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A Study of In-School and Out-of-School Life Experiences Affecting Veteran Teacher Retention in a Southeastern School District

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A Study of In-School and Out-of-School Life Experiences Affecting
Veteran Teacher Retention in a Southeastern School District

by
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An Applied Dissertation Submitted to the
Abraham S. Fischler College of Education
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Approval Page

This applied dissertation was submitted by Rosa Ana Jonson under the direction of the persons listed below. It was submitted to the Abraham S. Fischler College of Education and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova Southeastern University.

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Abstract

A Study of In-School and Out-of-School Life Experiences Affecting Veteran Teacher Retention in a Southeastern School District. Rosa Ana Jonson, 2018: Applied Dissertation, Nova Southeastern University, Abraham S. Fischler College of Education. Keywords: teacher attrition, teacher retention, teacher turnover, teacher burnout

The purpose of the research was to investigate the in-school and out-of-school life experiences affecting veteran teacher retention in a southeastern school district. The study sough to gain a better understanding of the factors that affected the decisions of teachers to remain with the district for more than 5 years. All of the teachers who had been working in the district for at least 5 years were potential research participant The survey was distributed to 75 teachers, and 24 teachers responded. The teachers were asked to respond to an online survey regarding their perceptions of their in-school and out-of-school experiences. The data gathered from the survey were analyzed to determine the effects of the experiences on the decisions of teachers to remain with the district.

The results of the survey indicated that in-school experiences and systems of support positively impacted the decision of a veteran group of teachers to remain at their current schools. Furthermore, teacher responses suggested that aspects such as working conditions, collaboration with other faculty members, schools' discipline and academic expectations, and the leadership style of their principal had the highest level of positive impact on their employment decision. Based on the results, it is concluded that in-school teacher experiences and in-school support have a greater positive impact on teachers' decision to remain at their current positions than out-of-school experiences. Recommendations for further studies include similar studies with larger districts with a high degree of diversity, urban, and suburban areas.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Description of the Setting

The purpose of the research was to investigate the in-school and out-of-school life experiences affecting veteran teacher retention in a southeastern school district. The research site is a school district located in a rural county that has had a modest increase in economic growth in the manufacturing field in recent years. The county is located about 1 hour south of Charlotte and about 30 minutes from the state capital. The greatest employer in the area is the V. C. Summer Nuclear Plant (Fairfield County Council, 2015). Other important employers are Fairfield County School District, Fairfield Memorial Hospital, South Carolina Electric and Gas, Fairfield County Council, SCANA Corporation, and BHI Energy and Power Services. About 46% of the county's workforce commuted to neighboring counties. The county is surrounded by the Sumter National Forest and two recreational lakes, Monticello and Wateree. Mean household income and housing prices are below the state's average in this rural area, and unemployment is above the state's average (S.C. Department of Employment and Workforce, 2017).

During the 2016-2017 school year, the county school district served around 2,900 in a rural setting. The district has nine schools: five elementary schools, one middle school, one high school, one alternative school, and one career and technology center. All the schools in the district qualify to receive Title I funding. The district has about 600 employees with about 350 teaching positions (Fairfield County School District, 2016). About 65% of teachers in the district are on continuing contracts (Fairfield County School District, 2016, 2017). The racial makeup of students in the school district included 88% African American students, about 1% Hispanic students, and 11% Caucasian students (Fairfield County School District, 2016, 2017; U.S. Census Bureau, 2016).

Nature of the Problem

Sass, Flores, Claeys, and Perez (2012) suggested that teacher shortage due to attrition and turnover has been a national problem since the 1970s. The issue of teacher shortage does not equally affect all districts. Although many school districts are adequately staffed, other districts around the country have difficulties filling all the vacancies. According to Hughes (2012) and Ingersoll (2001), the average rate for teacher turnover and attrition remains constant between 12% and 15%. Boe, Cook, and Sunderland (2008) suggested that national teacher turnover reached 25% during the 2001-2002 school year. Research results have indicated that, between 33% and 50% of teachers leave the profession within the first 5 years of their careers (Fisher, 2011; Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 2004; Hughes, 2012; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003, 2004; Pearman & Lefever-Davis, 2012).

