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# Study of the Relationship of Organizational Protective Processes and Teacher Resilience

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A STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIP OF ORGANIZATIONAL PROTECTIVE  
PROCESSES AND TEACHER RESILIENCE

by

RICKY DAVID TATUM

ABSTRACT

(Under the Direction of Barbara J. Mallory)

School systems in the United States have found it difficult to retain teachers in the teaching profession. The need for programs and interventions that lead to teacher resilience and retention determined the following research question for this study: Is there a relationship between the organizational protective processes and teachers' personal resilience? High school teachers in 7 out of 17 schools in the Northeast Georgia Regional Education Service Agency District participated in the study. Responses were received from 307 high school teachers. Partial correlations were used to analyze the results.

Teachers indicated that they believed all of the five organizational protective processes were important to retaining teachers in the teaching profession. Significant relationships were found between resilience and four of the five organizational protective processes: empowerment; collaboration; administrative support; staff development; and mentoring.

The most significant relationships were found between empowerment and resilience, administrative support and resilience, and mentoring and resilience. Collaboration and resilience also showed high significance. The results indicated that teachers believed these organizational protective processes were crucial to retaining teachers in the profession. The least prevalent relationship was found between staff development and

resilience. The results indicated that teachers did not believe staff development was important in retaining teachers in the profession.

The results indicated that school systems should utilize programs and interventions that act as protective factors and retain teachers in the teaching profession. These programs and interventions can be utilized and carried out by building level administrators. Principals should allow faculty a voice in building level decisions concerning curriculum and instruction. Teachers should also be allowed to work in collaborative teams and interact with colleagues when designing curriculum and lesson planning. Schools should also have strong induction programs for new teachers that allow for veteran teachers to mentor them through the induction phase of their career.

Finally, administrators should support teachers by being visible and readily available to help with discipline and instructional needs. Principals should be the instructional leaders in their building and support teachers whenever possible

**INDEX WORDS:** Resilience, Teacher retention, Collaboration, Staff development, Administrative support, Mentoring

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## DEDICATION

In recognition for their love, support, and patience, I hereby dedicate this dissertation to my wife Beth and my son Brock. Thank you for enduring the long hours that I spent sitting at the computer completing this endeavor. You never complained and allowed me to have the perseverance to finish. Your encouragement made all the difference.

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CHAPTER I  
INTRODUCTION

This e-mail was forwarded to teachers in a local school district:

After being interviewed by the school administration, the eager teaching prospect said:

Let me see if I've got this right. You want me to go into that room with all those kids and fill their every waking moment with a love for learning. And I'm supposed to instill a sense of pride in their ethnicity, modify their disruptive behavior, observe them for signs of abuse and even censor their T-shirt messages and dress habits. You want me to wage a war on drugs and sexually transmitted diseases, check their backpacks for weapons of mass destruction, and raise their self esteem.

You want me to teach them patriotism, good citizenship, sportsmanship, and fair play, how and where to register to vote, how to balance a checkbook, and how to apply for a job. I am to check their heads for lice, maintain a safe environment, and recognize signs of antisocial behavior, offer advice, write letters of recommendation for student employment and scholarships, encourage respect for the cultural diversity of others, and, oh yeah, always make sure that I give the girls in my class 50 percent of my attention. My contract requires me to work on my own time after school and evenings grading papers. Also, I must spend my summer vacation at my own expense, working toward advance certification and a Master's degree. And on my own time you want me to

attend committee and faculty meetings, PTA meetings, and participate in staff development training. I am to be a paragon of virtue, larger than life, such that my very presence will awe my students into being obedient and respectful of authority. And I am to pledge allegiance to family values and this current administration.

You want me to incorporate technology into the learning experience, monitor web sites, and relate personally with each student. That includes deciding who might be potentially dangerous and/or liable to commit a crime in school. I am to make sure all students pass the state mandatory exams, even those who don't come to school regularly or complete any of their assignments. Plus, I am to make sure that all of the students with handicaps get an equal education regardless of the extent of their mental or physical handicap. And I am to communicate regularly with the parents by letter, telephone, newsletter, and report card.

All of this I am to do with just a piece of chalk, a computer, a few books, a bulletin board, and a big smile and on a starting salary that qualifies my family for food stamps!

You want me to do all of this, and you expect me NOT TO PRAY?

(Anonymous, 2004)

This passage does an excellent job of explaining the difficulties educators face while teaching the youth of today. Teaching is a challenging profession, and teacher turnover is creating difficulties for school systems nationwide. Teachers are being asked to do more with fewer resources and greater accountability. For



this reason, many teachers leave the profession during the early stages of their career. All of the difficulties described in the above passage contribute to the teacher turnover rate and help to explain why young teachers leave the profession at an alarming rate as high as 50% after their first five years in the profession (Ingersoll, 2001). Ingersoll asserted that these difficulties demonstrate the high pressure and less-than perfect working conditions that lead to teacher turnover. School systems are currently realizing the need to foster personal resilience in their teachers. Personal resilience is defined as remaining productive during hard and stressful times. By promoting five organizational protective processes that foster personal resilience in teachers, systems may lower the turnover rate and keep teachers productive throughout the career cycle (Steffy, Wolf, Pask, & Entz, 2000).

#### History of Supply and Demand for Teachers

Modern day teaching was basically shaped by events that occurred in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Rury (1989) asserted that prior to the nineteenth century, during the colonial period, most of the teachers were white men. He stated that there was a common belief that men made better teachers because good deportment was synonymous with learning. The belief was that men were better able to handle the authority and the discipline needed to effectively run a school. He concluded that the teaching profession was used as an avenue to other professions such as the ministry or law, and that trend continued until the mid-nineteenth century. Rury reported that women only taught as adolescents, and abandoned the career to start households and have children of their own.

However, Sedlak (1989) reported that by the middle of the nineteenth century women were entering the field in mass numbers. He asserted that this demographic shift was due in part to the influence of the beliefs of liberal Christian sects of New England and the Mid-Atlantic region. He stated that this shift was due to the doctrine of “Christian nurture,” where children could be led by the educational process toward salvation. He asserted that personalities of women were considered much more suited for this doctrine than men's personalities.

Teaching in the nineteenth century was basically considered women’s work (Weiler, 1989). Work was wage based for middle-class women in a society with rigid gender categories. Altenbaugh (1997) argued that the feminization of American schools began in the 1830s, and Weiler emphasized that during 1840-1865 teaching became defined as appropriate work for women. Conway (2005) stated that women teachers earned only about 60% of the salary paid to men in the same school. Around 1900 the pay had increased to \$350 a year. The “feminization of teaching” continued through the turn of the century, and by 1930 a gender ratio of 70% female to 30% male was achieved (Clifford, 1989). The 30% male rate came mainly from men who taught in high schools. Clifford reported that this ratio has remained constant into present time.

Sedlak (1989) argued that the teaching profession suffered from the diminished status of women in society, even in modern times. He concluded that teaching became women’s work and was vulnerable to a loss of discretion and autonomy, which led to a lowering of status of the profession. Bilken (1983)

reported that many teachers in his study of elementary programs stated that if they had the chance to choose over, they would choose a career with high pay and more status. He felt that the low pay was because teaching was viewed as women's work.

The lowering of status as explained by Sedlak is an example of an external pressure on the teaching profession. However, external pressures may not be the greatest cause of teacher turnover. According to Ingersoll (2001), there are also internal organizational conditions that cause pressure and teacher turnover. Ingersoll charged that a lack of administrative support, salary, student discipline and motivation, class size, inadequate planning time, and a lack of opportunity for advancement are all internal pressures that lead to a high teacher turnover rate.

With the continued low status of the job and the low pay in relation to other professions, teachers leave the profession in large numbers. The National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES] (2004) reported that in the 1987-88 school year, 2,323,200 public school teachers left teaching. The NCES projections showed that this was in line with the 6% turnover rate for previous years. The NCES reported that 12.7% of private school teachers left the profession during the same time period. The report indicated that private schools suffered from a higher turnover rate than public schools. These NCES turnover figures were similar to the turnover rates for the state of Georgia (Georgia Department of Education [GDOE] (2004) ten years later in FY 97 and FY 98. The GDOE showed turnover rates for public schools and private schools of 7.5 % and 8.1% respectively. The turnover

rates have been slowly rising. The last available data reported by the GDOE showed that 8,303 teachers did not return to Georgia classrooms in FY 02.

#### Teacher Turnover/Retention

Where have all the teachers gone? This is a question that school districts all across the United States are asking themselves. Historically speaking, it is becoming more difficult to staff our nation's schools (Guin 2004). A national shortage of teachers currently exists, especially in the critical areas of math, science and special education (Georgia Professional Standards Commission [GPSC]), (2002). The GPSC indicated that states are scrambling to fill positions and are creating special programs to fill vacancies. States are implementing new and innovative programs in order to attract teachers to the profession.

The shortage results from at least two sources, according to Hallinan and Khmelkov (2001). They asserted that two factors caused low status in K-12 teaching when compared to other professions such as medicine and law. Teachers at the K-12 level suffered from low status in academia because of their lack of research activities and their focus on applied teaching practices.

Also, two societal conditions that Hallinan and Khmelkov (2001) cited as detrimental to teachers were low salaries and the minimal qualifications of some applicants. They concluded that the growing global economy led to large salary increases in other professions, but not in teaching. Teachers are still seen as service personnel who are paid less than professionals with a similar education. Hallinan and Khmelkov cited the growing student population and the need to fill vacancies with alternatively certified teachers as adding to the low status of teaching.

Teachers may leave the profession to seek higher salaries in other areas (Ingersoll, 2001). Georgia raised teacher pay in order to retain teachers; however, even with higher salaries, there remains a shortage of teachers in critical need areas. Georgia raised its average salary to a level that is nationally competitive; however, teaching salaries are still lower than professionals with similar educational backgrounds (GDOE, 2004).

Organizational processes also cause teachers to leave the profession. Ingersoll (2001) cited school staffing and accountability as creating significant organizational pressures. He determined that staffing problems were due primarily to organizational pressures rather than personal factors. He asserted that when teachers leave a school, the shortage can lower the school's performance and cause staffing pressures. Schools are forced to hire minimally qualified applicants to staff positions because of shortages in critical areas such as math and science. In his study of teacher turnover, Ingersoll stated that, "Contemporary educational theory holds that one of the pivotal causes of inadequate school performance is the inability of schools to adequately staff classrooms with qualified teachers" (p. 33). In this age of accountability, schools are being asked to achieve higher standardized test scores with less qualified teachers.

State departments of education are being forced to issue provisional certificates in order to staff schools and fill these critical needs positions. The definition of "provisional" changes as the shortage increases. The impact that these provisionally certified teachers will have on achievement remains to be seen (GDOE, 2004).

GPSC (2004) defined teacher retention as the percentage of teachers who stay in the classroom from year to year. Attrition was defined as the number of teachers who leave the profession each year. The GDOE (2004) stated that 25-30% of new teachers in

Georgia quit the profession in the first three years and as many as 50 % left the profession after five years (Ingersoll, 2001). It costs school districts large amounts of money to fill employment vacancies.

At any time during the career cycle teachers may suffer from teacher withdrawal. Steffy, Wolf, Pask and Entz (2000) reported that there are three stages of teacher withdrawal:

- Initial Withdrawal - The teacher stops growing professionally, the magic begins to fade and the teacher becomes a follower rather than a leader. This process can take place at any time, but usually occurs between three to five years of teaching.
- Persistent Withdrawal – Negative feelings surface and the teacher becomes critical of school improvement initiatives. After the teacher's initial withdrawal, if intervention does not occur, persistent withdrawal sets in.
- Deep withdrawal - Growth has ceased and the teacher becomes defensive and difficult. Deep withdrawal is characteristic of older teachers who have too much time invested in teaching to change careers. These teachers have completely stopped being productive. They are totally negative to school improvement initiatives.

School districts should provide interventions to deal with teachers who have entered the stages of career withdrawal. They can address teacher withdrawal by providing programs and interventions that address the teacher withdrawal stages in order to keep the teacher in the profession (Steffy, et.al., 2000).

In his study of beginning teachers, Johnson (1999) found that new teachers face challenges that are greater than those of experienced teachers. He believed that a major goal of experienced teachers and administrators should be to help beginning teachers stay

in the profession. He asserted that this can be done through a collaborative effort by experienced teachers and administrators to help new teachers learn the duties of the job.

Ingersoll and Smith (2003) also focused on new teachers, and they stated that schools must develop strategies to retain new teachers. They suggested that providing adequate supplies, administrative support, and providing mentors were crucial to the retention of new teachers. They went on to suggest that environmental issues were the most crucial processes in retaining new or experienced teachers. They found that teachers often leave schools that cannot provide an adequate working environment and go to schools that offer better resources (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). When schools understand the process for minimizing the turnover rate, they establish a more competent and qualified workforce.

It is important for districts to recruit teachers who are likely to stay in the profession. It is also important to recognize that after recruiting teachers, systems need to focus more on the support and professional development of beginning teachers. Burke (2001) developed an instrument to measure teachers' behaviors at various stages during their career. He used factor analysis, and divided the categories of responses into influences from the personal environment and those from the organizational environment. His findings showed that by measuring teachers' attitudes during the various career stages, administrators could tailor professional development that meets teachers' individual needs. Burke concluded that by tailoring staff development to the needs of teachers at their particular career stage, more teachers would remain productive and not leave the profession.

Williams (2003) found that exemplary teachers were able to stay in the classroom due to autonomy and collegiality with coworkers. They valued these relationships much more than factors such as salary and working conditions. These teachers stated that they needed to be part of a learning community with strong collaboration with their colleagues.

According to Steffy et al. (2000), the key to retaining teachers was to provide an environment in which instructional practices were supported throughout the teaching career. By continuing to grow professionally, teachers would not initially suffer from withdrawal, which could cause them to leave the profession. Steffy et al. continued to assert that teachers go through a Reflection-Growth-Renewal Cycle during their career. The Reflection-Growth-Renewal Cycle was defined as the stages a teacher progresses through in a productive teaching career. Steffy et.al. believed that progressing through the Reflection-Growth-Renewal Cycle was essential if teachers were to survive a thirty-year career in education. They asserted that teachers and administrators must work together to insure that continual growth is achieved. The phases of the Reflection-Growth-Renewal Cycle are the novice, apprentice, professional, expert, distinguished, and emeritus. Teachers progress through these phases at differing time intervals. A beginning teacher may quickly reach the professional phase, whereas, a twenty year teacher may have yet to reach this phase. In order to understand the importance of personal resilience for teachers, each stage of the Reflection-Growth-Renewal Cycle will be briefly discussed. Teachers need different organizational protective processes provided to them by schools at different times during their career. It is important that the reader understand the career



stages in order to understand the impact that personal resilience can play in teacher retention. The following discussion will shed light on these needs.

### Reflection-Growth-Renewal-Cycle

#### *The Novice Phase*

Steffy, et al. (2000) stated that the Novice Phase begins when the potential teacher enters education courses in college and continues as the student enters into the practicum phase and student teaching. During this phase, the potential teacher is concerned with the transition from being a full time student to entering the world of work. This is a very difficult transition for most students. Teaching can be a difficult and isolating profession. The potential teacher must learn to cope with the realities of classroom life and must develop the time management skills needed to become a successful teacher. Prior to this transitional period, the teacher candidate has little experience with instructional methods and strategies. During this phase the teacher candidate has very little autonomy and is directed by a supervising teacher. This phase usually goes quite well as the full reality of the job has not yet become apparent as the supervising teacher is still responsible for the majority of the work. The candidate is still concerned with learning how to teach and is still sheltered from the realities of the job. Most of the teaching candidate's time is spent developing instructional strategies and methods that will be used as a first year teacher. Feiman-Nemser (2001) charged that beginning teachers should develop a repertoire of teaching skills. Pre-service teachers should become familiar with curriculum, instruction strategies and models of teaching. This will allow new teachers to not only know strategies, but where, when, and how to use them.

Steffy, et. al. (2000) continued to describe the Novice Phase as the time when realities of behavior management in the classroom become evident. They believe candidates may withdraw during this time and choose other career paths. A great deal depends on the mentoring support the teacher candidate receives from his/her supervising teacher and the student teacher coordinator from his/her college. They stated that novice teachers need to receive quality instruction that will enhance the chances of making it through the first few years of teaching. With this quality instruction and mentoring, the new teacher should be prepared to take his/her first teaching job.

### *The Apprentice Phase*

According to Steffy, et al. (2000) this Apprentice Phase starts when the teacher candidate accepts his/her first teaching job and is given the responsibility of planning and delivering instruction. These new teachers are usually enthusiastic and idealistic about their new profession. Even with undaunted enthusiasm, the apprentice phase may prove to be the most difficult phase of their career. This is the first time that the teacher works entirely alone, and has the responsibility of running a classroom. He/she must implement the instructional and classroom management strategies presented in college courses and in the student teaching experience. Steffy et al. reported that this stage can be an overwhelming time for new teachers. Teachers no longer can expect a professor or supervising teacher to guide and direct their activities. As new educators, they are usually unprepared for the tremendous workload involved in planning and implementing instructional activities for students. New teachers may feel isolated and alienated from their co-workers and from friends who have what appear to be easier jobs in other professions.

Flores (2001) asserted that the transition from student to teacher is stressful due to the recognition of a new instructional role. There is a gap between expectations and reality that can shock the new teacher. This is the first time that a teacher feels like he/she is dealing with real schools and real students. In this phase, according to Steffy, et al. (2000), new teachers sometimes question their career choice as they see their friends from college with more flexible and less stringent work schedules. The teaching job does not end at four o'clock, as there are papers to grade and parents to contact. The job is never-ending. During this phase, many new teachers withdraw and leave the profession. This period can last several years and many teachers leave the profession before they advance out of this phase.

Steffy, et al. (2000) stated that the need to feel competent and accepted by fellow teachers is an important aspect of the apprentice phase. New teachers wonder why the job is more difficult for them than it is for older, more accomplished teachers. New teachers sometimes feel that the school district disregards the needs of the new teacher. Hopefully the new teacher will be in a school that has a strong mentoring program and extensive teacher collaboration. With these two things in place, the new teacher has a much better chance of making it to the next phase in the career cycle.

To help those in the apprentice phase Feiman-Nenser (2001) found that many states are developing induction programs for new teachers. She felt that too often little preparation and support is provided for the tremendous stress of the job as a new teacher. She asserted that the new teachers arrive with many questions concerning curriculum, instruction, assessment, management, school culture and the larger learning community. Many of these were only lightly touched on in their pre-service education. She concluded

that the organization must induct the new teachers into the school culture in order to assure a successful first year of teaching.

