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Staying Put: An Analysis of Teacher Retention in a Rural, Low-Performing, High-Poverty School District in Northeastern North Carolina

By
LaKesia Y. Boone

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

Gardner-Webb University
2018

Approval Page

This dissertation was submitted by LaKesia Y. Boone 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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To the students I previously taught and those I currently serve, you inspired me to be the best educator possible and deepened my love for the profession.

Abstract

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Many teachers have seen the role of an educator gradually change in the last decade. Some have considered leaving their chosen careers due to low morale, low pay, and the constant adoption of education initiatives that do not work. Many teachers have stated the reason they have remained in education is due to the intrinsic rewards such as making a difference in the life of a student and the love or enjoyment education provides. This study sought to determine factors that impact retention of teachers in a rural, low-performing school district in northeastern North Carolina that serves high populations of children of poverty. The criteria used to select the rural school district for this study were based on the high percentages of minority students, families living below the poverty line, students eligible for free and reduced meals, and low student achievement on standardized tests. The literature on teacher retention in rural, low-performing, high-poverty school districts is sparse. Much of that research literature does not address specific challenges of retaining teachers in rural areas serving at-risk students with low student achievement. There is little to no research that addresses why teachers are interested in rural education or remain teaching in rural school districts (Boylan & McSwan, 1998; Davis, 2002). Discovering what factors contribute to teacher retention in high-poverty schools may be especially important (Marston, 2014). This qualitative study includes a review of related literature to job satisfaction and a discussion of Herzberg's Two-Factor Motivation Theory.

Table of Contents

	Page
Chapter 1 Introduction	1
Statement of the Problem	2
Statement of the Purpose	7
Scope of the Study	11
Research Questions	11
Significance of the Study	12
Definition of Terms	13
Assumptions	15
Limitations	16
Delimitations	16
Theoretical Framework	17
Chapter 2: Review of Literature	19
Rural Specific Challenges to Retention	20
Difficult Working Conditions	29
No Child Left Behind Requirements for Highly Qualified Teachers	31
National Programs and Initiatives for Rural and Small Schools	32
Teacher Retention and Job Satisfaction	35
Hertzberg's Theory of Motivation	37
Conclusion	46
Chapter 3: Methodology	49
Research Design	49
Population and Sample	51
Research Participants	53
Individual Protocol	53
Interview Interviews	54
Data Collection	54
Data Analysis	56
Ethical Consideration	57
Summary	58
Chapter 4: Results	59
Introduction	59
Problem	59
Research Participants	61
Sources of Data	66
Data Analysis	66
Emerging Themes	67
Findings	74
Chapter 5: Conclusions	83
Background of the Study	83
Findings	83
Conclusions	87
Implications for Practice	87
Limitations	90
Recommendations for Future Research	90
References	93

Appendices

A	Approval of Study	106
B	Explanation of Table 1	108
C	Letter to Participants	110
D	Informed Consent Form	112
E	Approval Letter	115
F	Interview Protocol	117
G	IRB Approval Form	119
H	Explanation of Figure 1	121
I	Explanation of Figure 2	123
J	Explanation of Table 2	125
K	Explanation of Figure 3	127
L	Explanation of Figure 4	129
M	Explanation of Figure 5	131
N	Explanation of Figure 6	133
O	Explanation of Figure 7	135
P	Explanation of Figure 8	137
Q	Explanation of Figure 9	139
R	Explanation of Figure 10	141
S	Participant Response by Theme.....	143

Tables

1	Eligible Participants Identified by Human Resources	52
2	Demographic Information on Research Participants	62

Figures

1	Teacher Turnover in North Carolina in 2016-2017 by School District	60
2	The 30 Highest and Lowest Rural Counties in the State of NC (2007).....	61
3	Exploratory Diagram for Teacher A (NVivo)	69
4	Exploratory Diagram for Teacher B (NVivo).....	70
5	Exploratory Diagram for Teacher C (NVivo).....	71
6	Exploratory Diagram for Teacher D (NVivo)	72
7	Exploratory Diagram for Teacher E (NVivo).....	73
8	Exploratory Diagram for Teacher F (NVivo).....	74
9	Comparison Diagram of Themes 1and 2 (NVivo).....	78
10	Comparison Diagram of Themes 3and 4 (NVivo).....	81

Chapter 1: Introduction

Wanted: dedicated and loyal college-educated individuals who are willing to work excessively long hours for low pay and obtain advanced degrees without commensurate compensation. Applicant must be able to work under adverse conditions with unappreciative supervisors, parents, and students while keeping a positive attitude. Applicant must also work without adequate resources and support, assume multiple roles and responsibilities, and adopt the newest educational initiative without any hesitation. The applicant will be held accountable for the satisfaction and performance of the unappreciative (Dworkin, 2001).

Retaining teachers in rural, high-poverty schools is a 21st century challenge. Studies on the retention of teachers in rural schools are limited even though they face many of the same challenges their urban counterparts do. Rural and urban schools face many similar challenges, including students living in poverty; but, contrary to popular belief, the depth of poverty is often more severe in rural communities (Montgomery, 2010). Though urban and rural school districts share the same problems of teacher retention, urban schools receive more attention than rural schools and obtain assistance from research to solve this problem (Rutenberg, 2008). Similar research has discovered that there is a need for school systems to incorporate effective strategies that will encourage teacher retention (Darling-Hammond, 2003).

In northeastern North Carolina, the situation is dire. While the most recent report from the state department of education (2016-2017) shows that teachers are staying in the classroom, this is not true for the most rural, low-performing, high-poverty districts. Several school districts, where there are high concentrations of poverty, have a hard time holding on to teachers. Four of the five districts with the highest attrition and mobility

rates are in the northeastern part of the state (North Carolina General Assembly [NCGA], 2018, p. 16).

Problem

Teaching remains one of the largest occupations in the United States. Individuals are attracted to teaching through a highly personal set of motivations (Cohen, 2005). Public school districts in the United States are comprised of urban, suburban, and rural. Nearly half of the public school districts in the United States are designated as rural school districts (Hammer, Hughes, McClure, Reeves, & Salgado, 2005, p. 1). One quarter of the children in the United States attend schools in rural areas with nearly 25,000 people in the community, while “14% attend schools in even smaller places with fewer than 2,500 people” (Beeson & Strange, 2000, p. 1). Many researchers deem the issue of teacher retention in rural school districts to be even more serious than teacher retention in urban school districts (Davis, 2002; Hammer et al., 2005; Monk, 2007; Watts, 2016). For many small rural school districts across America, the effort to attract and retain teachers continues to be a major concern (Lowe, 2006). These districts often have low achievement, high poverty, and high percentages of racial minorities (Beckett, 2009). Many of these “hard-to-staff” districts have become places to leave, not places in which to stay. Teacher retention is a complicated issue that involves many factors. It is often discussed but rarely actually addressed (Marston, 2014).

Although most attention has been directed to teacher recruitment strategies, it holds little value if the teachers continue to leave the field of education. The Department of Labor estimates teacher attrition costs districts approximately 30% of the leaving employee’s salary, which, in turn, costs taxpayers over \$2.2 billion a year (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005). Researchers point to teacher retention as the key to solving

this current educational dilemma (Locklear, 2010). The problem in many rural districts is not recruiting; it is retention. The challenge of staffing schools becomes more acute when the district is labeled as “high-needs.” High-needs schools, as defined in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), are schools that are (a) located within urban or rural areas in which more than 30% of the student population comes from families with income levels below the poverty line, (b) within the top 25% of a state's schools as ranked by the number of unfilled teaching positions, or (c) located within urban or rural areas with relatively high percentages of teachers who are not certified or licensed, who teach out of field, or teach in schools with high teacher turnover rates (Amrein-Beardsley, 2012, p. 2).

Some individuals believe the issues concerning the retention of teachers stem from unwelcoming work environments that lack essential professional support (Griffin, 2007; Loeb, Darling-Hammond, & Luczak, 2005). That may be true in all school districts; however, rural communities face many challenges urban and suburban areas do not. Rural and small-town school districts are “uniquely challenged” in recruiting and, even more so, retaining teachers. The most common challenge is competing financially. While rural areas are developing more rapidly each year, the revenue in these areas for education is not (Kannapel & DeYoung, 1999; Lowery & Pace, 2001; Watts, 2016). Inequities in funding, which dictate salaries, make it difficult to attract and retain teachers. This situation limits the size and quality of their applicant pools. Some rural districts in other states have gone to court to try to obtain funding for teacher salaries equal to those in larger, more affluent districts. In 1993, a case was launched in South Carolina by a total of 43 rural districts. They alleged that the education financing system violated the state and federal constitutions because it allowed major disparities in per-

pupil spending between high- and low-wealth districts (Dessoiff, 2010). In the end, rural school leaders have relatively little outside financial support to guide them in overcoming educational challenges (Rutenberg, 2008). Due to many other financial restrictions, rural districts have very few incentives currently existing to attract expert teachers or teachers in general to teach in these settings (Berry & Ferriter, 2006; Dessoiff, 2010).

In addition to offering lower salaries, rural districts are in small and often remote communities with limited housing and amenities such as shopping and entertainment (which are particularly important for younger teachers, according to the experts). Nationally, teachers in the highest poverty schools at the top of their salary scale earn one-third less than those teachers in higher-income school districts (Darling-Hammond, 2003). A major issue for teachers in rural schools is the lack of suitable living quarters. Teachers who must drive long distances to work because of a lack of housing are more likely to leave their positions than teachers who live in or near the community where their school is located (Lowe, 2006). Housing and long commutes are not the only issue plaguing rural areas. The geographic isolation of many rural communities can mean limited job opportunities for teachers' spouses (Samarick, 2014). Rural schools and districts located on the outskirts of suburban areas have greater difficulty in retaining teachers (Hammer et al., 2005).

The workload is also a huge concern among rural teachers. They are often required to earn multiple teaching certificates because they are required to teach multiple subjects or grade levels within one site. While certification is an issue in some districts, research shows that rural districts also provide little opportunity for professional development and advancement (Dessoiff, 2010).

Further, it will be difficult for many rural teachers to obtain the required

certifications for all subject areas they teach because they are often separated by long distances from colleges and training facilities. Rural district officials reported in a U.S. Government Accountability Office (2004, p. 17) study that the limited availability of professional development opportunities posed challenges because even when professional development opportunities are found, the limited availability of substitute teachers in small districts makes it difficult to release teachers to attend training (Montgomery, 2010). There are still some smaller schools in the rural U.S. where multiple grades meet in the same classroom. Other schools require that teachers move with students, which means you might teach the same students from kindergarten through their later years. There is also a chance the school might require one to lead activities and events outside of work hours (Amrein-Beardsley, 2012; Dessoiff, 2010).

Low-performing rural schools face a more intense experience. The state of North Carolina labels a school as low performing when that school receives a school performance grade of D or F and a school growth score of “met expected growth” or “not met expected growth” as defined by G.S. 115C-83.15 (NCGA, 2011). One of the many challenges low-performing schools faced in the past was meeting the guidelines set forth by NCLB. The act required states to, among other educational reforms, guarantee that every teacher is qualified in their subject area. All core classes (science, history, math, English) were required to be taught by qualified teachers. Qualifications entailed the necessary degrees and certifications for teachers mandated by the Department of Education; and for rural schools, this demand proved difficult.

The Rural School and Community Trust (2005) contended, “poverty is the single strongest and most persistent threat to high student achievement” (p. 6). Schools that are rural and low performing usually share the characteristic of being high poverty.

Characteristics of high-poverty schools include large percentages of students on free and reduced lunch. Because of the attributes surrounding those in poverty, teachers' jobs tend to be more difficult and exhausting (Marston, 2014). According to Kopetz, Lease, and Warren-King (2006), students attending high-poverty schools are taught by more novice, uncertified, and less experienced teachers (McKinney, Berry, Dickerson, & Campbell-Whately, 2007). The educational realities, detrimental effects of poverty, and human despair that often depress low-income communities can prove to be quite overpowering for many teachers new to the profession and significantly contribute to high levels of teacher absenteeism, attrition rates, and teacher shortages (McKinney et al., 2007). Often, teachers who stay in high-poverty schools overcome challenges such as overcrowded classrooms and out-of-date textbooks. They also have faced issues with the community such as gang violence and impoverished neighborhoods (Marston, 2014). In 2001, Roscigno and Crowley reported that students living in poverty have lower levels of educational performance and of dropping out of school as opposed to their non-rural counterparts. More than a fifth of the nation's poorest performing high schools, the so-called dropout factories, are in rural areas (Dessoiff, 2010).

One of the most challenging issues of rural, low-performing and high-poverty schools is increasing parental involvement. In rural areas, the distance between school and home can be great. A lack of public and private transportation in rural areas and the distance between home, work, and school also prevents parents from becoming more involved. Research has shown that good attendance at parent-teacher conferences and other events was facilitated by the school's proximity to student homes (Samarick, 2014). Collectively, lower salaries, social and professional isolation, difficult working conditions, and NCLB requirements for highly qualified teachers can place rural schools

and districts at a competitive disadvantage in retaining teachers.

Purpose

The purpose of this research was to examine the unique issues that challenge rural schools with retaining teachers; specifically, to identify school-based factors associated with teacher retention in rural, low-performing, high-poverty schools. Teachers often cite specific teacher working conditions as reasons for leaving their teaching positions but not much research has been done on the reasons they stay. In fact, there is little research on why teachers stay in rural, low-performing school districts. The districts that usually serve high populations of children of poverty are far more likely to have challenges retaining teachers than other school districts due to significant differences in salary, benefits, and resources (Ingersoll, 2001). Research consistently shows that teachers often leave high-poverty, low-performing, at-risk schools because they have not been adequately prepared to teach in such challenging environments (Laine, 2008); however, additional research has shown that teacher retention is directly related to job satisfaction. Some of the most known antecedents of teacher job satisfaction include administrative support, school climate, positive working conditions, self-efficacy, and resiliency.

Administrative support. Administrative support refers to the involvement of principals and other school leaders in supporting teacher tasks and helping them in improvement of their teaching. Administrative support plays an important role in providing professional development opportunities to school teachers (Hirsch & Emerick, 2007; Tehseen & Hadi, 2015). According to research by Blase and Blase (2004), principals have a major influence on a new teacher's decision to stay. The principal of the school is the main leader who not only handles school operations but is also responsible for the growth of teachers' careers (Locklear, 2010). According to studies, a

successful school principal is the leader of the school and has a major impact on teacher intentions to stay in the profession due to their influence (Tehseen & Hadi, 2015).

Principal actions can have positive and negative consequences on teachers as well as the entire school climate. One study of South Carolina's teacher working conditions found that 25% of South Carolina teachers considered strong principal leadership as the most important factor in their decision to remain in their schools (Hirsch, 2005, p. 12).

Administrative support has the power to create an ambience where teachers feel supported and are more likely to stay (Griffin, 2007). The effects of the principal's leadership style relate to teacher satisfaction ratings and, consequently, retention (Blase & Blase, 2004; Locklear, 2010).

School climate. The National School Climate Center defines school climate as the quality and character of school life as it relates to norms, values, relationships, processes, and structures. It sets the tone for all teaching and learning done in the school environment. A school's professional climate and supportive methods can encourage teachers to stay and improve the school and student learning (Eberhard, Reinhardt-Mondragon, & Stottlemeyer, 2000). Strong collaboration and communication must take place within the school environment in order to improve student learning (Locklear, 2010). Although administrators are responsible for determining the climate and culture of a school (Fredericks, 2001; Griffin, 2007), when teachers are allowed to be a part of the decision-making process, they feel empowered and are more likely to accept the policies and rules that have been decided upon (Griffin, 2007; Ingersoll, 2001; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). A good leader who is caring and considerate makes a huge difference in the establishment of a positive school environment. Supportive actions from the administration can include more equitable treatment; support when dealing with parents,

students, and the community; and faculty involvement in school decision-making (Blase & Blase, 2004; Locklear, 2010). Having a voice in such issues also leads to less conflict between staff and students, resulting in higher morale and less turnover (Griffin, 2007; Ingersoll, 2002).

Positive working conditions. Earthman (2002) stated, “the condition of a school building not only influences student achievement, but can also influence the work and effectiveness of a teacher” (p. 8). Poor working conditions seem to be a major category for dissatisfaction among teachers and include a variety of areas including but not limited to workplace conditions, lack of collegial support, excessive paperwork, lack of planning time, and resources as well as unnecessary interruptions, job responsibilities, and duties (Futernick, 2007; Locklear, 2010; Luekens, Lyter, & Fox, 2004). In the 2014 North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions (NCTWC) survey, working conditions were found to play a vital role in student performance as well as teacher retention. Moreover, teachers viewed their working conditions similarly regardless of their years of experience. The items teachers ranked high for improving working conditions included planning time, technology and instructional supplies, professional development, and having a role in decision-making related to budget and the school improvement team. With an analysis of 90% of North Carolina schools encompassing all the school systems and 34,000 individual survey responses, the findings provided powerful data for teacher retention as well as student achievement. Even novice teachers need colleagues they can count on to ensure a positive working environment that supports all teachers. This provides an integrated professional culture and helps everyone to constantly improve learning within the framework of the school environment (Kardos, Johnson, Peske, Kauffman, & Liu, 2001).

Self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is the feeling a teacher has that they are making a difference in the lives and learning of students (Grant, 2006; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Locklear, 2010; Yost, 2006). A feeling of self-efficacy relates directly to teacher morale. The research found it contributed to increased teacher retention. Higher self-efficacy in teachers helps to retain teachers and lessen the teacher turnover rate; lessening the money that schools lose on separation, recruitment, hiring, incentives, and new employee induction and professional development (Watlington, Shockley, Guglielmino, & Rivka, 2010). Creswell (2012) stated that individuals with strong self-efficacy set themselves challenging goals and maintain a strong commitment to them. These teachers sustain efforts in the face of failure, quickly recover after failures or setbacks, attribute failure to insufficient effort or deficient knowledge or skills which are acquirable, and approach threatening situations with assurance that they can exercise control over them.

Resiliency. Resilience has been defined as positive adaptation in the context of great trials (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Bronwyn, 2000). According to Yonezawa, Jones, and Singer (2011), teachers who stayed in high-poverty schools have resilience. Resilience is affected by the social constructs and environment in which a person lives. Positive adaptations to adversity are often found within resilient people (Marston, 2014). Wolin and Wolin (1993) stated that resilient teachers have characteristics of good relationships, insight, initiative, independence, creativity, humor, and morality. Gupton and Slick (1996) said these teachers also possess persistence, determination, and optimism. Whatley (1998) said that self-reflection is also an important characteristic of resilient teachers. Patterson, Collins, and Abbott (2004) conducted a study to explore the strategies of resilient teachers. Major findings indicate that resilient teachers have a set of personal values that guide decision-making, operate a core of personal values, actively

seek professional development, do whatever it takes to help children, focus on children, and take charge to solve problems.

The purpose of this research was to examine the unique issues that challenge rural schools with retaining teachers; specifically, to identify school-based factors associated with teacher retention in rural high-poverty schools. Because rural districts experience difficulty in recruiting and retaining qualified teachers, scholars have suggested that an ideal recruitment and retention strategy would be to emphasize the benefits of rural schools; benefits such as attractive class size, genuine personal relationships, and a high degree of involvement in the decision-making process (Lemke, 1994; Malloy & Allen, 2007; Sargent, 2003).

Scope of the Study

This was a qualitative case study in which the researcher gathered information by interviewing six teachers from one school district in northeastern North Carolina. The group consisted of elementary, middle, and high school teachers. The purpose of these interviews was to gather insight as to why these teachers chose to continue to work in a rural, low-performing, high-poverty school district despite the high demands and the difficulties that come with teaching low socioeconomic children.

Research Questions

The following question was the framework for this study: What factors attributed to the choice to remain in a rural, low-performing, high-poverty school district? This research question was answered through the following sub-questions.

1. What factors led to teachers accepting employment in a rural, low-performing, high-poverty district?
2. What did teachers in rural, low-performing, high-poverty schools find most

enjoyable about their work?

3. What school-based factors are associated with teacher retention?

Significance

Although many researchers showed that there is a shortage in certain areas and states in the United States, there is little information that discusses the strategies that are being used by school districts in retaining teachers and the effectiveness of those strategies (Colgan, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 1999; Fetler, 1997; Griffin, 2007). This study provided a unique perspective on the issue of teacher retention in a rural, low-performing school district. In an effort to learn from those closest to the retention decision, the teachers themselves, this study reflected their perspectives. The study sought to uncover and reveal some of the complexities associated with teacher retention. The methodology of the study and presentation of findings revealed the unique issues associated with rural school districts and how, despite the obstacles, they retained teachers. These findings provided a case study of one particular rural, low-performing northeastern school district. It also provided researched best practices that individual school leaders might apply for improving teacher retention in their respective buildings. This study provided district leaders with researched best practices for improving teacher retention. It presented reasons teachers working in rural, low-performing and high-poverty schools gave for remaining despite the conditions. Without the research base to make the most informed decisions for increased teacher retention, rural districts and school administrators are more likely to make ineffective or inefficient policy decisions to retain their teaching staffs. It is through this lens that an examination of how these factors impact rural teacher retention can be of particular benefit to rural administrators, teachers, and students (Rutenberg, 2008). The results of this study were shared with the

participating school district and the recommendations for improving the current retention initiatives within the district. All members of the school district benefit from reviewing strategies that may be successful in retaining teachers. Information from this study aided school and district administrators in reviewing and understanding retention strategies. By making this a priority, administrators may also find that an increase in teacher retention causes improvements throughout the structure of their school or county.

Administrators have observed low teacher retention rates throughout school systems, especially in the areas of special education, mathematics, and sciences (Ingersoll, 2001). These teaching disciplines are especially difficult to staff in rural schools. A study that investigated teacher retention of rural, low-performing, high-poverty schools increases the potential impact on student achievement in these areas.

Examination into prior literature revealed that the majority of research on teacher retention looks at the issue from an economic, organizational, or policy perspective. Consequently, the majority of these works focused on quantitative methodologies; looked at teacher retention in terms of trends and correlations; and in many cases, examined factors that affect retention in isolation from other factors. In this study, qualitative research allowed the researcher to document details related to wants, desires, needs, behavior, emotion, personality, routines, and a variety of other information. The researcher chose a qualitative design because there was limited information about the personal aspects of a teacher's life experiences and how these experiences impacted the decision to remain in the teaching profession.

Definition of Terms

The following terms were defined to bring clarity to the study.

High-needs schools. Schools that are (a) located within urban or rural areas in

which more than 30% of the student population comes from families with income levels below the poverty line; or (b) within the top 25% of a state's schools as ranked by the number of unfilled teaching positions; or (c) located within urban or rural areas with relatively high percentages of teachers who are not certified or licensed, who teach out of field, or teach in schools with high teacher turnover rates (Public Education Network, 2011).

High-poverty. Refers to a single-family household making at or below \$12,140, two-person household making at or below \$16,460, and three-member household making at or below \$20,780 per year (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2018).

High-poverty schools. Refers to schools with 75% to 100% of their students on free or reduced lunch (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2018).

Hygiene-motivation theory (also called the two-factor theory). Hygienes are defined as those factors contributing to job dissatisfaction: supervision, salary, work environment, district and individual school policies, and relationships with coworkers. Motivators are considered as responsibility, recognition, promotion, achievement, the work itself, and professional/personal growth (Farthing, 2006).

Job satisfaction. Job satisfaction is defined as “simply how people feel about their jobs and different aspects of their jobs” (Farthing, 2006, p. 14).

Low-performing schools. Those that receive a school performance grade of D or F and a school growth score of “met expected growth” or “not met expected growth” as defined by G.S. 115C-83.15 (North Carolina General Statutes, 2011).

Minority students. Minority students are those of African-American, Asian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic, and American Indian/Alaskan Native ethnicities (Rural

School and Community Trust, 2005).

Resiliency. The ability to be able to bounce back or recover from difficult situations and challenges (Abiyou, 2017).

Retention. The continuous employment of a teacher in a school district beyond the probationary period (Redman, 2015).

Rural schools. Rural school districts are “more than 25 miles from an urbanized area and are also more than 10 miles from an urban cluster” (Beckett, 2009, p. 13).

Title 1. A program that provides financial assistance through state educational agencies (SEAs) to local educational agencies (LEAs) and public schools with high numbers or percentages of poor children to help ensure that all children meet challenging state academic content and student academic achievement standards (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

Teacher retention. This term is also used when referring to teachers who remain in the same school systems from 1 year to the next but change schools (Brown, Brown, & Wynn, 2007).