Regardless of the reasons behind teacher attrition, researchers have argued the constant process of hiring and training teachers increases the cost for school districts by an estimated 2.2 billion dollars a year. School districts must constantly interview, hire, and train new teachers, often inexperienced, in order to cover the vacancies created by teachers who migrate to other school districts or simply leave the teaching profession. Research has shown that teacher turnover negatively impacts student achievement. Borman and Dowling (2008) attributed students' achievement to the quality of their teachers and cited the work of Hanushek in 1992, who concluded that achievement differences between students taught by an effective or ineffective teacher could amount to a full grade during any particular school year.

According to Jalongo and Heider (2006), the exodus of qualified teachers directly affects students who experience substandard education. Shernoff et al. (2011) concluded

that teacher turnover directly affects student performance because discontinuity in the staffing of schools destabilizes the organization, affecting the morale of teachers who stay. Furthermore, the negative effects of teacher turnover are critical in urban schools, high-minority schools, and schools with a high index of poverty (Bennett, Brown, Kirby-Smith, & Severson, 2013).

Kukla-Acevedo (2009) contended that schools with high attrition and turnover rates, especially in urban areas, often fill their vacancies with new or inexperienced teachers. The constant hiring of inexperienced teachers often results in districts with high concentrations of less effective and inexperienced teachers, thus affecting students' performance. According to Greenlee and Brown (2009), much of the teacher turnover in urban areas is caused by migration of teachers to schools with better resources, low rates of minority students, and higher achievement rates in general. Bennett et al. (2013) agreed with Greenlee and Brown that teacher exodus in urban schools and high-poverty schools negatively impacts instruction because schools often sacrifice the quality of instruction that students receive in order to retain their teachers.

Some of the causes of teachers leaving the profession and teachers moving from one school to another identified by the literature include the following: dissatisfaction with working conditions, lack of support by school and district administration, lack of effective mentoring programs for beginning teachers, excessive federal and state accountability, student discipline, low salaries, undervalued social and professional perception of the teaching profession, stress, and unfair teaching assignments. Ingersoll (2001) concluded, "The data indicate that school staffing problems are primarily due to excess demand resulting from a revolving door where large numbers of qualified teachers depart their jobs for reasons other than retirement" (p. 499). Kukla-Acevedo (2009)

focused her conclusions on the particular characteristics of each school, as many of the teachers who leave the profession reported that working conditions and low support from the administration were influential factors in their decision to leave.

Johnson (2006) stated, "Supportive working conditions can enable teachers to teach more effectively. They can enhance teacher quality, and they can improve retention" (p. 3). Low salaries and the emotional effects of teaching in a disadvantaged school were cited by Kelly (2004) as the primary predictors of teacher attrition, and rewards, such as summer off, and intrinsic rewards, such as student achievement and love for the subject taught, are important for teachers who stay. Jalongo and Heider (2006) found that participation in induction and mentorship programs and support for professional development encourage teachers, and especially beginning teachers, to remain in the profession. Targeting effectiveness in classroom management and engagement of students through mentoring programs is, according to Shernoff et al. (2011), an important step in the retention of qualified teachers.

The working relationships between teachers and their principals were cited by Boyd et al. (2011) as one of the most influential factors for teacher turnover. According to Watkins (2005), other causes of teacher attrition relate to the leadership style of their principals and their ability to provide support and professional-development opportunities for their teachers. Additional factors influencing teachers' intentions to leave the profession or transfer to a different school or district include maternity leave and health and family issues (Boyd et al., 2011; Ingersoll, 2003; Sass et al., 2012).

Initial responses to teacher shortage implemented by districts and states included attracting the best teacher candidates by offering signing bonuses, programs that offered student loan forgiveness to teachers who accepted positions at hard to staff schools, and

mortgage and housing assistance (Johnson, 2006). Improving the working conditions of teachers through higher levels of autonomy and decision-making influence, increased administrative support, and balanced and equitable teaching assignments positively correlated with increased teacher retention rates. Bennett et al. (2013) cited access to professional development, mentorship programs, collaboration with colleagues, and learning experiences while on the job as factors that teachers consider important when deciding to stay in the teaching profession. According to Fisher (2011), teaching can be frustrating and teachers often feel emotionally drained, which is one of the causes of stress and burnout. Improving working conditions and levels of support can potentially alleviate teacher stress.

It is possible the reasons for teacher attrition and teacher turnover, especially among veteran teachers, are likely a combination factors that affecting teachers both in and out of the school setting. On the other hand, there are likely many reasons that teachers choose to remain with their school districts. Retaining effective teachers is a major asset for the districts. Consequently, it is believed that a better understanding of these factors that affect veteran teachers to remain with their districts could potentially help districts and schools and ultimately the students.