### *Professional Phase*

The third phase of the career growth Reflection-Renewal-Cycle is the Professional Phase. Steffy, et al. (2000) determined that if teachers make it to the professional stage, they thrive on the interaction with students. Great pleasure is gained from the feedback these teachers receive from their students. These teachers are popular with the students and many times work with extracurricular activities after school. The majority of the teachers in a school will be in the professional stage, as they are the backbone of the faculty. These teachers are motivated by student learning and generally receive few professional accolades for their work. Behavior management strategies have been developed and implemented. The everyday activities of the job are easier for this group. Movement from an instructional paradigm to a learning paradigm has taken place. They understand how children learn and design their lessons to accommodate individual learners. They view other teachers' teaching and understand that collaboration between teachers is an important part of the educational process. Professional teachers may attend graduate school; however, they often stop at the Master's level. The process of reflection is understood but seldom practiced due to its time constraints. Some are able to work reflective practices into their daily routines; however, they do not see it as necessary for career growth. About 80% of the teachers in the building will be at this phase.

### *Expert Phase*

Steffy, et al (2000) stated that the Expert Phase is when teachers practice self-reflection about teaching practices. Expert teachers understand the learning needs of their

students. They are believers in the lifelong learning concept. They model this by having advanced degrees and possibly even a terminal degree. Participation in professional and community conferences shows a commitment to informal learning opportunities. They use reflective practice as an avenue for change. School-wide involvement is a characteristic of this stage. Administrators and teachers hold expert teachers in high regard. They are seen as forces for positive change in a building. They are usually involved in school wide improvement initiatives and professional organizations. Expert teachers often take on leadership roles at the building level and the community level. Teachers in this phase may meet the criteria for national certification even if they have not been through the process. Teachers may stay at this level for the remaining years of their career. About 20% of the teachers in the school will be in the Expert Phase.

#### *The Distinguished Phase*

The Distinguished Phase is reserved for teachers who are gifted in the profession. Teachers in this phase exceed the expectations of the expert phase by winning awards and accolades. The teachers, who reach this stage, are held in high regard by administrators, community leaders, and peer teachers. Distinguished teachers are the educators in the building that young teachers seek out for advice on teaching strategies. Distinguished teachers may be Teachers of the Year or Milliken Award winners. By being proactive in politics, distinguished teachers impact educational policy at the local, state, and national levels of education. This group consists of a very small number of teachers in the school (Steffy, et al., 2000).

### *Emeritus Phase*

This phase in the reflection-growth-renewal cycle is characterized by a lifetime of achievement working in educational endeavors (Steffy, et al., 2000). Most of these teachers are retired from the classroom and find other ways to contribute and serve. Many go back into the profession as administrators or serve on a part time basis. They are well thought of by the school system and the community. Some become consultants or volunteers. The main characteristic of this phase is that these teachers find ways to contribute to the profession even after retirement.

By understanding the phases of a teacher's career cycle and the needs of teachers at each phase, one may develop a clearer understanding of retention in the profession. Also, an understanding of the withdrawal process provides additional needed insight; however, an understanding of the professional and personal resilience of individual teachers could help with a deeper insight into the reasons teachers choose to remain in the profession. This area has only been briefly studied, especially concerning those who remain in the profession for an extended period of time.

### History of Resilience Research

Luthar, Ciccihetti, and Becker (2000) stated that from the early study of at-risk adolescents, a new research paradigm developed in the field of psychology. Instead of studying processes that lead to risk and withdrawal, the resilience paradigm examined the characteristics and processes that cause an individual to "stick with it" during hard and stressful times. Most academic disciplines use the resilience paradigm in some capacity to explain how people stick with it during adversity.

The majority of resilience research comes from the field of child psychology and was first conducted in the early 1970s (Luthar, et al., 2000). Resilience research was first conducted as a means of finding out why some children will thrive after suffering traumatic childhoods and some will not. Garmezy (1970) conducted the first pertinent study of resilience on the children of schizophrenics to determine why these children often go on to lead productive and fulfilling lives despite adversity in their family lives.

The most significant study on resilience was conducted by Werner and Smith with a groundbreaking longitudinal study of children in Hawaii. Werner and Smith started following a cohort of children in 1955 and followed them for three decades. They found that although these children were exposed to cumulative stress, many of the children proved to be resilient. Werner wrote three books on this population who are now approaching fifty years in age. Her findings showed that almost one third of these children thrived, despite their high risk family status. They have gone on to lead productive lives. Werner and Smith explained their findings in the following way:

Yet there were others, also vulnerable, exposed to poverty, perinatal stress and family instability, reared by parents with little education or serious health problems, who remained invincible, and developed into competent and autonomous young adults, who worked well, played well, loved well, and expected well. This report is an account of our search for the roots of their resilience, for the sources of their strength (Werner & Smith, 1992, p.15).

The shift in resilience research has been away from studying environmental protective factors and towards examining environmental protective processes. For years

research was aimed at personal protective factors, such as personal qualities of the child and the external environment. Designing intervention strategies for people facing adversity has become a major focus. The focus today is on external underlying processes that cause positive adaptation during trying times. The processes that contribute to personal resilience are called “protective processes” and can be found in all organizations and social systems. “Protective processes” are those processes that exist in organizations that provide support, education, and interventions to the child. Protective processes differ from protective factors because they are organizational processes that are systemic in nature. Protective factors deal with the variables external to a child such as environment and family. Protective processes deal with understanding how underlying mechanisms in organizations lead to positive outcomes. Recently research has focused on understanding underlying protective processes that lead to positive outcomes (Luthar, et al. 2000).

#### Experienced Teachers

Work by Steffy, et al. (2000) showed that teachers must grow and develop in order to move from one career stage to another. According to Steffy, teachers can be at any stage of the cycle at any given time during their career. There is not a direct correlation between years of experience and where a teacher falls in the career stages. No matter how long a teacher has been in the profession, she may be at any stage on the continuum. Steffy, et al. explained that teachers who have survived past the experienced mark on the continuum (past the novice phase) usually exhibit certain characteristics that fall within the professional and expert stages of the growth-reflection-renewal cycle. Some of these teachers will have made it to the distinguished or emeritus stage. Steffy concluded that experienced teachers will display the characteristics attributed to the three stages of



professional, expert, and distinguished. Shen (1997) found that those teachers in the middle of the career were the least likely to leave the profession.

It is important to look at the characteristics of experienced teachers in order to draw a picture of their unique circumstances. Evans (1989) found that experienced teachers face the same obstacles that other professionals face in other fields. Boredom, health problems, loss of interest in their jobs, and a leveling out of performance are all characteristic of experienced teachers. However, Steffy, et al. (2000) stated that resilient teachers exhibit characteristics that are positive, professional, and reflective, in their teaching careers. They reported that teachers, who have made it to the professional phase and beyond, are able to withstand these career ending obstacles of health problems, boredom, and loss of interest, and stay instructionally and professionally productive in spite of their longevity in the career. Organizational protective processes can help teachers to move through the Reflection-Growth-Renewal Cycle and never withdraw from the profession.

#### Organizational Protective Processes

Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman (1959) conducted one of the first pertinent studies as to why people are motivated to work. They studied 200 accountants and engineers to determine what factors motivated employees to work. They called these factors “motivators” and they consisted of things such as achievement, growth, the work itself, and recognition. They called dissatisfying experiences “hygiene” factors and they included things such as salary, company policy, benefits, and coworker relations. Herzberg, et al. argued that the elimination of dissatisfying experiences (hygiene factors) would not motivate workers or result in a state of job satisfaction. They reported from

this study that the elimination of these factors resulted in a neutral state. Herzberg, et al. stated that the implications from the study were clear. The best way to motivate employees was through the process of job enrichment. They reported that jobs should be designed to allow for increased challenge, responsibility, and opportunities for growth and recognition. The theory can be applied to the educational arena as well as the business world. Teaching careers appear to be enriched by the organizational processes that foster resilience in teachers.

It is important to look at organizational protective processes for teachers. Bobek (2002) believed that there are five organizational environmental processes that act as organizational protective processes for teachers: collaboration, empowerment, administrative support, mentoring, and staff development.

#### *Collaboration*

Collaboration is the development of close relationships with colleagues; collaboration can foster resilience. This is extremely important for new teachers and remains a protective process for teachers throughout their career. A teacher's support group may include administrators, parents, and teachers within and outside their building. Administrators can take the lead in fostering collaborative activities in the school by providing common planning, grade level meetings and common teaching assignments.

#### *Empowerment*

Empowerment is another protective process. Nir (2002) found that school based management and empowerment positively affect a teacher's commitment to the teaching profession and student achievement. Personal resilience can also be fostered by involving

teachers in the shared decision-making process. Teachers who have input in building level decisions experience a sense of ownership in their career.

#### *Administrative Support*

A third organizational protective process is administrative support. Mallak (1998) believed that using positive reinforcement can build resilient organizations.

Administrative support should result in trust and a positive exchange of ideas between teachers and administrators. Mallak felt administrators should endorse the processes that lead to teacher resilience and an open exchange of ideas and trust should flow from the school administrators and teachers.

#### *Mentoring*

Pavia, Nissen, Hawkins, Monroe, and Filimon-Demyen (2003) stated that mentoring of new and experienced teachers, another of Bobek's (2002) five protective processes, is a widely accepted practice for supporting teachers' professional development. They asserted that new teachers may increase their resilience by fostering relationships with older, more experienced teachers. Mentoring gives teachers support that otherwise would not be available to them. They asserted that mentoring of new and experienced teachers is a widely accepted practice for supporting a teacher's professional development.

#### *Staff Development*

"To develop resilience, new teachers must be lifelong learners, willing to venture into areas that may challenge their current views of themselves and their practices" (Bobek, 2002, p. 3). Bobek believed this could be done with pertinent staff development, the fifth protective process. She asserted that staff development should be afforded to both

beginning as well as veteran teachers. Staff development keeps teachers current with the latest teaching methods that may increase student achievement.

All of these organizational protective processes may have the capacity to lead to resilience in teachers. The connection between these processes and resilience in teachers has yet to be significantly studied. By studying resilient teachers, the researcher may determine how protective processes in schools contribute to the resilience. School systems can then utilize these protective processes to aid in the well being and retention of teachers.

#### Statement of the Problem

One of the greatest needs of 21st century schools is the need to retain quality teachers. The retention of teachers has been studied over the last two decades to inform researchers that over one-third of beginning teachers leave the classroom within the first five years of teaching. Research has also revealed that the more resilient teachers are, the more likely they are to remain in the profession.

Although the literature identifies personal factors that contribute to resiliency, little is known about the organizational protective processes that are related to resiliency. The organizational protective processes, which are empowerment, collaboration, administrative support, staff development and mentoring, may be related to teachers' level of resiliency.

Few studies exist that look at the resilience of teachers in general, and experienced teachers specifically. Studies have been conducted to determine the resilient characteristics of adults, but not adults as teachers. The fact that a teacher survives the first five years of teaching implies that he/she must possess some resilient characteristics.

Because the majority of the teachers who leave the profession do so within the first five years of accepting their first teaching position, it is possible that the teachers who stay in teaching possess personal resilience. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to determine the relationship of organizational protective processes and teachers' personal resilient characteristics.

### Research Questions

The proposed study was designed to answer the following overarching research question: Is there a relationship between the organizational protective processes and teachers' personal resilient characteristics?

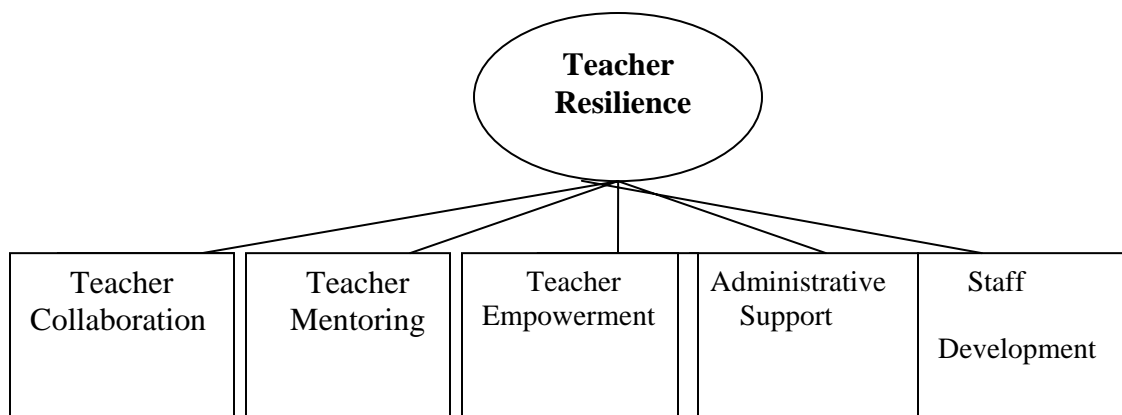
The following sub-questions further guided the study:

1. What are the demographic profiles of participants of the study?
2. What is the relationship between the teacher's perception of empowerment and the level of personal resilience?
3. What is the relationship between the teacher's perception of collaboration and the level of personal resilience?
4. What is the relationship between the teacher's perception of administrative support and the level of personal resilience?
5. What is the relationship between the teacher's perception of staff development and the level of personal resilience?
6. What is the relationship between the teacher's perception of mentoring and the level of personal resilience?

## Conceptual Framework

The researcher has discovered that there is a gap in the literature concerning organizational protective processes for teachers (Bobek, 2002). Protective processes have been studied in other fields but have not been studied extensively in education, and specifically for teachers. The conceptual framework for this study showed that five organizational processes may provide personal resilience for teachers. Teachers' beliefs of how these processes have impacted their career and fostered resilience can be of great benefit to schools as organizations in their attempts to retain teachers.

*Figure 1. Teacher Resilience*



## Significance of Study

Researchers have studied the personal resilient characteristics of adults, adolescents, and career groups. One of the last areas to be studied is the field of education, and teachers specifically. There appears to be a large hole in the literature concerning the personal resilient characteristics of teachers. Two aspects of the teaching profession that

have not been examined concern individual teacher resilience over the life of a career and the role the organization plays, if any, in fostering personal teacher resilience. Career teachers may naturally become more resilient as they progress through the career cycles. There may also be aspects of the organization that promotes teacher resiliency. Only by studying the resilient characteristics of teachers, will there be a more complete picture of the organizational protective processes that lead to the longevity of American educators.

This study is important to veteran teachers because resilient teachers appear better able to guide new teachers through the learning process and protect them from leaving the profession in the early stages of the career. Veteran teachers who are resilient spend more time reflecting on teaching practices and experience less stress from an ever changing educational environment. This reflective process leads to better learning outcomes for students. As teachers mature in the career cycle, the job should become easier, as opposed to more difficult. By studying the personal resilience of teachers, schools can aid teachers in developing personal resilience in their formative years of the career cycle. As teachers mature in the career cycle they interact professionally with the organizational protective processes that enhance the longevity of their career. When these processes are provided by the organization, the goal is to develop happier, healthier, and more productive teachers. More productive teachers will lead to better student outcomes.

This study is also important to administrators at the school, central office, and state levels. Administrators realize that a contented teacher is usually a productive teacher. It is in the building level administrator's best interest to foster personal resilience in his/her faculty in order to prevent career withdrawal of teachers and teacher turnover. By contributing to the resiliency of teachers, building level administrators could reduce

teacher turnover and keep experienced teachers in the classroom. This goal could be accomplished by enhancing teachers' personal resilience and organizational protective processes within the school.

State departments of education could benefit from this study because of the potential to impact a drop in teacher turnover rates. By lowering the number of teachers leaving the profession, state departments of education could alter their budget and decrease the time and money currently expended on attracting teachers to critical needs areas. State departments could instead use expenditures to aid in student achievement. By focusing on teacher retention, rather than teacher recruitment, students could all be taught by highly qualified, resilient veteran teachers.

Teacher education programs at colleges and universities could focus their curriculum on the organizational protective processes that lead to resilient teachers. Universities could then provide school systems with pertinent staff development programs that aid in developing resilient teachers.

This researcher is concerned with the career length and longevity of classroom teachers. Having worked as both a classroom teacher and building level administrator, it has become apparent to him that resilient teachers have a positive impact on student learning. Resilient teachers are flexible, experienced, and invested in the career for a long period of time. They are able to focus on the teaching of students when the environment becomes unsettled. This researcher, as a teacher and administrator, observed teachers who were able to cope and thrive with the high demands of the profession during all phases of the career cycle, while others floundered and became disgruntled. It was difficult to watch teachers, who devoted their lives to the profession, leave the career



disenchanted. The disgruntled workers seemed to lack the ability to “stick with it during the hard times,” a characteristic that resilient teachers possess. It appears from the literature that resilient teachers have a positive impact on students in that they provide consistency in the classroom and in the building. Teacher turnover creates an unstable school environment for students. New teachers are overwhelmed with the every day duties of being a new teacher. Many have yet to develop resilient characteristics in the teaching career. This researcher believes that schools should expend resources to foster personal resilience in their teachers. This study will provide school systems with information pertinent to the retention and productivity of teachers.

#### Summary of Procedures

This research was a quantitative study. Partial correlation analysis determined the relationship between personal resilience and the seven organizational protective processes. The Personal Resilience Questionnaire (PRQ) developed by ODR (2003), and the Organizational Protective Processes Survey (OPP) developed by the researcher were administered to teachers from high schools in the Northeast Georgia Regional Educational Service Agency [RESA] (2005). All seventeen high schools in the Northeast Georgia RESA district were invited to participate. Participation in the study was voluntary and seven out of seventeen high schools participated.

Data was collected and Statistical Procedures in Social Sciences (SPSS 14.0) was used to provide descriptive information on the population of teachers surveyed. Tables were used to show the relationship between the two scales. The data revealed if there was a relationship and significance between the level of teachers’ resilience and the five organizational protective processes

### Limitations of the Study

The study was limited by the honesty of the participants and their willingness to complete the survey. Since personal resilience can fluctuate over time, this resilience measurement only showed the level of resilience of teachers at the time of the survey. Personal resilience is situational specific and may change over time depending on the individual's environment.

### Delimitations of the Study

This researcher chose to use quantitative methodology. The researcher designed Organizational Protective Processes Survey and the Personal Resilience Questionnaire, developed by ODR, resulted in data that best answers the research questions of the study. The sample population consisted of teachers who work in high schools in the Northeast Georgia RESA District.