Teacher turnover. The collective term referring to teachers departing their current schools (Locklear, 2010).

Assumptions

There were several assumptions relative to this research study. The first assumption was the district selected for this study was to serve as a representative for all rural school districts in North Carolina. Second, the researcher assumed that schools in the district of study had experienced some success in the retention of its teachers. Next, it was assumed that job satisfaction influenced an intention to stay in or leave a teaching

job, which in turn influenced actual behavior. Additionally, this work assumed teachers who say they are satisfied with their jobs will also be more likely to stay in their current positions. Upon interviewing participants, the researcher assumed each respondent would answer honestly and without persuasion. Last, the researcher assumed that 100% of the teachers in the study would participate in the face-to-face interviews.

Limitations

The following were limitations to this study that needed to be addressed: The primary limitation was the admittedly small number of research participants. This limitation was due to two factors. First, in-depth interviewing was a time-intensive process for both researcher and participant. Second, the process of recording, transcribing, and cyclical reviewing of transcripts and looking for themes was time intensive. The second limitation was that although there were standard questions prewritten before each interview, they were viewed as a jumping off point for further exploration and questioning. The ability to ask follow-up questions afforded the researcher the opportunity to deeply examine the experiences of participants. Last, this study was limited to one high-poverty, low-performing, rural school district in northeastern North Carolina and did not necessarily represent opinions and thoughts of all teachers in teaching in high-poverty schools.

Delimitations

The primary delimitation associated with this study was that it excluded teachers from North Carolina. The researcher made this decision to ensure there was no bias associated with retention. The premise for this decision was based on the fact that a high number of teachers who are employed are from the area and are aware of the issues related to rural teacher retention. An additional delimitation was the site of the study.

The researcher chose the district of study as a site for the research because this is where they are employed.

Theoretical Framework

Human beings make decisions every day that impact their own personal ideals regarding quality of life. To understand human behavior, researchers are continuously analyzing why humans make life-changing decisions that impact their quality of life. The decision to remain in certain types of schools and districts in rural areas can be life altering. There are a number of theories that can be used to study teacher retention in a rural school district. This section contains the theoretical framework for the study. The theoretical framework was developed from a review of literature on teacher retention and job satisfaction of teachers. The framework of this study was based on the theoretical notion of Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory of Motivation. Herzberg's two-factor theory is probably the most widely known and accepted approach relating directly to job satisfaction (Haruna, 2013). The two-factor theory (also known as Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory and dual-factor theory) states that there are certain factors in the workplace that cause job satisfaction, while a separate set of factors cause dissatisfaction. It was developed by psychologist Frederick Herzberg, who theorized that job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction act independently of each other. The two-factor theory distinguishes between motivators (e.g., challenging work, recognition for one's achievement, responsibility, opportunity to do something meaningful, involvement in decision-making, sense of importance to an organization) that give positive satisfaction arising from intrinsic conditions of the job itself such as recognition, achievement, or personal growth; and hygiene factors (e.g., status, job security, salary, fringe benefits, work conditions, good pay, paid insurance, vacations) that do not give positive

satisfaction or lead to higher motivation, though dissatisfaction results from their absence. The term hygiene is used in the sense that these are maintenance factors. These are extrinsic to the work itself and include aspects such as company policies, supervisory practices, or wages/salary. The state of North Carolina began surveying teachers during 2004-2005 concerning these same factors. The researcher of this study chose to focus only on the motivators or intrinsic factors associated with teacher retention.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this research was to examine the unique issues that challenge rural schools with retaining teachers; specifically, to identify school-based factors associated with teacher retention in rural, low-performing, high-poverty schools. A challenge facing all rural research is the lack of a single definition of rural. The Rural Policy Research Institute (2006) identified nine different rural definitions commonly used in research (Miller, 2012). Research in rural education is in its infancy; however, over half of all operating regular school districts and approximately one third of all public schools were in rural areas (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2013).

Information on effective rural teacher recruitment and retention is limited, and states as well as school districts are clamoring for guidance from studies on best practices. Educators and policymakers recognize the need to expand retention efforts and are responding with a range of programs to entice potential candidates into the field and keep them there. Prior studies highlighted key factors to include in any analysis of teacher retention; however, they provided only minimal insight on how the teacher retention picture in rural schools may differ from those in non-rural schools (Miller, 2012, p. 4).

Ingersoll and Smith (2003) agreed that while recruitment and retention go hand in hand, it is more important to address retention. Even though the loss of new teachers plays a major role in the teacher shortage, pouring more teachers into the system will not solve the retention problem (Redman, 2015). Chapter 2 reviews literature relevant to teacher retention and identifies important factors that resulted in teacher job satisfaction. The current literature for this review focused on topics closely related to teacher retention

and job satisfaction including administrative support, positive working conditions, self-efficacy, and resiliency. The review examined the issue of teacher retention in a rural, low-performing, high-poverty school district and revealed both general and rural-specific problems related to teacher recruitment and retention (Hammer et al., 2005).

The literature focusing specifically on rural teacher retention is limited. Most rural-focused studies rely on descriptive statistics of survey data from administrators and teachers to highlight potential causes of low teacher retention in rural schools (Miller, 2012). A look at current rural-specific and general literature shows agreement that successful recruitment and retention practices share several characteristics which can be categorized as strategic, specific, and sustained. A distinguishing characteristic of rural retention is the importance of community “rootedness” in countering isolation. Much of this literature emphasizes difficulties in urban retention and recruitment (Hammer et al., 2005). Rural difficulties are often mentioned in passing, but rural-specific data and examples are rarely included. It appears that rural-specific literature on the topic has not kept pace with other literature on the topic (Montgomery, 2010).

Rural Specific Challenges to Retention

Rural schools, particularly high-poverty rural schools, often have difficulty hiring and retaining qualified teachers, perhaps in part since the funding offered was inadequate to attract new teachers to isolated communities (Maranto & Shuls, 2012). Turnover is highest among high-poverty, high-minority schools. In nearly every state, some schools are hard to staff because of geographic teacher shortages. Notably, rural school districts may face certain distinct challenges (Maranto & Shuls, 2012). The challenge centers on identifying teachers who are both qualified and willing to teach in hard-to-staff schools. Typically, hard-to-staff schools include those in highly urban and rural areas, especially

those schools serving minority or low-income students. Shortages also exist in certain geographic regions in the country (the southeast, southwest, and the west) and in particular specialties such as special education, bilingual education, and math and science education (Montgomery, 2010; Murphy, DeArmond, & Guinn, 2003; National Association of State Boards of Education, 1998).

Rural-specific literature identifies four primary challenges faced by rural schools and districts: lower pay, geographic and social isolation, difficult working conditions, and NCLB requirements for highly qualified teachers (Hammer et al., 2005, p. 3).

Collectively, these challenges can place rural schools and districts at a competitive disadvantage when recruiting, hiring, and retaining teachers. Rural districts reported that their greatest challenges in recruiting and retaining teachers are geographic and social isolation as well as being in close proximity to higher paying districts (Hammer et al., 2005, p. viii). The greatest shortage is among teachers who are both qualified and willing to teach in traditionally hard-to-staff schools, including urban and rural schools (Ingersoll, 2001).

The circumstances of rural districts and schools create special challenges. The small populations and geographic isolation of many rural schools affect their access to resources, including the size of the pool of applicants and the ability to offer competitive salaries and teacher support programs. Rural schools face this problem both in specific grades and in specific curriculum areas (Murphy et al., 2003).

Lower pay. According to the Educational Research Service (2004), staff in rural schools earned lower-than-average pay in every employment category. In 2008, the average salary of teachers in rural schools was less than in other areas. Base salaries ranged from \$44,000 for teachers with a bachelor's degree, to \$51,000 with a doctorate.

The Rural School and Community Trust reported that the four lowest average salaries are all in Northern Plains states and, in general, the highest rural salaries are in large urban states (Montgomery, 2010). Rural states tend to pay less than more populated/ industrialized states; and within states, rural schools and districts tend to pay less than their urban and suburban counterparts. Hammer et al. (2005, p. 4) reported that rural superintendents saw their districts' inability to provide competitive salaries for highly qualified teachers as a major obstacle to fulfilling the requirements of NCLB. The financial predicament rural schools are facing is proving to limit the educational opportunities rural schools are seeking to provide students. With the lack of funding comes a shortage of technology, qualified teachers, and resources (Levey, 2013).

Monetary incentives for teacher retention. Differential pay and teacher bonuses are methods that have been widely used by school districts to recruit and retain teachers in low-performing rural and urban schools; however, such plans are often unsuccessful on their own because they do not account for the differences between urban and rural school districts. According to the North Carolina Rural and Economic Development Center, 85 of the 100 counties in North Carolina are considered rural. In these rural counties, 14.1% of the total population and 18.5% of children live in poverty.

Increased pay is positively associated with retention; however, it is not sufficient to overcome poor working conditions. Although widespread, monetary incentives have not proved their ability to attract teachers in rural areas. Not surprisingly, turnover of teachers is connected to the demographics of the students they teach, including achievement level. Teachers often leave low-paying, low-achieving schools in favor of employment in high-paying, high-achieving schools (Maranto & Schuls, 2012).

The North Carolina Bonus Program in 2001 was a statewide initiative aimed at

recruiting teachers to high-poverty or low-performing, economically disadvantaged, areas. The Bonus Program offered \$1,800 salary bonuses to teachers at eligible schools in high needs content areas including math, science, and special education (Hines & Mathis, 2007). North Carolina saw some positive impacts. Though the program was poorly implemented, it did appear to slightly lower teacher attrition. One reason for its small success may be that the North Carolina incentive plan focused on all teachers rather than only on new teachers, where most attrition occurs (Maranto & Schuls, 2012). An evaluation of the program by the Center for Child and Family Policy (CCFP) in May 2005 indicated that 80% of principals believed monetary incentives were not sufficient to retain teachers. Similarly, 72% of teachers said an \$1,800 salary bonus was not enough to have a significant impact on teacher recruitment. Funding for the program was discontinued after the 2003-2004 academic year. A possible explanation for the eventual failure of the initiative is that it did not address key differences in rural and urban areas, which may negatively impact teacher recruitment and retention. Recent teacher pay increases in North Carolina are aimed at increasing the retention rate; but even after these pay increases, North Carolina ranked 41st in the nation for teacher pay in 2016.

Geographic, professional, and social isolation. Geographic isolation is the distance from the school to the nearest hub or primary airport. Professional isolation is the distance from the school to the nearest teacher education program. Social isolation is a state of complete or near-complete lack of contact between an individual and society (Miller, 2012). Geography plays an important role in rural schools' abilities to attract and retain teachers. Ingersoll (2003) pointed out that there is no overall teacher shortage, but shortages do exist for some geographic and subject areas. Rural and inner city urban districts typically suffer from geographic shortages (Maranto & Schuls, 2012).

Geographically isolated communities tend to have greater problems in attracting teachers, while rural schools and districts located on the outskirts of suburban areas have greater difficulty in retaining teachers. Several researchers have suggested reasons underlying this circumstance. Collins (1999), in a review of the literature on rural teacher retention, cited a survey of teacher mobility in one rural district that found four main reasons why teachers leave communities: (a) geographic isolation, (b) climate/weather, (c) distance from larger communities and family, and (d) inadequate shopping (Rutenberg, 2008, p. 9). Social isolation is particularly unappealing to young, beginning teachers (Montgomery, 2010). In a 2012 recruitment and retention survey of North Carolina superintendents, limited dating opportunities was a factor that impacted retention (Verdin & Smith, 2013, p. 4). In surveys of rural administrators and teachers, relatively poor community amenities are often cited as significant barriers to attracting and retaining highly skilled teachers (Miller, 2012).

On the other hand, rural schools located close to suburban areas are often able to attract teachers but tend to lose them after only a few years. It may be that new teachers view these rural areas as attractive places to begin their teaching careers but soon move to higher paying positions in the nearby suburban schools. Some analysts (Collins, 1999) theorize that teachers who stay in rural areas are more likely to have grown up in small communities or to be committed to living in the region (Montgomery, 2010, p. 24). A study that surveyed 86 special education teachers in rural states concluded that “staying seemed to be a matter of having roots in the community” (Montgomery, 2010, p. 24).

Rural communities tend to provide their residents with fewer shopping venues, fewer cultural activities, weaker access to health services, and a lack of adequate housing (Miller, 2012). The remote locations of these rural schools often discourage college

graduates from relocating to these areas, because the demographics of the region may not be diverse in age, race, and gender (Hines & Mathis, 2007).

Housing

Due to the lack of adequate housing, school districts around the country are using innovative recruitment and retention methods to attract highly qualified teachers to rural counties. To encourage teachers to be more receptive to teaching in rural school districts, housing incentives have been used to decrease teacher isolation that is often exacerbated by cultural and economic factors preexisting in rural areas (Hines & Mathis, 2007). In order to combat these challenges, several states offer incentives to teachers. Louisiana, Georgia, California, Arkansas, and Mississippi all provide assistance for teachers to purchase homes in targeted areas (Verdin & Smith, 2013, p. 3). In North Carolina, the lack of affordable housing has created the need to build apartment complexes for teachers. Five districts, two in the western part of the state (Asheville and Buncombe), one in the central region (Hoke), and two in the east (Dare and Hertford) built apartment complexes for their teachers. For three of them (Asheville, Dare, and Buncombe County), teacher salaries have not kept pace with rising housing costs, leaving many teachers unable to afford housing. In Hertford and Hoke County, there are few housing options for teachers who do not want or cannot afford to buy a house.

Arkansas Teacher Housing Development Act. As part of the 2016 adequacy study, the Bureau of Legislative Research (BLR) is taking a closer look at teacher recruitment and retention issues in Arkansas, in addition to the court-mandated analysis of teacher salaries. This report includes analysis of data from the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) and Arkansas Department of Higher Education (ADHE) on the supply, distribution, and attrition of public school teachers in all Arkansas public school

districts and public charter schools. It also provides a summary of relevant findings from BLR's survey of all school superintendents as well as site visits with school principals and teacher surveys in a sample of schools randomly selected to participate in this year's adequacy study. The final section of the report summarizes the state's Equitable Access to Educators Plan and state policies and programs designed to improve teacher recruitment and retention in Arkansas.

In 2003, the Arkansas Legislature passed the Arkansas Teacher Housing Development Act. The purpose of this act is to develop or to facilitate the development of affordable housing for high-performing teachers in high-priority school districts and provide housing incentives to encourage high-performing teachers to move to high-priority school districts. Under this act, teachers in high-priority districts are eligible for housing assistance. This assistance can come in the form of a conventional mortgage (interest rate not to exceed 6%), assistance with a second mortgage of less than 20% of the home's value (interest rate not to exceed 4%), and down payment assistance in the form of loan forgiveness of no more than 10% of the total cost of the home or rent reduction. The purchase price of the home must be less than \$100,000 and it must be located within 30 miles of the high-priority district in which the teacher is employed. The reduced rent price must be at least 50% of fair market value. To participate in the housing assistance program, teachers must be high-performing and must teach in a high-priority district.

By the end of 2007, 35 teachers had received funds to assist with home ownership via the incentive program and another 62 teachers had received rental incentive funds. Since the program began in October 2007, 50 teachers were awarded some type of housing assistance. So far, all the awards have gone to teachers in rural districts,

although teachers in high-priority urban districts are also eligible for the program (Rural School and Community Trust, 2008). According to the 2010 Arkansas Equity Plan, the number of eligible counties was reduced to 14 in October 2007. In the 2016 adequacy study, the BLR found that in 2015, Arkansas spent \$0 on the Arkansas Teacher Housing Development Act. The program, although still in statute, has not been funded in recent years. Money has been poured into new initiatives that focus on helping those who want to be in these communities, not just using the state, then abandoning the system. To date, the success these programs have had in attracting new teachers to hard-to-staff districts is not evident. It may be the case that the monetary incentives are simply not enough to attract teachers to these areas in Arkansas, especially when higher salaries can be earned in more desirable locations (Maranto & Schuls, 2012).

Hertford County Housing Project (North Carolina). The Hertford County Housing Project was the pilot aimed to recruit and retain teachers to rural counties. The project is a short-term teacher recruitment method that seeks to attract highly qualified teachers to schools within the district. In 2006, the State Employees' Credit Union (SECU) Foundation partnered with local 501c3 organizations solely devoted to education and school districts to construct apartment complexes in Hertford and Dare Counties. Through discussions with local leaders, the organization realized that several areas lacked affordable and/or quality housing for young teachers. The lack of housing forced teachers to commute long distances or find work in a different district. High turnover rates in Hertford County inspired community leaders to designate Ahoskie as the first site for an apartment complex. On July 10, 2006, a bill was ratified authorizing the "Hertford County Board of Education to construct and provide affordable rental housing for teachers and other local government employees" (NCGA, 2006, p. 1). Rights to rent the

property are to be exclusively given to teachers or other school professional staff.

Hertford Pointe consists of 24 units that offer two bedrooms, two baths, living room, kitchen, dining area, and laundry facilities. Located on 10 acres of land in proximity to three schools in the district, these units equipped with numerous amenities are leased almost exclusively to teachers for below market rate prices. Hertford Pointe opened its doors to teachers in 2007. Prior to its construction, lack of unsubsidized housing made it difficult for teachers to find a place to live within the county. The complex has rented at capacity every year since it opened.

Since 2005, turnover at the state level has remained relatively stable, but rates have changed dramatically in Hertford County. Around the time Hertford Pointe opened, turnover was about 18% in the district. Since 2008, there has been a downward turnover trend in Hertford County. Similarly, Dare County has not reported turnover as high as 8% since 2008-2009. Although Hertford County was the first, Dare County provided the most data. A case study conducted by Verdin and Smith (2013) provided the above-mentioned data. Additionally, they provided a brief analysis revealing that of the 50 residents who have lived in Run Hill Ridge since 2008, the majority have worked in Kill Devil Hills and taught at the high school level. On average, residents occupied their units for 33 months. Surveys were conducted on 13 former and current residents. Respondents began working for Dare County Schools from as early as 1995 to as recently as 2011. The majority of the teachers reported that affordable housing did impact their decision to teach in Dare and rated quality affordable housing as the largest contributor to their desire to continue teaching in Dare County. Three of four former residents eventually left Run Hill Ridge after purchasing homes in the area. Eight residents agreed that the low rent allows them to live comfortably, and eight reported that Run Hill Ridge

contributes to their job satisfaction. Housing may be one of many factors contributing to the overall downward turnover trend in both counties; but ultimately, recruiting and retaining teachers requires a myriad of strategies (Verdin & Smith, 2013).

Difficult Working Conditions

Working conditions cited by teachers as contributing to their decisions to leave include lack of basic resources and materials, lack of a strong professional community, ineffective leadership, and discipline issues. Declining enrollments and increased costs have resulted in a financial crisis for many rural school districts. This has caused issues in maintaining school buildings and sites. The U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (2000) reported that historically, school facilities have been built and maintained using local funds most often raised through local property taxes, bonds, or both. Depressed economies, lower property values, and an insufficient tax base were common to rural areas, and these factors had converged to prevent new construction as well as the regular upkeep required by older structures. Decades of deferred maintenance have left many rural schools in great need of repair (Montgomery, 2010).

Eleven states, including Nebraska, require local communities to pay the entire cost of school facilities – a policy approach that is unfair to students who live and attend school in poor and rural communities. Some rural schools and parents have resorted to lawsuits as a way to address state funding formulas that rely heavily on local property taxes to support school facilities. For example, lawsuits have been filed in many states across the nation: Arkansas, Arizona, Wyoming, Montana, New York, New Jersey, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee (Montgomery, 2010).

Winning in court has also come at a price for rural schools in states like West

Virginia and Arkansas. In Arkansas, after 12 years of litigation, Lake View, a small, rural school district, successfully challenged Arkansas' school funding system in the state Supreme Court. However, the state Legislature, under court order to reform Arkansas' school funding system, decided to consolidate smaller districts including Lake View. Though they were able to successfully challenge the funding system in court, the citizens of Lake View had lost their community school. The experience in West Virginia paralleled that of Arkansas. Since winning in court, over 25% of West Virginia's rural schools have been shut down and consolidated.

Rural School and Community Trust (2008) pointed out how Legislative Bill 988 in Nebraska caused a redistribution of aid from rural to urban. Legislative Bill 988 also changed the way the money was distributed among districts, primarily through several new cost "allowances" that sent extra money to some districts but not others. A few changes were beneficial to rural districts. For example, the formula provided additional funding for remote elementary sites (Montgomery, 2010). Bailey and Preston (2000, p. 2) conducted a study to determine if Legislative Bill 1114 (capping property tax levies) and Legislative Bill 806 (distributing state aid) had an effect upon the relationship between boards of education and their respective superintendents. The reality is that no significant differences were found, and it was clear that rural districts had been hurt by the school finance formula.

Many rural school districts are underfunded and some lack a steady revenue stream. Moreover, they are disadvantaged by size as well as geography. For example, when rural districts apply for grants, the resulting funds based on number of students are often too small to accomplish the purpose of the award. One rural district received a technology grant of \$800, scarcely enough to buy a single computer (National Education

Association, 2015). In political debates over school facility funding, rural communities are often overlooked because they are small, sparsely populated, and widely dispersed. Provisions in each state constitution guarantee all children an education; however, many state funding formulas favor property-rich school districts while viewing rural schools as an economic burden on wealthier areas of the state (Montgomery, 2010, p. 24).

NCLB Requirements for Highly Qualified Teachers

The NCLB legislation mandate of highly qualified teachers was more difficult to achieve in rural and urban schools than in suburban schools. Attracting qualified teachers to remote areas was difficult, especially when their suburban counterparts had the ability to offer better pay due to the greater wealth of many suburban school districts (Clark, 2009).

Under NCLB, by the end of the 2005-2006 school year, all teachers must have been highly qualified (some rural schools have until 2006-2007). A highly qualified teacher is one with full state certification, a bachelor's degree, and demonstrated competence in all subjects they teach (U.S. Department of Education, 2009, p. 10). Given the common practice of out-of-field teaching, rural schools and districts faced a difficult challenge in meeting this requirement. Researchers and advocates for rural schools argued that this requirement increased the existing competitive disadvantage for rural hard-to-staff and low-resource schools (Jimerson, 2003, p. 17). Combined with the lower salaries, more stringent certification requirements add another disincentive for teachers to take positions in rural schools. Teachers needed to pass multiple tests in order to teach multiple subjects, unlike teachers in urban or suburban schools, who may have needed to pass only one test for an individual subject (Jimerson, 2003, p. 14). Further, it was more difficult for many rural teachers to obtain the required certifications for all

subject areas they taught because they were often separated by long distances from colleges and training facilities. Rural district officials reported in a U.S. Government Accountability Office (2004) study that the limited availability of professional development opportunities posed challenges to recruiting and retaining highly qualified teachers. Even when professional development opportunities were found, the limited availability of substitute teachers in small districts made it difficult to release teachers to attend training.

Barley and Beesley (2007) stated that rural educators are also experiencing increased pressure to achieve 100% student proficiency in core subject areas by the year 2014 as a result of NCLB, even though many of them perceive this expectation to be inadequately funded. The more serious issue rural schools faced was providing a full range of qualified teachers and the supportive resources to ensure success. Complicating this research, studies relevant to rural education and its particular context and challenges have always been sparse (Montgomery, 2010).

National Programs and Initiatives for Rural and Small Schools

The Small, Rural School Achievement (SRSA) program provided grants to rural school districts. These schools can apply for a grant for activities related to increasing teacher retention including professional development, career and job fairs, and financial incentives for teachers. The purpose of the SRSA program was to provide rural LEAs with financial assistance to fund initiatives aimed at improving student academic achievement. Awards are made to SEAs that in turn make formula subgrants to LEAs. State agencies for higher education (SAHEs) also received a (separate) formula grant. SAHEs in turn awarded competitive grants to partnerships that must have included at least one institution of higher education (IHE) and its division that prepared teachers and

principals, and a school of arts and sciences IHE, and a high-need LEA.

The purpose of the program was to increase academic achievement by improving teacher and principal quality. This program was carried out by increasing the number of highly qualified teachers in classrooms, increasing the number of highly qualified principals and assistant principals in schools, and increasing the effectiveness of teachers and principals by holding LEAs and schools accountable for improvements in student academic achievement.