Purpose of the Study

As stated earlier, the purpose of the study was to investigate the in-school and out-of-school life experiences affecting veteran teacher retention in a southeastern school district. The literature offers numerous studies on the causes of teacher attrition and turnover and strategies that districts and schools could implement to increase teacher retention rates, but there is little research that focuses on the factors affecting teachers' decisions to remain with their district for long periods of time. This study investigated the

factors that have influenced a group of veteran teachers to remain with the district. The participants were veteran teachers who had remained with their district for at least 5 years.

Significance of the Study

This research study sought to understand the reasons behind the decision of a group of veteran teachers to not only remain in the profession, but to remain with their district. It was believed that increasing an understanding of the factors that influence teachers to remain with their districts could assist in designing and implementing strategies to increase teacher retention rates and decrease teacher dropout. Recommendations based on the results of the study could potentially help to reduce teacher attrition and ultimately improve the quality of education.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this applied dissertation, the following terms are defined.

Teacher attrition. This term refers to teachers who leave the teaching profession in favor of pursuing other careers and interests (Boe et al., 2008; Durham-Barnes, 2011; Hahs-Vaughn & Scherff, 2008; Heineke, Mazza, & Tichnor-Wagner, 2014; Sherff & Kaplan, 2006; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011; Smith & Smith, 2006).

Teacher retention. This term refers to the ability to keep teachers in their current teaching positions, thus reducing teacher turnover (Ingersoll, 2004; Lasagna, 2009; Spradlin & Prendergast, 2006).

Teacher turnover. This term refers to the migration of teachers from one school to another or between districts (Klassen & Ming, 2010; Kohn, 2000; Lasagna, 2009; Mendels, 2012; Prokop & Lukasik, 2015; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Schaefer, Long, & Clandinin, 2012).

Research Questions

This research was guided by the following the following research questions:

1. What are the in-school life experiences that may have affected the decision of a group of veteran teachers to remain with their school district?

2. What are the out-of-school life experiences that may have affected the decision of a group of veteran teachers to remain with their school district?

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of the research was to investigate the in-school and out-of-school life experiences affecting veteran teacher retention in a southeastern school district. This chapter presents a review of literature in areas related to the study. The areas include teacher attrition, factors affecting teacher attrition, and teacher retention strategies.

Teacher Attrition

The term teacher attrition refers to teachers who leave the profession for other careers and interests (Boe et al., 2008). The high rate of teachers leaving the classroom in pursuit of other careers has affected many districts across the country since the 1970s. Hughes (2012) and Ingersoll (2001) reported the national teacher attrition rate fluctuates between 12% and 15%. Brown and Wynn (2009) concluded the shortage of teacher directly affects the quality of instruction that students receive. This is because, in many instances, schools are more concerned with covering the vacancies than they are with maintaining high academic expectations. Rodgers and Skelton (2014) argued that teacher turnover negatively influences students and learning. It also cripples the ability of schools to work effectively, especially when veteran teachers leave the school in large numbers (Johnson, 2006). Attrition is not the only factor contributing to teacher shortages because, in many cases, teachers transfer to different schools within a school district or move to other districts. Ingersoll (2001) used the term revolving door to define teacher turnover, or the constant transferring of teachers between schools and districts.

According to Kersaint, Lewis, Potter, and Meisels (2005), some of the factors that affect students are hurried hiring of underqualified teachers, inadequate or inexistent teacher orientation and induction, and emotional and psychological effects on children. Jalongo and Heider (2006) also mentioned the negative consequences that teacher

attrition and turnover have on children, linking the quality of the teacher to the years of teaching experience. According to Johnson (2006), research studies have shown the best and highly prepared teachers are often those who leave the profession as many other career opportunities open to them. Furthermore, highly qualified teachers leaving the classes take with them a wealth of knowledge and experience about the children, their families, and the curriculum. New teachers usually need years before they can gain that knowledge and experience, therefore often compromising the students' learning (Johnson, 2006).