### Definition of Terms

- Administrative Support: support from administrators who foster professional growth
- Collaboration: teachers sharing experiences for professional growth
- Empowerment: shared decision-making by teachers and administrators
- Experienced Teachers: teachers with fifteen or more years of teaching experience
- Georgia's K-12 Teachers: teachers who teach any grade from kindergarten through twelfth grade in Georgia
- Mentoring: the act of supporting a teacher through professional growth
- Organizational Protective Processes: systemic processes that protect the teacher from withdrawal

- Provisional Certification: lacking the training and education to hold a clear renewable certificate in Georgia
- Reflection-Growth-Renewal Cycle: the stages through which a teacher progresses in a productive teaching career
- Personal Resilience: continuing to remain productive during hard and stressful times
- Retention: the number of teachers who return to the classroom the following year
- Staff Development: training and programs provided to teachers to foster professional growth
- Teacher Withdrawal: stages in which a teacher becomes unproductive in the classroom and school improvement efforts
- Turnover: the number of teachers who leave their classrooms to exit the profession or change schools

### Summary

Teacher turnover and retention are areas of concern for school districts nationwide. Beginning teachers face many difficulties entering a profession that is constantly changing and becoming more difficult each year. Teachers who have survived the beginning years of a teaching career seem to possess some resilient characteristics. The Growth-Reflection-Renewal Cycle is of major importance to teachers who plan to stay in teaching for an entire thirty-year career. The cycle shows that with reflective practice, teachers can move forward in the cycle and thrive in the profession. In order to survive and flourish as a teacher, organizations must use protective processes to discourage teacher withdrawal.

This study focused on processes that organizations can use to foster personal resilience in teachers. Teachers were surveyed in order to get a true measure of personal resilience. Experienced teachers have been exposed to the organizational processes that are considered in this study, whereas beginning teachers do not have the length of exposure as experienced teachers. Results showed if there was a relationship between the personal resilience of teachers and their beliefs of organizational processes that fostered that personal resilience. The organizational processes studied were administrative support, mentoring, collaboration, empowerment, and staff development.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE RESEARCH AND RELATED LITERATURE

#### Introduction

The ability of school systems to foster resilient teachers in their schools continues to be a major challenge. School systems find it difficult to retain teachers in the early years of the career. Ingersoll and Smith (2003) found those things such as providing adequate supplies, administrative support, and providing mentors for beginning teachers were crucial in retaining teachers. They emphasized that turnover must be considered at the organizational level, and school systems must address teacher retention with programs that prevent teacher migration and turnover.

School systems lose teachers each year through turnover, which includes both migration and attrition. In the new era of accountability, teacher shortages provide major obstacles for schools. One federal mandate that causes stress for systems is The No Child Left Behind Act [NCLB] (2004). Under NCLB, states are requiring teachers to do more with fewer resources. NCLB requires a highly qualified teacher in every classroom. This places a strain on school systems, particularly in hard to staff urban areas, as they scramble to fill vacancies in the critical needs areas.

Large numbers of teachers are leaving the profession each year for reasons other than retirement (Ingersoll, 2001). One main reason teachers leave the profession appears to be the systems' inability to foster personal resilience in their teachers. Schools can foster personal resilience in teachers by focusing on organizational protective processes (Bobek, 2002). Ingersoll charged that school systems that fail to provide organizational processes that lead to teacher retention, are the schools systems with the highest teacher turnover.

Ingersoll asserted that school systems must address these retention problems at the organizational level, in order to prevent high turnover.

Researchers have studied the personal resilient characteristics of adults, adolescents, and career groups (Morris, 2002; Issacs, 2003; and Werner & Smith, 1992). Only recently has the field of education and teachers specifically, been studied for personal resilient characteristics. Personal resilience basically means an ability to remain productive during hard and stressful times, or in times of change (Luthar, et al. 2000). Organizations, including schools included, need employees who can handle stress and change during the entire thirty-year career cycle (Steffy, et al. 2000). Steffy emphasized that teachers go through an entire thirty year career cycle where they are constantly vulnerable to attrition. If school districts do not utilize organizational protective processes to enhance personal resilience and retention, then turnover may result at any given time during the teacher's career.

It appears that organizational protective processes can foster personal resilience. This study attempted to identify the relationship between those organizational protective processes that are best at fostering personal resilience in teachers. The five organization processes that were considered were collaboration, empowerment, administrative support, mentoring, and staff development.

#### Definition of Personal Resilience

Resilience research comes from the field of adolescence psychology and was first used to describe children who overcame adversity to become productive adults (Garmazy, 1970). Werner and Smith (1992) found that the concept of resilience emerged while conducting a longitudinal study of Hawaii's at risk children. After following the

cohort for three decades, they found that although exposed to cumulative stress, a high percentage of the children proved to be resilient and lead rich and rewarding lives. Their study was one of the most extensive studies on resilience ever conducted.

Most academic disciplines use the resilience paradigm to explain how people stick with it during hard and stressful times. Isaacs (2003) stated that the following fields or disciplines all have similar definitions of resilience: psychology, psychiatry, developmental psychopathology, human development, change management, epidemiology, nursing, social sciences, and medicine. He described the ability to cope, to stand, to bounce back, to survive stress, to withstand hardship, and to be flexible during change, as being parts of these disciplines' definition of resilience. Masten, Best, and Garmezy (1990) spoke of resilience as being a dynamic process where individuals can overcome severe adversity by utilizing protective processes. Their definition was little different than that of other resilience researchers in other fields. McCubbin (2001), in an extensive review of literature, stressed that resilience can be conceptualized as either an outcome or a process. As an outcome, stress factors lead to either positive or negative outcomes. As a process, she asserted that resilience acts as a moderator between risk factors and outcomes. She felt that researchers must be careful in defining resilience before the research begins.

Krovetz (1999) described resiliency theory in the following way:

Resiliency theory is founded on the proposition that if members of one's family, community and/or school care deeply about you, have high expectations and purposeful support for you, and value your participation, you will maintain a faith in the future and can overcome almost any adversity (p. 2).

ODR (2003) in the Personal Resilience Questionnaire defined people who are resilient to change as follows:

- Positive - They display a sense of security and self assurance that is based on their view of life as complex but filled with opportunity. They are able to see opportunities and possibilities in situations that may be difficult for most people. They are generally optimistic about their environment and are able to turn negative situations into positive ones.
- Focused - They have a clear vision of what they want to achieve. They have a clear sense of focus and purpose and are goal driven. They are better able to use resources in a positive way to overcome challenging situations.
- Flexible - They demonstrate a special pliability when responding to change. They are able to live with paradoxes and contradictions and overcome the stress of an ever-changing environment. They are able to draw from other people and use synergy to overcome obstacles in the environment.
- Organized - They develop structured approaches to managing ambiguity. They are able to move forward with a detailed plan of action. These people use available resources to find sense in ambiguity and chaos.
- Proactive - They engage change rather than defending against it. They seek challenges rather than avoid them. They are involved in problem solving and finding solutions that will help them move on (pp. 3-6).

The five domains above are used to determine the resilience level in ODR's Personal Resilience Questionnaire.



Luthar, et al. (2000) made the assertion that the construct of resilience has changed over the years. They stated that the early focus of resilience was that of focusing on the resilient characteristics of children. They asserted that over the last two decades the focus of research on resilience has changed from identifying protective factors to analyzing protective processes. Researchers are trying to understand how protective factors lead to protective outcomes. In this process things such as environment and other underlying mechanisms that promote resilience have been studied.

### Teacher Resilience

Teacher resilience has yet to be studied extensively in schools. Few studies exist that look at the personal resilience of teachers in general. The following studies are the most recent research completed on teacher resilience. Morris (2002) measured the resilient characteristics of beginning teachers in private Christian high schools in the United States. She surveyed teachers in 127 private schools affiliated with the Church of Christ. Her study was designed as a foundation piece for further research on the implications of resilience for teachers. Her study used descriptive statistics to measure resilience using teacher demographics as variables. Her study showed mixed findings of significance across demographic variables.

Patterson, Collins, and Abbott (2004) studied strategies used by urban teachers to build their personal resilience. Qualitative interviews were conducted on teachers and teacher leaders who taught for at least three years in urban school districts. Research questions asked what drove these teachers to remain in schools facing the toughest challenges and what strategies they used to cope with adversity. The findings revealed the following:

- Resilient teachers have a set of personal values that guides their decision-making.
- Resilient teachers place a high premium on professional development and find ways to get it.
- Resilient teachers provide mentoring to others.
- Resilient teachers are not victims - they take charge and solve problems.
- Resilient teachers stay focused on the children and their learning.
- Resilient teachers do whatever it takes to help children be successful.
- Resilient teachers have friends and colleagues who support their work emotionally and intellectually.
- Resilient teachers are not wedded to one best way of teaching and are interested in exploring new ideas.
- Resilient teachers know when to get involved and when to let go (pp. 5-6).

The respondents also reported that a strong supportive principal, high level of collegiality and a high influence on school decisions lead to their personal resilience.

In a more global study, Howard and Johnson (2003) interviewed primary school teachers in Australia's hard-to-staff disadvantaged schools. Teachers who were at-risk for burnout and survived the profession for an extended period of time were considered for the study. The study looked for what was going right for teachers, as opposed to previous research that studied what was going wrong. The findings showed that strong peer group support, administrative support, a strong discipline policy, and staff development on how to depersonalize stressful incidents were all things that fostered their personal resilience.

Bernshausen and Cunningham (2001) asserted that the role of teacher preparation programs should be to foster resilience in their graduates. They charged that resilience must be fostered in pre-service programs as well as continuing education programs but is not occurring as it should be. Resiliency building requires the school or school system to redefine program goals in order to provide processes that foster resilience. They emphasized that teacher attrition, stress, and burnout indicate that schools may not provide adequate support for teacher resilience.

Bobek (2002) stressed that in order to foster resilience new teachers must seek out relationships with people who understand teaching and what teachers do. She stated the following:

Significant relationships and a sense of competence, personal ownership, accomplishment, and humor are necessary resources for the development of resilience. The promotion of teacher resiliency can enhance teacher effectiveness, heighten teacher satisfaction, and better prepare teachers to adjust to education's ever-changing conditions. Effective teachers depend on high levels of competency, personal decision-making, and appropriate humor for creating classroom environments that stimulate learning and emphasize achievement. Teacher satisfaction is contingent on levels of autonomy, perceived and recognized accomplishments, and supportive collegial relationships. Teachers who use their resources to develop resilience will successfully confront the ongoing challenges of teaching and prevail within the profession (p. 4).

Bobek charged that the above factors foster resilience in new and veteran teachers.

## Resilience/Protective Processes

Personal protective factors have been studied at length in the field of child development and psychology (Garmazy, 1970; Werner & Smith, 1992; Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 2004). Little or no attention has been paid to organizational protective factors that act as protective processes for teachers in schools. Luthar, et al. (2000) stated that certain themes recur across studies, when dealing with the small amount of research on protective factors and correlates of resilience. They reported that close relationships with supportive adults, effective schools, and connections with pro-social adults are recurring themes. They went on to state that there is no consensus in the use of the term "protective factors," since researchers use the terms in varied and inconsistent ways. Krovetz (1999) stated that the following are key protective factors that are needed within the school, community and family to help a child bounce back from adversity:

- a caring environment - at least one adult who knows the child well enough and cares deeply about the well being of that child.
- positive expectations - high, clearly articulated expectations for each child and the purposeful support necessary to meet those expectations; and
- participation - meaningful involvement and responsibility (p. 3).

As stated earlier, protective processes have been studied for years in the field of child development but have yet to be studied extensively in the career stages of teachers.

Ingersoll and Smith (2003) found organizational factors such as administrative support and mentoring help to prevent turnover and retain teachers.

Ingersoll said that turnover must be viewed from an organizational perspective.

He asserted that when a teacher leaves or moves to a similar job with another

school system, both schools are impacted. He reported the following: "Hence from an organizational perspective, high turnover of teachers from schools is of concern not simply because it may be an indicator of sites of potential staffing problems, but because of its relationship to school performance" (p. 8). Ingersoll explained his analysis in the following way:

Underlying my analysis is the premise drawn from the sociology of organizations, occupations, and work, that high levels of employee turnover are tied to how well organizations function. From this perspective high rates of teacher turnover are of concern not only because they may be an indication of underlying problems in how well schools function, but also because they can be disruptive in and of themselves, for the quality of school community and performance (p. 25).

Ingersoll (2001) asserted that turnover cannot be understood without examining it at the organizational level. His findings showed that high teacher turnover is both cause and effect of low academic performance in schools. Schools with high turnover must continually train new teachers. These teachers are often new to teaching and the most likely to leave the profession. This is costly for schools both financially and instructionally.

Some researchers have ideas on ways organizations can reduce costly turnover. Norton and Scott (1999) emphasized the following leadership practices as essential in stopping high teacher turnover:

- Policy - The retention of teaching talent in the school system must be viewed as a district priority. The adoption of a specific personnel policy on teacher

retention by the board of education serves to place this matter on the district's agenda as one of primary importance. Policy is the forerunner for the administrative actions needed to implement effective retention practices.

- Planning - designing and implementing a specific plan for retaining staff personnel are essential. Such a plan must give full consideration to program purposes, budget needs, program strategies, and the delegation of leadership responsibilities.
- Monitoring of Turnover - Close monitoring of teacher turnover is recommended. Empirical evidence suggests that teacher retention is increased when assistance is provided staff personnel in areas of specific personal need. Records of turnover should be maintained and utilized in diagnosing turnover patterns and problem areas at the local school level. Then these problem areas must be addressed.
- Individualization - Re-recruitment for purposes of teacher retention must be personalized. Staff personnel leave the organization for different reasons. School leaders must devise ways to ascertain these reasons and determine the factors that might serve to retain personnel services on a one-to-one basis.
- Personnel Services - School districts must develop clear guidelines concerning the personnel processes of teacher selection, orientation, teacher assignment, personal support, professional development and related personnel services and then see to it that each of these processes includes provisions that promote the reduction of teacher turnover. The working definition of the personnel

function, for example, must not only include the terms attract, select, assign, and develop personnel, but must also include the important term, "retain."

- Retention Provision - Evidence suggests that nonmonetary considerations are more important than salaries and benefits in fostering job satisfaction. Teachers are concerned about job security; they want to participate in the decision-making process; they view positive working conditions as of utmost importance; they need autonomy that fosters personal creativity; they seek an understanding of their role and its contributions to the scheme of things that take place in the school and the school system; and they are motivated by being part of doing the right things to accomplish worthy end results (p. 4).

They asserted that by having a proactive plan to combat teacher turnover, school districts as organizations are taking positive steps toward its resolution.

Organizational processes that foster teacher retention have been examined only briefly in the literature. Ingersoll (2001) found that organizational processes have significant influences on teacher retention and that school systems should focus resources on those processes that alleviate teacher turnover.

The following recent research provided similar results. Williams (2003) conducted in-depth interviews with 12 outstanding teachers who had been in the classroom for at least 15 years. The teachers were identified by their administrators as being the best teachers that existed. In his findings, teachers stated that they wanted to be a member of a learning community with time to collaborate and support colleagues. They also cited the ability to be autonomous and creative in their classrooms, have meaningful relationships with colleagues, and have the ability to make a difference in the lives of students. William's

study showed that the organizational process of teacher collaboration was essential to teacher retention.

In a study done by Colgan (2004), first year teachers were interviewed to determine the types of support they would need to stay in teaching. Teachers cited the following organizational process as crucial to their support:

- a mentor that teaches the same subject as them,
- collaboration with a group of teachers who support and inspire,
- an effective discipline policy that supports teachers,
- collaboration with a team of teachers that share the same students and,
- a supportive principal who not only supports classroom activities, but also encourages involvement in leadership activities.

In recommendations made by focus groups of teachers from The Georgia Teacher Retention Study (2004), organizational processes were again mentioned as essential to teacher retention. Collegiality and administrative support were two organizational processes that were defined in their recommendations. The recommendations stated the following:

Teachers need to help each other establish a teamwork environment, one that facilitates teachers' (both new and veteran) feelings of being supported. New teachers need mentoring by veteran teachers who teach the same subject at the same grade level and who are located nearby to facilitate quick and easy answers to questions. Also teachers need to share ideas with their colleagues about what works in their classrooms (p. 16).



Administrative support was also stressed in the recommendations:

Teachers expressed the desire for more equitable treatment by administrators, especially in terms of distribution of resources and supplies. Administrators need to support teachers when dealing with parents, students, and the community in general. Administrators also need to involve teachers in the decision-making process (p. 16).

The recommendations showed teachers value organizational processes as a means to sustain them in the teaching profession.

In another study, Certo and Fox (2002) also used focus group research in studying attrition and retention in seven Virginia Schools. The findings revealed a hierarchy of organizational influences that have an effect on teacher attrition and retention. Consistent across participants was the finding that a lack of administrative support was a significant reason that teachers leave the profession. This finding is consistent with Ingersoll (2001), who found organizational influences affect teacher turnover and retention tremendously.

Patterson, Roehing, and Luff (2003) interviewed beginning science teachers in Arizona to determine their reasons for leaving teaching. The teachers had all been involved in a program aimed at induction support. Their findings showed two organizational processes teachers viewed as critical to their leaving the profession. First, teachers in the study cited a lack of administrative support as a major reason for their departure from teaching. Secondly, teachers lamented the fact that there were few opportunities for collegial interaction with their colleagues.

The studies contained in this section of the review of literature show schools as organizations that can use organizational processes in order to retain teachers and lower

teacher turnover. Administrative support, collegiality, collaboration, mentoring, empowerment and staff development were all mentioned as organizational processes that would lead to teacher retention.

One researcher who touched on the subject is Bobek (2002). She charged that certain organizational processes act as protective factors for teachers in schools. She interviewed twelve young adults in the Midwest who had successfully advanced to college, in order to gain a better understanding of resilience. Her findings identified several resources that were important in the development of resilience. Bobek asserted that these resources can also be applied in schools to foster resilience in teachers.

The first organizational process that Bobek mentioned was collaboration. She stated that new teachers should seek out relationships with peers who understand the trials and tribulations of the teaching profession. These collaborative efforts involve coordinating teacher schedules to allow for participation in teacher observations and professional development activities (Bobek, 2002).

Experienced teachers may also act as mentors for beginning teachers. Bobek remarked that twenty-eight states require or strongly encourage mentoring programs for new teachers. Experienced teachers are a valuable resource for new teachers. Bobek argued that a third organizational process that acts as a protective mechanism for new teachers is administrative support. She stated that the relationship of new teachers and administrators should be that of a partnership where the new teacher is guided and supported by the administration.