In 2011, these grants allocated \$86 million across nearly 4,000 school districts. Each grant the SRSA program administered ranged from \$20,000 to \$60,000 (Watts, 2016). By 2014, these grants allocated a total appropriation of \$2,349,830,000 across nearly 4,000 school districts. The large increase has been attributed to changes in eligibility criteria for SRSA. North Carolina received a total of \$48,705,093. The Rural Low-Income Schools project also awarded grants for activities, which were aimed at increasing teacher retention in rural schools. One of these activities was awarding grants to teachers in order to ensure they remain within the job. Schools that were eligible for grants from this project were not eligible for grants from the SRSA program. In 2011, over \$87 million were awarded via the Rural Low-Income Schools project. This money was split between approximately 1,200 districts. Eligibility for grants from this program was dependent on the poverty level of each individual school district (Yettick, Baker, Wickersham, & Hupfeld, 2014).

In 2015-2016, Title II, Part A provided states with approximately \$2.18 billion for teacher quality reforms. The highest poverty districts received a greater share of the funds than the lowest poverty districts, with 15% creating programs to recruit and retain highly qualified personnel. Eighty-one percent of the administrators in schools receiving

funding reported their school to be at some level of program improvement status, as defined by NCLB, where the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Act was passed (U.S. Department of Education, 2014).

The Rural Low-Income Schools Project. Part B of Title VI of the reauthorized Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) contains the Rural Education Achievement Program (REAP). REAP was designed to address the needs of rural, low-income schools. Grants were awarded to SEAs, which in turn awarded subgrants to eligible LEAs either competitively or on a formula basis. The funds were to be used to carry out activities specified by the statute. All of these initiatives were designed to help rural districts that may have lacked the personnel and resources to compete effectively for federal competitive grants and that often received grant allocations in amounts that were too small to be effective in meeting their intended purposes. The Rural Low-Income Schools Project also awarded grants for activities, which were aimed at increasing teacher retention in rural schools. One of these activities was awarding grants to teachers in order to ensure that they were retained. Schools that were eligible for grants from this project were not eligible for grants from the SRSA program. In 2011, over \$87 million were awarded via the Rural Low-Income Schools project. This money was split between approximately 1,200 districts. Eligibility for grants from this program is dependent on the poverty level of each individual school district (Yettick et al., 2014).

The Teacher Quality Enhancement program. The Teacher Quality Enhancement program funded initiatives aimed at improving teacher retention in an effort to improve standards of teaching within America's public schools. This funding aimed to improve the quality of new prospective teachers by enhancing the preparation of prospective teachers and the professional development activities for current teachers;

holding teacher preparation programs at IHEs accountable for preparing talented, certified or licensed, and effective teachers; and recruiting effective individuals, including minorities and individuals from other occupations, into the teaching force.

More specifically, the TQP Grants Program sought to improve the quality of new teachers by creating partnerships among IHEs, their schools/colleges of education and arts and sciences, high-need school districts (LEAs), their high-need schools, and/or high-need early childhood education (ECE) programs. These partnerships created model teacher preparation programs at the pre-baccalaureate level (or in a 5th year initial licensing program) through the implementation of specific reforms of the IHE's existing teacher preparation programs or model teaching residency programs for individuals with strong academic and/or professional backgrounds but without teaching experience. Fayne and Matthews (2010) noted that this program also aimed at improving the standards of education teachers were capable of delivering.

Teacher Retention and Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is one of the important elements to measure employee feelings about their job and has significant effects on the development of organizations and employees themselves (Gu, 2016). Addressing the factors influencing rural teacher job satisfaction, which have been previously overlooked, affords rural administrators a new opportunity to positively influence teacher retention, teacher quality, student achievement, and school climate. Research on job satisfaction in the field of education has explored both the consequences (outcomes) and antecedents (influences) of teacher satisfaction. Research has examined at least three possible outcomes that include retention, attrition, and absenteeism and at least three major influences that include demographic variables, job role-related characteristics, and work experiences. This area

of research has repeatedly demonstrated that job satisfaction results in higher levels of teacher retention (Perrachione, Rosser, & Peterson, 2008). Additional studies of employee motivation and job satisfaction have adopted various theoretical models. Many of these models draw on the ideas of the classic motivation theorists who supported the notion that individuals have an inherent need for a work life they believe is meaningful (Chalofsky & Krishna, 2009, p. 189).

In the field of education, there are many studies about teacher job satisfaction (Demirtas, 2010). Research showed that high job satisfaction resulted in a low rate for teachers leaving their professions (Ingersoll & Strong 2011, p. 12). In order to help solve the difficulty of losing teachers, many predictors of teacher job satisfaction have been found through research; for example, school environment, principal leadership style, and the quality of communication with students and parents (Guleryuz, Guney, Aydin, & Aşan, 2008).

Research on Teacher Satisfaction in Public School by Gu (2016) found there are many inter-related factors that influence the retention of teachers. This study examined the overall teacher job satisfaction in public schools and the conditions that influence teacher choice to remain employed within a school district. The study was conducted on 36 full-time teachers from public schools in western New York. In order to find out the relationship between teacher job satisfaction and years of teaching experience, the teachers were surveyed using Spector's Job Satisfaction Survey. The body of literature chosen was relatively recent; however, older studies of importance are included as well. Although some of the research focused directly on job satisfaction, many other studies were conducted to address other issues related to teacher retention (Johnson, Berg, Donaldson, 2005). The findings of this study showed that teacher decisions to remain in

their schools and in teaching are influenced by a combination of the intrinsic and extrinsic rewards they receive in their work. Intrinsic rewards included such things as the pleasure of being with children, the exhilaration of contributing to student learning, the enjoyment of teaching a subject matter one loves, or the chance to develop new skills and exercise expanded influence on the job. Extrinsic rewards included salary, benefits, bonuses, and public recognition for one's accomplishments or being chosen to take on special responsibilities; however, intrinsic and extrinsic rewards sometimes interact. For example, pay is seldom an important incentive that draws people into teaching, but it can take on increased importance in reference to working conditions, e.g., lack of supplies, thus making it difficult or impossible to succeed with students (Johnson et al., 2005).

Herzberg Theory of Motivation

The Two-Factor Theory of Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman (1959) was the theory used to examine teachers in this study. Herzberg, along with his fellow investigators, Mausner and Snyderman, studied 200 engineers in a Pittsburgh industry. The results of their study provided evidence of two distinct categories (motivators and hygies) related to job satisfaction. Herzberg et al. published the two-factor theory of work motivation in 1959. The theory was highly controversial at the time it was published, claimed to be the most replicated study in this area, and provided the foundation for numerous other theories and frameworks in human resource development (Herzberg, 1987). According to Herzberg et al., jobs should be restructured to increase the ability of workers to achieve goals that are meaningfully related to the doing of the job. Job satisfaction can also be reached by matching the individual's work capacity to the work he will need to do during the selection process. It is equally important to recognize the supervisor's role in job satisfaction. They must provide recognition when

needed and effectively plan and organize the work. Finally, although it is not realistic to allow the worker to set their own goals in most circumstances, the worker can often determine how they will achieve their goal. This will give workers a greater sense of achievement over their work (Stello, 2013). In order to increase satisfaction, the motivation factors must be improved. Motivation factors lead to positive job attitudes because they satisfy the need for self-actualization. The satisfaction of hygiene needs can prevent dissatisfaction and poor performance, but only the satisfaction of the motivation factors will bring the type of productivity improvement sought by companies (Herzberg et al., 1959). While Herzberg's Two-Factor Motivation Theory was originally designed to research the job satisfaction of engineers in a Pittsburgh industry, the identified motivators and hygienes relate well to the level of teacher job satisfaction. The State of North Carolina began surveying teachers during 2004-2005 concerning these same factors. The results of biennial NCTWC survey for the district of research were also used in this study.

There has been validity and criticism to Herzberg theory. In 1968, Herzberg indicated that there were 16 other studies from various parts of the world that used different population samples that were supportive of his original findings. The results of the latter two-factor theory studies had been in agreement with the findings of the original study. This proves that the Two-Factor Theory deserves being one of the well-regarded theories on job attitudes, particularly in intrinsic motivation of employees. The Two-Factor Theory has also been criticized by behaviorists due to its general assumption that satisfied workers have greater productivity. Other criticisms of the theory include (a) the theory appears to be bound to the critical incident method; (b) the theory confuses events causing feelings of satisfaction and dissatisfaction with the agent who caused the event to

happen; (c) the reliability of the data could have been negatively impacted by ego-defensiveness on the part of the employee; (d) factors overlapped as sources of satisfaction and dissatisfaction; (e) the value of the factors differed as a function of the occupational level of the employee; and (f) the theory ignores the part played by individual differences among employees (Gaziel, 1986).

House and Wigdor (1967) reviewed the theory, the criticisms, and the empiric investigations to date. They summarized the findings of 31 empiric investigations using methods other than the critical incident technique and noted the inconsistent findings (House & Widgor, 1967). They also cited numerous criticisms regarding Herzberg's original study, including the study is methodologically bound, the study was based on faulty research, and the study was inconsistent with past evidence (House & Widgor, 1967). The authors went on to re-analyze Herzberg's data and formed new conclusions based on the same data. In a reply to House and Widgor, Winslow and Whitsett (1967) defended Herzberg's theory by publishing a critique of House and Widgor's analysis of the data and summary of the empirical studies presented. King (1970) also reviewed the literature to date on the two-factor theory. King attributed the controversy surrounding the theory to the fact that Herzberg did not explicitly state the theory himself and left it for others to interpret. King identified five different versions of the two-factor theory that had been used in the literature in the 11 years since the original publication of Herzberg's findings. Because none of the versions of the theory were supported by two or more different methods of testing, none of the versions had been validated (King, 1970). Gardner (1977) agreed with King's opinion and tested the two-factor theory using King's model of the five versions. Gardner found that all of the interpretations are possible and noted how difficult this makes it to compare the studies against each other.

Gardner stated that there is no single test of validity for the two-factor theory, but a multiplicity of hypotheses which should be tested in a multiplicity of ways. Farr (1977) examined the two-factor theory in relation to new methods suggested in the field of occupational psychology. In his opinion, although Herzberg contributed valuable insight into people's perceptions of their everyday working environment, he made a serious error as an investigator by coming to believe that the data yielded information of a casual nature and that his research had uncovered the "causes" of job satisfaction and dissatisfaction (Farr, 1977).

One of the greatest criticisms of Herzberg's methodology is the tendency for people to give socially desirable answers in their responses, resulting in factors that impact dissatisfaction as being attributed to external factors instead of internal factors. Wall and Stephenson (2007) examined the existing literature using this criticism as a frame of reference. They found that Herzberg's data is a result of this tendency and is therefore untenable as a description of job attitudes (Wall & Stephenson, 2007); however, despite these limitations, Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory is acceptable broadly. Although Herzberg and the two-factor theory has been the subject of several misinterpretations over the years, there are strong correlations between the two-factor theory and recent research in intrinsic motivation (Sachau, 2007).

Administrative support in teacher retention. Support from administrators is a strong indicator for teacher retention. According to the 2004 NCTWC survey, what mattered most in teacher decisions to remain in education was to have a collegial atmosphere at school, along with a strong leader. According to Borman and Dowling (2008), administrative support is the school's effectiveness in assisting or supporting teachers regarding student discipline, curriculum, instructional methods, and adjustment

to the school environment. Leithwood and Jantzi (2007) studied the effects of a school-specific model of transformational leadership on teachers to include motivation, capacities, work settings, their classroom practices, and gains in student achievement. Some 2,290 teachers from 655 primary schools responded to two forms of a survey (literacy and numeracy). The data from the study indicated that effective administrative support plays a vital role in school leadership practices and includes its four dimensions: building vision of school, development of specific goals and priorities, offering individualized support, and development of a collaborative school culture. Loeb et al. (2005) revealed through survey data that lack of administrative support leads to turnover issues of teachers. The Teacher Follow-up Survey is a revisit of those who participated in the teacher component of the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS). The purpose of the Teacher Follow-up Survey is to provide information about teacher mobility and attrition. For example, how do teachers who remain teaching at the same school from year to year (“stayers”) compare with those who do not? It also determines what percentage of teachers leave the profession between 1 year and the next and why (“leavers”)?

Consistent with this agreement, Luekens et al. (2004) also found that nearly 40% of teachers left the teaching profession due to lack of administrative support. Liu and Meyer (2005) suggested school leadership as a significant contributor to teacher job satisfaction and intention to stay in teaching. Similarly, many other studies have found positive impact of administrative support on teacher job satisfaction and their staying or leaving intentions in teaching (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). Multiple studies have related administrative support to staying intentions of teachers (Ladd, 2011). Additionally, many studies have described the impact of leadership and school working conditions on teacher retention decisions.

It is the principal's responsibility as leader of the school to create a positive environment that supports the growth of both teachers and students (Nooruddin & Baig 2014). When school leaders provide more collaboration and communication with their school, teacher performance as well as student performance improves, leading to greater teacher satisfaction (Gruenert, 2005). That satisfaction helps measure a principal's effectiveness. Administrator effectiveness is connected to the overall school climate and will impact teacher retention decisions (Williams, 2009). In rural schools and districts, the leadership is frequently consolidated among very few individuals, therefore leaders often must assume multiple roles. An effective leader in a rural school or district can dramatically effect student achievement and the culture of their workplace (Barley & Beesley, 2007). The leadership makeup of rural schools impacts the principal roles and their leadership responsibilities due to the fact that they operate with less staff and resources (Cortez-Jimenez, 2012, p. 12).

School climate. In order to feel successful, teachers need support from their colleagues and administrators within their work environment. Improving the school's culture and working conditions can make teachers want to stay. Additionally, research shows that improvements in school culture can lead to improved student achievement, which can, in turn, make the school a more attractive place to teach. The current climate has the ability to translate to an integrated school culture. Peer observations and collaborative curricular planning have been shown through research to have the most positive effects on new teacher retention rates due to the professional culture that is created within the school (Kardos et al., 2001).

It is important for leaders to view their employees as teammates who have an opportunity to collaborate to achieve the organization's goals and vision. Teachers who

feel they are effective are more likely to be more collaborative, creating collegial environments and in which they are more likely to remain in a school district. One of the important tasks for a leader is to create a better organizational climate for motivating employees and promoting their willingness to work hard and to promote school autonomy. School climate is critical for an organization to be productive. It is also challenging because it is defined by the perceptions of individuals and their personal views of the working environment.

Tickle, Chang, and Kim (2011) observed that working conditions have emerged as the main source of teacher job dissatisfaction and teacher turnover. Similarly, Marvel et al. (2007) showed the importance of working conditions in retention of school teachers. According to Benders and Jackson (2012), teachers voiced the major reasons for leaving the field were working conditions that included a lack of support from administration and peers, lack of respect, limited opportunities for advancement, and salary level. School climate and the administrative stability of schools are associated with student outcomes which may also influence a teacher's decision to remain with a district.

Resiliency. Building resiliency in the new teacher during the first several years of teaching may be part of the answer to addressing the high rate of teacher turnover in rural areas (Zost, 2010). As Henderson and Milstein (2003) argued, "We need to promote a healthy, self-confident, effective workforce if we expect educators to be willing and able to support the resiliency needs of students" (p. 19). Understanding why teachers who produce achievement beyond the norms remain in challenging urban schools was the focus of their study. Using a qualitative approach, eight teachers from four urban school districts who reported student achievement scores equal to or above state averages in

reading or mathematics were interviewed. With this in mind, several descriptive narratives were written to elaborate on the findings. Teachers who understand the challenges of at-risk schools and believe they can overcome them will take control and have greater opportunities to cultivate resiliency to remain in the profession (Hong, 2012). Identifying, understanding, and promoting resilience will provide an opportunity to develop policies and practices to employ and retain novice teachers and increase student achievement (Beltman, Mansfield, & Price, 2011).

Resiliency and survival are not synonymous. Resiliency is learning and developing the skills and knowledge to become the dedicated professional educator students require (Johnson et al., 2012). Consequently, the early years of a teacher's career are critical to long-term success, retention, and student achievement. Districts and schools must address teacher resiliency if they are going to retain novice teachers. Henderson and Milstein (2003) have developed a six-step strategy that is needed to develop a resiliency-building school. This strategy is based upon a Resiliency Model (Richardson, Neiger, Jensen, & Kumpfer, 1990) that suggests that when an individual (adult or child) is confronted with adversity, he or she tends to draw upon protective factors to mitigate that adversity and to enable the individual to move forward. It has been the intent of the investigators to use the three steps in the building resiliency component to examine the extent to which a K-8 school has established a resiliency-building school culture. These steps are providing caring and support, setting and communicating high expectations, and providing opportunities for meaningful participation. The use of this strategy will enable the investigators to describe how one school has developed into a teacher resiliency-building school.

Pugach and Johnson (1995) identified four dimensions of collaboration:

supportive, facilitative, informative, and prescriptive. Supportive collaboration is defined as caring and being available in times of need, joy, and stress. Facilitative collaboration promotes the development of capacity through problem-solving and dealing independently with professional challenges. The goal of informative collaboration is to provide information to better equip colleagues to address challenges. Prescriptive collaboration seeks to identify a specified action in order to prove its effectiveness.

Rosenholtz (1989) provided the extent to which the concept of a teacher resiliency-building school (Henderson & Milstein, 2003) embraces essential components related to retention in a coherent fashion more specific to these benefits by summarizing the literature and identifying 10 essential components of a recruitment and retention plan. It is important to examine the findings from this case study of Nurtureville to assess the extent to which the concept of a teacher resiliency-building school (Henderson & Milstein, 2003) embraces Rosenholtz's (1989) essential components related to retention in a coherent fashion. The importance of the Nurtureville Elementary case is that although prescriptive dimension is still apparent, it will not be the sole driving force that promotes adult-to-adult interaction. With less emphasis on prescription, the teacher stress level is significantly reduced. The Nurtureville Elementary culture fosters positive collaborative relationships and promotes the type of trusting atmosphere that encourages professional growth and obviates status differences.

Sachs (2004) used a quantitative study to research the attributes of effective teachers as qualities of urban contextual influences on teacher retention. In phase one of the study, a questionnaire was used to survey 179 elementary teachers with 5 or more years of experience in a midwest urban school district. The results were analyzed using SPSS 9.0 software and an established coefficient and reliability standard of .60. This

process analyzed the data to 29 items and seven factors which were used in phase two. The participants of phase two included 121 selected elementary teachers. A one-way ANOVA was used in the final analysis of the data for the remaining 29 variables. The results of this study revealed five attributes of highly effective urban teachers. The attributes identified were sociocultural awareness, contextual interpersonal skills, self-understanding, risk taking, and perceived efficacy.

McCusker (2009) revealed that teachers recovered from adversities successfully due to the recognition that their special education students needed them and that what they did was important to their students. The teachers also reported they were able to maintain their resilience due to the support from professional development, administration, and school leadership. From these findings, an operational definition of teacher resilience was proposed as comprising multiple subthemes such as optimism, adaptability, courage, emotional intelligence, fragility, and emotional stamina. Moreover, resilience was conceptualized as a continuum, which relates to stress and vulnerabilities. The study was argued to have two important implications for future research and actions. First, teachers should frequently evaluate their own resilience to thrust themselves into a positive resilient mindset. Second, school and district administrators should use appropriate relational leadership strategies to support special education teacher resilience to increase retention. Teacher self-efficacy construct offers a unique insight to an educator's behavior that impacts instructional strategies, effort, and perseverance (Putman, 2012).

Conclusion

Czubaj (1996) stated, "When a teacher remains motivated, loving the profession, the students not only learn the content by the teacher, the students are also motivated to

learning” (p. 372). Conversely, if a teacher is dissatisfied with teaching, it is apparent to their students and they exit the class with a dislike for education. If rural school administrators can acquire an understanding of what motivates the teachers in their schools, they can potentially ease the problems they have with staffing their schools, retaining highly qualified teachers, and improving the overall work environment. Latham (1998) suggested that when schools provide opportunities to enhance the satisfaction of their teachers, not only would it be positive for the current faculty, it would also encourage young prospects to enter the profession, while persuading teachers to remain. Identifying the common intrinsic factors (which encourage student success and lead to increased job satisfaction) among rural educators will help administrators encourage teachers to put these attributes into practice more often (Armstrong, 2010). These practices, when implemented, should aid rural school districts with the retention of rural educators. When coupled with Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory, districts can begin to identify best practices that will promote a positive culture for learning, while encouraging teacher retention (Murray & Zoul, 2015). In this study, the intrinsic motivational reasons that underlie the decisions of educators to remain in rural school settings were explored (Armstrong, 2010).

Malloy and Allen (2007) studied a specific rural school district and found the answer to recruiting and retaining teachers was to identify a plan that would emphasize the benefits of teaching in a rural district. They found a similar plan in the work of Rosenholtz (1989), who devised 10 essential components of recruitment and retention from his studies that could aptly be applied to rural settings as well as other school communities. These components were designed to decrease high turnover rates and increase stability and longer tenure of teaching experience. In summary, these 10

components included carefully selected initial assignments of new teachers, opportunities to participate in decision-making, clearly set administrative goals, a nonthreatening environment, encouragement from colleagues and administration, clearly set school rules for student behavior, regular and clear feedback with suggestions for improvement, opportunities for discussion with experienced colleagues, opportunities to react with parents, and support to experiment and discuss results with colleagues.

This literature review gave an in-depth review of the literature associated with teacher retention. It focused a great deal on poverty and rural schools and the barriers associated with them. The literature review reported many negative educational factors associated with rural schools such as low socioeconomic status, low teacher pay, teachers practicing outside of their specialized areas, and low teacher morale. These factors are also barriers in areas of poverty. The literature also provided an overview of basic research about challenges facing small rural school districts including those in Nebraska, Arkansas, and North Carolina. The findings from this literature review indicate that an increasing number of teacher recruitment and retention programs are being implemented at the federal, state, and local levels; but not much is known about their effectiveness. Many of these programs evaporate after funding sources dry up and the time span does not allow for one to make a determination as to its effectiveness. A search for research and other literature on model programs and practices that are rural specific and successful resulted in sparse information.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter is organized to present the methodology and procedures that were followed during the conducting of research on teacher retention in a rural, low-performing, high-poverty school district in northeastern North Carolina. The purpose of this research was to examine the unique issues that challenge rural schools with retaining teachers; specifically, to identify school-based factors associated with teacher retention in rural, low-performing, high-poverty schools. A review of literature revealed the major factors associated with teacher retention in a rural, low-performing school district that serves high populations of students living in poverty. Although teacher retention across the United States is a national problem, many researchers deem the issue of teacher retention in rural school districts to be more serious than in urban school districts (Davis, 2002; Hammer et al., 2005; Monk, 2007; Watts, 2016).

Research Design

Qualitative research seeks to understand social reality through explorations of the lived experiences of both participants and researchers. To be more specific, qualitative research is a “situated activity” that “involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 3). Qualitative researchers recognize that reality is socially constructed, that the researcher cannot be divorced from the research, and that inquiry is subject to situational constraints. As such, qualitative researchers typically adopt varied empirical methods to describe the concrete materiality of individuals’ lives and engage a myriad of interpretive practices in order to more fully understand their subjects (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 11). In an effort to comprehend

the characteristics of teacher retention in a rural school district, a qualitative research design was utilized. Qualitative research procedures demonstrate a unique and different approach to scholarly inquiry (Creswell, 2012). Procedures are not inhibited by predetermined analytical categories but permit inquiry of selected issues to a greater depth and breadth of data with careful attention to detail, nuance, and context (Patton, 2002, p. 227). Therefore, a qualitative approach was deemed appropriate for this study. Specific focus on the participant selection, data collection techniques, analysis of data, and role of the researcher within the study are important to the knowledge and truthfulness that can be found from the data in this type of research methodology and procedures involved (Patton, 2002).

The researcher utilized a descriptive, qualitative research design. The qualitative data consisted of face-to-face interviews conducted with approval of the district's superintendent (see Appendix A). The interviews were held with eligible teachers who had remained in the district for more than 3 years; 2 for Teach for America Corp (TFA) members. Interviewing participants and analyzing data are both indicative of qualitative research. To address validity, the researcher chose to triangulate data resources. The interview data were triangulated with the results of the 2016 NCTWC survey for the district of study. Data triangulation assisted the researcher in analyzing data and validating findings through the convergence of multiple data sources.

The overarching research question was, "What factors attributed to the choice to remain in a rural, low-performing, high-poverty school district?" Three sub-questions assured the overarching research question was answered as they were aligned with the interview questions.