Lasagna (2009) argued that teacher attrition negatively impacts students' learning and achievement by fracturing the learning continuum in schools, affecting schools' stability and the normal daily operations. As a result, students suffer when veteran teachers leave, and the quality of instruction is often lowered when schools fail to hire qualified teachers in order to rapidly fill the vacancies. Teacher attrition demands the rapid filling of vacancies, often resulting in the hiring of unqualified teachers. Researchers estimated that 12% of elementary school teachers do not have a degree in early childhood or elementary education and that about one third of secondary mathematics educators do not have a degree in the subject area or course they teach (Johnson, 2006).

Although attrition is a nationwide issue that directly affects the preparation of our students and therefore the future of our nation, research results have showed the problem is exacerbated in urban, low-income, high-minority schools and among novice and the most veteran teachers (Ingersoll, 2001). Bennett et al. (2013) concluded the negative effects of teacher attrition are often more visible and severe in inner city and high-poverty schools, thus leaving urban children in the hands of less prepared teachers. Strunk and

Robinson (2006) found that levels of attrition are higher among highly specialized

teachers in the areas of science, mathematics, and special education.

Hanushek et al. (2004) also argued the problem of teacher shortages is especially

crucial in the math and science areas, especially in urban areas. Boyd et al. (2011)

concluded that working conditions in urban and high-poverty areas, linked with new

opportunities in other industries, contributed to math and science teachers abandoning the

teaching profession in pursue of new careers. Sass et al. (2012) also acknowledged the

fact that math and science are the disciplines that present the greatest rate of attrition.

Also, special education is another area of teacher shortages. Teacher attrition and

turnover is especially critical in the areas of science, mathematics, foreign languages, and

special education (Johnson, 2006; O'Keefe, 2001; Sass et al., 2012).

There is abundant literature documenting teacher attrition during the first 5 years

of a teacher's career and in the years prior to retirement (Fisher, 2011; Hughes, 2012;

Ingersoll, 2003; Ingle, 2009). Jalongo and Heider (2006) cited research conducted by

Ingersoll in 2001, which concluded that 46% of the nation's teachers leave the teaching

profession during their first 5 years of service. This alarming percentage often reaches

50% among novice urban district teachers. Johnson (2006) reported that between 50%

and 80% of teachers with emergency certifications leave the classrooms after 2 or 3 years

of teaching. According to Borman and Dowling (2008), retirement, family and personal

reasons, and salary dissatisfaction are the most frequent reasons cited by teachers who

leave the teaching profession.

Factors such as age, gender, and race can also play an important role on the issue

of teacher attrition. According to Sass et al. (2012) and O'Keefe (2001), the attrition rate

is higher among female than male teachers. This assertion is also supported by Quartz et

al. (2008), who concluded that, although female teachers leave the profession in pursuit of new careers, male teachers often stay in the education field but often pursue leadership roles. Furthermore, O'Keefe indicated the unbalanced distribution of highly qualified teachers makes the issue of attrition a grave national problem. Yasin (as cited in O'Keefe, 2001) studied the demographic disparities observed in the educational system. Yasin reported that, in the United States, the percentage of female teachers, roughly 74%, is disproportionately high in comparison to the country's overall female population. Other demographic disparities cited by Yasin included that, although about 65% of the total population is Caucasian, about 87% of the teaching population is Caucasian.

Further, the gender and racial imbalance is greater in urban and rural areas (O'Keefe, 2001). However, with regard to the effects of race and ethnicity on teacher attrition and turnover, research is not only often inconclusive but sometimes contradictory. Sass et al. (2012) cited the findings of Kirby, Berends, and Naftel (1999) regarding the insignificant differences in attrition rates between teachers from diverse racial and ethnic background during the first teaching years. Kirby et al. also stated that, once the initial teaching years passed, research indicated the highest rate of teacher turnover was found among Caucasian females and African American males. Teacher attrition rates were considered higher among Caucasian teachers during the late 1990s, but more recent research indicated a shift in this trend as the rate of minority teachers leaving the teacher profession is rapidly increasing (Ingersoll, Merrill, & May, 2012).

Hughes (2012) also reviewed the literature regarding teacher attrition and teacher retention. The author found that, although discrepancies in the findings do exist, research results seem to indicate that retention rates are higher among middle-aged minority male teachers who scored low on achievement tests and did not complete graduate programs of

study. This assertion implies, to some extent, that teachers who completed graduate programs and scored high on standardized tests have a greater tendency to abandon the teaching profession in search of new career opportunities in the private industry (Hughes, 2012). Therefore, the level of teacher educational and pedagogical preparation often plays an important role, especially in the areas of science and mathematics, in regard to teacher attrition rates. Less prepared teachers in science and mathematics tend to leave the profession before completing 5 years of service, whereas those who attended courses in teaching pedagogy, youth psychology, and education often stay in the teaching profession for longer periods of time (Ingersoll et al., 2012).