Bobek believed that a sense of humor is important for teachers to become resilient. This sense of humor allows teachers to vent frustrations and adapt to volatile situations

within the classroom and school. Finally, the last organizational process mentioned by Bobek was staff development. New teachers must become life-long learners in order to become resilient and deal with the ever-increasing demands of the profession.

Bobek laid a foundation for future research on organizational factors that act as protective processes for teachers. The following is the most recent pertinent literature on the five organizational processes cited by Bobek. Each process is discussed in the context of it acting as a protective factor for teachers.

### *Collaboration*

The Georgia Teacher Retention Study (2004) stated that teamwork and collegiality are factors that lead to teacher retention. The study found that by establishing an environment that facilitates teamwork, teachers feel more supported and remain in the teaching profession. It asserted that all teachers need to share ideas with grade level colleagues about what works in the classroom. This collaborative process leads to the retention of teachers.

Gabriel (2005) stated that, "Collaboration and cooperation are critical for success, both personal and standardized. We confer with our friends and family before making a life-changing decision even a minor one, so why wouldn't we do the same when it comes to kids" (p. 109). He asserted that the collaborative process is not only good for kids, but it is also good for adults. New teachers are so overwhelmed by the job that they sometimes fall into a pattern of isolation rather than a collaborative culture.

Collaboration appears to be an organizational process that is tremendously beneficial to teachers. Schmoker (2004) stated that if there is anything that the research community agrees on, it is the need for strong teacher collaboration structures. He argued that these

collaborative structures pay big dividends in teacher morale and student learning.

Schmoker charged that collegiality alone will not be enough. Teachers must be provided access to a group that meets regularly to share teaching methods and strategies. He asserted that these organized collaborative activities afford the teacher opportunities to refine teaching strategies and practices.

Schools must make the collaborative process a priority. Collaborative culture will not produce itself on its own. According to Gideon (2002), everyone in the school must work to make collaboration the norm. She asserted that collaborative activities must be planned and worked into the school day by administrators and teachers. By implementing collaborative processes within the school, administrators can assure that both new teachers and veteran teachers are not working in isolation. She recommended the following scaffolding approach to build collaborative culture in the school:

- The campus leadership team - The process starts with a weekly meeting of the campus leadership team. This team consists of administrators and department heads. Here the principal acts as an instructional leader and sets an agenda that reinforces collaborative activities in the school. Time is set aside to discuss curricular issues and the principal models instructional leadership techniques that can be disseminated to the rest of the school.
- Learning communities - Departments are grouped into learning communities based on curricula commonalities. Department heads, teacher leaders and assistant principals meet bi-weekly to discuss instructional understanding. The learning communities are composed of two related academic departments. At these meetings, success and failures are discussed and elaborated in order to improve instruction. By meeting on

- instructional issues, everyone in the school remains on the same instructional focus and common delivery system.
- Grade Level meetings - These meetings allow assistant principals, counselors and team leaders to meet on issues that affect students. The meetings focus on attendance, grades, and needs of individual students. Teachers share a common time to meet. This meeting may occur at lunchtime or may be scheduled during other times during the day. The main focus here is that team members have common time to address the needs of students.
  - Department meetings - Department meetings are held to address the nuts and bolts of running the school. Here the housekeeping duties are performed in the traditional manner of managing a school. Again, common planning time is the key to the collaborative activities that take place at the meetings.
  - Cadres - When issues are of common concern, work groups should be used. These groups are called cadres. They are used to study issues that are school wide or district wide. They may have members from the community and business world. These groups meet as needed and may explore any issue pertinent to the school (Gideon, 2002).

Gideon summed up her views on collaboration in schools in the following way:

Venues for collaboration take time and require trust; they will be different for every campus. Initially, teachers will be skeptical, and administrators will be tempted to take charge. Successful collaboration requires that teachers' voices be heard and that administrators be willing to honor varying viewpoints. Focusing on the issues and fostering conditions to support

teaching and learning lead groups to make good decisions that ultimately result in student success and true school improvement (p. 34).

She concluded that principals must afford teachers the opportunity to explore their thoughts and come to their own conclusions.

Achinstein (2002) asserted that collaboration in schools may also serve another important purpose. She emphasized that advocates of collaboration sometimes fail to mention the role of diversity, dissent, and disagreement in the community, and the role that this conflict plays in organizational learning and change. In her case studies of two urban middle schools, she found that the process of collaboration could create conflict, which is a strong indicator of organizational learning and change. She asserted that the micro political process of collaboration plays a role in organizational learning and has a strong effect on things such as school reform efforts and the building of school culture.

#### *Teacher Empowerment*

The Georgia Retention Study (2004) found that high levels of teacher autonomy and decision making were factors that improve teacher retention in the state of Georgia. The study found that these factors were important because they promoted a stable and satisfied workforce. These factors helped to counteract negative aspects of teaching and helped to retain teachers in the profession.

Educational policy makers are now being asked to decentralize decision-making, and allow teachers a voice in building level decisions. Many school districts utilize site-based management. Empowerment became a buzzword for school administrators during the 1980's and 1990's. Very little research has been done in the last five years on teacher empowerment and shared decision-making. One of the more recent studies on teacher

empowerment was conducted by Jones (1997), who contended that by allowing teachers to make decisions, administrators are allowing the ones closest to the students to guide instruction. The purpose of the study was to determine if there was a correlation between participatory decision-making and organizational effectiveness. He asserted that some theorists contend that as participatory management increases, so does organizational effectiveness. Jones' findings offered partial support for this idea. He found a strong positive correlation between participatory management and the effectiveness of an organization.

The same type results were found in a study by Davis and Wilson (2000). They studied principals and teachers in Eastern Washington to determine if there was a relationship between principal empowering behaviors and teacher motivation. Their findings revealed a significant relationship between the principal's empowering behaviors and teacher motivation. Results showed that the more the principal empowered them in the decision-making process, the more teachers felt they were involved in decisions that led to positive outcomes.

Continuing with the same thought, Enderlin-Lampe (2002) performed a meta-analysis on significant teacher empowerment studies and found that a key factor in the restructuring of schools is teachers' beliefs in their central role in decision-making. She asserted that it is easy to discuss an empowered workplace, but delivering on the promise is much more difficult. A study by Keiser and Shen (2000) illustrated this differently.

Keiser and Shen (2000) examined the difference in the way principals and teachers view empowerment. Their data was extracted from the 1993-94 School Staffing Survey conducted by the National Center for Educational Statistics. Their findings revealed that

principals view teachers as being much more empowered than teachers view themselves. The findings also showed that teachers continue to have little influence on decisions concerning areas other than instruction. In another perception study, similar findings about empowerment were revealed in South Carolina schools. The study showed that South Carolina principals viewed teachers as being more empowered in the decision-making process than they actually were (Beckett & Flanigan, 2000).

Klecker and Loadman (1998) asserted that in order for teacher empowerment to be successful, administrators must be trained in the knowledge that will foster change. They charged that changing from an autocratic leadership style to that of instructional leader is a difficult challenge for most administrators. They concluded that administrators must be willing to make the change in leadership style in order to provide teachers with more options to expand their roles and functions in the school.

Empowerment as an organizational process may be a key factor in fostering resilience in teachers. Empowerment appears to be an intrinsic factor that leads to teacher retention.

### *Mentoring*

The literature points to the fact that mentoring is a positive process for both beginning and experienced teachers. In Georgia, the Georgia Teacher Retention Study (2004) found mentoring to be an essential component for retaining teachers. The study found that without a high level of job satisfaction, teachers are likely to leave the profession. The study asserted that new teachers should be mentored by veteran teachers in order to facilitate quick answers to questions.

Weaver (2004) emphasized that mentoring may be the vehicle for support needed for compliance with NCLB. He asserted that the close bond of support created by successful



mentoring programs cannot be overrated during times of policy change. He stated that, "Formalizing the mentoring relationship, however, could prove to be a more effective approach for reading teachers to meet these mandates" (p. 259).

Boreen and Niday (2000) pointed to the fact that new teachers often have a difficult time finding collegiality in schools. What they find is isolation due to the compartmentalized nature of today's schools. They recommended that novice teachers have a one-on-one link with a veteran teacher for mentoring. When studying beginning teachers, Moir (2003) found that a quality mentoring program breaks the cycle of attrition in schools and saves money for the districts involved. He stated that mentoring also has a positive effect on veteran teachers, as it tends to revitalize them in the process of passing on knowledge to a new generation of teachers. He asserted that many times mentors go on to take the positions as lead teachers or administrators.

Continuing with the same line of thought, Trubowitz and Robbins (2003) charged that the practice of mentoring new teachers is spreading quickly, and systems are finding that beginning teachers who have intensive mentoring are less likely to leave the profession. He asserted that more attention should be paid to the mentor/mentee relationships to assure a quality experience for both parties. Pavia, et al. (2003) studied mentor/protégé relationships in order to provide an insider's view of the mentoring experience. They found that establishing lasting bonds between the mentor and mentee was a difficult task, and that the organization and implementation of mentoring programs were essential to their success.

Evertson and Smithey (2000) explored ways in which mentors can support their protégé. Their results showed evidence of ways mentoring programs helped novice

teachers survive in the profession. They found that mentors who helped new teachers focus on things such as establishing classroom routines, developing lesson plans, and handling student behavior in positive ways, all had a positive effect on the teacher's longevity in the profession.

Whitaker (2000) found in her study of beginning special education teachers that the most important factors in the retention of special education teachers were emotional support and help with the mechanics of the job. She asserted that studies on mentoring in general stress a need for selectivity in choosing the mentor. Their duties should be as much like those of the mentee as possible. All of the previous studies pointed to the fact that mentoring is one organizational process that acts as a protective mechanism for the retention of teachers.

#### *Administrative Support*

It appears from the limited amount of recent literature that the organizational protective process of administrative support fosters teacher retention. In the Georgia Retention Study (2004) teachers expressed the desire for more support from administrators when dealing with parents, students and the community. Darling-Hammond (2003) asserted that good teachers gravitate towards schools where administrators will support them. She said, "Great school leaders create nurturing school environments in which accomplished teaching can flourish and grow" (p. 13). She charged that good teachers are drawn to these types of schools.

The definition for administrative support varies. Johnston (2003) defined administrative support in the following ways:

- Show up. Visit classrooms to see what kinds of special things might be going on. Beyond formal observations, stop by teachers' classes to witness special projects, student activities, or student-produced exhibits or displays. Work to understand what teachers are doing and the issues they face. In essence, use your presence to show that you are interested in the academic program and teachers' work.
- Back me up. In matters of discipline, help teachers devise reasonable solutions to discipline problems, then assist them in applying the strategies in their classes. Be helpful in dealing with parents and district office administrators.
- Lend a hand. Help teachers find resources, solve problems, and take advantage of growth opportunities. Support their continued professional growth and provide help and information related to their specific problems and needs.
- Show appreciation. It's not necessary to create elaborate reward systems, but simple, informal recognition of good work or exceptional effort is a major indicator of support. Notes, accolades at faculty meetings, celebrations, and private compliments go a long way toward making teachers feel valued and respected.
- Let me in on things. Teachers feel most effective when they feel included in what's going on in the school. They don't necessarily want extensive roles in formal school governance, but they do want to know what's

happening and how it will affect them and their students. They also want a voice in those things that affect them most directly.

- Respect my time. Time is the most precious commodity in a school. Teachers cherish leaders who respect their time by keeping meetings brief and focused, not placing unnecessary non-instructional demands on teachers, and protecting their time from the demands of district administrators (p. 1).

These administrative supports described by Johnston can have a tremendous effect on teacher commitment.

Singh and Billingsley (1998) studied how professional support affects teacher commitment. Their sample was selected by using data from the School Staffing Survey, 1987-88, conducted by the National Center for Educational Statistics. A random sample of teachers in their first three years was given the Principal Leadership and Support Survey. The results show that there is a strong connection between principal leadership/support and teacher commitment. This was especially evident when principals provided clear expectations, fair observations, as well as support and assistance.

In a study conducted by Johnson and Birkland (2003) teacher career paths of fifty teachers were studied for the previous three years in order to determine what teachers seek, understand, and experience. Of the fifty teachers studied, eight voluntarily left, seeking employment in other schools. One of the main reasons these eight teachers left their school was the lack of administrative support. The teachers in the study cited a lack of support for discipline, instructional issues, and a preoccupation with running the larger school as reasons for their perception of a lack of administrative support.

One area where administrative support is crucial appears to be discipline. Yoon and Gilcrest (2003) used a questionnaire to study teachers' beliefs of administrative support in dealing with disruptive and aggressive students in elementary schools. Administrators' direct involvement with student discipline had the highest frequencies of responses. It was followed by emotional support, teamwork, and parent involvement. They also found that administrative support involves staff development training for teachers to learn how to handle difficult students.

Wilms (2003) asserted that the problem with many educational reforms in the United States is that administrators don't really know what is going on in the classroom. He said that for any reform effort to survive, it must have administrative support from the top down. Administrators must support teachers' efforts in the classroom on a daily basis.

#### *Staff Development*

Steffy, Wolf, Pasch and Enz (2000) asserted that in order to retain teachers in the profession, a framework for designing staff development must be implemented to support professional growth. This framework must support teachers at all levels of the teacher career cycle. In order to retain teachers, the staff development must address different needs they have across the career.

There are many types and models of staff development available to teachers and administrators. Dickinson, McBride, Lamb-Milligan, and Nichols (2003) stated that all educators are involved in some type of staff development on some level. They claimed that many times these practices are useless, and even wasteful of school resources and staff time. They charged that many times staff development is an isolated activity that has

little or nothing to do with student learning. Therefore models with realistic expectations should be employed.

Burke (2001) felt that staff development is a means to increase the effectiveness of instruction for teachers. He charged that staff development needs to be tailored to the teacher, depending on the teacher's career stage. Morris, Chrispeels, and Burke (2003) asserted that both external and internal networks should be utilized in order to provide pertinent staff development for teachers. Whether external or internal resources are used, in order for staff development to be successful, certain things must happen. Gentry and Keilty (2004) made the following recommendations:

- The process should start with conversations by the faculty to establish a mission and objectives for the program or activity.
- The staff should have a general awareness session in order to research the activity and make sure that the program is aligned with the goals and objectives.
- The staff chooses the course of action to be taken.
- The program is implemented, with special consideration given to the individuals who will teach the program.
- The new program must be supported by giving staff the opportunities to attend meetings with other staff members.
- The maintenance and growth of the program is guaranteed by making it a part of the school improvement program.

Gentry and Keilty feel that these recommendations will work when implementing any type of staff development program.

Kent (2004) insisted that high quality staff development is crucial to the future of education. Schools must provide pertinent staff development to teachers so they can meet the instructional needs of their students. He charged that it is the teacher who must link staff development to instruction in order for students to be successful. Joyner (2000) felt that schools must allow teachers to make schools reflective places, where teachers select the training they need to improve student learning. Staff development should never be a one shot deal that is not connected to the school's improvement plan. He charged that schools should have teachers, administrators, and support staff all working together to develop the staff development plan, taking into account previous knowledge and experience.

Holloway (2003) emphasized that schools must provide a pool of highly qualified and experienced teachers. He charged that by providing support for experienced teachers, they will stay in the classroom longer and thrive. He mentioned professional development or staff development as one particular effort that can reduce teacher attrition and turnover and sustain teachers in the profession. All of the above authors stressed that staff development is a means to retain teachers and raise student achievement.

### Summary

Teacher retention continues to be a major problem for school districts in the United States. Schools that serve academically disadvantaged students have a harder time retaining teachers. The resilience of teachers may play an important role in teacher retention in hard-to-staff districts.

The research that has been done on resilience has mainly occurred in the field of child development and child psychology. Little research has been done on the resilience of

teachers and organizational protective processes that lead to teacher retention. The literature points to the assumption that the five organizational protective processes may have a positive impact on teacher retention.

Collaboration appears to be a process that aids in retaining teachers. Collaboration keeps teachers from feeling isolated in the profession. By offering venues for collaboration in schools, administrators can lead groups to make decisions that foster student achievement in their schools.

Organizational effectiveness is improved when teachers are empowered in making building level decisions concerning the education of their students. Empowerment increases teacher motivation when teachers believe they are involved in the decisions that lead to positive outcomes in their schools. In order for teacher empowerment to be successful, administrators must be willing to change their leadership styles and allow teachers more say in building level decisions.

Mentoring is a positive process for teachers at all levels of the career cycle. Mentoring is a critical tool in combating isolation in the teaching profession. Teachers who are mentored are less likely to leave teaching. Mentors may focus on the every day routines of the job that new teachers often find difficult. Mentoring is a crucial process for both new and experienced teachers. Both mentor and mentee gain professionally from the mentoring relationship.

Administrative support aids teachers in remaining in the profession. Teachers want administrators that back them up, show appreciation, and support discipline in their classrooms. When administrators are supportive of teachers, teachers are more likely to overcome the isolation of teaching and remain committed to the profession.



Finally, in order for staff development to be effective it must be pertinent and tailored to the career stage of the teacher. Staff development activities in a school should be developed and implemented with input from the faculty. Schools must support teachers by providing staff development activities that will allow the teacher to increase student learning. By providing this support, schools will decrease teacher turnover and attrition.

This study measured the relationship between teachers' beliefs of the five organizational protective processes measured by the Organizational Protective Processes Survey and the teachers' level of resilience, as measured with the ODR Personal Resilience Questionnaire.

The following charts show the pertinent studies found in the above review of Literature (see Tables 1-8.).