1. What factors led to teachers accepting employment in a rural, low-performing

district?

2. What did teachers in high-poverty schools find most enjoyable about their work?
3. What school-based factors are associated with teacher retention?

Population and Sample

This study was an effort to address the issues that surround retention in a rural, low performing school district that serves high populations of students living in poverty. The researcher studied teachers in this population using on-the-job support, job satisfaction, and feelings of self-efficacy as indicators of retention. All study participants are employed within one of the schools in the district of study. Those teachers who met the qualifications for participation in the research study were identified in a report given to the researcher by the human resources department (see Appendix B). The list included all experienced and qualified teachers as defined by the state of North Carolina. Those teachers were solicited for participation in the study.

Table 1

Eligible Participants Identified by Human Resources

Pseudonym	Race	Sex	From	Content Area	Grade Level	Career Path
Teacher 1	W	M	New York	Social Studies	High	Teach for America
Teacher 2	W	F	New Jersey	Exceptional Children	Elementary	Teach for America
Teacher 3	B	M	Virginia	JROTC	High	2 nd Career
Teacher 4	B	M	Virginia	Physical Education	Middle	Lateral Entry
Teacher 5	W	F	Colorado	Exceptional Children	Middle	Teach for America
Teacher 6	B	M	Virginia	Physical Education	Elementary	Lateral Entry
Teacher 7	B	F	Virginia	Social Studies	Middle	Teach for America
Teacher 8	W	F	Pennsylvania	Exceptional Children	Elementary	Teach for America
Teacher 9	B	F	South Carolina	Pre-K	Elementary	Teach for America
Teacher 10	H	F	Honduras	English as a Second Language	Elementary Middle High	Visiting International Faculty

The sample included teachers in the K-12 population including specific core subjects, special education, areas related to the arts and Pre-K. The teachers included those hired via TFA, lateral entry (LE), Visiting International Faculty (VIF), second career, and those traditionally trained through a teacher education program. The researcher's logic for selecting the population size and diversity was related to the research problem and the major data collection strategy. Six subjects were chosen from

those who agreed to participate. The researcher attempted to demonstrate an equal balance between areas of certification, grade level, and career path. A demographic profile of each participant identified by pseudonyms is found in Table 2 of Chapter 4.

Research Participants

The researcher informed each person who qualified for the study via email and asked for their participation. Some provided immediate feedback about their willingness to participate, but the researcher followed up with a formal participant letter that introduced the topic and requested their participation (see Appendix C). An approved Informed Consent Form (see Appendix D) was procured from each willing participant prior to collecting any data. In this study, teachers were interviewed and data were analyzed based on each teacher's experience working in a high-poverty school and explanation of why they chose to stay in the district. The researcher assessed all the positive aspects of their work that played a role in their decisions to stay and explored their views on their teaching environment.

Interview Protocol

The interview protocol for this research was designed and validated in a previous dissertation (Watts, 2016). The author granted the researcher permission to use a number of approved questions (Appendix E). The instrument was validated by a number of school personnel and collegiate personnel including a current superintendent, a former principal, several teachers, and two researchers. The interview protocol used in this study (Appendix F) was edited to address concerns raised during this process. These revisions made the interview questions more focused, intentional, and understandable for the participants in this study.

Individual Interviews

Individual interviews were conducted at an agreed-upon time with the interviewee. Times ranged from 10 to 20 minutes. Prior to the interview, participants were given time to read the questions and formulate their thoughts. The interviewer asked all the structured interview questions to maintain consistency on the focus of the interviews, thus allowing for a later comparison of responses. The purpose of conducting the individual interviews was to gain insights about teacher retention in the district of study. An important part of this research approach included the interviewer maintaining respect for participant views and the crucial aspect of these views being deemed as valuable. The interviewer sent interview invitations via electronic-mail messages and followed up with telephone calls to make an appointment with each interviewee to review the Participant Letter and Informed Consent form. Open-ended questions asked during the interviews were semi-structured to ensure any differences in interviewee responses could be attributed to the differences in responses and not to the way questions were presented. Interviews were video recorded with an iPad and transcribed by the researcher.

Data Collection

The primary data collection method used was face-to-face, one-on-one interviews. The data were used to extend the field of research on teacher retention as from the perspective of the participant. Prior to data collection, permission was secured to conduct the research from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Gardner-Webb University (Appendix G). Participants were advised that all of their responses would remain confidential and the information they provided could not identify them within the study. Data collection in this study began when permission was granted from IRB authorities

and the participants. The researcher used an interview guide designed and validated by another researcher that was approved by the committee. The interview questions were thematically divided providing an open-ended response format. Questions focused on how the participant entered the profession, how they have been supported in their journey, specific achievements, and why they have chosen to remain in the district.

Interviews were conducted by the researcher in a natural setting. This methodology increased the likelihood that the participants felt comfortable and safe in their own secure surroundings. The researcher allowed the participants to choose the site for the interview. They were interviewed in an atmosphere that was pleasant, nonthreatening and private. The interviews were in depth and probing. Interviews were set for a time not to exceed 30 minutes, and each session was recorded. The participant had the option of video or audio recording. Having a video or audio recording during an interview provided a much deeper reflective tool for the researcher. Each recording was secured and used to document behaviors and responses observed during the process. Any participant who refused to participate in a face-to-face interview was dismissed from the study.

The interview began with a brief introduction and overview of the format being used, introduction to the audio recorder, and appreciation for participation. The conclusion of the interview repeated the importance of privacy and appreciation for the participant. No one else was allowed to be in the area for the duration of the interview. Data collected from study participants were studied, compared, and cross-referenced. The knowledge learned from the interviews, combined with the review of literature, captured a deeper understanding of the teacher's choice to remain employed within this school district.

Data Analysis

Qualitative methods were used to analyze the data revealed in the interviews. The process of data analysis in qualitative research can have several components and has been referred to by some qualitative researchers as a process equated to peeling back layers of an onion (Creswell, 2012, p. 183). Creating a plan for analyzing data for a qualitative research study involves a process that includes preparing the data for analysis, conducting the different analyses, moving deeper into understanding of the data, representing the data, and making an interpretation of the larger meaning of the data (Creswell, 2012).

For this study, the data analysis began with information collected from the one-on-one, face-to-face, in-depth interviews of teacher participants and the interviewer. The researcher identified herself to each participant as a doctoral student conducting research on teacher retention in a rural, low-performing, high-poverty school district in northeastern North Carolina. In this way, the positionality was constructed as “researcher as learner, not as expert or authority” (Glesne, 2006, p. 46; Rumley, 2010, p. 54). Through the in-depth interviews, there were three types of data collected and analyzed from each individual interview session: interview guides with open-ended questions, notes from interviews of participant responses, and video recordings of the interview. Every study participant was assigned a pseudonym for anonymity. All pieces of information gathered from individual interviews were organized and prepared for analysis beginning with interview transcripts with data coded by the pseudonym of each participant. The analytical steps suggested by Creswell (2012) involved listening to video recordings, transcribing the interviews, optically scanning material, typing up observations, and sorting the sources of information. The researcher read each transcript

of interviews several times to identify the themes and subthemes. The researcher also used NVivo. This software program was designed for qualitative and mixed-methods research. NVivo was intended to help users organize and analyze non-numerical or unstructured data. The software allows users to classify, sort, and arrange information; examine relationships in the data; and combine analysis with linking, shaping, searching, and modeling. NVivo was designed to help researchers uncover and systematically analyze complex phenomena hidden in unstructured data (text, multimedia, geospatial). The program provided tools that allowed the researcher locate, code, and annotate findings in primary data material; to weigh and evaluate their importance; and to visualize the often complex relations between them. NVivo consolidated large volumes of documents and kept track of all notes, annotations, codes, and memos in all fields that required close study and analysis of primary material consisting of text and images. With this program, the researcher identified trends and cross-examined information in a multitude of ways using its search engine and query functions. Observations were made in the software and a body of evidence was built to support their case or project. This program supported multiple data formats including Word, PDF, and spreadsheets. The researcher imported transcribed data in Word and Excel into NVivo for additional analyses. NVivo classified, sorted, and arranged the data. Then it examined relationships within the data through coding to identify emerging themes. The researcher created diagrams using the primary data to determine the weight and frequency of the response, the sentiment, and complex relations between them.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher was granted permission to conduct the study by the superintendent of the district. Each participant in the study was provided a consent form

to be signed and returned allowing the use of their feedback and information for the completion of the study. The interview participants were informed by the researcher that their personal information would not be published and that they would not be exposed to situations that would have a negative impact on them and their professional roles.

Summary

Chapter 3 delineated the methodology that was used in conducting this study about the exploration of teacher retention in a rural, low-performing school district in northeastern, North Carolina. Chapter 4 provides the findings of the research organized by the three guiding questions of this study. Chapter 5 provides a discussion and conclusion of the findings, in addition to providing direction for future practice and research.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

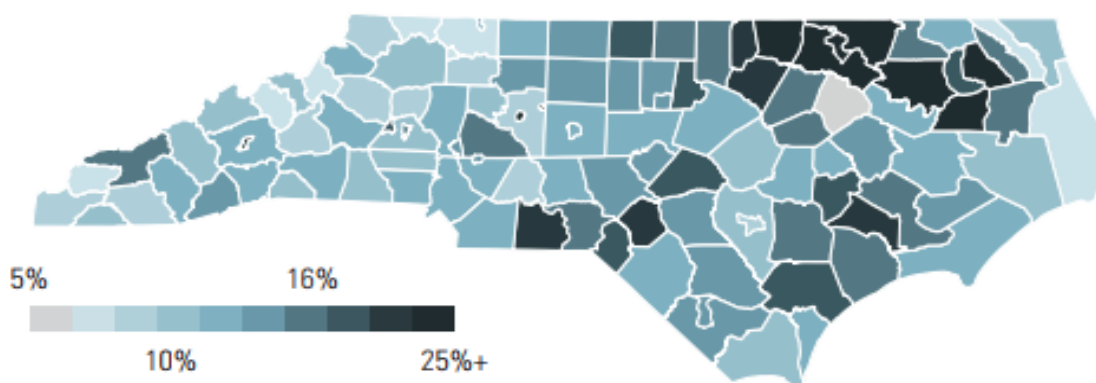
The purpose of this research was to examine the unique issues that challenge rural schools with retaining teachers; specifically, to identify school-based factors associated with teacher retention in rural, low-performing, high-poverty schools. Chapter 4 presents the findings of this study by correlating teacher responses to one research question with three sub-questions. This research study used qualitative methodology to investigate why teachers chose to remain employed in a rural, low-performing, high-poverty school district in northeastern North Carolina. The following are the sub-questions that guided this study.

1. What factors led to teachers accepting employment in a rural, low-performing district?
2. What did teachers in high-poverty schools find most enjoyable about their work?
3. What school-based factors are associated with teacher retention?

Problem

For many small rural school districts across America, the effort to attract and retain teachers continues to be a major concern (Lowe, 2006). In North Carolina, the effort has become direr as rural districts lose teachers to more urban areas, and urban districts lose teachers to states like Virginia and South Carolina who have a higher pay scale. In 2017, the turnover in many of the rural districts in northeastern North Carolina was 16-32%. The attrition rate for the district that is the focus of this study was 27%, as indicated in Figure 1 (see Appendix H).

Teacher Turnover in North Carolina K-12 Schools by District (2016-17)



13.5% State Average Teacher Turnover in 2016-17

Base geographic mapping files provided by the Friday Institute for Educational Innovation, North Carolina State University. Visit www.NCedFacts.org for more interactive data.

Source: [NC DPI 2016-17 State of the Teaching Profession Report](#)

Figure 1. Teacher Turnover in North Carolina in 2016-2017 by School District.

These districts often have low achievement, high poverty, and high percentages of racial minorities (Beckett, 2009). Rural and small-town school districts are “uniquely challenged” in recruiting and, even more so, retaining teachers. The most common challenge is competing financially. In addition to offering lower salaries, rural districts are in small and often remote communities with limited housing and amenities such as shopping and entertainment (which are particularly important for younger teachers, according to the experts). Low-performing rural schools face a more intense experience. One of the most challenging issues of rural, low-performing and high-poverty schools is increasing parental involvement. In rural areas, the distance between school and home can be great. A lack of public and private transportation in rural areas and the distance between home, work, and school also prevent parents from becoming more involved.

North Carolina is a very rural state. There are many rural, high-poverty school

districts that have been labeled as low performing. These districts struggle with finding and retaining teachers. Figure 2 (see Appendix I) shows that many of the high-poverty rural districts in North Carolina are located in the northeastern part of the state. The district that is the focus of this study ranks as one of the highest rural poverty districts.

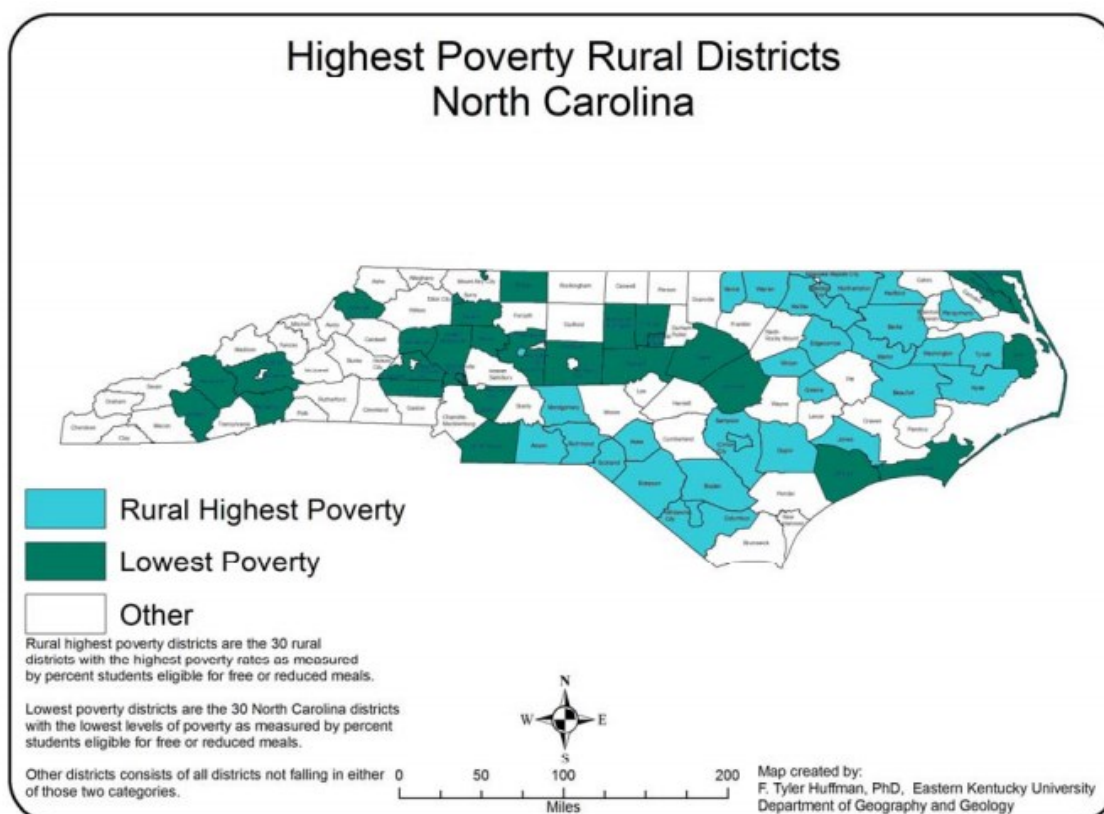


Figure 2. Highest and Lowest Rural Counties in North Carolina (2007).

Research Participants

The six teachers who participated in this study consisted of two males and four females. The racial makeup of the participants included three African-Americans, one Hispanic, and two Caucasians. Areas of content, school level, school sites, and career path varied for each participant. The goal of the researcher was to find six participants who were not native to eastern North Carolina who found employment in the area as an

educator and found a reason to remain employed there. The demographics of the research participants are summarized in Table 2 (see Appendix J).

Table 2

Demographic Information on Research Participants

Pseudonym	Race	Sex	From	Content Area	Grade Level	Career Path
Teacher A	W	F	New York	EC	Elementary, High	TFA
Teacher B	B	F	Virginia	Social Studies	Middle	TFA
Teacher C	B	M	Virginia	JROTC	High	2ndCareer
Teacher D	B	M	Virginia	PE	Middle	LE
Teacher E	W	F	Colorado	EC	Middle	TFA
Teacher F	H	F	Honduras	ESL	Elementary, Middle, High	VIF

The following descriptions were intended to provide mini portraits of the six research participants. The purposeful selection of those individuals was to ensure the researcher was able to gather information from various demographic areas. Some personal information was reported, but much of what was communicated was related to background and participant experiences in their current school assignments. Participants were identified by pseudonyms, which were chosen by the researcher but shared with the participants. Each of these teachers began their teaching career in the district.

Teacher A

Teacher A is in her fifth year in the district. She graduated from a public university in New York and majored in childhood education and special education.

Following an interview with the TFA program, she was placed in the district. She was initially hired as an EC teacher in an elementary school where she described her first year as “hard” due to her relationship with administration. When administration changed, however, she soon began to feel more supported and was provided multiple leadership opportunities. She later transferred to another school in the district in a leadership role of instructional support coach for the EC department. She remains in the profession and talked a great deal about how she appreciated the district for all of the opportunities it has provided to her.

Teacher B

Teacher B is in her third year in the district. She graduated from a private university in Virginia and majored in psychology. Following an interview with the TFA program, she was placed in the district. She was very excited about the opportunity to work in another state yet remain close to her family. She described her pre-teaching field experiences as exciting yet noted that the preservice training did not truly prepare her for working in an area with all of these identifying markers. Although she holds a license to teach social studies in Grades 6-9 in any school setting in North Carolina, she is currently teaching fifth grade due to a decline in sixth-grade enrollment. After serving in her school for 3 years, this participant described her relationship with administration as unsupportive at times but mostly felt that there was a lack of consistency among the administrative team. Since she started, she has begun taking classes for her master’s degree. She reported that she plans to remain in education as she feels this is her professional calling but may not remain in the classroom. Although she considered leaving the district, she attributes her decision to stay to support from her staff and colleagues.

Teacher C

Teacher C is in his fourth year in the district. He is a retired Lieutenant Colonel from the United States Army and teaching is his second career. Immediately following retirement, he inquired about JROTC/SAI positions. He has a passion for working with disadvantaged students and establishes relationships with them by sharing his experiences growing up in a poor farming community similar to this one. He is an example that students can become more than their circumstances and models integrity. During his first 2 years, he was very frustrated with the school climate and rebuilding the entire JROTC program. Today, he remains happily employed in his school, which he reports “is more effective due to gradual change.” He attributes his decision to remain in the district solely based on his relationship with his students.

Teacher D

Teacher D is in his fifth year in the district. Although he is from another state, he had an affiliation with the district prior to working here. His mother taught in the district and at the same school, although they did not teach at the same time. He graduated from a public university in Virginia and majored in health and physical education. Following an interview with the principal, he was offered a position via LE. In his position, he has served as a health/physical education teacher, a coach, and an athletic director. He felt he grew every year in the classroom and as a coach. During his time, he discussed the connections he made with the students and members of the community through coaching. That is what has kept him motivated to come to work every day. He also discussed the positive relationships he had with administration and how their support has also affected his decision to remain in the district.

Teacher E

Teacher E is in her third year in the district. She graduated from a public university in Colorado and majored in Speech Language and Hearing Sciences. Following an interview with the TFA program, she was placed in the district. She described her pre-teaching field experiences in Oklahoma as helpful but reiterated that it did not prepare her for working in this type of district. Although she was required to meet professional standards as a new teacher, she praised the district for its lack of pressure to perform in a certain capacity; however, she did experience frustration with the lack of resources for her students. In this district, she felt that there was always room to grow and learn. She taught as an inclusion teacher for fifth and sixth grades and in a self-contained setting for students in Grades 5-8. She remains in the profession, feels well-rounded in her field, and talked a great deal about how she felt supported in her professional growth by her previous and current administrators.

Teacher F

Teacher F is in her fifth year in the district. She came to the district as a member of the VIF program. She is the only participant who is a district teacher. She works with all the students at the elementary, middle, and high schools as the English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher. She graduated and earned a bachelor's degree from a private college in Greensboro, North Carolina but returned back to Honduras to obtain her master's degree. One issue this participant described was the principals and assistant principals were unaware of what she really does, although they are supportive of her role. She admitted that she came in with learning and cultural gaps but has grown over the last 5 years. She reported that she liked living in this area as the demographics are very similar to where she lived in her own country. Because she liked the locale and the

community, she has enthusiastically continued to work there. She remains in the profession and talked a great deal about how supportive the district has been. She plans to remain in the district as long as they support the VIF program.

Sources of Data

The qualitative data consisted of face-to-face interviews that were conducted with teacher participants using the Interview Protocol for Participants (see Appendix C) which was also used by Watts (2016). Other qualitative data included the results of the 2016 NCTWC survey reports for the district of study. The data were triangulated to ensure there were no errors or bias associated with the study. With an analysis of 90% of North Carolina schools encompassing all the school systems and 34,000 individual survey responses, the findings provided powerful data for teacher retention. The information was gathered through the NCTWC website. Since each of the research participants have been in the district a minimum of 2 years, the responses to the 2016 NCTWC survey data included their responses.

Data Analysis

Three types of data were collected and analyzed from each individual interview session: interview guides with open-ended questions, notes from interviews of participant responses, and video recordings of the interview. Data were analyzed to identify what factors attributed to the choice to remain in a rural, low-performing and high-poverty school district. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym for anonymity. All data were coded using the pseudonym of each participant. All pieces of information gathered from the individual interviews were organized and prepared for analysis beginning with interview transcripts. The order of the interview questions was designed to reveal information about the participant. Section 1 of the interview asked for background

information and factors that influenced teacher decisions to accept employment in the district. Section 2 addressed factors that influenced teacher decisions to remain employed in the district. Section 3 explored teacher opinions about school and district administration as well as how retention could be improved. Responses from each one-on-one, face-to-face interview were compiled and transcribed into narrative form. The information was sorted by each question and the answer given by each participant. The researcher carefully read and analyzed the raw data in order to identify broad categories or themes (Creswell, 2012). Additionally, each answer was categorized by the NCTWC category it correlated to. The categories included time, facilities and resources, community support and involvement, managing student conduct, teacher leadership, school leadership, professional development, instructional practices and support, and new teacher support.

The data were then imported into Microsoft Excel. Next, the Excel file was imported into NVivo for additional analyses. NVivo classified, sorted, and arranged the data according to the response of each participant. Then it examined relationships within the data through coding to identify emerging themes. The researcher was able to create diagrams using the primary data to determine the weight and frequency of the response, the sentiment, and complex relations between them.

Emerging Themes

The researcher sought to discover what teachers enjoyed about their work which has led them to remain employed in the current school district. Since each of these teachers began their teaching career in the district, the answers to their questions provided school and district administration with valuable insight into practices they currently have in place and can utilize to retain teachers. The emerging themes in this study were

related to an affinity for working with students, teacher leadership, administration, and individual supports. Several themes were identified by the researcher but validated through NVivo using auto coding word frequency reports. Nodes were created using key words from those reports, and themes were identified through cluster analysis. An exploratory diagram was created for each participant (see Appendices K-P) that connected sources, nodes, and relationships showing all of its connected items. Each diagram revealed how closely the participants identified with a theme, the question associated with the response, and the sentiment (attitude) of their answers based on a Likert scale. NVivo allowed the researcher to sort through the project data and explore all the connections between the identified themes.