In the southern state in which the research site is located, teacher attrition rates are similar to those found at the national level. The rural and impoverished counties reported higher turnover rates for the 2014-2015 school year. Some districts had rates reaching up to 27.4% in the southern part of the state during that time. During the same period of time, more affluent school districts reported rates under 7%, whereas urban counties' turnover rates were close to 12% (Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement, 2016a). In 2008, the state department of education conducted a study on the state's attrition rates. The results indicated the state was losing about 5,700 teachers per year. The study also found that about 6,300 teachers who were in the classroom during the 2006-2007 school year did not return to teaching or changed teaching positions the following year. This figure represented about 11% of the state's teaching force (Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement, 2008).

The state's recruitment efforts are shifting as the number of college graduates is insufficient to cover all the annual teaching position needs. The state recruits not only from local colleges but also recruits candidates from out-of-state institutions. It is

estimated that out-of-state annual teacher license applications account for about 40% of the total applications. Furthermore, the state recruiting efforts include alternative certification routes aimed to attract midlife career changers. The implementation of programs such as Teach for America, Teacher Cadet, and Teaching Fellowship are part of the recruiting strategies used by the state. Other strategies include extensive benefits for retirees who decide to serve for a period of 5 years under the Teacher and Employee Retirement Incentive program (Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement, 2008).

The state's Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement (2016b) reported that 448 teaching positions remained vacant at the start of the 2015-2016 school year, a 33% increase from the 2013-2014 school year. The report also indicated that early childhood and elementary school vacant positions accounted for 20% of the total unfilled teaching positions, and special education vacancies accounted for 18.6%. The report also indicated that the approximately 53% vacancy rate for the middle and secondary schools was about the same as the previous year (Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement, 2016b). Attrition rates in this southeastern state are not evenly distributed. The turnover rates are higher in districts with high levels of poverty and low performing students (Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement, 2016b).

The research site is located in one of the high-poverty areas and has been has been identified as having high teacher attrition rates. At the start of the 2014-2015 school year, the district had 57 teaching vacancies. This included six in early childhood, 22 in elementary school, 10 in middle school, and 19 in high school. According to a report by the Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement (2015), the turnover

rate in this district was 10.7% during the 2013-2014 school year and increased to 11.4% the following year. Although teacher attrition affects schools in all socioeconomic levels, the literature suggests that schools in low socioeconomic areas with high-poverty and minority student percentages suffer an increased rate of teacher attrition and turnover and, therefore, a shortage of qualified educators (Jalongo & Heider, 2006; Kukla-Acevedo, 2009; Shernoff et al., 2011).

Some of the personal factors influencing the intention of teachers to leave the profession or seek employment in a different school district or school include salary dissatisfaction, maternity and health, and family-related problems. Boyd et al. (2011) concluded that working conditions and the relationship between teachers and principals played an important role in teachers' decisions to leave the school or the teaching profession. According to Ingersoll (2001), teacher retention could improve as working conditions in the school setting changed. The results indicated that improving the organization's conditions, increasing administrative support, improving the decision-making process by including teachers' opinions and perspectives, and increasing salaries would ultimately improve teachers' retention.

Sass et al. (2012) tied teacher retention to teachers' personal characteristics and school contexts. Factors such as a teacher's age, gender, race and ethnicity, and classroom assignment are important predictors of teacher attrition and turnover. Contextual school factors such as testing and accountability, as well as school level and type, are also factors that influence teachers' decisions to leave a school, transfer to a particular school that better meets their needs or preferences, or leave the teaching profession. Strunk and Robinson (2006) reported the following:

To the extent that teachers of a given racial/ethnic group identify with their own

racial/ethnic group, they may prefer to work in schools where the student and/or teaching staff reflects their own identity. Mismatch between the teacher's race/ethnicity and that of the students and other staff is predicted to result in a greater likelihood of attrition. (p. 68)

The concept of economic opportunity or opportunity wage was also mentioned by Strunk and Robinson (2006) as a strong predictor of teacher attrition. If presented with an opportunity for higher payout in the sociocultural, monetary, and nonpecuniary aspects, teachers would live teaching in pursuit of the higher payout alternative. Kersaint et al. (2005) concluded that there are six primordial factors that directly and personally influence teachers' retention rates. The need to spend time with their families and the number of family responsibilities often play an important role in a teacher's decision to remain in the profession.