Table 1

*Studies Related to Personal Resilience*

| STUDY                              | PURPOSE   | PARTICIPANTS                           | DESIGN                     | OUTCOMES  |
|------------------------------------|---|--|----------------------------|---|
| Garmazy (1970)                     | Examined why some children thrive after suffering traumatic childhoods.           | Children of Schizophrenics             | Qualitative                | Some children thrived after traumatic childhoods and others did not |
| Werner & Smith (1992)              | Examined the influence of environment on resilience                               | Cohort of 55 low SES Hawaiian children | Qualitative Longitudinal   | One third of children thrived despite high risk family status.      |
| Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker (2000) | Examined the changing definition of the concept of resilience across disciplines. | Resilience studies                     | Quantitative Meta Analysis | Resilience paradigm should change to include processes.             |

Table 2

*Studies Related To Teacher Resilience*

| STUDY                               | PURPOSE   | PARTICIPANTS                                     | DESIGN      | OUTCOMES   |
|-------------------------------------|---|--|-------------|--|
| Howard & Johnson (2003)             | Examined teachers in Australia's hard to staff schools for resilience.  | Primary school teachers in disadvantaged schools | Qualitative | Peer group support, administrative support, strong discipline policy, and staff development fostered resilience. |
| Patterson, Collins, & Abbott (2004) | Studied strategies used by urban teachers to build personal resilience. | Teachers who had taught for at least three years | Qualitative | A strong supportive principal, high level of collegiality, lead to high personal resilience.                     |

Table 3

*Studies Related to Organizational Protective Processes*

| STUDY                                  | PURPOSE  | PARTICIPANTS  | DESIGN                  | OUTCOMES   |
|--|--|---|-------------------------|--|
| Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker (2000)     | Presented a critical appraisal of resilience and protective factors.                 | Critique of research on resilience and protective processes | Qualitative             | Showed a need for resilience researchers to enhance the scientific rigor of their work.        |
| Igersoll (2001)                        | Examined teacher turnover and staffing problems as organizational phenomena.         | 6,733 teachers from 1990-91 Teacher Follow-up Survey        | Quantitative            | Teachers choice to stay or exit are shaped by particular organizational conditions in schools. |
| Georgia Teacher Retention Study (2004) | Examined factors that lead to the retention of teachers in Georgia's Public Schools. | 153 teachers from 11 sites in Georgia                       | Qualitative Focus Group | Recommendations included organizational processes that foster teacher retention                |

Table 4

*Studies Related to Collaboration*

| Study            | Purpose  | Participants                             | Design   | Outcomes   |
|------------------|--|--|--|--|
| Achinstein(2002) | Examined two school-wide teacher professional communities engaged in collaborative reform initiatives. | 2 public middle schools in San Francisco | Qualitative Case Study using Ethnographic techniques | Teachers engaged in collaboration generated and often thrived on conflict. |

Table 5

*Studies Related to Teacher Empowerment*

| STUDY                     | PURPOSE  | PARTICIPANTS   | DESIGN   | OUTCOME  |
|---------------------------|--|--|--|--|
| Jones (1997)              | Tested the hypothesis that employee participation in decision making and organizational effectiveness are positively correlated. | 1,176 teachers in low SES urban elementary schools                 | Quantitative                                     | More participation is experienced in curriculum and instruction. Less participation is provided in personnel and budget              |
| Davis & Wilson (2000)     | Examined how teacher empowerment relates to teacher motivation, job satisfaction and job stress.                                 | 666 elementary teachers and 44 elementary principals               | Quantitative                                     | The more principals participated in empowering behaviors, the more teachers made choices that led to positive work related outcomes. |
| Kaiser & Shen (2000)      | Studied the difference in perceptions of principals and teachers concerning empowerment.   | 9,098 principals and 47,105 teachers in high schools               | Quantitative<br>Data from School Staffing Survey | Principals perceived teachers as more empowered than teachers actually feel.   |
| Beckett & Flanigan (2000) | Measured shared decision making in South Carolina Associate/Partner schools.   | 37 principals and 1,812 full time faculty members in middle school | Quantitative                                     | Teachers had to accept new responsibility and principals needed to relinquish authority  |

Table 6

*Studies Related to Mentoring*

| STUDY   | PURPOSE   | PARTICIPANTS  | DESIGN  | OUTCOME   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Boreem & Naday (2000)                           | Studied the collegial interaction between experienced and beginning teachers.   | 60 pre-service teachers and four experienced teachers | Qualitative Case Study                          | Interaction with mentor teachers gave pre-service teachers the opportunity to reinforce their learning.     |
| Pavia, Nissen, Hawkins, & Filimon-Dryden (2003) | Examined the benefits of mentoring and the difficulties within the mentor/protégé relationship.                       | 12 experienced teachers                               | Qualitative Interview                           | Offered information about successful mentoring strategies.  |
| Evertson & Smithey (2000)                       | Studied the efficacy of using a research based mentoring program to assist teachers in supporting protégés.           | 46 experienced mentor teachers                        | Quantitative Analyses of Variance               | Determined that preparing mentors for their task is critical for success.                                   |
| Whitaker (2000)                                 | Examined the factors that first year special education teachers cited as constituting an effective mentoring program. | 200 first year special education teachers             | Qualitative Focus Group and Quantitative Survey | Mentors needed to be made more aware of the importance of the mentor role in order to become more effective |

Table 7

*Studies Related To Administrative Support*

| STUDY                     | PURPOSE  | PARTICIPANTS                                     | DESIGN                 | OUTCOMES   |
|---------------------------|--|--|------------------------|--|
| Wilms (2003)              | Examined the effects of lesson study on teachers.  | 30 teachers from the Los Angeles School district | Qualitative Interviews | Administrators must support teachers in the classroom on a daily basis.              |
| Johnston (2003)           | Examined what the term "administrative support" meant to teachers.                               | 270 new teachers                                 | Quantitative Survey    | Teachers identified seven behaviors crucial to teacher support.                      |
| Singh & Billingsly (1998) | Examined the effects of professional support on teachers' commitment to the teaching profession. | 11,840 teachers from school staffing survey      | Quantitative Survey    | Results showed a strong connection between principal support and teacher commitment. |
| Yoon & Gilcrist (2003)    | Examined teachers' perceptions of different types of administrative support.                     | 370 elementary teachers                          | Quantitative Survey    | Teachers cited direct involvement with student discipline as most important.         |



Table 8

*Studies Related to Staff Development*

| STUDY                  | PURPOSE  | PARTICIPANTS                                 | DESIGN                        | OUTCOMES  |
|------------------------|--|--|-------------------------------|---|
| Burke (2000)           | Examined influences that might trigger a movement through the career stages. | 23 teachers                                  | Quantitative<br>Likert Survey | Analysis of attitudes will lead to the development of appropriate professional development. |
| Gentry & Keilty (2004) | Examined staff development in cluster grouped schools.                       | 8 elementary schools, 1 rural and 7 suburban | Qualitative<br>Interviews     | Success of staff development depends on continuous maintenance.                             |

### CHAPTER III

#### METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the study was to analyze the relationship between teachers' beliefs of organizational protective processes and teacher resilience. This researcher chose a quantitative design because survey responses could yield the data to be analyzed to answer the research questions. The study was quantitative in design and utilized a perception survey developed by the researcher, the Organizational Protective Processes Survey, and the Personal Resilience Questionnaire developed by ODR, Inc. (2003). These two instruments were administered to high school teachers. Ravid (2000) defined quantitative research as: "research which focuses on explaining cause-and-effect relationships, studies a small number of variables, and uses numerical data" (pp. 3-4).

For this study, data was collected to examine the relationship between teachers' beliefs of organizational protective processes and teachers' personal resilience. Nardi (2003) stated the following about quantitative research:

Quantitative methods involve writing questions for surveys and in-depth interviews, learning to quantify or count responses, and statistically (mathematically) analyzing archival, historical, or our own data. A most common form is a self-administered questionnaire. Questionnaires are ideally suited for respondents who can read, measuring people's attitudes and opinions, and when we want to get a very large number of respondents too difficult to observe with qualitative methods (p. 17).

Quantitative design was the best choice to answer the research questions proposed for this study. A questionnaire was used to collect data.

The following chapter contains the research procedure used in the study. This chapter is divided into the following sections: (a) research questions, (b) research design, (c) population, sample, participants, (d) data collection, (e) data analysis.

### Research Questions

The overarching research question for this study was “Is there a relationship between the organizational protective processes and teachers’ personal resilient characteristics?” To obtain an answer to this question, the researcher developed sub-questions which guided the study:

1. What are the demographic profiles of participants in the study?
2. What is the relationship between the teacher’s perception of empowerment and the level of personal resilience?
3. What is the relationship between the teacher’s perception of collaboration and level of resilience?
4. What is the relationship between the teacher’s perception of administrative support and level of resilience?
5. What is the relationship between the teachers’ perception of staff development and level of personal resilience?
6. What is the relationship between the teacher’s perception of mentoring and level of resilience?

### Research Design

This study was a quantitative study which used two survey instruments to determine the relationship between teachers’ beliefs about the organizational protective processes of collaboration, empowerment, mentoring, administrative support, staff development, and

personal resilience. The researcher used two survey instruments which were given during one administration. The Personal Resilience Questionnaire utilized a Likert-type intensity scale with a six point response scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree as its measuring instrument. The researcher developed survey, the Organizational Protective Processes Survey, utilized the same scale. The scale provided six choices which prevented respondents from making a neutral response (Nardi, 2003). This researcher chose to use a quantitative method because it allowed the researcher to collect large amounts of data by the survey method. Ravid (2000) stated that questionnaires are suited for surveying large numbers of respondents quickly, and allow for generalizing to a larger population. Qualitative design would have been too difficult to reach large enough numbers of respondents to generalize to the larger population of teachers in Georgia. Also, correlational statistics provided sufficient means to analyze data to answer the research questions. Therefore, quantitative design, employing surveys for data collection, was chosen as the design for the study.

### Participants

The participants in the study were high school teachers in grades 9-12 in the 13 county Northeast Georgia Regional Education Service Agency (RESA). High school teachers were chosen in order to limit the study to a manageable size as high schools generally have fewer staff than elementary and middle schools. The high schools in the study had the following number of certified teachers as reported by The Georgia Office of Student Achievement's Report card for the year 2005:

Table 9

*High Schools*

| School District    | School              | No. of Certified Teachers |
|--------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|
| Barrow County      | Apalachee High      | 77                        |
| Barrow County      | Winder Barrow High  | 86                        |
| Clarke County      | Cedar Shoals High   | 88                        |
| Clarke County      | Clarke Central High | 88                        |
| Commerce City      | Commerce High       | 25                        |
| Elbert County      | Elbert County High  | 64                        |
| Greene County      | Greene County High  | 40                        |
| Jackson County     | Jackson County High | 84                        |
| Jefferson City     | Jefferson High      | 29                        |
| Madison County     | Madison County High | 82                        |
| Morgan County      | Morgan County High  | 58                        |
| Oconee County      | Oconee County High  | 110                       |
| Oglethorpe County  | Oglethorpe High     | 40                        |
| Social Circle City | Social Circle High  | 26                        |
| Walton County      | Monroe Area High    | 78                        |
| Walton County      | Loganville High     | 97                        |
| Total              |                     | 1072                      |

### Demographics

The following demographic data was obtained from the 2004-2005 State of Georgia K-12 Report Card (GDOE, 2005). During the 2004-2005 academic year the genders of the Northeast Georgia RESA district teachers were 56% female and 44% male. While 93% of the teachers were white, 6% were black, and less than one percent is other races. The educational attainment level of teachers in Northeast Georgia RESA was as follows: 37% held bachelors degrees, 52% held masters degrees, 9% held specialist degrees, and 2% held doctorates (Georgia Office of Student Achievement, 2004). The GOSA also reported that 22% of the district teachers had been teaching between 21-30 years, 28% between 11-20 years, 41% between 1-10 years, 6% less than 1 year, and 3% more than 30 years.

### Instrumentation

The Personal Resilience Questionnaire, developed by ODR. Inc., (2003), a company from Atlanta, Georgia, which specializes in change management, was used to measure resilient characteristics of teachers in public high schools in the Northeast Georgia RESA District. ODR developed this instrument to measure seven characteristics of personal resilience. This was the only instrument the researcher found that had been used to measure personal resilience in teachers, and was a recent personal resilience instrument that had been tested for reliability and validity.

The team at ODR began developing a tool to measure resilience in 1990. The team conducted a comprehensive literature review to determine

the characteristics of resilience. In order to define a resilient person, ODR used the review of literature to develop a questionnaire with 75 items.

A pool of questionnaire items was developed and pilot tested on 239 individuals. The data was analyzed and the final questionnaire of 75 items was developed. At present, more than 50,000 people have completed the instrument. The internal validity was tested in 1993 by comparing sub-scales scores from the questionnaire with other validated scales that measure the same constructs (ODR 2003, p.89).

The ODR questionnaire was used because it is a valid and reliable instrument to measure personal resilience. Morris (2002) used the PRQ to measure the resilient characteristics of teachers but did not look at the relationship between resilience and protective processes. Morris was interested in the resilient characteristics of beginning teachers. This study was concerned with measuring personal resilience characteristics in teachers at all career stages to measure the relationship between the organizational processes and personal resilience of teachers. ODR defines the characteristics of resilient people in the PRQ by measuring the characteristics of resilient people in seven sub-scales, (1) Positive: The World, (2) Positive: Yourself, (3) Focused, (4) Flexible: Thoughts, (5) Flexible: Social, (6) Organized, and (7) Proactive.

High scores indicated areas of strength and low scores indicated areas of weakness. The research department designed each of the sub-scales in this manner:

1. Positive: The World: “Designed to assess the tendency to see opportunities in a variety of situations” (p. 89).
2. Positive: Yourself: “Designed to assess a person’s general sense of self-efficacy in responding to situations” (p. 89).
3. Focused: “Designed to assess a person’s clarity of purpose: that is, the extent to which the person has a sense of direction in his/her life” (p. 89).
4. Flexible, Thoughts: “Designed to assess the extent to which a person tends to be comfortable with ambiguity, to entertain unfamiliar or contradictory ideas, and to enjoy working with complex ideas” (p. 89).
5. Flexible, Social: “Designed to assess the extent to which a person gives and receives social support” (p 90).
6. Organized: Designed to assess the extent that a person can impose structure on ambiguous situations” (p. 90).
7. Proactive:” Designed to assess the extent to which a person is willing to act on his or her environment” (p. 90).

Cronbach’s alpha was used to measure the internal consistency for each subscale of the PRQ. The following coefficients were reported: Positive: The World .83, Positive: Yourself .81, Focused: .82, Flexible: Thoughts .71, Flexible: Social .74, Organized: .68, Proactive: .65 (ODR, 2003).

The stability or test retest reliability was measured by administering the PRQ twice to the same group approximately seven months apart. The following test-retest reliability coefficients were reported: Positive: The World .79, Positive: Yourself .66, Focused: .60, Flexible: Thoughts .73, Flexible: Social .69,



Organized: .70, Proactive: .68. The items that make up the scale show a moderately high level of covariance. The moderately high level of covariance shows that people responded similarly to the various questions in each scale. This means that the questions constituting each sub-scale were measuring the same concept (ODR, 2003).

For this study the PRQ was administered in self-report paper and pencil format. It was completed in approximately 20 minutes by the participants. The data from the instrument were then scored by ODR in Atlanta, which returned the results to the researcher. The PRQ provided an aggregate resilience score for each participant, as well as a sub-scale score measuring each of seven characteristics. Each participant's score was reported as a percentage based on a 100% scale and each subscale score was also based on a percentage out of 100%.

The second instrument used in this research was a researcher-developed questionnaire with a Likert Scale that measured teachers' beliefs of organizational protective processes. This paper and pencil self-report questionnaire consisted of 22 items developed from a subset of variables identified from the review of literature. These organizational processes, related to teachers' retention characteristics, are: empowerment; collaboration; administrative support; staff development; and teacher mentoring. A six point Likert intensity scale consisting of strongly agree, agree, slightly agree, slightly disagree, disagree, strongly disagree, was used to measure participants' beliefs about the organizational protective processes. The scale was a six point Likert that matched the PRQ to

ensure that the respondents did not get confused while taking the survey which was administered at the same time as the PRQ.

The Organizational Protective Processes Survey was developed by identifying key themes in the review of literature about retention. The researcher included items from the literature that were related to five key themes of teacher retention. Due to the length of the final instrument, three to five items per construct were selected for the final survey. The Quantitative Item Analysis Chart (see Table 10.) cited the research study to support each item of the survey.

Table 10

*Quantitative Item Analysis Chart: Organizational Protective Processes Survey*

| Item Analysis                             | Research Study                           | Research Question |
|---|--|-------------------|
| 1. Age                                    | Morris, 2002; Issacs, 2003               | 1                 |
| 2. Gender                                 | Morris, 2002; Issacs, 2003               | 1                 |
| 3. Highest Degree                         | Morris, 2002; Issacs, 2003               | 1                 |
| 4. Years in Teaching                      | Morris, 2002; Issacs, 2003               | 1                 |
| 5. Experience - teaching first career     | Morris, 2002; Issacs, 2003               | 1                 |
| 6. Experience - years in teaching         | Morris, 2002; Issacs, 2003               | 1                 |
| <i>Staff Development</i>                  |  |                   |
| 1. Survive in teaching                    | Gentry & Keilty, 2004                    | 5                 |
| 2. Student learning                       | Holloway, 2003                           | 5                 |
| 3. Pertinent Staff Development            | Morris, Chrispeels, & Burke, 2003        | 5                 |
| 4. Lifelong learning                      | Holloway, 2003                           | 5                 |
| 5. Principal Support                      | Wilms, 2003                              | 5                 |
| <i>Collaboration</i>                      |  |                   |
| 1. Principal's utilization                | Gideon, 2002                             | 3                 |
| 2. Instructional support                  | Gideon, 2002                             | 3                 |
| 3. Student achievement                    | Schmoker, 2004; Gideon, 2005             | 3                 |
| 4. Collaboration with colleagues          | Schmoker, 2004; Gideon, 2005             | 3                 |
| <i>Mentoring</i>                          |  |                   |
| 1. Remain in teaching                     | Trubowitz, 2003                          | 6                 |
| 2. Mentoring impacts student learning     | Weaver, 2004                             | 6                 |
| 3. Mentoring in the first five years      | Evertson & Smithey, 2000                 | 6                 |
| 4. Strong mentoring and isolation         | Boreen & Naday, 2000                     | 6                 |
| 5. Being a mentor rejuvenates             | Moir, 2003                               | 6                 |
| <i>Administrative Support</i>             |  |                   |
| 1. Principal Support                      | Johnston, 2003; Darling-Hammond, 2003    | 4                 |
| 2. Accolades                              | Johnston, 2003                           | 4                 |
| 3. Principal interest in academic program | Johnston, 2003                           | 4                 |
| 4. Support and communication              | Singh & Billinsley, 1998; Gilcrest, 2003 | 4                 |
| 5. Supportive administration              | Darling-Hammond, 2003                    | 4                 |
| <i>Empowerment</i>                        |  |                   |
| 1. Empowered teachers aid learners        | Enderman-Lampe, 2002                     | 2                 |
| 2. Positive attitude about teaching       | Davis & Wilson, 2000                     | 2                 |
| 3. Longevity                              | Klecker & Loadman, 1998                  | 2                 |

The researcher-developed section of the survey was pilot tested for validity in a high school that did not participate in the study. Before the instrument was distributed to teachers in the pilot study, a panel of experts in the field reviewed the instrument for content validity by comparing the questions to their knowledge of the domains. The panel consisted of a group of twenty teachers from Cedar Shoals High School in Athens, Georgia. Content validity was established by asking the teachers to review the instrument and make suggestions that would improve the instrument. The panelists' subjective opinions were used to validate the instrument. The following questions were asked:

- Please read the survey for content and relevance.
- Are the questions relevant to teacher retention?
- Please look at the language used. Can it be improved? If so, how would you reword a particular question?
- Would you change the format and how?
- Please list any other comments for improvement.