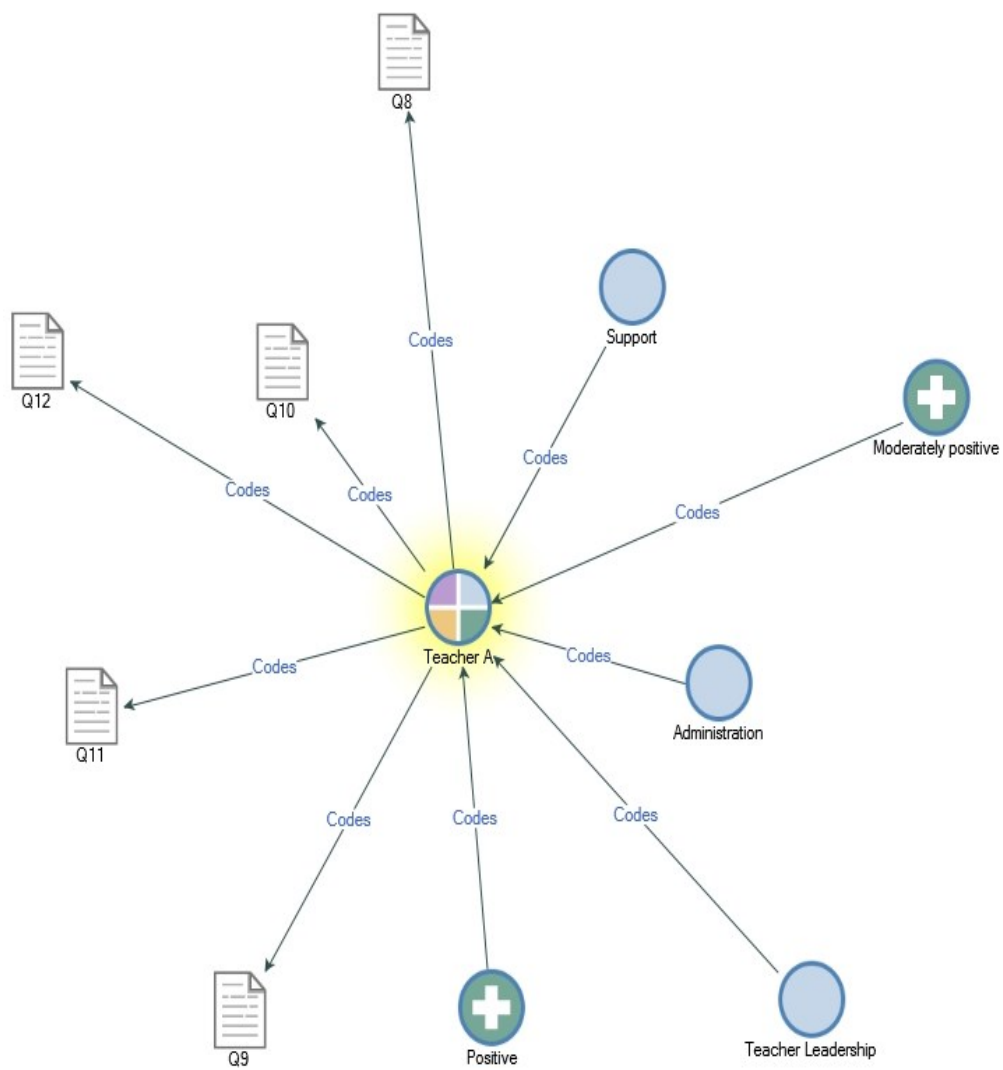


Figure 3. Exploratory Diagram for Teacher A (NVivo). See Appendix K.

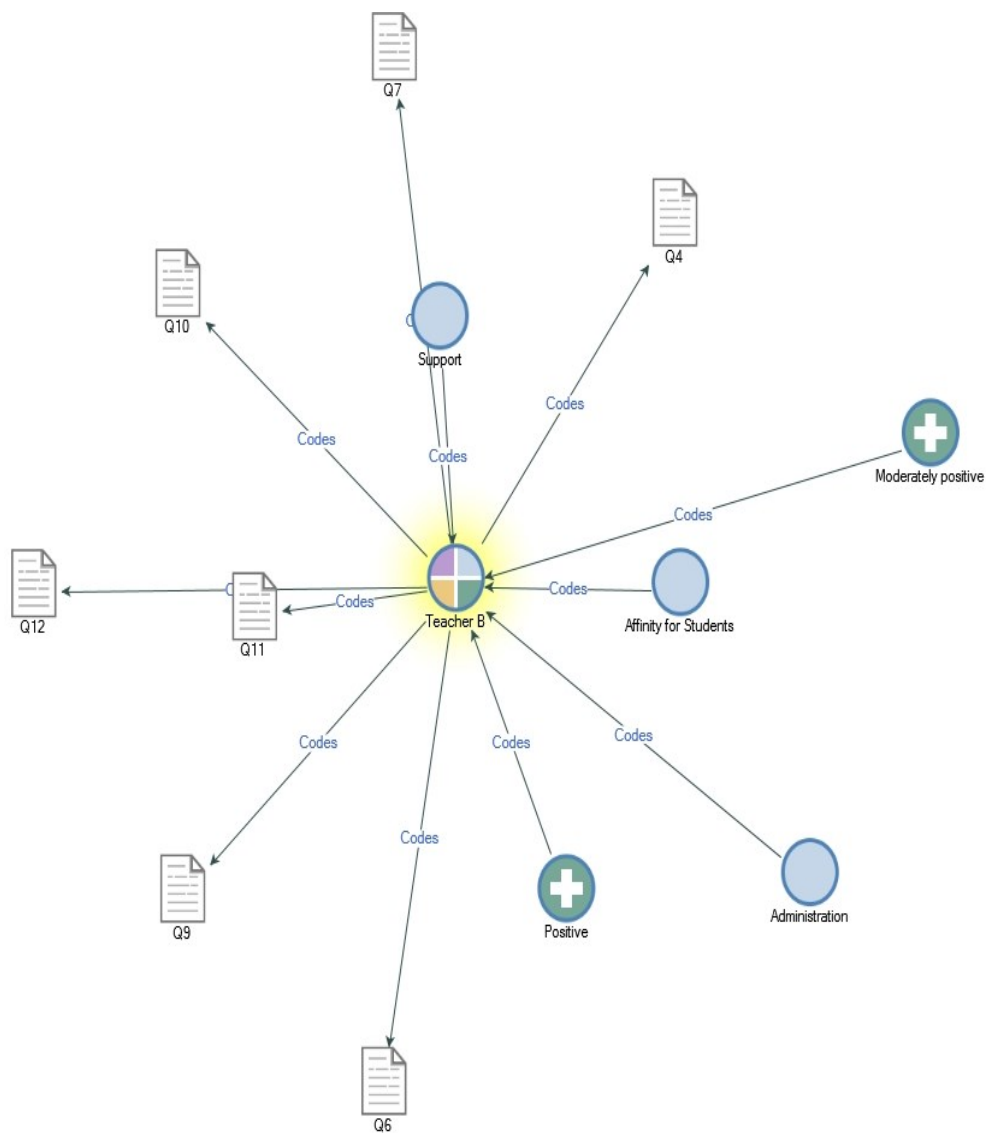


Figure 4. Exploratory Diagram for Teacher B (NVivo). See Appendix L.

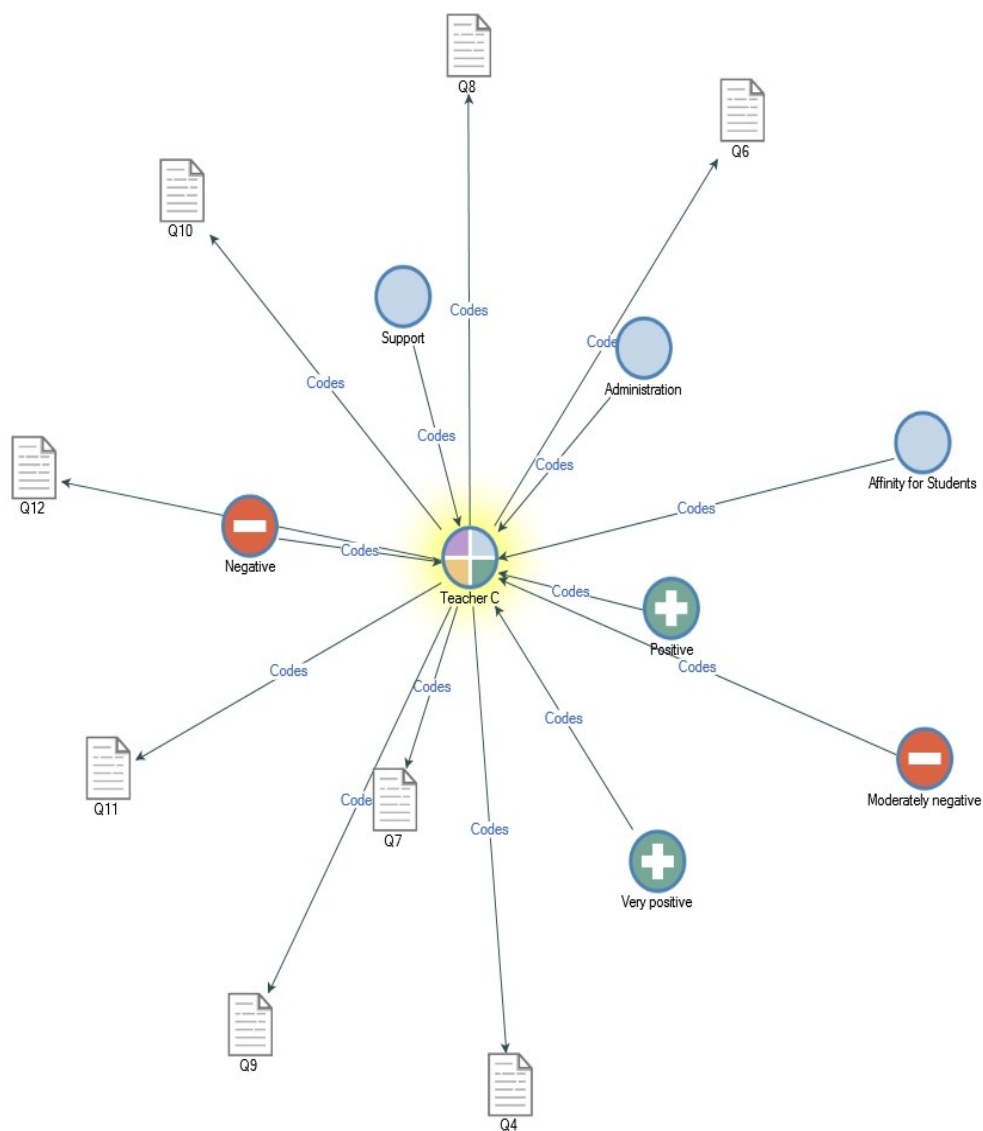


Figure 5. Exploratory Diagram for Teacher C (NVivo). See Appendix M.

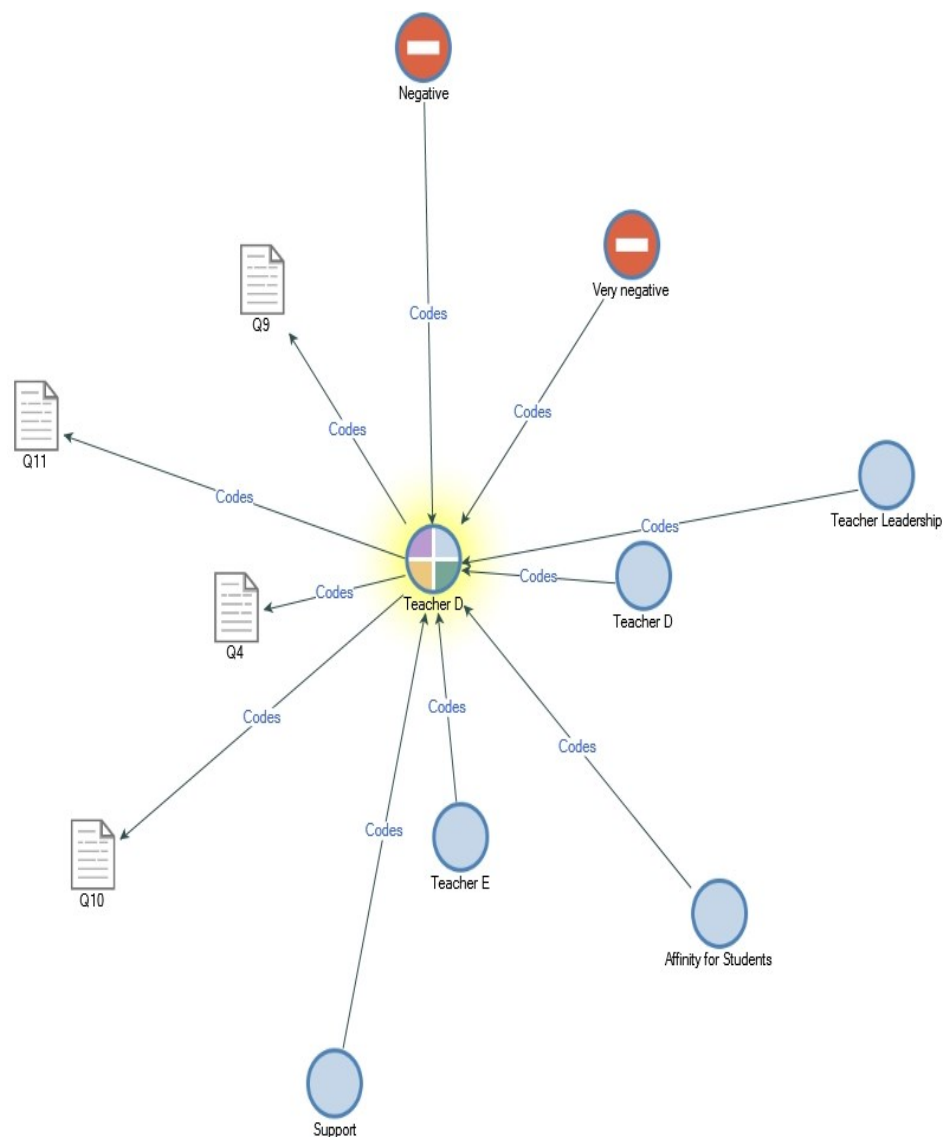


Figure 6. Exploratory Diagram for Teacher D (NVivo). See Appendix N.

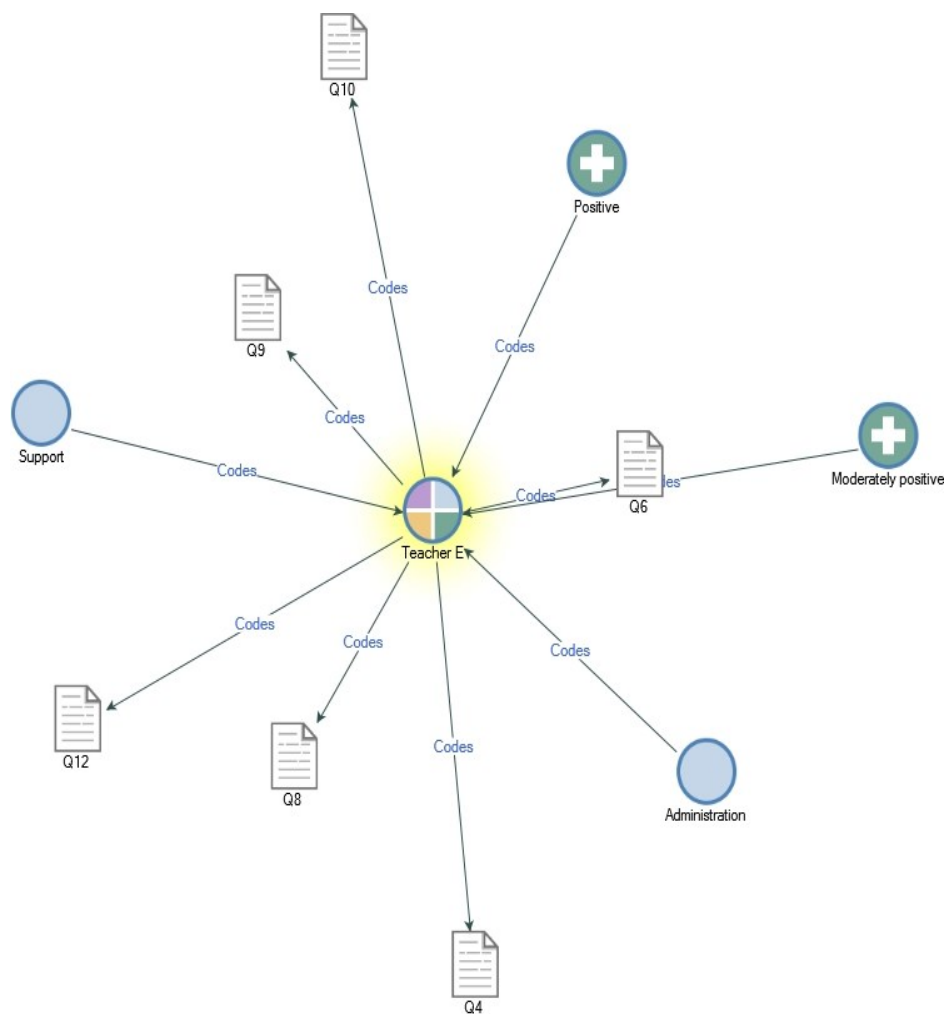


Figure 7. Exploratory Diagram for Teacher E (NVivo). See Appendix O.

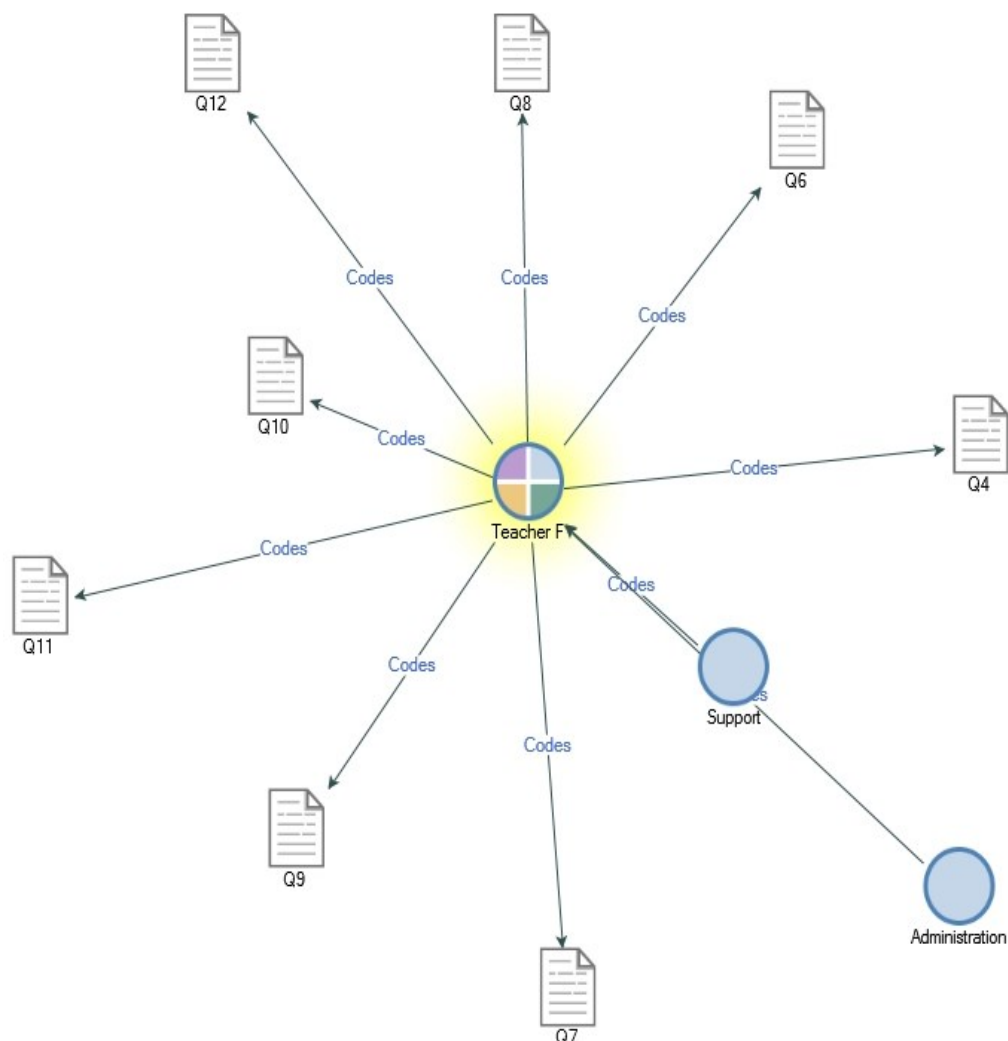


Figure 8. Exploratory Diagram for Teacher F (NVivo). See Appendix P.

Findings

The highest degrees of satisfaction for the teachers in this study were found to compliment the theoretical framework of Herzberg. These were areas Herzberg termed as motivators. They included working with students, mentoring by administration and others, encouragement by school leaders and opportunities they had to engage in professional development, and school leadership activities. The areas of the 2016 NCTWC survey that validated the findings of Herzberg were community engagement and support, teacher leadership, school leadership, and new teacher support.

Triangulation of the data was performed through analyzing NCTWC data and interviewing the six participants. Although interviews were the primary source of data collection employed in the research design, triangulating the different sources of data allowed the researcher to build a coherent justification for themes. The process added validity to the study. Analysis and interpretation of the data collected from the interviews were then transcribed, and coding was performed in NVivo. The data were based on frequency patterns in the interviews of the participants. From this coding, the researcher was able to identify the major themes associated with rural teacher retention in the district. Common themes identified among the research participants included teacher leadership, an affinity for working with students, administration, and individual teacher supports.

Research Question 1

What factors led to teachers accepting employment in a rural, low-performing district? All of the teachers who participated in this study came to their district fully aware of its characteristics; rural, low performing, and high poverty. While some chose to come to the district after seeking employment on their own, others were able to gain employment through teaching programs associated with the district such as TFA and VIF. Those who gained employment through the TFA program knowingly had the option of working in a rural setting such as eastern North Carolina. Participants of the VIF program are often sent to urban and rural communities who struggle finding teachers. Teacher F, who came to the district via the VIF program, revealed that she wanted to work in a rural setting. “I like the rural life because I am not a fan of city.” She came to this district specifically because it reminded her of her native community in Honduras. In addition to the services being requested by the district, it is one of the

reasons she has chosen to stay. Teacher C is the only participant who offered a compelling reason for choosing to work in this type of district. He opted for this area as it reminded him of the type of community in which he grew up.

I grew up in a poor farming community similar to this one and it does not have to be the end all be all. I am able to identify with my students as I worked all through high school learning different trades, went on to college and had a successful military career. I am able to show a student that they can get out of their current poor situation and can become something different.

Research Question 2

What did teachers in low-performing schools find most enjoyable about their work? The participants in this study were all very resilient. Each of them found something special they equivocated to job satisfaction that kept them employed in the district. For many of the participants, this was an affinity for working with their students and venturing into teacher leadership.

Affinity for working with students. It is important that teachers in rural, low-income, high-poverty schools are satisfied with their relationships with their students. Every participant in this study recognized their desire to continue to work with students and make their lives better. Therefore, the needs of the students impacted teacher retention to a great extent. During several interviews, participants explicitly shared that their students were one of the main reasons they have continued to stay. The study participants had a passion for their work that was consistent and clear. Their passion for their students was very evident.

Teacher A stated “I know every child's name at school. You develop those close relationships with students. Even though students may not be on my roster, I still feel

comfortable talking to them in the hallway and things like that.” Teacher B echoed, “students alone are a great reason to stay in the district.” Teacher C stated, “my kids make me smile on my worst days and it is good to work around people that you care about.” Teacher D explained, “there is a good rapport with the students. That has motivated me and given me drive to do better for them.”

Teacher leadership. Teachers have begun to lead without leaving the role of classroom teacher. Teacher leadership is “the process by which teachers, individually or collectively, influence their colleagues, principals and other members of school communities to improve teaching and learning practices” (Wixom, 2016, p. 2). In the state of North Carolina, teacher leadership is the first of the professional teaching standards. Most of the teacher participants in this study have become leaders in some capacity.

Teacher A has become a presenter during district-sponsored professional development; she mentors new teachers and has taken on a new role with support from district administrators. Teacher B has taken on the role of afterschool coordinator, department chair, PBIS coordinator, and a member of the school improvement team. Teacher C serves on many interview panels and as a mentor for male students and facilitates professional development. Teacher D has taken on the role of athletic director, department chairman, basketball, and track coach. Teacher E has transitioned from an inclusion teacher to self-contained teacher to a cheerleading coach and served on the AdvancED accreditation team.

Themes one and two expressed the impact of teacher leadership and an affinity for working with students. Figure 9 (See Appendix Q) illustrates how respondents referenced an affinity for working with students and teacher leadership; furthermore, each

code noted a comparison of the respondents.