Teachers also cited administrative support, economic benefits, and the increasing amount of paperwork and accountability assessments as reasons to ponder before deciding to remain at their teaching positions. Kelly (2004) discussed the importance of social recognition of the educational professionals as an added value to intrinsic motivators such as personal accomplishment or connections with students. According to Kersaint et al. (2005) and Strunk and Robinson (2006), married teachers, teachers with young children, and those who are contemplating to start a family are more likely to leave the teaching profession than teachers with adult children.

As mentioned earlier, research has indicated that racial and ethnic makeup of schools affected teacher attrition. Schools with high-minority populations lose more teachers than schools with low rates of minority students. The socioeconomic level of students and their families is also a factor that increases teacher attrition in schools with

high with Title I status. Teachers in the areas of science, mathematics, and special education often leave teaching because they are more likely to find better paying opportunities in the private sector. Strunk and Robinson (2006) and Hughes (2012) argued that good teachers often reject positions in poor schools, and veteran teachers often leave schools with high indexes of poverty and minority students.

Factors Affecting Teacher Attrition

According to McBeath (2012), teachers' dissatisfaction with working conditions and in-school life experiences are capable of negatively impacting their intention to remain at their current teaching positions or in the teaching position. These factors include the following: unachievable expectations regarding what teachers and schools should accomplish, unacceptable pressure in an environment presided by lack of parental and community support exacerbated by a deteriorating student behavior, the number of noninstructional tasks that teachers must complete on a daily basis and which are not directly conducive to learning, lack of administrative and community trust in teachers capability of delivering quality instruction, workloads that in many instances exceed common sense, and lack of control on teachers' own work. Teachers' negative perceptions of these experiences often serve as an indicator of attrition and turnover in a school system.

Furthermore, Hanushek et al. (2004) found that salary dissatisfaction has less impact on the decision of teachers to continue employment if working conditions improve or are closer to meeting teachers' needs and ideals. Sorenson (2007) argued some school cultures that promote tension, stress, and anxiety can create negative working experiences that often result in the inability of educators to produce the desired results or meet goals set by the organization. These school systems often impose

unrealistic performance expectations, micromanage daily operations, and make continuous change that can result in a highly stressed situation conducive to early teacher burnout. Teachers working in stressful schools feel that their only choice when they do not meet the performance goals or follow all the administrative mandates is to resign before facing termination.

Many teachers enter the profession because they care for the children and their education and feel their creativity and curiosity will be fulfilled in the classroom. The reality of high-stakes testing, scripted programs, and federal mandates often negatively affects teachers' experiences at the professional and personal levels (Kaback, 2006). Teachers prefer professional experiences in schools or educational systems in which there is a high level of professional autonomy, administrative support, and expectations that are clearly communicated (Hughes, 2012). According to Birkeland (as cited in Hughes, 2012), teachers described teaching assignments, interaction with colleagues, curriculum design, administrative support, and discipline as some of the factors conducive to positive in-school experiences and to teacher effectiveness.

Several studies have identified factors that may contribute to a teacher's decision to remain or leave a position in his or her district. Good working conditions and personal relationships within the school were cited by Boyd et al. (2011) as influential factors conducive to decreasing teacher attrition. According to Boyd et al., Ingersoll (2003), and Johnson (2006), teachers' perceptions of their level of autonomy to participate in the decision-making process, the level of influence in the development of school policies, the selection of instructional materials, and the intervention in the design of professional-development opportunities are contributing factors in the decision of teachers to remain at their current position. Kelly (2004) argued that district and school policies and school

demographics were the most influential factors for increasing or decreasing teacher

attrition rates. Practices such as teacher tracking and student socioeconomic levels were

also often seen as decisive and directly related to career decision-making changes.

Ingersoll (2003) alluded to the fact that no exhaustive and conclusive research had

been conducted to evaluate the reasons behind teacher shortage. The author argued the

research has principally focused on teacher attrition without seriously considering other

aspects of teacher turnover such teacher mobility between districts and schools. Sass,

Seal, and Martin (2011) explored some of the causes of teacher attrition and concluded

that teachers' decisions to leave the profession or migrate to a new district or school are

rooted on a series of stressors such as student engagement and behavior, school

administration of discipline, workload, and social support from both superiors and

colleagues.