The panel responded to each question in the following way:

- Question No. 1 - All members of the panel reported that the questions were relevant and content related.
- Question No. 2 - Three panelists reported that there should be a definition of Organizational Protective Processes added to the survey. A definition was added to the top of page one of the survey.
- Question No. 3 - Two panelists cited their dislike of the Likert format. Three panelists felt that the Likert scale choices should be added to the top of each

page of the survey. They were added to each page as a result of their input. All other panelists liked the format.

- Question No. 4 - One panelist wanted factors such as salary, working conditions, and benefits added to the survey because he felt these were factors that kept teachers in the profession. This study did not deal with personnel issues, so these were not added. One female responded that adding color to the survey and a less masculine format would make the survey better.

Once input from the panel was considered, permission was obtained from the system and the principal to pilot the questionnaire for internal consistency. This type of test was used because it allows reliability to be tested using a single testing session. The surveys were distributed to 20 high school teachers by the researcher. Once the surveys were returned they were analyzed for reliability using Cronbach's Alpha. The following Alpha coefficients were reported: Overall: .91, Collaboration: .74, Mentoring: .78, Empowerment: .75, Administrative Support: .69, and Staff Development: .83. Three items were deleted during reliability testing due to their low internal consistency leaving the total item number at 22. The coefficient alpha of .91 suggested that the questions in the instrument were internally consistent. The scores for each domain also suggested that they had a moderately high level of internal consistency.

#### Data Collection

Beginning with the assumption that there is a relationship between teacher resilience and organizational protective processes, the researcher sought a population of high school teachers for this study. Due to the large numbers of

teachers in the state of Georgia, the researcher decided to limit the study to high school teachers from the Northeast Georgia Regional Educational Service Agency (2005). This researcher used the total population of teachers in the Northeast Georgia RESA district as the sample for the study. Demographic profiles of teachers in Northeast Georgia RESA were representative of the entire population of teachers in the state of Georgia. This study had never been conducted on any population of teachers. Each system's board office was contacted for permission to survey its teachers. When permission was granted, the principal of each high school was contacted and asked to participate in the research. The questionnaires were hand delivered to each high school by the researcher. Once the principal gave permission, he/she was asked to distribute the questionnaires to his/her teachers so they could participate on a voluntary basis. A letter accompanied the questionnaire explaining the purpose of the study and asking for teacher participation. The questionnaires were distributed and collected by the researcher.

At the time of this study, the Northeast Georgia RESA has approximately 1072 high school teachers in its member schools. Each teacher in the high schools that chose to participate was given the opportunity to complete the questionnaire. Due to the length of the questionnaire, teachers were asked to complete the instrument at their leisure and return it to the front office in a sealed envelope provided by the researcher. The principal was asked to forward an e-mail reminder to all teachers after one week. A follow up letter was sent to the faculty after two weeks encouraging participation. The letter reminded teachers to return the questionnaires

to the front office where they were collected by the researcher. The researcher collected the questionnaires from the principal after a four-week period.

### Data Analysis

The data were analyzed by using SPSS 14.0 designed to analyze data in the Social Sciences. It was chosen because of its widespread use and ease of availability. SPSS reported descriptive statistics for the participants: age, gender, highest degree attained, number of years in teaching, teaching as first career, and employment at multiple schools. Partial correlation was used to explain the relationship between the predictor variables of collaboration, mentoring, empowerment, administrative support, and staff development, and the dependent variable of teacher resilience. The correlation coefficient was used to determine the  $r$  value and significance between the predictor variables and the criterion variable. SPSS summary tables will show the adjusted R square and significance (Kirkpatrick & Feeney, 2005).

The data were entered into the computer for analysis of the variables to determine the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable. Partial correlation determined which variables showed a significant relationship with resilience.

### Summary

This quantitative study measured the relationship between teachers' perception of organizational protective processes and personal resilience. The organizational protective processes studied are administrative support, mentoring, collaboration, empowerment, and staff development. The main assumption of the study was that

the five organizational processes were related to resilience in teachers. Partial correlational analysis determined the relationship between teachers' beliefs of the organizational protective processes and resilience. The population came from the Northeast Georgia RESA District. All high schools in the RESA district were invited to participate in the study.

The PRQ (Personal Resilience Questionnaire) developed by ODR (2003) was used to measure resilience in the teachers. A researcher developed attitude scale, the Organizational Protective Processes Survey, was used to measure the relationship between teachers' beliefs of the organizational protective processes and personal resilience. Partial correlation was used to determine if there is a relationship between teachers' beliefs and teachers' resilience scores.



## CHAPTER IV

### REPORT OF DATA AND DATA ANALYSIS

#### Introduction

A descriptive study was used to determine the relationship between teachers' personal resilience and organizational protective processes in schools. Two Likert-scaled survey instruments were used to determine the level of resilience in teachers and their beliefs of organizational protective processes in high schools. The total population of teachers in the 17 high schools in the Northeast Georgia Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA) District was one thousand and seventy two. Five hundred eighty three high school teachers, in seven high schools that participated, returned surveys.

Permission was granted by ODR to distribute the Personal Resilience Questionnaire. The researcher-developed Organizational Protective Processes survey was administered with the Personal Resilience Questionnaire. Three hundred and seven of five hundred and eighty three surveys were returned for a return rate of 52%. The survey responses were analyzed by using partial correlation to determine the relationship between the resilience score from the seven sub-scales of the Personal Resilience Questionnaire and the responses from the Organizational Protective Processes Survey. Demographic variables were factored out and held constant while the relationship between each category of the organizational protective processes of collaboration, empowerment, administrative support, mentoring, and staff development were correlated with resilience to determine the relationship. Partial correlations were run on each sub-scale of the

PRQ and each category of the Organizational Protective Processes Survey.

Findings were reported and summarized in tables 11-21.

### Research Questions

The study was designed to answer the overarching research question: Is there a relationship between the organizational protective processes and teachers' personal resilience characteristics? The following sub questions further guided the study:

1. What are the demographic profiles of participants of the study?
2. What is the relationship between the teachers' perception of empowerment and the level of personal resilience?
3. What is the relationship between the teachers' perception of collaboration and level of personal resilience?
4. What is the relationship between the teachers' perception of administrative support and level of resilience?
5. What is the relationship between the teachers' perception of staff development and level of personal resilience?
6. What is the relationship between the teachers' perception of mentoring and level of personal resilience?

### Research Design

For this study, two Likert type surveys were used: the Personal Resilience Questionnaire developed by ODR (2003) and the Organizational Protective Processes Survey developed by the researcher. A six point Likert intensity scale consisting of strongly agree, agree, slightly agree, slightly disagree, disagree, and strongly disagree was used in both surveys. The PRQ measured seven sub-scales

of personal resilience. High scores indicated areas of strength and low scores indicated areas of weakness. ODR's research department designed each of the subscales in this manner:

1. Positive: The World: "Designed to assess the tendency to see opportunities in a variety of situations" (p. 89).
2. Positive: Yourself: "Designed to assess a person's general sense of self-efficacy in responding to situations" (p. 89).
3. Focused: "Designed to assess a person's clarity of purpose: that is, the extent to which the person has a sense of direction in his/her life" (p. 89).
4. Flexible, Thoughts: "Designed to assess the extent to which a person tends to be comfortable with ambiguity, to entertain unfamiliar or contradictory ideas, and to enjoy working with complex ideas" (p. 89).
5. Flexible, Social: "Designed to assess the extent to which a person gives and receives social support" (p. 90).
6. Organized: "Designed to assess the extent that a person can impose structure on ambiguous situations" (p. 90).
7. Proactive: "Designed to assess the extent to which a person is willing to act on his or her environment" (p. 90).

Both the PRQ and the OPP were validated by using CronBach's Alpha. The PRQ was validated by ODR, and the OPP was validated by the researcher. The researcher developed OPP measured teachers' beliefs of collaboration, mentoring, empowerment, administrative support, and staff development. Demographic data were also collected consisting of age, gender, highest degree, years in teaching,

and number of high schools worked in. The OPP was validated for content validity by a panel of experts in the field prior to its piloting. The experts reviewed each question for content and relevance.

Once the panel gave feedback on the questions, the survey was revised and piloted for internal consistency using Cronbach's Alpha. The following Alpha coefficients were reported: Overall: .91, Collaboration: .74, Mentoring: .78, Empowerment: .75, Administrative Support: .69, and Staff Development: .83. Following testing for internal consistency, the instrument was piloted in a high school by 20 high school teachers who were not part of the study. The participants were asked to complete the instrument and identify questions that were difficult to understand or needed rewording. The instrument was then revised based on the feedback from the participants and disseminated to high school teachers in the Northeast Georgia RESA district in April of 2006.

#### Findings - Research Question #1

##### *Demographics - Age*

What are the demographic profiles of participants of the study?

Three hundred and two respondents, who were high school teachers in the Northeast Georgia RESA, answered question #1. The mode (most frequently occurring response) of the frequency distribution for Question #1 was forty six and over. 32.8% of the survey respondents were age forty-six and over. 20.5% of the respondents indicated that they were between the ages of thirty-one and thirty-five (see Table 11).

Table 11

*Frequency Distribution - Age*

|       | Frequency | Valid percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|-----------|---------------|--------------------|
| 21-25 | 20        | 6.6           | 6.6                |
| 26-30 | 43        | 14.2          | 20.9               |
| 31-35 | 62        | 20.5          | 41.4               |
| 36-40 | 39        | 12.9          | 54.3               |
| 40-45 | 39        | 12.9          | 67.2               |
| 46 +  | 99        | 32.8          | 100.0              |
| Total | 302       | 100.0         |                    |

*Findings - Demographics (Gender)*

Three hundred and two respondents answered question #2. One hundred ninety-one females (63.2%) and one hundred and eleven males (36.8%) responded to the survey (see Table 12).

Table 12

*Frequency Distribution - Gender*

|        | Frequency | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|--------|-----------|---------------|--------------------|
| Female | 191       | 63.2          | 63.2               |
| Male   | 111       | 36.8          | 100.0              |
| Total  | 302       | 100           |                    |

*Findings - Demographics (Highest Degree)*

One hundred fifty-seven of the respondents had Masters Degrees for a total of 52.0%. Eighty-six (28.5%) respondents had Bachelors Degrees. Forty-two respondents (13.9%) had Specialists Degrees. Seventeen respondents had Doctorate Degrees (5.6%) (see Table 13).

Based on an analysis of the data the findings were as follows:

The teaching force in the Northeast Georgia RESA district was predominantly masters educated. The second highest category was bachelors educated at the entry level, and 5.6% held the terminal doctorate degree.

Table 13

*Frequency Distribution - Highest Degree*

|            | Frequency | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|------------|-----------|---------------|--------------------|
| Bachelors  | 86        | 28.5          | 28.5               |
| Masters    | 157       | 52.0          | 80.5               |
| Specialist | 42        | 13.9          | 94.4               |
| Doctorate  | 17        | 5.6           | 100.0              |
| Total      | 302       | 100           |                    |

*Findings - Demographics (Years in Teaching)*

Three hundred and two respondents answered question #4 in the demographic section of the survey. The bimodal response for this question was between six to ten years and eleven to twenty years in teaching (27.2%). Seventy-nine respondents had between one and five years in teaching (26.2%). Fifty-nine respondents had twenty-one years and over in the profession (19.5%).

Based on an analysis of the data the findings were as follows:

The majority of the teaching staff in the Northeast Georgia RESA district had between six and twenty years in teaching. The findings showed the teachers spread out evenly between age groups with the twenty-one plus group having the fewest number of teachers.

Table 14

*Frequency Distribution - Years in Teaching*

|             | Frequency | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------------|-----------|---------------|--------------------|
| 1-5 Years   | 79        | 26.2          | 26.2               |
| 6-10 Years  | 82        | 27.2          | 53.3               |
| 11-20 Years | 82        | 27.2          | 80.5               |
| 21 + Years  | 59        | 19.5          | 100.0              |
| Total       | 302       | 100.0         |                    |

Based on an analysis of the data the findings were as follows:

Two hundred and six respondents (66.2%) stated that teaching was their first career. Ninety five (31.5%) respondents stated that teaching was not their first career (see Table 15).

Table 15

*Frequency Distribution - Teaching First Career*

|       | Frequency | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|-----------|---------------|--------------------|
| Yes   | 206       | 66.2          | 68.2               |
| No    | 95        | 31.5          | 99.7               |
| Total | 301       | 100           | 100                |



*Finding - Demographics (Number of High School Employed In)*

The mode (most occurring response) of the frequency distribution for question #6 was one high school (39.7%) high school. Ninety-seven (32.1%) of the respondents had worked in two high schools and eighty-five (28.1%) had worked in three or more high schools

Based on an analysis of the data the findings were as follows:

The majority of the teachers in the Northeast Georgia RESA District have worked in only one high school. The responses showed the groups were similarly divided with 32.1% working in two high schools and 28.1% working in three or more (see Table 16).

Table 16

*Frequency Distribution - Number of High Schools Employed*

|               | Frequency | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---------------|-----------|---------------|--------------------|
| One           | 120       | 39.7          | 39.7               |
| Two           | 97        | 32.1          | 71.9               |
| Three or More | 85        | 28.1          | 100.0              |
| Total         | 302       | 100           |                    |

### Findings - Research Question #2

What was the relationship between the teachers' perceptions of empowerment and the level of personal resilience?

Based on an analysis of the data the findings were as follows:

Partial correlations were computed between the seven sub-scales of the PRQ and empowerment, and the results are shown in Table 17. The control variables used in the partial correlations were age, gender, highest degree, years in teaching, and the number of high schools worked in. The average correlation between all seven sub-scales ( $r=.99$ ) was statistically significant at .01 level. Of the seven domains, six were significantly correlated with empowerment at the .01 level: Positive: The World ( $r=.232$ ,  $p=.000$ ), Positive: Yourself ( $r=.227$ ,  $p=.000$ ), Focused ( $r=.244$ ,  $p=.000$ ), Flexible: Thoughts ( $r=.164$ ,  $p=.005$ ) Flexible: Social ( $r=.152$ ,  $p=.009$ ) and Proactive ( $r=.194$ ,  $p=.001$ ). Organized ( $r=.137$ ,  $p=.018$ ) was significantly correlated with empowerment at the .05 level.

All seven sub-scales of the PRQ showed significant findings with empowerment. Positive: The World, Positive: Yourself, Focused, Flexible Thoughts, Flexible: Social and Proactive were all significant at the .01 level. Teachers who scored high in these significantly related sub-scales saw opportunities in a variety of situations, had clarity of purpose, responded well to difficult situations, were comfortable with ambiguity, and were organized and proactive in handling situations.

Table 17

*Partial Correlations between Empowerment and Resilience (N=302)*

|                     | Empowerment | Significance Level |
|---------------------|-------------|--------------------|
| Average             | .99         | .000**             |
| Positive: The World | .232        | .000**             |
| Positive: Yourself  | .227        | .000**             |
| Focused             | .244        | .000**             |
| Flexible: Thoughts  | .164        | .005**             |
| Flexible: Social    | .152        | .009**             |
| Organized           | .137        | .018*              |
| Proactive           | .194        | .001**             |

\*\*p<.01, \*p<.05

### Findings - Research Question #3

What was the relationship between teachers' perceptions of collaboration and the level of personal resilience?

Based on an analysis of the data the findings were as follows:

Partial correlations were computed between collaboration and resilience, and the results are shown in Table 18. The control variables used in the partial correlations were age, gender, highest degree, years in teaching, and the number of high schools worked in.

The average  $r$  value and  $p$  value between the seven domains of the PRQ and collaboration was  $r=.138$ ,  $P=.018$  and was statistically significant at the .05 level. Of the seven domains in the PRQ, Positive: Yourself ( $r=.105$ ,  $p=.071$ ), Flexible: Thoughts ( $r=-.020$ ,  $p=.72$ ), Organized ( $r=-.016$ ,  $p=.78$ ), and Proactive ( $r=.038$ ,  $p=.517$ ) were not significantly correlated with collaboration. Positive: The World ( $r=.233$ ,  $p=.000$ ) and Flexible: Social ( $r=.151$ ,  $p=.009$ ) were significant at the .01 level. Focused ( $r=.139$ ,  $p=.017$ ) was significantly correlated with collaboration at the .05 level.

Teachers with sub-scales significantly related with empowerment saw opportunities in a number of situations, were good at giving and receiving social support, and had a sense of direction in his/her life. Sub-scales that were not significant indicated teachers, who showed a lack of self-efficacy, were uncomfortable with ambiguity, were unorganized, and were not proactive in managing their environment.

Table 18

*Partial Correlations between Collaboration and Resilience (N=302)*

|                     | Collaboration | Significance Level |
|---------------------|---------------|--------------------|
| Average             | .138          | .018*              |
| Positive: The World | .233          | .000**             |
| Positive: Yourself  | .105          | .071               |
| Focused             | .139          | .017*              |
| Flexible: Thoughts  | -.020         | .729               |
| Flexible: Social    | .151          | .009**             |
| Organized           | -.016         | .783               |
| Proactive           | .038          | .517               |

\*\*p&lt;.01, \*p&lt;.05

#### Findings - Research Question #4

What was the relationship between the teachers' perceptions of administrative support and level of personal resilience?

Based on an analysis of the data the findings were as follows:

Partial correlations between administrative support and resilience were computed and the results reported in Table 19. The control variables used to compute the partial correlations were age, gender, highest degree, years in teaching, and the number of high schools worked in.

Based on an analysis of the data the findings were as follows:

The average correlation between all seven subscale and administrative support was ( $r=.189$ ,  $p=.001$ ) and was significant at the .01 level. This means that there was a significant relationship between the total resilience score and administrative support. Five sub-scales of the PRQ were significantly correlated with administrative support. Positive: The World ( $r=.175$ ,  $p=.003$ ), Positive: Yourself ( $r=.175$ ,  $p=.003$ ), Focused ( $r=.161$ ,  $p=.006$ ), and Flexible: Social ( $r=.203$ ,  $p=.000$ ) were all significant at the .01 level. Flexible: Thoughts, Organized, and Proactive were not significant.

