved in making important decisions at the school.
 - a. Strongly disagree
 - b. Somewhat disagree
 - c. Neither disagree or agree
 - d. Somewhat agree
 - e. Strongly agree

14. Many teachers express their personal views at faculty meetings.
 - a. Strongly disagree
 - b. Somewhat disagree
 - c. Neither disagree or agree
 - d. Somewhat agree
 - e. Strongly agree

15. Faculty meetings are used for problem solving or professional development.
 - a. Strongly disagree
 - b. Somewhat disagree
 - c. Neither disagree or agree
 - d. Somewhat agree
 - e. Strongly agree

16. Teachers have input into discipline policies and procedures.
 - a. Strongly disagree
 - b. Somewhat disagree
 - c. Neither disagree or agree
 - d. Somewhat agree
 - e. Strongly agree

17. Student disruptions are handled quickly and efficiently by school administration.
 - a. Strongly disagree
 - b. Somewhat disagree
 - c. Neither disagree or agree
 - d. Somewhat agree
 - e. Strongly agree

18. Student discipline policies are clear, consistent, and fair.
 - a. Strongly disagree
 - b. Somewhat disagree
 - c. Neither disagree or agree
 - d. Somewhat agree
 - e. Strongly agree

19. Student learning is my school's number one goal.
- Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Neither disagree or agree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
20. Most of the students are capable of the standards I am trying to teach them.
- Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Neither disagree or agree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
21. Teachers are able to decide discipline for students in their classrooms.
- Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Neither disagree or agree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
22. Teachers have adequate time to help students learn.
- Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Neither disagree or agree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
23. Student disruptions are minimal.
- Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Neither disagree or agree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
24. Teachers can choose what in-service trainings to attend.
- Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Neither disagree or agree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree

25. Teachers have a variety of professional development options from which to choose.
- Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Neither disagree or agree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
26. Teachers are given time to share their ideas from professional conferences they have attended.
- Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Neither disagree or agree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
27. Teachers are able to help determine the content of professional development.
- Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Neither disagree or agree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
28. Overall, I am satisfied with the professional development offered at my school.
- Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Neither disagree or agree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
29. The principal has confidence in the expertise of the teachers
- Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Neither disagree or agree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
30. Teachers are able to talk openly about frustrations and worries with the principal.
- Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Neither disagree or agree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree

31. I feel respected by the principal.
- Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Neither disagree or agree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
32. The principal takes a personal interest in teachers' professional development and accomplishments.
- Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Neither disagree or agree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
33. Teachers have reasonable class sizes to meet the educational needs of all students.
- Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Neither disagree or agree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
34. I have the chance to work alone in my job.
- Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Neither disagree or agree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
35. My job provides steady and secure employment.
- Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Neither disagree or agree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
36. I get a feeling of accomplishment in my job.
- Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Neither disagree or agree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree

37. I feel comfortable discussing educational issues with my colleagues.
- Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Neither disagree or agree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
38. Overall, I am satisfied with the work conditions (environment, facility, resources) of my job.
- Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Neither disagree or agree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
39. Overall, I am satisfied with the pay and security of my job.
- Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Neither disagree or agree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
40. Overall, I am satisfied with my relationship with my colleagues.
- Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Neither disagree or agree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
41. Are you willing to participate in a focus group on teacher retention?
- Yes
 - No

If yes, please provide your contact information below.

*Email address is being collected for contact and scheduling of focus group only.

Name, First and Last

School

*Email Address