Leadership behavior. A school administration that promotes and sustains a

positive working environment contributes to increasing teacher retention (Bennett et al.,

2013). According to Greenlee and Brown (2009), teachers, especially those assigned to

challenging schools, should not only possess specific characteristics that allow them to

thrive in difficult school settings, but also be under the direction of highly competent

principals and skilled coworkers. Johnson (2006) concluded that teacher effectiveness is

directly affected by the level of support received from the school administration. An

important aspect of social support is collaboration with colleagues.

In a qualitative study, Brown (2005) concluded that teachers valued collaboration

with colleagues, especially if such collaboration is spontaneous. Isolation was cited by

the participants in the study as a major stressor. Kaback (2006) considered teachers' level

of academic autonomy as an important aspect of teachers' working condition and

workload. Kaback concluded that high-stakes testing and scripted programs negatively affected teachers' creativity and by extension quality of instruction. Fear of not meeting the federal and state performance requirements also affected teachers' perceptions and satisfaction with working conditions (Kaback, 2006) by increasing their levels of stress.

One of the pioneers in the analysis of teachers' perceptions of school leadership, William Scotti, investigated the relationship between leadership behavior and teacher perceptions of this behavior. According to Scotti (1987), there are four different leadership behaviors. The researcher focused this study on the characteristics of Type 1, or task-oriented leadership, and Type 4, or relationship-oriented leadership. Scotti argued that, even when subordinates spend large amounts of time in daily contact with school leadership, employees are not considered an active part of the leader's evaluation process. Scotti suggested that the voice of subordinates should be an important part of the leader's effectiveness evaluation. For this particular study, Scotti used an evaluation instrument created by Mullen in 1976 designed to evaluate organizations, including schools, using employees' perception of leadership.

The survey was administered to a sample selected from teachers working in a large suburban district. The questionnaire posted questions in terms of the principal *is* or the principal *should be* as indicated by the levels of a Likert scale. The object of Scotti's (1987) study was to find and evaluate discrepancies between district and teacher evaluations of school principals. The survey defined five domains of leadership that measured confidence and trust, communication, control, decision-making process, and interaction and influence in the workplace (Scotti, 1987). The study concluded that a principal's behavior and experience represented the most important factor for discrepancy prediction and directly affected teachers' intention to return. The study also found a high

level of comfort between principals and the teachers that these principals directly hired. Scotti concluded that teacher feedback is a valuable tool for a principal's evaluation and used the results of his research to inform principals of areas that needed improvement.

Alger and Devine (2011) used the McGregor-Burns Leadership Theory of 1978 to conduct a study on the perceptions that middle school teachers have of school principals and by extension of instructional leaders. The authors based their work on the recent changes in the educational system and also the changes in the principal's role. According to Alger and Devine, principals are no longer considered the only leaders in the school, and even when educational leadership theories link principals' leadership styles to student achievement and teacher satisfaction, collaboration and shared instructional leadership have become part of effective leadership (Boyd et al., 2011) and are key elements of increased student achievement.

Alger and Devine (2011) studied the leadership styles in middle school as perceived by teachers and compared teacher responses as they related to the principal leadership style and the leadership style of teachers who were instructional leaders. The study used the population of a Connecticut school district, and the instrument used to collect data was the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire. The results of the study showed that teachers in the role of instructional leaders were perceived by other teachers as stronger transformational leaders than their principals. Teachers participating in this study also reported that their principals exhibited a transactional behavior and were more concerned with managing the building than with quality of instruction, which often was delegated and monitored by teacher leaders. The study found significant differences in the middle schools participant in this study regarding the level of transformational leadership of principals and instructional leaders.

Building on Scotti's research in 1987, regarding teacher perceptions of school leadership, Hauserman and Stick (2013) conducted a study on the type of leadership preferred by teachers. The authors agreed on the importance of the principal's role as the primary factor for increasing students' achievement and creating an effective learning environment. In their study, Hauserman and Stick used the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire to evaluate and classify principals as transformational, transactional, or laissez-faire. The study included personal interviews for qualitative data-collection purposes. Hauserman and Stick indicated that, before a principal fully evolves into a transformational leadership style, characteristics of transactional leadership must be developed. Transformational leaders serve others, and their priority is the development of subordinates' leadership qualities. Principals who practice a transformational leadership style are highly effective and foster cooperation and respect through the school.