Teachers with sub-scales that were significantly related with administrative support had a tendency to see opportunities in a variety of situations. They were good at giving and receiving social support, and they had a sense of self efficacy and direction in life. Non-significant sub-scales showed teachers who were not comfortable with ambiguity, were unorganized and were not proactive in managing their environment.

Table 19

*Partial Correlations between Administrative Support and Resilience (N=302)*

| Level               | Administrative Support | Significance |
|---------------------|------------------------|--------------|
| Average             | .189                   | .001**       |
| Positive: The World | .175                   | .003**       |
| Positive: Yourself  | .175                   | .003**       |
| Focused             | .161                   | .006**       |
| Flexible: Thoughts  | .029                   | .622         |
| Flexible: Social    | .203                   | .000**       |
| Organized           | .089                   | .127         |
| Proactive           | .017                   | .765         |

\*\*p<.01, \*p<.05

#### Findings - Research Question #5

What was the relationship between the teachers' perceptions of staff development and level of personal resilience?

Partial correlations were computed between staff development and resilience, and the results are reported in Table 20. The control variables were age, gender, highest degree, years in teaching, and number of high schools worked in. The average r value between the seven domains in the PRQ and staff development was .063, (p=.277). The average of the seven domains and staff development was

not significantly correlated with staff development. Of the seven domains, the only significant finding was Positive: The World ( $r=.127$ ,  $p=.029$ ) which was significantly correlated with staff development at the .05 level.

Based on an analysis of the data the findings were as follows:

The average correlation between the seven sub-scales of the PRQ and staff development was not significant. Positive: The World ( $r=.127$ ,  $p=.029$ ) was significant at the .05 level. Positive: Social ( $r=.045$ ,  $p=.444$ ), Focused ( $r=.028$ ,  $p=.634$ ), Flexible; Thoughts ( $r=-.036$ ,  $p=.533$ ), Flexible: Social ( $r=.044$ ,  $p=.450$ ), Organized ( $r=.012$ ,  $p=.834$ ), and Proactive ( $r=.070$ ,  $p=.227$ ) were not significant. No significance was found between six of the seven sub-scales of the PRQ and staff development. The only significant sub-scale showed a relationship between teachers who have a sense of self-efficacy in responding to situations and resilience.



Table 20

*Partial Correlations between Staff Development and Resilience (N=302)*

|                     | Staff Development | Significance Level |
|---------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Average             | .063              | .277               |
| Positive: The World | .127              | .029*              |
| Positive: Social    | .045              | .444               |
| Focused             | .028              | .634               |
| Flexible: Thoughts  | -.036             | .533               |
| Flexible: Social    | .044              | .450               |
| Organized           | .012              | .834               |
| Proactive           | .070              | .227               |

\*\* p <.01 \*p<.05

#### Findings - Research Question #6

What was the relationship between the teachers' perceptions of mentoring and level of personal resilience?

Based on an analysis of the data the findings were as follows:

Partial correlations between mentoring and resilience were calculated and the results reported in Table 21. The control variables used in the partial correlations were age, gender, highest degree, years in teaching, and number of high schools worked in. The average r value ( $r=.187$ ,  $p=.001$ ) between the seven domains of the

PRQ and resilience was significant at the .01 level. Other significant domains included Positive: The World ( $r=.220$ ,  $p=.000$ ) and Proactive ( $r=.178$ ,  $p=.002$ ) both significant at the .01 level. Flexible: Thoughts ( $r=.130$ ,  $p=.026$ ) was significantly correlated with mentoring at the .05 level.

Based on an analysis of the data the findings were as follows:

Teachers with significantly related sub-scales with mentoring had the tendency to see opportunities in a variety of situations. These teachers were proactive in acting on their environment. They were comfortable with ambiguity and were able to give and receive social support.

Table 21

*Partial Correlations between Mentoring and Resilience (N=302)*

|                     | Mentoring | Significance level |
|---------------------|-----------|--------------------|
| Average             | .187      | .001**             |
| Positive: the World | .220      | .000**             |
| Positive: Social    | .109      | .061               |
| Focused             | .103      | .076               |
| Flexible: Thoughts  | .130      | .026*              |
| Flexible: Social    | .135      | .020*              |
| Organized           | -.017     | .768               |
| Proactive           | .178      | .002**             |

\*\* $P<.01$ , \* $P<.05$

## Summary

This chapter presented and analyzed data collected regarding teachers beliefs of the relationship between organizational protective process and personal resilience of high school teachers. The data were collected from responses to a survey from 307 high school teachers in the Northeast Georgia RESA district. The data collection began in April 2006 and was completed in June 2006.

Demographic information collected on the study's participants showed that the majority of the respondents were 46 years of age or over (32.8%). They were majority female (63.2%), and most had obtained their masters degree (52.0%). The majority of respondents said that teaching was their first career (66.2%), and had between six and twenty years in teaching (53.4%).

The research format for this study revolved around one over-arching research question and six sub-questions. This was a quantitative, descriptive study using partial correlations to organize and interpret the data.

The study answered the overarching research question: Is there a relationship between the organizational protective processes and teachers' personal resilience characteristics? All five of the organizational protective processes showed a relationship with at least one sub-scale of the PRQ. The strongest relationships were reported between empowerment and resilience, and administrative support and resilience. The weakest relationship was between staff development and resilience.

Partial correlations between empowerment and resilience indicated a very strong significance between the seven sub-scales of the PRQ and empowerment.

All seven sub-scales were individually significant at the .01 with the exception of Organized, which was significant at the .05.

Partial correlations between collaboration and resilience indicated the average of all seven sub-scales was significant at the .05 level. Positive: The World, and Flexible: Social was significant at the .01, level. Focused was significant at the .05, level. Positive: Yourself, Flexible: Thoughts, Organized, and Proactive were not significant.

Partial correlations between administrative support and resilience showed the average of all seven sub-scales of the PRQ as significant at the .01 level. Positive: The World, Positive: Social, Focused, and Flexible: Social all showed significant findings at .01 level. Flexible Thoughts, Organized, and Proactive were not significant.

Partial correlations between staff development and resilience indicated the average of all seven sub-scales of the PRQ were not significant. Positive: The World was significant at the .05 level. Positive: Social, Focused, Flexible: Thoughts, Flexible: Social, Organized, and Proactive, were not significant.

Partial correlations between mentoring and resilience indicated the average of all seven sub-scales of the PRQ as significant at the .01 level. Positive: The World and Proactive were also significant at the .01 level. Flexible: Thoughts and Flexible: Social were significant at the .05 level. Positive: Social, Focused, and Organized were not significant.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter presents a summary of the findings, conclusions, and implications for further study. It includes a discussion of the research findings in relation to the review of literature. The chapter is organized into the following sections: the summary, discussion of research findings, conclusions, implications, and recommendations.

#### Summary

The purpose of the study was to answer the overarching research question: “Is there a relationship between the organizational protective processes and teachers’ personal resilience?” Specifically, the objective of the study was to determine if there is a relationship between organizational protective processes in schools and teachers’ personal resilience as it applies to teacher retention. The following sub questions further guided the study:

1. What are the demographic profiles of participants of the study?
2. What is the relationship between the teachers’ perceptions of empowerment and the level of personal resilience?
3. What is the relationship between the teachers’ perceptions of collaboration and level of personal resilience?
4. What is the relationship between the teachers’ perceptions of administrative support and level of resilience?
5. What is the relationship between the teachers’ perceptions of staff development and level of personal resilience?

6. What is the relationship between the teachers' perceptions of mentoring and level of personal resilience?

The retention of beginning teachers has been studied intensively over the last decade. Statistics show that about one third of beginning teachers leave the classroom within the first three years of teaching. When teachers survive the first five years of teaching the turnover rate drops dramatically; therefore, schools should provide support and interventions in order to retain teachers in the classroom (Ingersoll, 2003). One variable that has not been studied extensively in teacher retention is personal resilience and how it relates to teacher retention. The ability of schools to foster resilience in its teachers remains a major challenge as an increasing number of teachers leave the profession each year. Ingersoll believed that this turnover must be addressed at the organizational level with programs and interventions that address teacher turnover and retention. Some of these programs may foster personal resilience in teachers which may lead to greater longevity in the profession.

The majority of resilience research comes from the field of child psychology and was first conducted in the early 1970's (Luthar, et al., 2000). Werner and Smith (1992) conducted the most significant resilience research on the children of Hawaii to determine why a high number thrived despite their high risk family status. They studied a cohort of children from birth to middle age to determine which ones overcame the adversity of childhood and thrived in adulthood. The most recent shift in resilience research has been away from studying environmental protective factors such as family and friends to studying environmental protective

processes which are external to the child, systemic within the organization, and lead to positive outcomes.

These positive outcomes can also be applied to retaining teachers in the teaching profession. Morris (2002) measured the personal resilience of teachers in private Christian high schools but only looked at the construct in terms of the teachers' demographic variables. Her study did not look at factors that fostered that resilience. The need to examine the personal resilience of high school teachers and its interaction with organizational protective processes led to this research. The intent of this study was to identify the relationship between five organizational protective processes and personal resilience in high school teachers.

Two survey instruments were given at the same time in the spring of the year: the Personal Resilience Questionnaire and the Organizational Protective Processes Survey. The PRQ was validated by ODR (2003) of Atlanta and the OPP was validated by the researcher.

Three hundred and seven of five hundred and ninety-eight surveys were returned. SPSS software analysis was used to analyze the research questions. The statistical procedures used for the analysis included descriptive statistics such as frequencies, mean, standard deviation, and partial correlation.

#### Analysis of Research Findings

The data from the surveys were compiled and entered into statistical analysis software (SPSS 14.0) for Windows and partial correlations were calculated between the PRQ and the OPP for the following research questions of the study.

1. What are the demographic profiles of participants of the study?

Based on an analysis of the data the demographic findings were as follows: the teachers in the Northeast Georgia RESA district were predominately female. A majority of them had earned a masters degree and had not gone to a higher educational level. They had between six and twenty years in teaching and had worked in one high school only. Education was the only profession in which they had worked.

2. What is the relationship between the teachers' perception of empowerment and the level of personal resilience?

All seven sub scales of the PRQ showed significant findings with empowerment. The average correlation between all seven subscales of the PRQ and empowerment was significant at ( $r=.99$ ,  $p=.000$ ,  $p<.01$ , two-tailed) level. Positive: The World, Positive: Yourself, Focused, Flexible: Thoughts, Flexible: Social and Proactive were all significant at the .01 level. The findings indicated that there was a relationship between empowerment and personal resilience. Teachers in the Northeast Georgia Regional Education Service Agency (RESA) District believed that the organization protective processes of empowerment influenced teachers remaining in the teaching profession. The findings indicated a significant relationship with all five sub-scales of the PRQ.

3. What is the relationship between the teachers' beliefs of collaboration and level of personal resilience?

Four sub-scales of the PRQ showed significant findings with collaboration. The average correlation between all seven sub scales of the PRQ and collaboration was ( $r=.38$ ,  $p=.018$ ) and was significant at the .05 level. Positive: Yourself,



Flexible: Thoughts, Organized, and Proactive did not show significance. Positive: The World and Flexible: Social was significant at the .01 level. Focused was significant at the .05 level.

The findings indicated that there was a relationship between the organizational protective process of collaboration and four of the subscales of the PRQ. Teachers in the Northeast Georgia RESA district believed that collaboration was a process that retains teachers in the teaching profession.

4. What is the relationship between the teachers' perception of administrative support and level of personal resilience?

The average correlation between all seven subscale and administrative support was ( $r=.189$ ,  $p=.001$ ) and was significant at the .01 level. Five sub-scales of the PRQ were significant with administrative support. Positive: The World ( $r=.175$ ,  $p=.003$ ), Positive: Social ( $r=.175$ ,  $p=.003$ ), Focused ( $r=.161$ ,  $p=.006$ ), and Flexible: Social ( $r=.203$ ,  $p=.000$ ) were all significant at the .01 level. Flexible: Thoughts, Organized, and Proactive were not significant. The findings indicated that there was a relationship between administrative support and resilience. Teachers in the Northeast Georgia RESA district believed that administrative support was an important protective process in retaining teachers in the profession.

5. What is the relationship between the teachers' perception of staff development and level of personal resilience?

The average correlation between the seven sub-scales of the PRQ and staff development was not significant. Positive: The World ( $r=.127$ ,  $p=.029$ ) was significant at the .05 level. Positive: Social ( $r=.045$ ,  $p=.444$ ), Focused ( $r=.028$ ,

$p=.634$ ), Flexible; Thoughts ( $-.036$ ,  $p=.533$ ), Flexible: Social ( $.044$ ,  $p=.450$ ), Organized ( $r=.012$ ,  $p=.834$ ), and Proactive ( $r=.070$ ,  $p=.227$ ) were not significant. The findings indicated that there was not a relationship between staff development and six out of seven sub-scales of the PRQ. Teachers in the Northeast Georgia RESA district did not believe staff development was a factor in retaining teachers in the profession.

6. What is the relationship between the teachers' perception of teacher mentoring and level of personal resilience?

The average correlation between the seven sub-scales of the PRQ and mentoring was significant ( $r=.187$ ,  $p=.001$ ) at the .01 level. Positive: The World ( $r=.220$ ,  $p=.000$ ) and Proactive ( $r=.178$ ,  $p=.002$ ) were significant at the .01 level. Flexible: Thoughts ( $r=.130$ ,  $p=.026$ ) and Flexible: Social ( $r=.135$ ,  $p=.020$ ) were significant at the .05 level. Positive: Social ( $r=.109$ ,  $p=.061$ ) and Organized ( $r=-.017$ ,  $p=.768$ ) were not significant. The findings indicated that there was a relationship between mentoring and resilience. Teachers in the Northeast Georgia RESA district believed that mentoring was a factor that retained teachers in the profession.

#### Discussion of Research Findings

The construct of resilience and organizational protective factors that lead to teacher retention had not been extensively researched prior to this study. The study described the relationship between a teacher's personal resilience and organizational protective processes in schools. Of the seventeen high schools in the

Northeast RESA district, seven high schools chose to participate. A total of 583 surveys were distributed and a total of 307 were returned for a return rate of 52%.

Overarching research question: Is there a relationship between the organizational protective processes and teachers' and teachers' personal resilience? Some relationship was found between all five organizational protective processes and the seven sub-scales of the Personal Resilience Questionnaire. The most significant relationships were between empowerment and resilience, and administrative support and resilience. The weakest relationship was between staff development and resilience which revealed only one significant sub-scale.

Research Question 1: What are the demographic profiles of participants of the study?

The demographic profiles of the respondents from the Northeast Georgia RESA District showed that the majority of teachers were 46 plus years in age. This was a consistent finding with Ingersoll (2001) who found a graying of the workforce in his study of teacher retention. Morris (2002) found that the teachers 30 years and over showed a significantly higher level of resilience than teachers younger than 30 years old. Issacs (2003) also found that older participants in his study (40% between 41 and 50 years of age) showed more resilience than younger participants. The majority of respondents in Morris' (2002) and Issacs' (2003) studies obtained masters degrees. The findings were consistent with this study where 52% of the teachers in the Northeast Georgia RESA also had obtained masters degrees, and only a few had gone to obtain a terminal degree in education. Age and highest obtained degree were the two variables that were consistent

between all three studies and are important demographic variables in studying resilience. For this study the respondents were mainly female (63.2%), and for the majority, teaching was their first career (66.2%), and they had worked in only one high school (39.7%). Based on the findings of this study the results showed that the teachers in the Northeast Georgia RESA District were mostly older females who had master's degrees, had never worked in another profession and have worked in only one high school. According to Morris' and Isaacs' studies, the teachers in the Northeast Georgia RESA District should have been resilient due to age and education level, and this was true.

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between the teachers' perception of empowerment and level of personal resilience?

The analysis of the data revealed a strong correlation between empowerment and resilience. There was a significant relationship between teacher's responses of empowerment and their resilience score. In other words, as teacher's resilience scores increased, so did their beliefs of empowerment as important in keeping them in the profession. These teachers' responses indicated that they felt that having a voice in school decisions was an important factor in retaining teachers. The average of all seven sub-scales of the PRQ indicated a highly significant relationship with empowerment. This indicated that teachers with high resilience scores had a strong relationship with empowerment. The findings were consistent with earlier studies. As mentioned previously, Jones (1997) found a high significance between participatory management and organizational effectiveness. Along the same line, Davis and Wilson (2000) found a significant relationship

between principals' empowering behaviors and teacher motivation. Their research was consistent with all seven sub-scales of the PRQ. The findings of this study indicated a high relationship between empowerment and resilience in that teachers who rated high in resilience viewed empowerment as beneficial to that resilience.

Of the seven individual sub-scales: Positive: the World, Positive: Yourself, Flexible: Thoughts, Flexible: Social and Proactive all indicated highly significant findings at the .01 level. Organized was significant at the .05 level. The findings indicated that there was a relationship between empowerment activities in school and teacher resilience. This relationship also indicated that teachers viewed their voice in decision making as essential to a productive career in teaching.

Additionally, some studies showed that empowerment may be viewed differently by administrators and teachers. Enderlin-Lampe (2002) concluded that empowerment was a key factor in restructuring schools but delivering on the promise was much more difficult. Keiser and Shen (2000) found that principals often viewed teachers as being more empowered in the decision making process than they actually were. The findings of this study indicated that empowerment was a very important protective process for teachers but administrators were sometimes slow to understand its importance. Teachers want a voice in the way decisions are made in their schools. Klecker and Loadman (1998) asserted that for the empowerment process to work, administrators must be willing to adopt empowerment in their leadership style.

Research Question 3: What is the relationship between the teachers' perception of collaboration and level of personal resilience?

The analysis of partial correlations between collaboration and resilience indicated a significant relationship when all seven sub-scales were averaged together to obtain an aggregate resilience score. The findings indicated that a significant relationship existed between the total resilience score and collaboration. In other words, as teacher's resilience score increased, so too did their beliefs of collaboration as helping to keep them in the profession. When the sub-scales were analyzed individually, Positive: The World, Focused, and Flexible: Social all showed individual significance. There was a significant positive relationship between these sub-scales and resilience. A significant relationship existed between teachers' responses and the organizational protective processes and resilience. The organizational protective process of collaboration is a positive predictor of resilience.