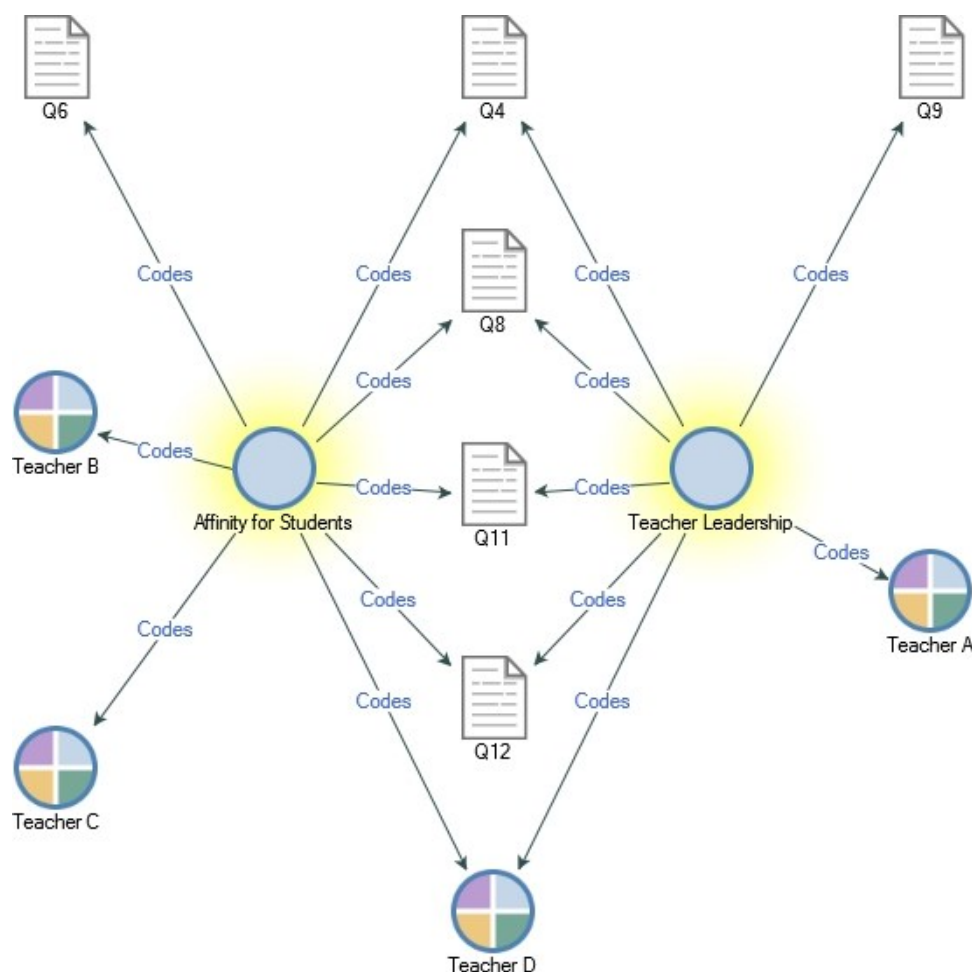


Figure 9. Comparison Diagram for and Themes 1 and 2 (NVivo).

Research Question 3

What school-based factors are associated with teacher retention?

Individual teacher supports. The highest intrinsic motivator influencing teacher decisions to remain in the district was support. Every participant in this study discussed how they had some sort of individual teacher support in place. In most cases, it was the main factor in their decision to stay in the district. Individual supports included support from school and district administration, collegial support, support from members of the

community, and district assigned mentors. The participants were all supported in various areas.

Teacher A emphasized how she has been supported by the district office to contribute to the profession by presenting on the school level and becoming a consultant at conferences. Teacher B became more resilient as a result of collegial support. Her efforts to grow as a leader have been a result of encouragement by her colleagues. Teacher C credited his mentor for much of his growth. He explained how their support kept him grounded and gave him consistent encouragement and feedback. Teachers D and E both credited school administration with giving them individual supports that encouraged them to stay, which included professional growth and freedom to explore in the profession. Teacher F implied that she was supported by district and school administration equally. She explained that personnel on each level assisted in her growth by filling in learning gaps and supported her presence in the schools across the district.

Administration. The second highest intrinsic motivator influencing teacher decisions to remain in the district was administration. Administrative support refers to principals and other school leaders supporting teachers and helping them improve in the profession. Supportive actions from the administration for the participants in this study included developing teachers to become leaders, an open-door policy, openly be able to express concerns and ideas, building resiliency, and being a constant presence professionally and personally.

Teacher A responded, “Administrators helped me develop the tools I needed to be effective.” Teacher B made it clear she was very supported in her first years: “My administration helped me adjust to teaching and that has been influential in my decision to stay.” Teacher C discussed how comfortable his administration made him feel upon

his arrival: “Administration empowered and allowed me to rebuild the JROTC program at my discretion.” Teacher D expressed that his administrative team was one of the large reasons he chose to stay: “I am quite comfortable with them and want to continue my career under those administrators.” Teacher E made a similar statement: “Knowing the administrator that was going to be here made it easy to decide to stay.”

Themes three and four illuminated the impact of individual teacher support and administration. Figure 10 (see Appendix R) illustrates how respondents referenced individual supports and administration; furthermore, each code noted the comparison between the participants and their responses.

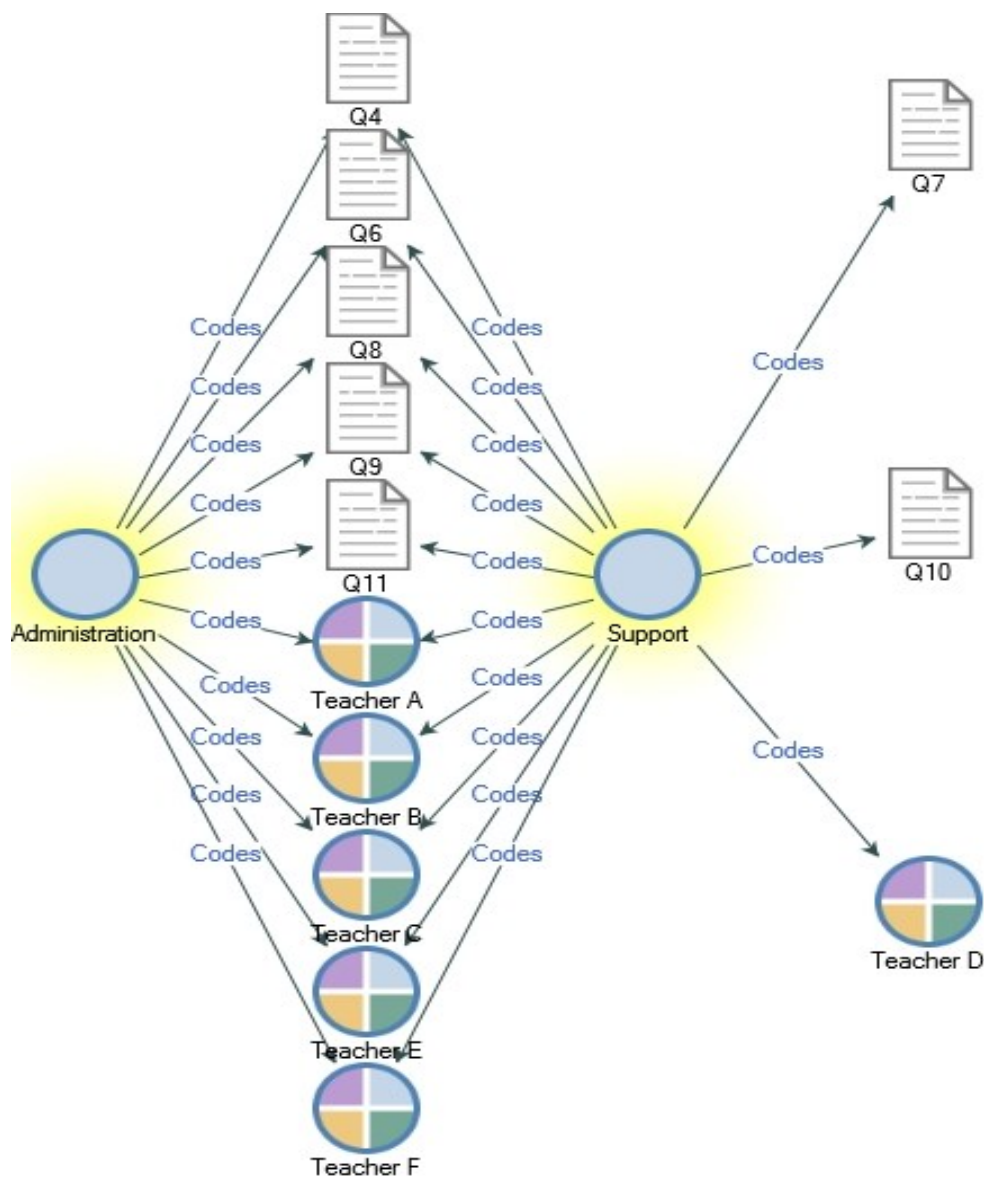


Figure 10. Comparison Diagram for Themes 3 and 4 (NVivo).

Summary

The design of this research study involved interviewing teachers in a rural school system in northeastern North Carolina. Each participant was interviewed about how they came to teach in the area; advantages to living and teaching in a rural, high-poverty area; factors that contributed to their decisions to stay; and how building- and district-level

administrators affected their decisions. Only teachers who were employed three or more years and not native to the state of North Carolina were asked to participate in the study. Due to the small number of available candidates in various certification areas, grade levels, and career paths, a total of six teachers were chosen for the study. In Chapter 5, the findings are presented in detail. Conclusions and implications for practice are discussed, and recommendations for future research are suggested.

Chapter 5: Conclusions

Background of the Study

The purpose of this research was to examine the unique issues that challenge rural schools with retaining teachers; specifically, to identify school-based factors associated with teacher retention in rural, low-performing, high-poverty schools. This chapter presents the findings of this research study by correlating participant responses to three research questions. This research study used qualitative methodology to investigate why teachers chose to remain employed in a rural, low-performing, high-poverty school district in northeastern North Carolina. This research question was answered through three sub-questions.

1. What factors led to teachers accepting employment in a rural, low-performing district?
2. What did teachers in high-poverty schools find most enjoyable about their work?
3. What school-based factors are associated with teacher retention?

Findings

The data were aligned with the research questions to see how they impacted each of the questions. In examining the motivators from the Two-Factor Motivation Theory, the participants in this study overwhelmingly acknowledged satisfaction in their current position.

Research Question 1. The literature suggests that attracting teachers in rural school districts is generally difficult (Salazar, 2007); however, the results from this research study found that novice teachers would accept work and remain employed in a rural, low-performing and high-poverty school district. Although each of the participants

began their employment in the district, they have all become resilient and used their strengths to function in their respective schools. In a review of the literature on rural teacher retention by Collins (1999), geographic isolation, distance from larger communities and family, and inadequate shopping are all issues plaguing rural communities; however, despite the challenges these rural schools are facing, some districts are having success in attracting teachers to the area and keeping them there.

Research Question 2. “Teaching is in the service of students” (Darling-Hammond, 2006, p. 303). The participants of this research study have an affinity for teaching students due to self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is the feeling a teacher has that they are making a difference in the lives and learning of students (Grant, 2006; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Locklear, 2010; Yost, 2006). In 2010, the research of Klassen and Chiu discovered that self-efficacy influences job satisfaction. A feeling of self-efficacy relates directly to teacher morale and contributes to teacher retention. In this research study, every participant expressed their desire to continue to teach their students in hopes of having some type of positive effect on them. Creswell (2012) stated that individuals with strong self-efficacy set challenging goals and maintain a strong commitment to them. They sustain effort in the face of failure, quickly recover after failures or setbacks, attribute failure to insufficient effort or deficient knowledge or skills which are acquirable, and approach threatening situations with assurance that they can exercise control over them. The positive and negative interactions participants in this study experienced with students taught them to be more resilient. Self-efficacy and resiliency have increased the desire for teachers to become leaders.

The concept of teacher leadership is evidenced throughout both the professional and scholarly (research) literature. The term teacher leadership has no clear definition in

K-12 education. Sanocki's (2013) study provides an understanding of the process of becoming a teacher leader and how teacher leadership is distributed. The major findings from the study suggested teacher leaders are classroom teachers first, who are primarily focused on positively impacting students; teacher leaders overcome their fears; teacher leaders positively build, maintain, function, and communicate in a learning community; and teacher leaders engage themselves and others in positive change within the school. Most of the participants in this study have become teacher leaders. From the school and district levels to consultants at conferences across the state, these teachers have taken on the responsibility to improve the profession. Participants shared how they improved communication and collaboration skills as they began to serve in various leadership roles at their schools and within the district. As they became a part of the decision-making process, they felt empowered to encourage others to grow professionally. Teacher C confessed "I enjoyed what I do in regards to building relationships with students and til this day almost 4 years later it's been a very rewarding experience." Teacher D made it clear that he had a purpose in staying for his students: "Knowing that I can touch the lives of children, especially those who come from really bad situations, reach those kids on a level that a lot of others would not be able do." His response directly correlates to the motivators in Hertzberg's Theory of Motivation.

Research Question 3. Research consistently showed that teachers often leave high-poverty, low-performing, at-risk schools because they have not been adequately prepared to teach in such challenging environments (Laine, 2008). Ingersoll's (2001) research, while focused on teacher attrition, is applicable to this study. His recommendations for improving teacher job satisfaction were echoed by teachers in this study: provide great support. The results from this research study found that supportive

methods can encourage teachers to stay in their current position. Although participants discussed the value of support, each person related it differently. Collegial support, community support, administrative support, and mentorships were all the individual supports teachers discussed in their responses.

Both formal and informal support systems are important for all teachers, especially those new to the profession. According to Yonezawa et al. (2011), teachers who stayed in high-poverty schools have resilience. Building resiliency in the new teacher during the first several years of teaching may be part of the answer to addressing the high rate of teacher turnover in rural areas (Zost, 2010). Individualized supports have promoted resiliency for the participants in this study. Wolin and Wolin (1993) stated that resilient teachers have characteristics of good relationships, insight, initiative, independence, creativity, humor, and morality.

The results of this research study are consistent with Ingersoll's (2001) findings in that administrative support plays a vital role in teacher retention. In the study, administration was the second largest indicator for teacher retention. Research by Blase and Blase (2004) stated that principals have a major influence on a new teacher's decision to stay. They have an influence on climate, evaluations, and, consequently, retention. According to the 2016 NCTWC survey, what mattered most in teachers' decisions to remain in education was to have a collegial atmosphere at school, along with a strong leader. Similarly, many other studies have found positive impact of administrative support on teacher job satisfaction and their staying or leaving intentions in teaching (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). Multiple studies have related administrative support to staying intentions of teachers (Ladd, 2011). Additionally, many studies have described the impact of leadership and school working conditions on teacher retention

decisions. The leadership makeup of rural schools impacts the principal roles and their leadership responsibilities due to the fact that they operate with less staff and resources (Cortez-Jimenez, 2012).

Conclusions

The findings of this study related to teacher job satisfaction were consistent with those found in the literature review in Chapter 2; however, the findings of Hertzberg were triangulated to the NCTWC to make the findings more concrete. Additional studies of employee motivation and job satisfaction have adopted various theoretical models. Many of these models draw on the ideas of the classic motivation theorists who supported the notion that individuals have an inherent need for a work life that they believe is meaningful. Research by Ingersoll (2001) showed that high job satisfaction resulted in a low rate for teachers leaving their professions. In order to help solve the difficulty of losing teachers, many predictors of teacher job satisfaction, intrinsic and extrinsic, need to be examined. While the NCTWC survey addresses those factors, there is little research to suggest that districts use the data to target teacher retention.

Implications of Practice

Support in various forms has a direct impact on teacher satisfaction. The following have been identified based on literature on job satisfaction.

1. Mentoring/induction.
2. Relevant teacher support plans.
3. Meetings with administration.
4. Luncheons and celebrations.
5. Differentiation in support to target the specific needs.

The strongest relationship between a teacher's satisfaction level and choosing to

stay in this research study has been support. According to the data, any efforts to retain teachers should include a number of interventions based on those identified supports. Those supports are identified as personal and working relationships. According to Herzberg, those relationships one engages in with their supervisors and peers affect both job satisfaction and dissatisfaction. According Teacher C, this was the case for her:

My co-workers were there for me not only in a profession sense, but also in a personal sense. They cared about my well-being. When you are in an environment where people care and you know they care, you are more likely to feel motivated to stay and to work with it and work it out.

Teacher E also expressed a high degree of satisfaction based on her working relationship with administration: “Knowing the administrator that was going to be here for the third year, made it easy to decide to stay. Had it been someone new, that would have negatively influenced my decision and I might not have stayed.”

Using this data effectively may allow district and school administrators to affect the retention rate. Support in various forms has an impact on new teacher satisfaction. Mentoring sessions with new teachers is one example of how new teachers receive support. Induction support for new teachers can increase job satisfaction and reduce attrition (Fry, 2009). These sessions can be held monthly or as needed. They should differentiate the needs of teachers based on topic and level of experience. Fry (2009) found that induction support can increase job satisfaction for new teachers and reduce attrition.

Teacher support plans are another example of how any teacher can receive support. Monthly meetings with administration can create opportunities for teachers to express issues and concerns. In fact, new teachers should probably meet with various

employees on a bi-weekly basis throughout the first years of one's career. Luncheons and celebrations are also ways to help teachers feel that they are loved and supported. The differentiation in support may target the specific needs of teachers and personalize their support experience. Hertzberg's theory suggests that motivation factors lead to positive job attitudes because they satisfy the need for self-actualization. Teacher C was the only participant who discussed the importance of his mentor:

I would say that it's been great having a good mentor. That's an important piece.

There are times when you need someone to talk to, you need to vent and have a sounding board because you can't talk to everyone. I've always felt that she kept things confidential and advised how to go forward.

Although many researchers show that there is a shortage in certain areas and states in the United States, there is little information that discusses the strategies that are being used by school districts in retaining teachers and the effectiveness of those strategies (Colgan, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 1999; Fetler, 1997; Griffin, 2007). This study provided a unique perspective on the issue of teacher retention in a rural low-performing school district. In an effort to learn from those closest to the retention decision, the teachers themselves, this study reflected their perspectives. The study sought to uncover and reveal some of the complexities associated with teacher retention. The methodology of the study and presentation of findings revealed the unique issues associated with rural school districts and how, despite the obstacles, they retained teachers. One of the findings of Hertzberg that has been validated by the participants in this study has been the possibility of advancement and promotion. Teacher B was one of the only participants who directly mentioned promotion:

One advantage to working in a small district is the ability to move up the ladder

faster. I think if you stay longer you have greater rapport with the people and that increases your chances of a promotion. The ability to move up the ladder is a great advantage.

Current trends in teacher retention efforts offer a number of incentives when recruited. Among them are alternative routes to licensure, supplements or bonuses, student loan forgiveness, affordable housing, and tuition-free classes. As enticing as these are, they may need to be considered secondary to focusing on job satisfaction (which supports the Herzberg theory described earlier; Farthing, 2006).

Limitations of the Study

The following were limitations to this research study: the small number of research participants. This limitation is due to two factors. First, the number of teachers who met the criteria for the study. These participants included those hired via TFA, LE, VIF, second career, and those traditionally trained through a teacher education program. The second limitation was that although there were standard questions prewritten before each interview, they were viewed as an opportunity for further exploration and questioning. The ability to ask follow-up questions afforded the researcher the opportunity to deeply examine the experiences of participants.

Recommendations for Future Research

Many research studies have been conducted on teacher retention, although the context of each individual study varies based on the research. However, very little research has been conducted on teacher retention in rural, low-performing and high-poverty districts. Nevertheless, the solution to the teacher retention problem has yet to be discovered, if there is one. Although there is no universal answer to the problem, future research on the subject could be improved. Therefore, it is recommended that future

research:

1. Studies multiple rural districts to compare how they address teacher retention.
2. Focuses on the advantages of teaching in rural areas.
3. Have a larger number of participants to expose additional relationships such as individual school environments.
4. Review comprehensive plans that address teacher retention and compare to the findings of additional studies.
5. Continue to examine the results of the NCTWC survey to look at factors contributing to teacher attrition and retention and determine what abilities and skills teachers need to be successful in rural, low-performing, high-poverty districts.

Summary

There is little research on why teachers stay in low-performing rural school districts. The districts that usually serve high populations of children of poverty are far more likely to have challenges retaining teachers than other school districts due to significant differences in salary, benefits, and resources (Ingersoll, 2001). Research consistently shows that teachers often leave high-poverty, low-performing, at-risk schools because they have not been adequately prepared to teach in such challenging environments (Laine, 2008). This qualitative study included review of related literature related to job satisfaction and a discussion of Herzberg's Two-Factor Motivation Theory. Despite the issues related to rural districts, the findings of this study validate the research of Hertzberg. The participants identified support, administration, development into leadership, and the enjoyment of working with students to be important areas of job satisfaction and what keeps them returning to their school in the district (see Appendix

S). The results of this study were shared with the participating school district and the recommendations for improving the current retention initiatives within the district.

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Appendix A
Approval of Study

Permission to Conduct Research

Letter to Superintendent

XXXXXXXXXX
 XXXXXXXXX County Schools
 XXXXXXXXX
 XXXXXXXXX

October 17, 2017

Dear XXXXXXXXX

I am currently a doctoral student in the department of Educational Leadership at Gardner-Webb University. I am conducting a qualitative research study on teacher retention. The study will focus on teachers who have chosen to remain employed in a rural, low-performing, high-poverty school district. These teachers will need to have stayed in their position for a minimum of three years (except Teach for America Alum). I will ask the participant questions regarding why they have stayed in their position. Their responses will be collected and analyzed in hopes of developing a theoretical framework depicting why teachers remain in rural, low-performing, high-poverty schools.

With your permission, I would like to conduct six confidential interviews at several sites in the school district (yet to be determined). The participants will not be referenced in the study nor their schools in order to ensure privacy. When my study is complete, you will receive a copy of my research and findings about reasons some teachers in XXXXX County are choosing to stay in their current positions in rural, low-performing, high-poverty schools. Thank you in advance for allowing me the opportunity to increase the knowledge base related to teacher retention in rural, low-performing high-poverty schools. If you should have any questions or concerns, we can discuss those at your convenience. You may contact me by phone at 252-258-3877(mobile) or email at lboone@gardner-webb.edu. I would greatly appreciate confirmation of your permission to conduct these six confidential interviews at school sites (yet to be determined) by returning this letter with your signature. For your convenience, I have enclosed a self-addressed stamped envelope. I look forward to your reply.

LaKesia Y. Boone, MAEd
 Doctoral Candidate
 Gardner-Webb University

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
Signature of District Superintendent

10-17-17
Date

Appendix B

Explanation of Table 1

Table 1

Eligible Participants Identified by Human Resources

Pseudonym	Race	Sex	From	Content Area	Grade Level	Career Path
Teacher 1	W	M	New York	Social Studies	High	Teach for America
Teacher 2	W	F	New Jersey	Exceptional Children	Elementary	Teach for America
Teacher 3	B	M	Virginia	JROTC	High	2 nd Career
Teacher 4	B	M	Virginia	Physical Education	Middle	Lateral Entry
Teacher 5	W	F	Colorado	Exceptional Children	Middle	Teach for America
Teacher 6	B	M	Virginia	Physical Education	Elementary	Lateral Entry
Teacher 7	B	F	Virginia	Social Studies	Middle	Teach for America
Teacher 8	W	F	Pennsylvania	Exceptional Children	Elementary	Teach for America
Teacher 9	B	F	South Carolina	Pre-K	Elementary	Teach for America
Teacher 10	H	F	Honduras	English as a Second Language	Elementary Middle High	Visiting International Faculty

Note: Teachers who met the qualifications for participation in the research study. They were identified by the Human Resources Department of the district.

Appendix C

Letter to Participants

LaKesia Y. Boone
 XXXXXXXXXX

December 6, 2017

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am currently a doctoral student in the department of Educational Leadership at Gardner-Webb University. I am conducting a qualitative research study of teachers who teach in rural, low-performing, high-poverty schools. These teachers will need to have stayed in their position for a minimum of three years (except TFA Alum). I will ask the interviewees questions regarding why they have stayed in their positions. Their responses will be collected and analyzed in hopes of developing a theoretical framework depicting what keeps teachers in rural, low-performing, high-poverty schools. The Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent of schools has granted approval for me to contact you to ask if you are willing to be a participant in my qualitative study.