As mentioned earlier, Gabriel (2005) asserted that collaboration and cooperation were essential for the success for teacher's success. He indicated that collaboration helped to ease the isolation new teachers sometimes felt as well as aid them with the overwhelming nature of the job. His research was consistent with the significant sub-scale (Positive: The World) which assessed the tendency to see opportunities in a variety of situations and the significant sub-scale Flexible: Support which assesses the extent to which a person gives and receives social support. Both of these sub-scales revealed a relationship between social support and personal resilience. Social support can be fostered by collaborative activities in school which might lead to teacher retention.

Schmoker (2004) stated that the research agreed that there was a need for stronger collaborative structures. He asserted that collaboration alone is not enough and that teachers must be given access to a group that meets regularly to share teaching methods and strategies. His research was consistent with the significant sub-scale Focused, which assesses the person's clarity of purpose and the extent that a person has a sense of direction in his/her life.

Gideon (2002) believed that everyone in school must work to make collaboration the norm. She proposed the use of campus leadership teams, learning communities, grade level meetings, department meetings, and cadres in order to make collaboration work and to fight teacher isolation. All of these ideas are consistent with Gabriel, Shoemaker and Gideon's previous research and the significant findings of this study.

Research Question 4: What is the relationship between the teachers' perception of administrative support and level of resilience?

The partial correlations between administrative support and resilience indicated a significant relationship when all seven sub-scales were averaged together to obtain an aggregate resilience score. Teacher's responses to administrative support showed a strong relationship with resilience. In other words as teachers resilience score increased so too did their beliefs of administrative support as important in keeping them in the profession. Darling-Hammond (2003) charged that good teachers were drawn to nurturing environments with supportive administrators. One sub-scale that was individually the most significant was Flexible: Social which assesses the extent in which a person gives and receives support. This

finding is consistent with the findings of Darling-Hammond's research. Johnson and Birkland (2003) found that the main reasons teachers left the schools in their study was a lack of administrative support. This was most evident in the area of classroom discipline and instructional support.

As mentioned earlier, Johnston (2003) defined administrative support in the following ways: show up; back me up; lend a hand; show appreciation; let me in on things; and respect my time. All of these types of support were consistent with the significant finding of the Flexible: Social sub-scale. Singh and Billingsley (1998) found a strong connection between leadership/support and teacher commitment. This was consistent with the findings of the Focused sub-scale which assessed a person's clarity of purpose and sense of direction in his/her life.

Johnson and Birkland studied teachers for three years to determine what teachers seek, understand, and experience. One of the main things teachers cited was the need for administrative support.

Research Question 5: What is the relationship between the teachers' perception of staff development and level of personal resilience?

Partial correlations between staff development and resilience indicated only one significant sub-scale: Positive: the World, which assessed the tendency to see opportunities in a variety of situations. A significant relationship did not exist for six of the seven sub-scales of the PRQ. This means that teacher's responses on the Organizational Protective Processes Survey did not show a significant relationship between staff development and resilience. Teachers did not feel that staff development contributed to their remaining in the profession. Holloway (2003)



emphasized that staff development was one particular effort that could reduce teacher turnover and attrition. However, the finding in this study is that staff development is not related to a teacher's decision to remain in teaching.

Research Question 6: What is the relationship between the teachers' perception of mentoring and level of personal resilience?

Partial correlations between mentoring and resilience indicated significance when all seven sub-scales of the PRQ were averaged together. Weaver (2004) emphasized the need for mentoring programs during times of change. Boreen and Niday (2000) asserted that mentoring relationships helped to fight the feeling of isolation that new teachers sometimes feel. Moir (2003) and Trubowitz and Rollins (2003) studied the effect of mentoring programs on teacher retention and found that it helped to break the cycle of attrition and retain teachers. The most significant individual sub-scale finding was Positive: the World which assessed the tendency to see opportunities in a variety of situations. Of particular interest is that the results indicated Flexible: Social as a significant finding. Flexible: Social assessed the extent to which a person gives and receives social support. This finding was consistent with the previously mentioned research. Other individual sub-scales that were significant were Flexible: Thoughts and Proactive.

#### Summary of Research Findings

All of the sub-scales of the PRQ showed some significant findings with the organizational protective process of empowerment, collaboration, administrative support, staff development and resilience. The two most significant findings were the relationships between empowerment and resilience and administrative support

and resilience. Teacher's responses showed that there was a strong relationship between shared decision making in schools and personal resilience. The second highly significant finding was between administrative support and personal resilience. A highly significant relationship existed between support from administrators and teachers personal resilience. The third and possibly the most interesting finding of the study showed no relationship between staff development and resilience. This is an interesting finding considering the amount of money spent on teacher staff development in schools.

### Conclusions

Organizational protective processes were important to high school teachers in the Northeast Georgia RESA district. Four out of five organizational protective processes showed significant relationships with teachers' personal resilience. The high return rate of 53% was evidence of interest in the topic. The overall findings of this study showed a relationship between four out of five organizational protective processes and the personal resilience of teachers in the Northeast Georgia RESA district. Therefore:

1. Organizational protective processes of empowerment, collaboration, administrative support, and mentoring were viewed by teachers as important factors that foster the retention of teachers.
2. Although staff development is important in teaching, staff development is not related to teachers' decisions to remaining in the profession.
3. If districts are concerned about teacher retention, the most influential factor is teacher empowerment.

4. A school culture which fosters collaboration among colleagues is an important factor in teacher retention. Collaboration also helps to lessen the isolation sometimes felt by new teachers, which may lead to their decision to leave the profession.

5. Principals who want to retain teachers in the profession should provide instructional support and attention to discipline problems.

6. Mentoring is important as a process to help build resilience of new teachers. Previous research identified the importance of empowerment, administrative support, mentoring, and collaboration on retaining teachers in the profession. The findings of this study indicate the importance for school districts to view these processes as protecting teachers in the profession, as teachers identified these as factors that were related to their decision to remain in the profession.

### Implications

This study has broad implications to teachers in K-12 classrooms everywhere. Teaching is a difficult and stressful job, and administrators often seek ways to keep teachers in the profession. The identified teacher shortage is actually not a supply problem but a retention issue. Keeping quality teachers in the classroom is a task that school districts engage in as an investment for learning. Based on the literature review and the findings of this study, the researcher identified the following as implications:

1. Principals should encourage teacher empowerment in all areas of decision making especially instruction. Principals should use committees to involve

teachers from all content areas for building level decisions. By allowing teachers a voice in the decision making process, retention rates might improve.

2. The isolation that teachers sometimes feel does not provide avenues for collaborative activities. Principals might improve retention rates by making sure that teachers are afforded time for collaboration, especially collaborative time to plan for instruction.

3. Principals should provide administrative support teachers as the instructional leader of their building. Principals should have a strong knowledge of the curriculum and a clear vision of how to implement the curriculum. Principals should also support teachers with discipline problems in order to maintain classrooms where learning can occur. By providing support in the areas of instruction and discipline, teachers might be retained in the profession.

4. Principals should encourage mentoring by providing strong induction programs for new teachers. Veteran teachers should be included as mentors for new teachers as they also benefit from the mentor/protégé relationship as they share their experiences with new teachers. Veteran teachers' expertise might help to retain new teachers in the profession.

5. Principals should make sure that staff development is tied to the instructional vision and mission of the school. Principals should make sure that staff development is pertinent to the needs of the teachers and a "one size fits all" approach to staff development is avoided. Teachers should have input into the selection, presentation, and follow-up of staff development. By having a well

planned and well defined staff development program, teachers might be retained in the profession.

6. Given the results of this study, school districts should provide funding for programs and interventions that support the organizational protective processes examined in this research. By promoting these processes, school districts might raise the retention rate in their schools.

### Recommendations

This study found that four out of five variables measured by the Organizational Protective Processes Survey were significantly related to teacher resilience in the high schools of the Northeast Georgia RESA District. Based on the findings of this study the researcher makes the following recommendations:

1. Recommend that high school teachers be afforded opportunities for shared decision making in their schools in order to provide more options to expand their roles as teacher leaders. When teachers are given opportunities for input, they increase their personal investment in the organization. This can also be accomplished by affording teachers opportunities to serve on committees at the state, district and local level. Administrators should offer opportunities for teachers to voice their concerns through the shared decision making model in schools. Administrators should provide faculty with true empowerment where it is possible. Pseudo empowerment only leads to teacher frustration and the possibility of an early exit from the profession.
2. Recommend that high school administrators encourage collaborative activities on their faculties in order for teachers to refine teaching strategies. This can be

- accomplished by allowing for common planning time for teachers in the same subject areas. Teacher should also be provided time to work together on common professional development interests across the school. School administrators must encourage collaborative activities in their school in order to fight the isolation that new teachers and experienced teachers sometimes feel.
3. Recommend that administrators show instructional support, professional development support, and classroom management support on a daily basis. Administrators should be the instructional leader within their building. They should support teachers with discipline problems in order to improve the learning environment in classrooms. This is especially important for new teachers so they will not leave the profession in the inception phase of their career. The principal should support teachers by providing all the organizational protective processes discussed in this study.
  4. Recommend that administrators deliver high quality staff development that is aimed at the instructional needs of the student. This can be accomplished by making sure that all staff development is tied to the school improvement plan of the school. Staff development should be pertinent and timely. It should also be accompanied by long term support and implementation. This researcher believes that many times staff development is not pertinent to the teachers' and students' needs and is not fully implemented. The findings of this study did not reveal a significant relationship between staff development and personal resilience.

5. Recommend that administrators provide mentoring programs for veteran teachers as well as new teachers. Administrators must make sure that they have a high quality induction program for new teachers that pair them with experienced teachers in the building. Veteran teachers should be provided mentoring as they take on new teaching responsibilities. This researcher believes that mentoring is crucial for new teachers and also helps experienced teachers refine their skills through the mentor/protégé relationship.

#### Future Research

1. A study should be conducted that analyzes personal resilience characteristics of teachers who overcame adversity in their early personal lives to determine if they had personal resilience when they entered teaching and what factors fostered that resilience.
2. A qualitative study should be done that analyzes resilient veteran teachers to see which variables they personally perceive led to their personal resilience. Qualitative design may give richer more in-depth data.
3. A study should be conducted that analyzes the achievement level of students taught by resilient teachers to see if there is an increase in achievement level.
4. Staff development did not show a significant relationship with resilience. This researcher felt that this was a finding that needs closer examination.

#### Dissemination

Teachers in the Northeast Georgia RESA District should find this information useful as they try to find ways to stay in the teaching profession for a complete thirty year career. School administrators, faced with an ever growing attrition rate

for new teachers, will find this information useful in developing programs and interventions that will keep teachers in the profession. All schools in the Northeast Georgia RESA District will receive a summary of the findings of this study. Administrators will be aware of options to lessen the attrition rate in their building.



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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

PERSONAL RESILIENCE QUESTIONNAIRE

### Sample Items for the Personal Resilience Questionnaire

1. Tasks that don't have a simple or clear cut solution are fun.
2. I feel at ease fairly quickly with most people.
3. I have a lot of confidence in myself.
4. People find me cheerful and happy.
5. I am powerless to change things in my life I don't like.
6. I am committed to getting what I want out of life.
7. Stressful situations are no time for joking.

The above items are example questions from the seven subscales of the personal resilience questionnaire.

The subscales are:

1. Positive: The World
2. Flexible: Thinking
3. Flexible: Social
4. Organized
5. Positive: Yourself
6. Focused
7. Proactive

Entire scale can be obtained by contacting ODR, Inc, 2900 Chamblee-Tucker Road, Building 16, Atlanta, GA 30341-4129; 94040455-7145

Source: Linbda Hoopes, ODR, Inc., 1994.

APPENDIX B

ORGANIZATIONAL PROTECTIVE FACTORS SURVEY

**I. Survey Participant Data:** Please complete the following demographic items by placing your answer in the column to the right.

1. AGE:  
A) 21-25, B) 26-30, C) 31-35,  
D) 36-40, E) 40-45, F) 46 and over
2. GENDER:  
A) Female, B) Male
3. HIGHEST DEGREE:  
A) Bachelors, B) Masters, C) Specialist, D) Doctorate
4. YEARS IN TEACHING:  
A) 1-5, B) 6-10, C) 11-20, D) 21+
5. EXPERIENCE: Teaching is my first career.  
A) yes, B) no
6. EXPERIENCE: Number of high schools in which you have worked as a teacher.  
A) one, B) two, C) three or more

**Demographic Data**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_

**II. Survey of Perceptions of Protective Processes:**

The first portion of this survey is used to determine the personal resilient characteristics of participants. The second part of the survey below looks at organizational factors outside a person's character that promote resilience.

The purpose of this portion of the survey is to determine which, if any, organizational factors help teachers be resilient and stay in the profession. This survey is divided into five different aspects of a school or system called protective processes which are Staff Development, Collaboration, Mentoring, Administrative Support, and Empowerment.

The results of this portion of the survey can influence the way schools and school systems develop, implement, and support their organizations to help teachers develop and maintain resiliency and stay in the profession.

Please respond to the following statements by placing an X in the correct column to indicate whether you

**Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Slightly Disagree, Slightly Agree, Agree, or Strongly Agree.**

|   |  | Strongly Disagree |  | Slightly Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|--|-------------------|--|-------------------|-------|----------------|
| <b>Staff Development</b>  |  |                   |  |                   |       |                |
| 1. Staff development activities help me survive in teaching.  |  |                   |  |                   |       |                |
| 2. Staff development activities are fundamental to teacher and student learning.                              |  |                   |  |                   |       |                |
| 3. Pertinent staff development activities have been available to me during my career.                         |  |                   |  |                   |       |                |
| 4. Lifelong learning is crucial for teachers.   |  |                   |  |                   |       |                |
| 5. Principals should support staff development activities in school.  |  |                   |  |                   |       |                |
| <b>Collaboration</b>  |  |                   |  |                   |       |                |
| 1. My principal utilizes collaboration activities with teachers and staff.                                    |  |                   |  |                   |       |                |
| 2. I feel better about my job when I collaborate with other teachers on instructional and school-wide issues. |  |                   |  |                   |       |                |
| 3. Collaborating between teachers fosters student achievement.  |  |                   |  |                   |       |                |
| 4. Collaboration with my colleagues helps me stay in teaching.  |  |                   |  |                   |       |                |
| <b>Mentoring</b>  |  |                   |  |                   |       |                |
| 1. A mentor has helped me remain in teaching.   |  |                   |  |                   |       |                |
| 2. A well developed mentoring program for novice teachers impacts student learning.                           |  |                   |  |                   |       |                |
| 3. Schools should mentor teachers in the first five years of teaching.  |  |                   |  |                   |       |                |
| 4. A strong mentoring program helps retain teachers and keeps them from feeling isolated in the job.          |  |                   |  |                   |       |                |
| 5. Being a mentor to another teacher rejuvenates me.  |  |                   |  |                   |       |                |

|   |  | Disagree | Slightly Disagree | Slightly Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|--|----------|-------------------|----------------|-------|----------------|
| <b>Administrative Support</b>   |  |          |                   |                |       |                |
| 1. Support from my principal is crucial in my commitment to teaching.         |  |          |                   |                |       |                |
| 2. I work harder when I receive accolades for a job well done.                |  |          |                   |                |       |                |
| 3. My principal shows an interest in my classroom and the academic program.   |  |          |                   |                |       |                |
| 4. I feel supported when my principal communicates expectations.              |  |          |                   |                |       |                |
| 5. Working for supportive administrators decreases teacher turnover.          |  |          |                   |                |       |                |
|   |  |          |                   |                |       |                |
| <b>Empowerment</b>  |  |          |                   |                |       |                |
| 1. Learning increases when teachers are empowered in instructional decisions. |  |          |                   |                |       |                |
| 2. I feel better about teaching when I have a part in decisions at my school. |  |          |                   |                |       |                |
| 3. Being empowered contributes to my longevity in teaching.                   |  |          |                   |                |       |                |



APPENDIX C  
IRB APPROVAL LETTER

|   |                               |   |
|---|-------------------------------|---|
| Georgia Southern University<br>Office of Research Services & Sponsored Programs<br>Institutional Review Board (IRB) |                               |   |
| Phone: 912-681-5465   |                               | Administrative Annex<br>P.O. Box 8005<br>Statesboro, GA 30460 |
| Fax: 912-681-0719   | Oversight@GeorgiaSouthern.edu |   |

**To:** Ricky D. Tatum  
300 Blue Heron Drive  
Athens, GA 30605

**CC:** Dr. Michael D. Richardson  
P.O. Box 8131

**From:** Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs  
Administrative Support Office for Research Oversight Committees  
(IACUC/IDC/IRB)

**Date:** February 17, 2006

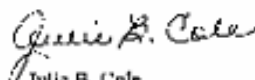
**Subject:** Status of Application for Approval to Utilize Human Subjects in Research

After a review of your proposed research project numbered: H06107, and titled "Teachers' Perceptions of Organizational Protective Processes that Foster Teacher Resilience", it appears that (1) the research subjects are at minimal risk, (2) appropriate safeguards are planned, and (3) the research activities involve only procedures which are allowable.

*Therefore, as authorized in the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, I am pleased to notify you that the Institutional Review Board has approved your proposed research.*

**This IRB approval is in effect for one year from the date of this letter.** If at the end of that time, there have been no changes to the research protocol, you may request an extension of the approval period for an additional year. In the interim, please provide the IRB with any information concerning any significant adverse event, whether or not it is believed to be related to the study, within five working days of the event. In addition, if a change or modification of the approved methodology becomes necessary, you must notify the IRB Coordinator prior to initiating any such changes or modifications. At that time, an amended application for IRB approval may be submitted. Upon completion of your data collection, you are required to complete a *Research Study Termination* form to notify the IRB Coordinator, so your file may be closed.

Sincerely,



Julie B. Cole  
Director of Research Services and Sponsored Programs

APPENDIX D

CONNER PARTNERS' APPROVAL LETTER



1230 Peachtree St., Suite 1000, Atlanta, GA 30309 TEL 404.564.4800 FAX 404.564.4850  
[www.connerpartners.com](http://www.connerpartners.com)

October 25, 2004

To whom it may concern:

Rick Tatum, as a representative of Georgia Southern University and under the supervision of Dr. Catherine Woody, has our permission to use the *Personal Resilience*<sup>®</sup> *Questionnaire* in the research project he has proposed for his dissertation in the Department of Educational Administration. Only sample items from the scale may be included in any write up of the research.

Sincerely,

Amanda L. Gettler  
Research Associate  
Conner Partners