Within the next several days, I will be calling to set up a time to obtain your consent to participate. Afterwards, I will request a confidential interview with you in regard to your experience as a teacher working in a rural, low-performing, high-poverty school. After the interview I will deliver a transcribed copy of our discussion to verify accuracy of its content. To guarantee confidentiality of the information shared during the study a pseudonym will be given to each participant. When my findings are complete, you will receive a copy of my research conclusions in an effort to enhance your knowledge base. Thank you in advance for allowing me the opportunity to increase the knowledge base related to teacher retention in rural, low-performing, high-poverty schools. I look forward to discussing this with you further.

Sincerely,
 LaKesia Y. Boone, MAEd
 Doctoral Candidate, GWU
 Email: XXXXXX

Signature of Voluntary Participant

Date

Appendix D
Informed Consent Form

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Please read carefully the following Informed Consent specifics and sign this form if you fully give your permission to participate in this research study.

You will receive a copy of this Informed Consent for your personal records.

Researcher: LaKesia Boone, MAEd
 Graduate Student, Department of Educational Leadership
 Gardner-Webb University
 XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Dissertation Title: *Staying Put: An Analysis of Teacher Retention in a Rural, Low-Performing, and High-Poverty School District in Northeastern North Carolina.*

Purpose of Study: The purpose of this research is to examine the unique issues that challenge rural schools with retaining teachers; specifically, to identify and examine school-based factors associated with teacher retention in rural high-poverty schools. Additionally, the study will examine which social, geographic, and economic conditions impact teacher's decision to remain in the rural school district

Request for Participation: The researcher requests your voluntary participation in this study. Your participation is strictly voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. Additionally, you have the right to withdraw your words from this study at any time.

Research Method: The researcher will interview teachers in the district of the study who have taught in this district for at least a duration of three years. The researcher will ask the interviewees questions related to their teaching positions and specifically why they have stayed in that position. Data collected from the interviews will be used to develop a theoretical framework depicting the thoughts and opinions of teachers' retention in a rural, high-poverty, low-performing schools district.

Duration of Research Participation: You will participate in one individual interview during the Fall 2017/Spring 2017 that will last approximately 20 – 30 minutes.

Confidentiality: Your name will not be used on the digital recording, on the final printed transcript, or in the final research report. Only the researcher will know of your participation in this study. The digital recording and corresponding transcripts will be secured during and following the data analysis of this study; these items will be secured in the researcher's home office for five years per IRB guidelines.

Method of Recording Interview: The researcher will digitally record your interview to ensure complete accuracy of your responses. The digital recording will be secured during and following the data analysis of this study. The recordings will be secured in the researcher's home office for five years per IRB guidelines.

Right of Refusal: You may refuse to participate in this study at any time. 102

Right to Withdraw: You may withdraw from this study at any time. You may withdraw your words from this study at any time.

Feedback and Benefits: You will receive a copy of the study's research conclusions to review. The benefit of your participation in this study is to share with colleagues and university professors what you learned about teacher retention in rural, low-performing, high-poverty schools. This information could be used to strengthen teacher retention in those schools.

Copy of Consent: You will receive a copy of this Informed Consent for your personal records.

Permission to Quote: Your words may be used in the final research report to clarify or further explain a component of the theoretical framework. The researcher will not identify the source of the quote. In addition, the researcher will take precautions to ensure that there are no identifiers within the body of the quote.

Thank you in advance for your willingness to participate. You are welcome to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Signature of Voluntary Participant

Date

Appendix E

Approval Letter

Dr. Jeremy Watts
Division of Teacher Education
Bob Jones University
1700 Wade Hampton Boulevard
Greenville, SC 29614

Date: September 19, 2016

Ms. LaKesia Boone
2826 Mockingbird Lane
Winterville, NC 28590

Dear LaKesia Boone:

I am pleased to grant you permission to use an amended version of my copyrighted individual interview protocol that I created and used while exploring teacher retention in rural school districts in eastern Kentucky. It is my understanding that you will use the following questions from my individual interview protocol in your protocol and/or questionnaire: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 13, 15, and 17. Likewise, I acknowledge that you would like to replace the word *teachers* in question 3 with *your*, and remove *and the community* in question 5. The below stipulations are requirements for permission to amend and use the individual interview protocol.

- This approval letter shall be submitted with your IRB documentation submission.
- This approval letter shall be included in the appendix of your final dissertation along with the acknowledgement of the protocol's use in the preface of your final dissertation.
- I shall receive a copy of your final dissertation after your dissertation examination in order to study the results of your new research.

I wish you all of the best in your research endeavors! If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at jeremywatts09@gmail.com.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jeremy Watts', with a stylized flourish extending from the end.

Jeremy Watts, PhD
Division Chair of Teacher Education

Appendix F

Interview Questions

Interview Questions

1. Please tell me about yourself and your work.
2. How did you come to work in the current school district?
3. Are there any advantages to living and teaching in a rural, high- poverty area?
4. What factors have contributed to (your) teachers' decisions to remain in this district?
5. Did money or other incentives affect (your) teachers' decisions to stay?
6. What helped you adjust and acclimate to the current school district and the community as a whole? (Remove and the community as a whole)
7. Do these efforts affect your decision to stay? If so, how so?
8. Did actions of a specific building level administrator influence your decision to remain in the current school district? If so, how?
9. What do you think building administrators and district administrators should do to ensure that new teachers remain in the district?
10. Considering everything we have discussed, overall, what is keeping you here in the current district?
11. Is there anything that your building administrators or district administration could do to further impact your decision to stay?
12. Is there anything else you would like to add to our time today?

Appendix G
IRB Approval



GARDNER-WEBB
UNIVERSITY

**Institutional
Review Board**

17111603x

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT THE RESEARCH PROJECT TITLED

Staying Put: An Analysis of Teacher Retention in a Rural, Low-Performing, High-Poverty School Dist

being conducted by LaKesia Boone

has received approval by the Gardner-Webb University IRB. Date 12-6-17

Exempt Research

Signed _____

Department/School/Program IRB Representative

Department/School/Program IRB Member

Expedited Research

Signed [Signature]

Department/School/Program IRB Representative

[Signature]
Department/School/Program IRB Member

[Signature]
IRB Administrator or Chair or Institutional Office

Non-Exempt (Full Review)

Signed _____

IRB Administrator

IRB Chair

IRB Institutional Officer

Expiration Date _____

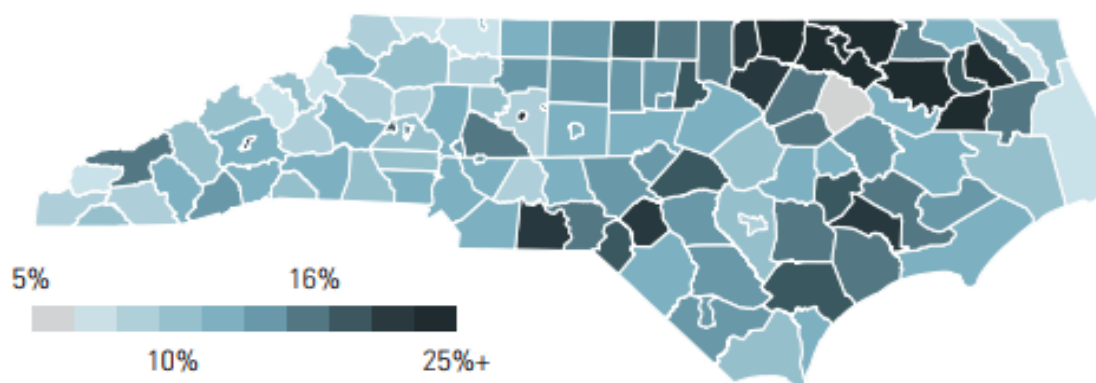
IRB Approval:

____ Exempt ☒ Expedited _____ Non-Exempt (Full Review)

Appendix H

Explanation of Figure 1

Teacher Turnover in North Carolina K-12 Schools by District (2016-17)



13.5% State Average Teacher Turnover in 2016-17

Base geographic mapping files provided by the Friday Institute for Educational Innovation, North Carolina State University. Visit www.NCEdFacts.org for more interactive data.

Source: [NC DPI 2016-17 State of the Teaching Profession Report](#)

Figure 1. Teacher Turnover in North Carolina in 2016-2017 by School District

Note: NC Teacher Turnover rates for the 2016-2017. This map highlights a high turnover rate for the district of this study (27%).

Appendix I

Explanation of Figure 2

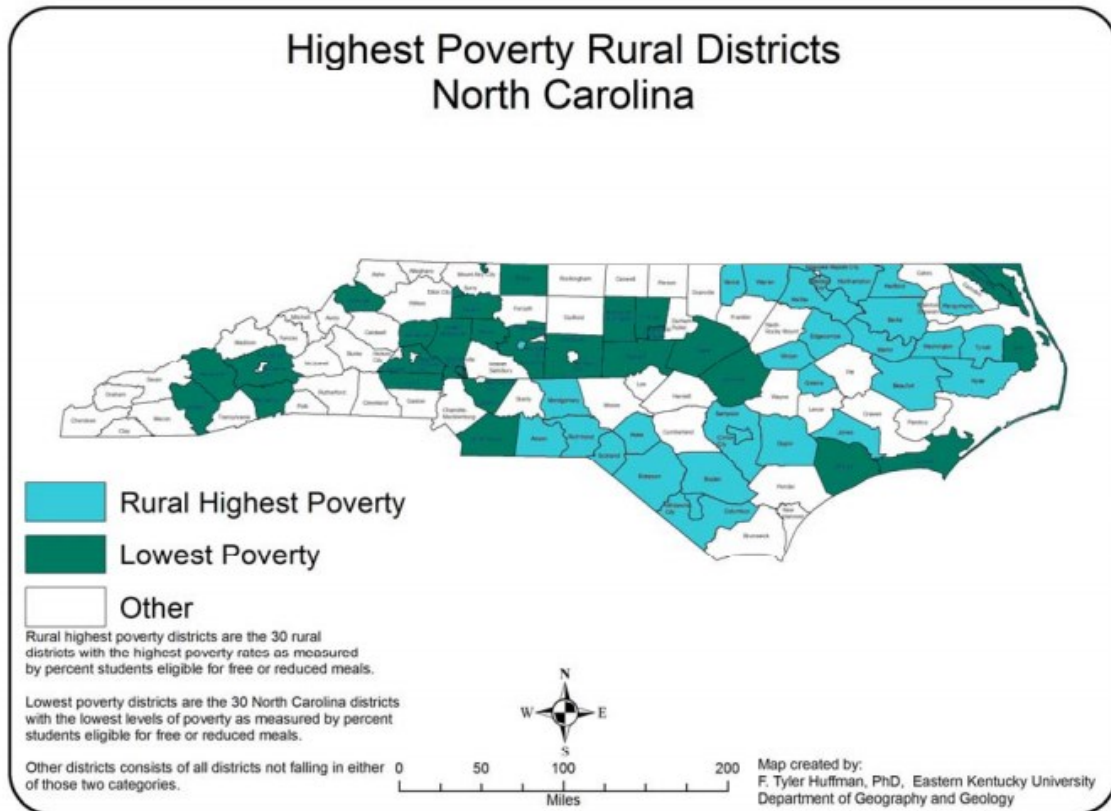


Figure 2. Highest and Lowest Rural Counties in North Carolina (2007)

Note: Highest and Lowest Rural Counties in North Carolina in 2007. This map highlights the ranking for the district of this study as Rural Highest Poverty. The ranking since then has been consistent.

Appendix J

Explanation of Table 2

Table 2

Demographic Information on Research Participants

Pseudonym	Race	Sex	From	Content Area	Grade Level	Career Path
Teacher A	W	F	New York	EC	Elementary High	TFA
Teacher B	B	F	Virginia	Social Studies	Middle	TFA
Teacher C	B	M	Virginia	JROTC	High School	2 nd Career
Teacher D	B	M	Virginia	PE	Middle	LE
Teacher E	W	F	Colorado	EC	Middle	TFA
Teacher F	H	F	Honduras	ESL	Elementary Middle High	VIF

Note: The demographics of each research participant. This included: race, sex, content area, grade level, and career path.

Appendix K

Explanation of Figure 3

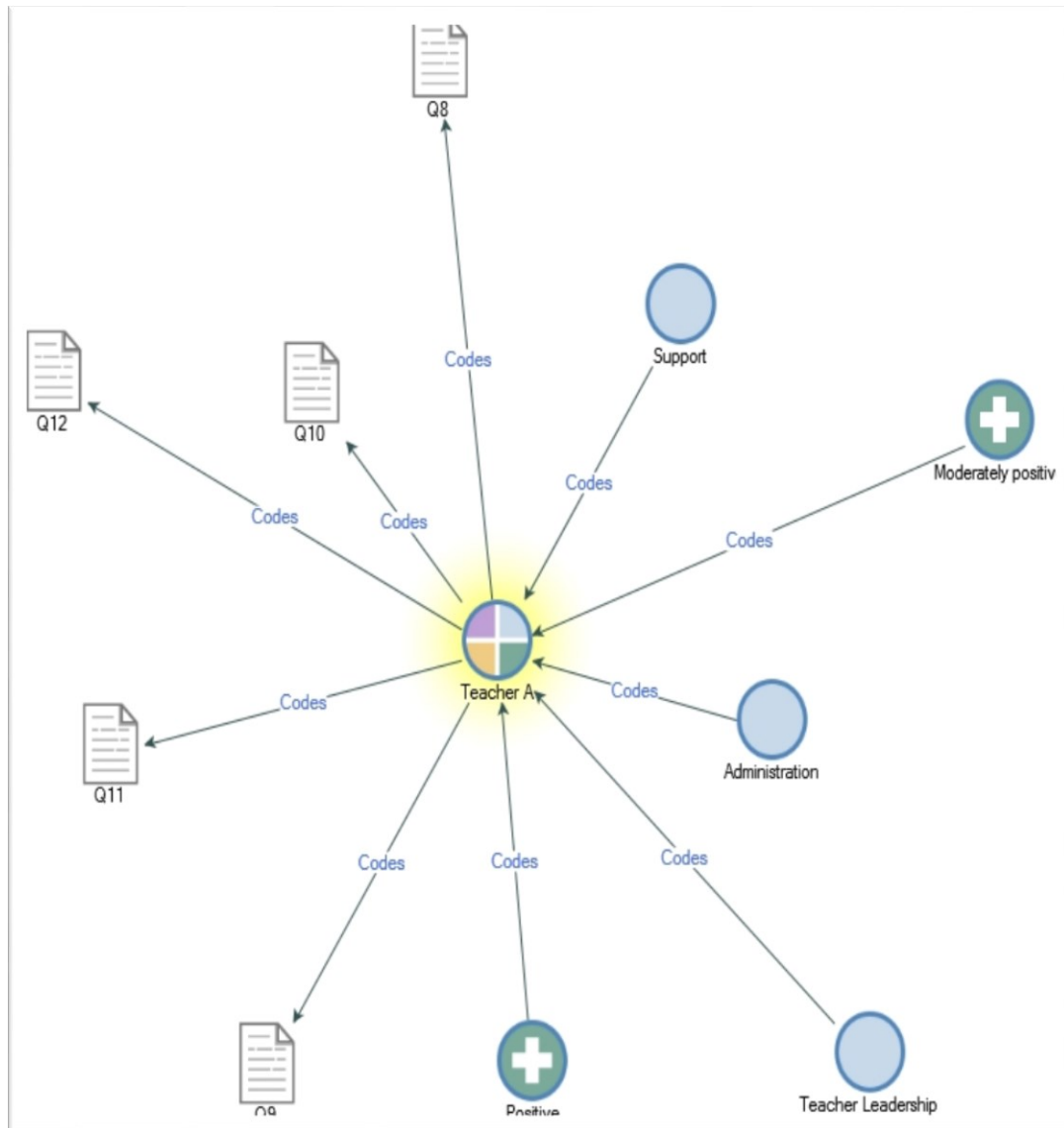


Figure 3. Exploratory Diagram for Teacher A (NVivo).

Note: Exploratory Diagram for Teacher A. This diagram identifies the themes mostly associated with the responses of the participant: Support, Administration and Teacher Leadership. The questions that indicate these responses are: 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12. The overall sentiment of the responses was positive.

Appendix L

Explanation of Figure 4

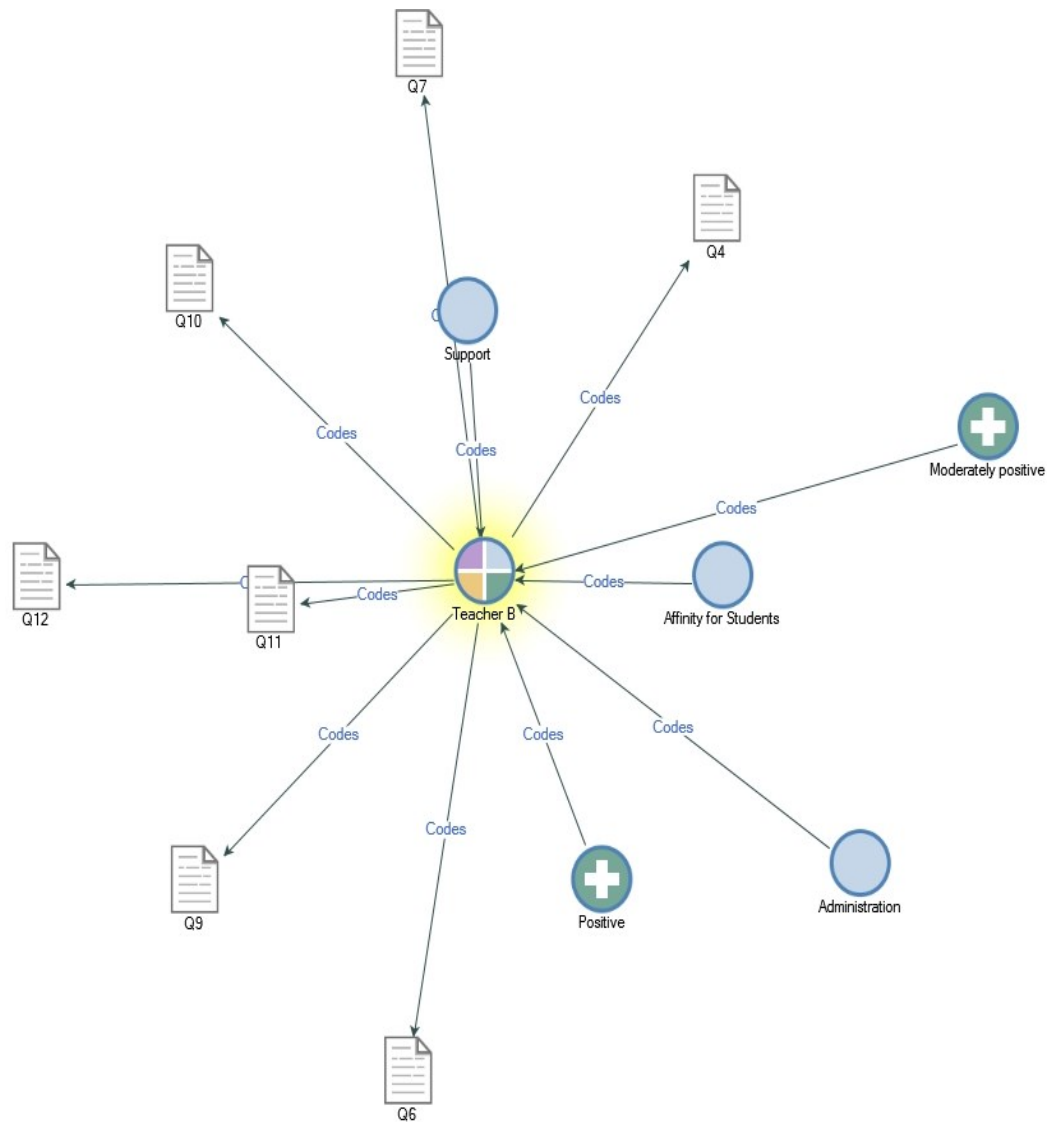


Figure 4. Exploratory Diagram for Teacher B (NVivo).

Note: Exploratory Diagram for Teacher B. This diagram identifies the themes mostly associated with the responses of the participant: Support, Administration and Affinity of Students. The questions that indicate these responses are: 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11 and 12. The overall sentiment of the responses was positive.

Appendix M

Explanation of Figure 5

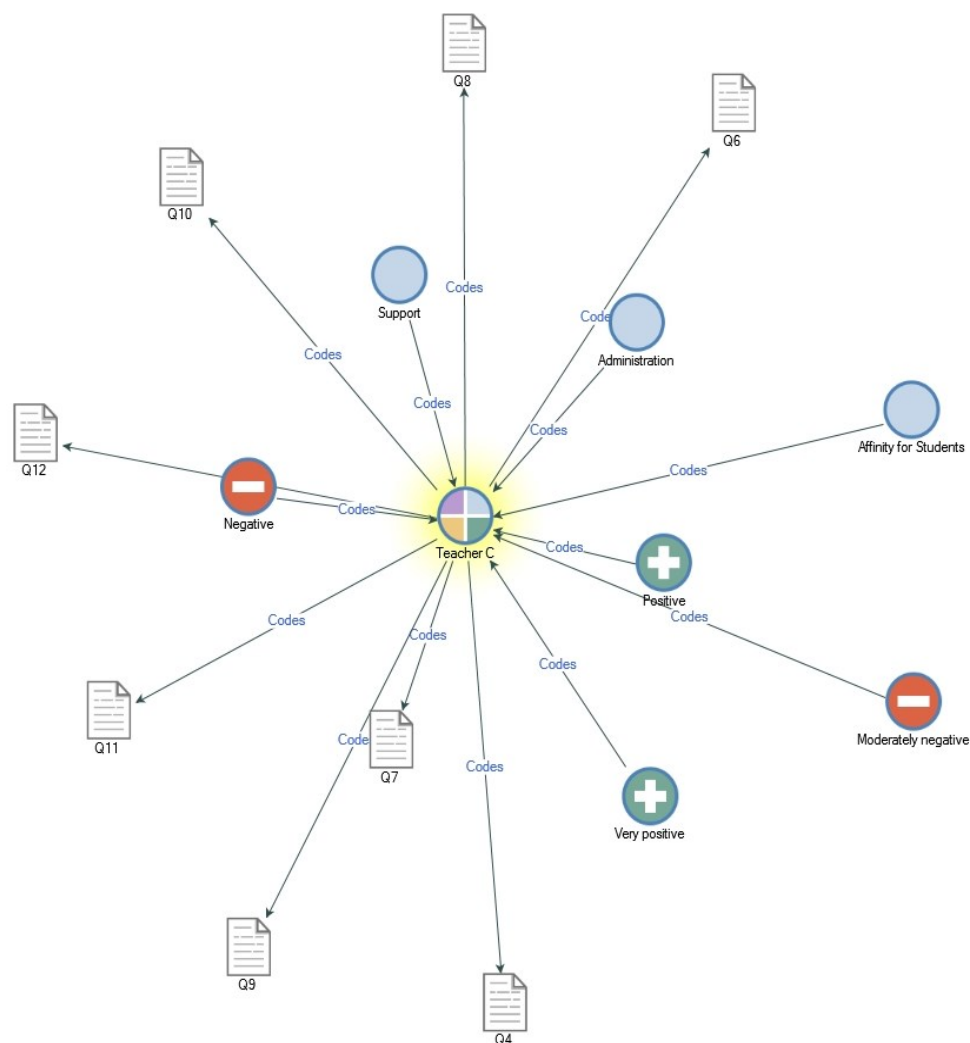


Figure 5. Exploratory Diagram for Teacher C (NVivo).

Note: Exploratory Diagram for Teacher C. This diagram identifies the themes mostly associated with the responses of the participant: Support, Administration and Affinity of Students. The questions that indicate these responses are: 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12. The overall sentiment of the responses was a mix of both positive and negative.

Appendix N

Explanation of Figure 6

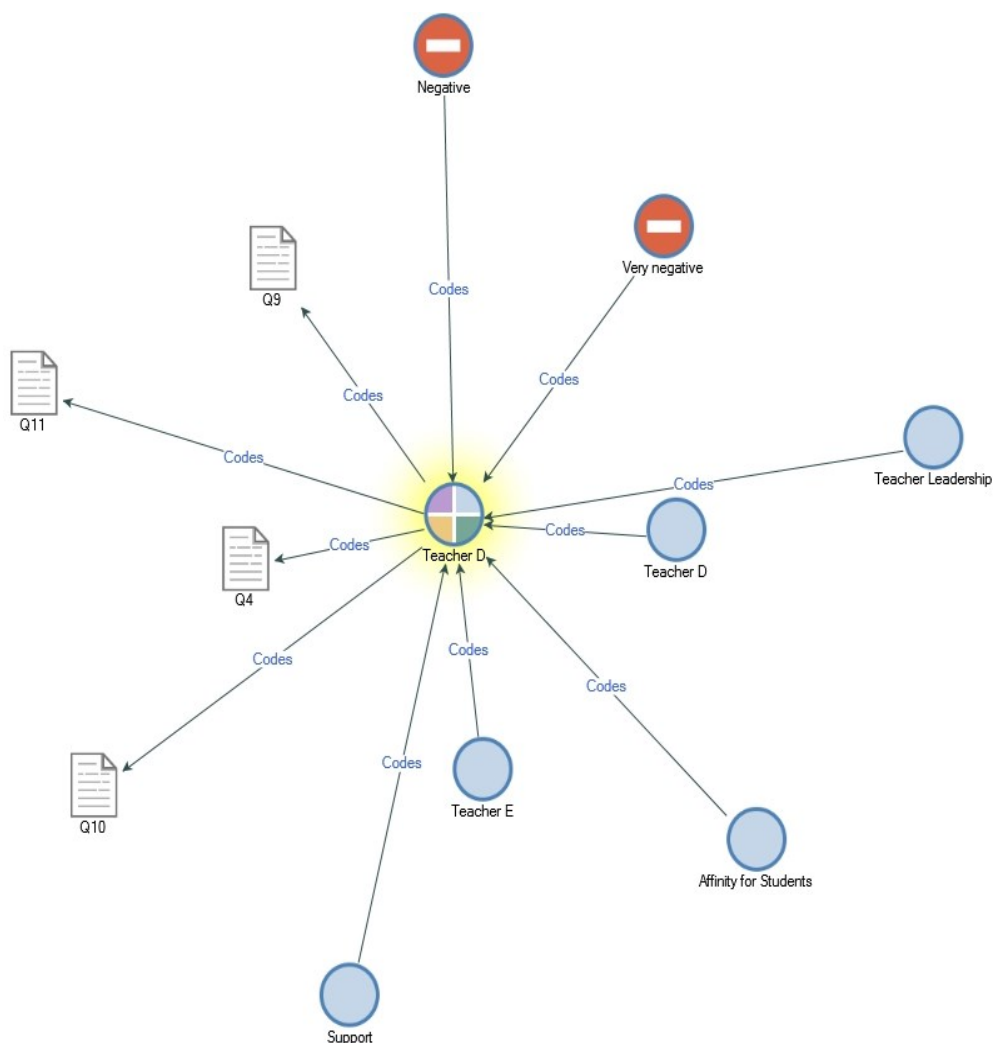


Figure 6. Exploratory Diagram for Teacher D (NVivo).

Note: Exploratory Diagram for Teacher D. This diagram identifies the themes mostly associated with the responses of the participant: Support, Affinity of Students and Teacher Leadership. The responses of Teacher D were very similar to Teachers E and D. The questions that indicate these responses are: 4, 9, 10 and 12. The overall sentiment of the responses was negative.

Appendix O

Explanation of Figure 7

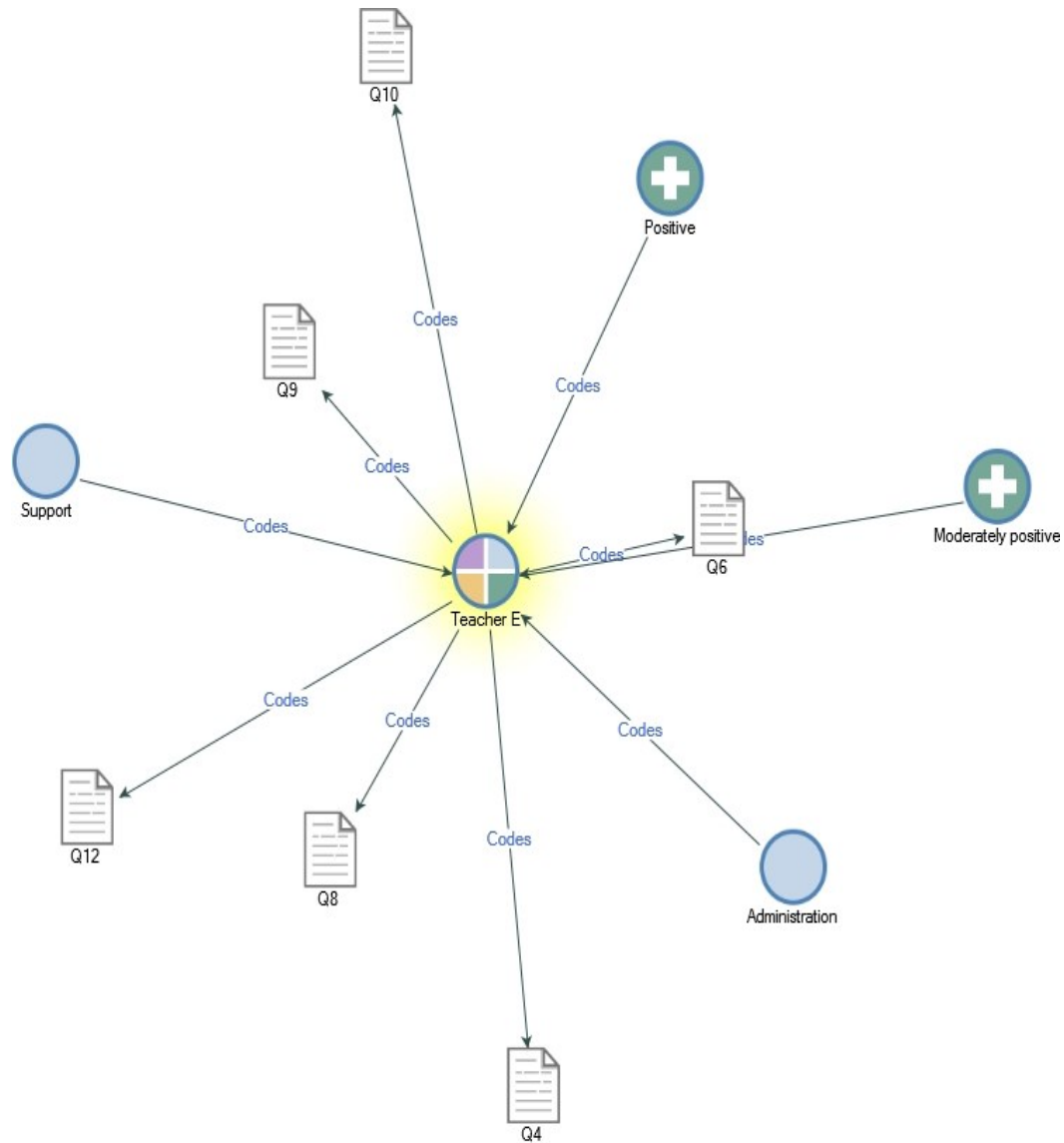


Figure 7. Exploratory Diagram for Teacher E (NVivo).

Note: Exploratory Diagram for Teacher E. This diagram identifies the themes mostly associated with the responses of the participant: Support and Administration. The questions that indicate these responses are: 4, 6, 8, 9, 10 and 12. The overall sentiment of the responses was positive.

Appendix P

Explanation of Figure 8

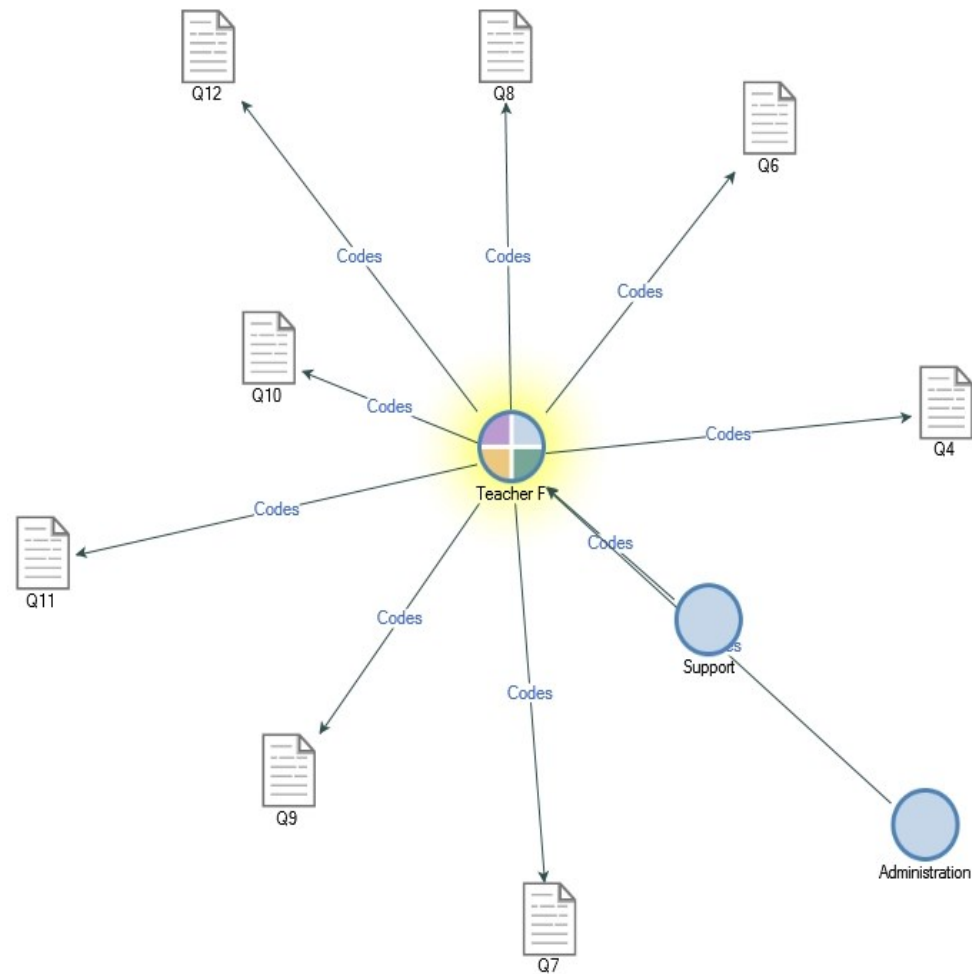


Figure 8. Exploratory Diagram for Teacher F (NVivo).

Note: Exploratory Diagram for Teacher F. This diagram identifies the themes mostly associated with the responses of the participant: Support and Administration. The questions that indicate these responses are: 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 12. The program did not rate an overall sentiment for this participant.

Appendix Q

Explanation of Figure 9

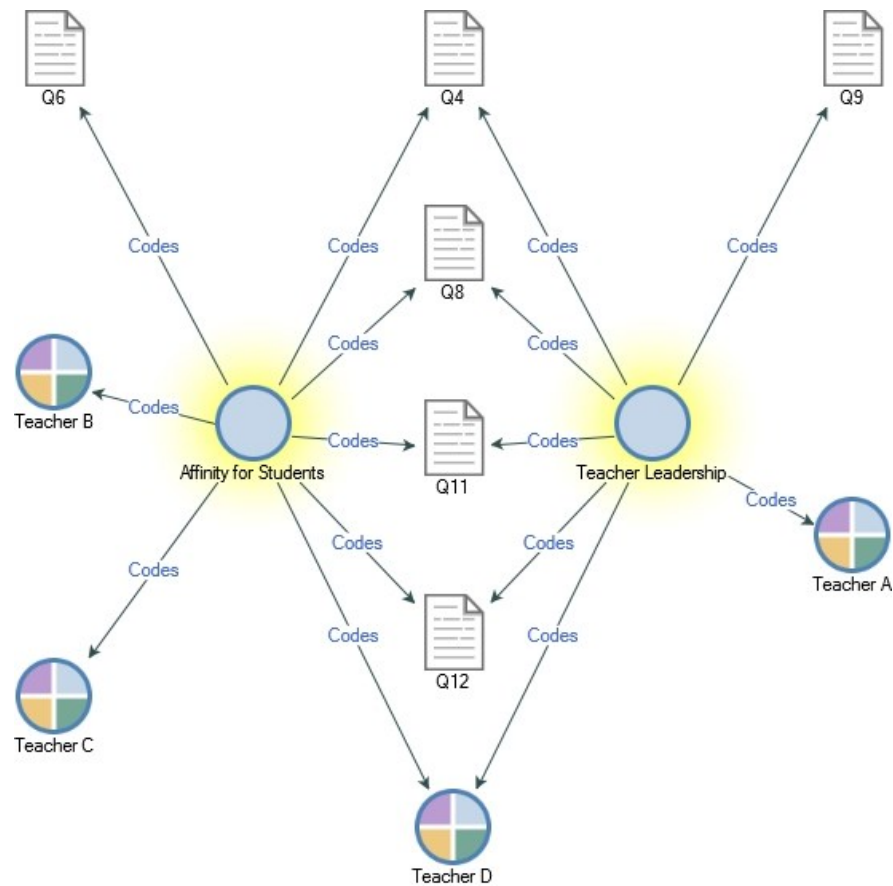


Figure 9. Comparison Diagram for and Themes 1 and 2 (NVivo).

Note: Comparison Diagram for Themes 1 and 2: Affinity for Students and Teacher Leadership. These themes answered RQ2. This diagram showed how many participants associated with one or both themes. Teachers B and C mostly associated with an Affinity for Students, Teacher most associated with Teacher Leadership and Teacher D equally associated with both and Teacher F did not register for either. The questions that indicate these responses are: 4, 6, 8, 9, 11 and 12.

Appendix R

Explanation of Figure 10

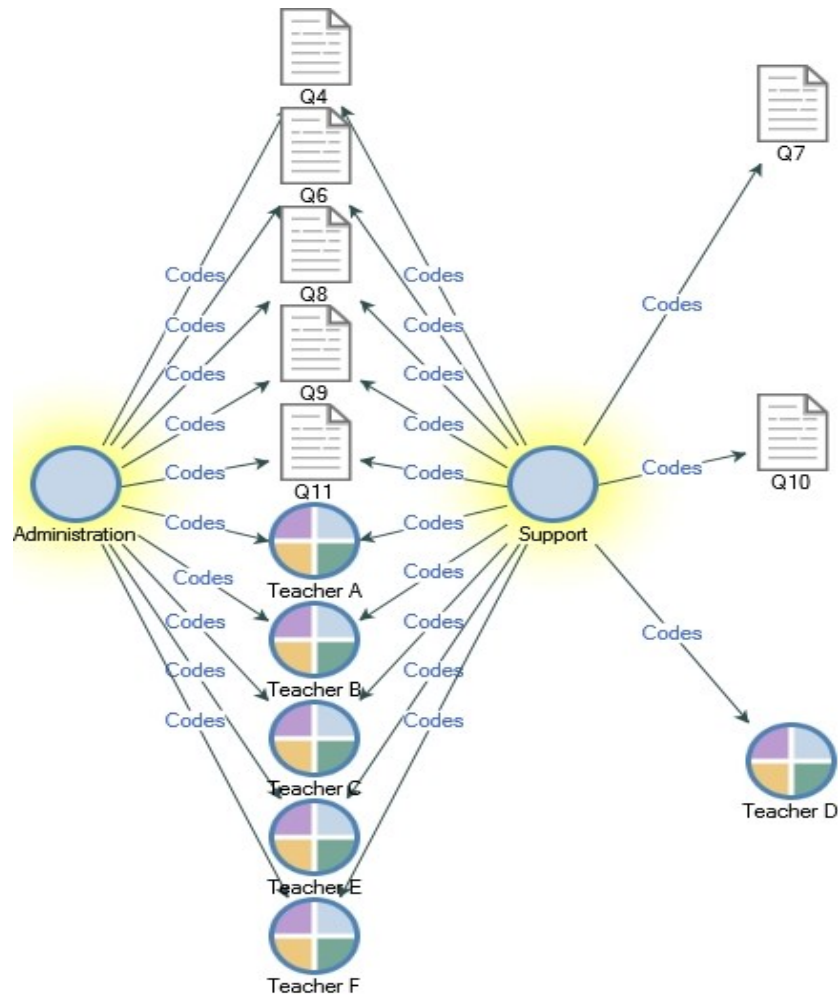


Figure 10. Comparison Diagram for Themes 3 and 4 (NVivo).

Note: Comparison Diagram for Themes 3 and 4: Administration and Support. These themes answered RQ3. This diagram showed how many participants associated with one or both themes. Teachers A, B, C, E and F associated with both themes while Teacher D mainly associated with Support only. The questions that indicate these responses are: 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11.

Appendix S

Participant Response by Theme

Participant Response by Theme

Teacher Leadership

Teacher A- One thing I really appreciated about this district is the administrators that I have worked with have given me a lot of opportunities to be a teacher leader and how to be a leader in a new way as a coach. That has been very powerful in my decision to stay here. I have experiences now, being on teacher recruitment teams, leading professional development, and running a classroom that I would not have had access to as early in my career if I was in other places. I have also been empowered to share those practices at a higher level by presenting at state and district level conferences and professional development sessions so that we can broaden my impact not only in our country but across the state. I don't feel like in a bigger district or a district in a different area, I wouldn't have been encouraged as much to reach for those options.

Teacher B- There is the ability to move up the ladder faster. They develop and recognize teacher leaders here.

Teacher C- I have grown professionally by mentoring other teachers, serving on interview committees and creating a district mentoring program.

Teacher D- I can grow professionally here. I chose to stay because every year I have had growth, in the classroom as well as athletics.

Teacher E- I have served on school committees, conducted professional development, been consulted about opinions that affected students outcomes. I feel like a leader in my building.

Teacher F- My work is valued and I am contacted about issues affecting my students. I have also facilitated school level professional development relative to my students.

Affinity for Students

Teacher A- There is more of a team feeling in the school with students, so even though students may not be on my roster, I still feel comfortable talking to them in the hallway and things like that. The whole "it takes a village to raise a child." I think that is one main positive. I literally know every child's name at school which is very powerful lets you develop those close relationships that you have to have with students and their parents in order to leverage to get them to perform at the level they are capable of.

Teacher B- Students alone are a great reason to stay in the district. My kids make me smile on my worst days and it is good to work around people that you care about. The kids have so much potential much like our district and I think that is vital to our success. I

think that when we start tapping into that potential and allowing our kids to be successful w/o enabling them although it is easy to bend b/c of others.

Teacher C- The advantage would be being able to show my relationship to the students growing up a poor country boy, growing up farming and working all through high school learning different trades, on to college and on to a successful military career. Being able to show a student that they may be able to identify with you because they may be in that situation now and to have them realize that they can get out of their current poor situation and I can become something, I can make these changes and I can get out of this area and become successful. Having good students with positive mindsets. I can see them grow and those highlights keep you doing what you do.

Teacher D- The advantages to working here are knowing that I can touch the lives of children, especially those who come from really bad situations, reach those kids on a level that a lot of others would be able to do. There is a good rapport with the students. That has motivated me and given me drive to do better for them. I feel like you have to love it, you have to care about the kids. That is what keeps you motivated to come and better them. A lot of them come from situations where school is the only safe haven so to speak so that it has motivated me and always kept me pushing and have the drive to do better for the kids and help them do better.

Teacher E- I like the students I work with. I already knew most of the kids and I thought I knew what I was getting into. It definitely wasn't what I expected. I have become frustrated with the lack of resources for our kids outside of school. They deserve better.

Teacher F- I really like working with the students here. I know most of the kids.

Administration

Teacher A- I had a really hard time with my principal my 1st year of teaching who is not a principal in the county any more. That was challenging. I was a little nervous going into my 2nd year I was going to have a new principal. Just because I didn't have a positive relationship with my administrative team at that point, I was still open. But one thing that I really, really appreciated about my new principal is that she saw leadership potential and encouraged me to take on those leadership options. Sometimes it was me kicking and screaming a little bit because I felt overwhelmed but I'm glad they pushed me in those areas because I think it helped develop me as a teacher, and as an educator, and also a leader in the school in ways I didn't even have on my radar before. So that is something I really appreciated. I appreciate my administrative team because I really felt empowered by both of them to lead and felt comfortable bringing up issues I saw but always feeling comfortable to follow up those issues with solutions I had and very supported in following through those issues. Administrators helped me develop the tools I needed to be effective. Sometimes it is hard in EC especially because you are a teacher but you are

also in charge of making sure everything is done in a compliant way. We had to have some uncomfortable conversations with administrators but they were very understanding and graceful in understanding that flow and helped me develop the communication tools I needed to effectively be able to advocate and be respectful of my principal and leadership at the school.

Teacher B- My administration helped me adjust to teaching and that has been influential in my stay. School and district administrations can provide those scaffolds and put supports in place for teachers to be successful. Not to say that our BT program is not effective, but is that enough. The question is are we putting ineffective administrators with ineffective teachers who can't handle the work load? Everyone needs continued professional development but not just online. The district needs to take some accountability and realize that we don't know how to work a lot of things and teachers are winging it by themselves. So that's one thing they can one, it train us to be effective teachers and don't give us multiple resources that our students can't use or that don't work with our students. Another thing they can do is consistency amongst our administrators. They are not on the same page and it's really hard to do anything or work around that. It is tedious to get around that. District/School need to fair, firm and consistent with staff so that everyone can do their jobs. Lastly, I think we need more incentives. It is hard to work in a rural environment with limited resources. We need motivation for people to want to work here.

Teacher C- We had to figure out how we were going to as we say "eat the elephant" together. You make small bits or small accomplishments and it seems easier to achieve the goal rather than looking at the whole picture that's just a glimpse. Administration allowed me to rebuild the JROTC program at my discretion and supported my initiatives.

Teacher D- I am comfortable with them and want to continue my career with those administrators who were here. I felt comfortable with them and I wanted to continue my career with those administrators who were in place at the time.

Teacher E- Knowing the administrator that was going to be here for the third year. That made it easy to decide to stay. I wouldn't say necessarily that convinced me to stay. But had it been someone new or some who didn't give me all of the freedom and flexibility, that would have negatively influenced my decision and I might not have stayed. Had I not had a good experience with the administrator, I probably would have left. My principal encouraged me to stay and I wouldn't have stayed if it wasn't someone I didn't get along with.

Teacher F- I have a good relationship with most of the principals. My work is valued and they have helped me adjust to the culture differences. I need help from them to explain the secondary role of someone like me and what I do to assist students and teachers.

Individual Supports

Teacher A- I think something that was really helpful was having a core group of people (not everyone) from here, who were raised here, who are stakeholders in this community also in this school system, really reach out and be open, and welcoming to me and not be afraid to have real conversations with me about “how this works,” where we are from let know how “it is.” There are good supports in place for teachers to be successful. There are leadership opportunities and professional development opportunities. I appreciate the chance to learn/apply practices and I feel very supported by the schools and the district.

Teacher B- My co-workers were there for not only in a profession sense but also in a personal sense. They cared about my well-being. When you are in an environment where people care and you know they care, you are more likely to feel motivated to stay and to work with it and work it out. People are a big reason I think we stay at our jobs. School and district administration provide supports for teachers to be successful. However, co-workers were extremely supportive in my transition.

Teacher C- There some days you don’t always feel the strongest but they keep you motivated so you motivate each other and you learn from each other. I've learned a lot doing this job and that's one of the factors that kept me here and is a great staff of folks. Yes there have been some transitions over the 4 years but now the motto of the school is “change begins with me” we all pretty much exemplify that and we pretty much gel as a staff. You can see the change in the school, the positive change in the school so that makes coming to work a lot easier. Even though I have to drive a long ways, it makes it okay. It has been great having a good mentor and a great staff of good supportive folks. I would say that it’s been great having a good mentor. That’s an important piece. There are times when you need someone to talk to, you need to vent and there have been some frustrating times I've had here but it’s always been a pleasure having my mentor to be that person/my sounding board because you can’t talk to everyone and I've always felt that whatever we said would be in confidentiality and in reality you always your best advice on how to go forward.

Teacher D- I felt very supported and knew the administrators would have my back.

Teacher E- Administrators have been flexible and forgiving and allowing me to try things I wanted to do and have autonomy in the class. I felt having that opportunity in a place I already knew was really the main thing that kept me here. I think most new teachers are supported pretty well.

Teacher F- The help/support I received from the central office and administrators has helped me with my learning gaps.