Finally, according to Hauserman and Stick (2013), laissez-faire leadership is defined as the lack of leadership qualities and initiative, as these type of leaders tend to purposely avoid taking part in the decision making process The results of the study showed that teachers working with transformational principals were more open and cooperative during the qualitative phase of the study than those who defined their principal as transactional. Although transformational leaders foster the development of leadership in subordinates through intellectual stimulus, transactional principals support new instructional ideas but are reluctant to make changes in the organization. Transformational principals lead by example and motivate staff to seek personal and professional growth, resulting in a happier faculty that perceives the school as an effective community in which teachers are prone to volunteer their time in order to improve students' achievement (Hauserman & Stick, 2013).

As a continuation of their investigation on teacher perception of school leadership, Hauserman, Ivankova, and Stick (2013) conducted a study that determined teacher perceptions of transformational leadership qualities of principals serving in the public schools of Alberta, Canada. The complexities of the principal's role in a changing educational environment demanded that school leaders embrace a transformational approach capable of leading faculty and students on a journey of instructional improvement (Hauserman et al., 2013). The goal of the study was to understand what qualities of transformational leadership were sought by teachers. The researchers used a mixed-methods approach by administering the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire and conducting personal interviews for data-collection purposes. The authors found through personal interviews with teachers that principals with low transformational leadership qualities had little or no influence on both the staff and the school as a community.

Transactional principals limited professional growth to a selected group of teachers who in turn had a greater opportunity for offering feedback and getting involved in the decision-making processes. Principals who are low on the transformational characteristics scale did not foster personal and professional growth and failed to monitor daily teacher activities. Transactional principals did not seek collaboration of all parties involved in teaching and learning. Contrarily to the behavioral patterns exhibited by transactional and laissez-faire principals, transformational leaders fostered collaboration, were visible and approachable, led by example, were fair to teachers and students, sought input from all parties, and made decisions based on principles and with the best interest of students in mind. The study showed that teachers were more comfortable working with transformational principals (Hauserman et al., 2013).

Newton and Shaw (2014) redefined transactional leadership as servant leadership

and introduced a series of shared characteristics of love, humility, altruism, vision, trust, empowerment of others, and service as the focus of their study. The authors explored the reasons behind the massive loss of teachers that the United States faced during the past decade, causing a shortage of qualified professionals across the country. After the retirement of Baby Boomers, about 2.2 million new teachers were hired, but also 2.7 million teachers left the profession, one third of them during the first 5 years of teaching (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Newton & Shaw, 2014). Even when it takes about 7 years to transform a new teacher into a highly effective teacher, many teachers leave the profession in the early stages of their career due to lack of administrative support and dissatisfaction with the working environment (Newton & Shaw, 2014).

Newton and Shaw (2014) defined a servant leader as a leader who embraces service to the community as his or her first priority, allowing and fostering personal and professional growth of subordinates and therefore improving the efficiency of the organization. According to the authors, servant leaders know the people, communicate effectively, are creative, learn from the student, develop not only the staff but also themselves, share their knowledge in order to help the organization's growth, and allow for free and continuous feedback. In their quasi-experimental quantitative study, Newton and Shaw used a teacher survey for evaluating teachers' perceptions of servant leadership characteristics observed in their principals, level of satisfaction with working environment, and teachers' intention to return.

The researchers used a large school district and administered the Servant Leadership Assessment Instrument, developed by Dennis in 2004, to high school teachers. Working environment satisfaction was assessed using the Organizational Leadership Assessment, created by Laub in 1999. The results of the survey showed a

significant positive correlation between teachers' personal perception of servant characteristics observed in their principals and level of job satisfaction and also a positive relationship between the perception of servant leadership observed in the principals and the teachers' intention to return. Even though further research is necessary to confirm these results, the findings of the study implicitly point to the need for reforming the content and scope of leadership preparation programs and districts' hiring processes. The intent of this study also is to foster reflection and encourages self-evaluation of leadership qualities.

A research study conducted by Bird, Chuang, Murray, and Watson (2012) used Burns' (1978) theory of leadership and introduced the concept of authentic leadership, a leadership style comparable to the transformational leadership described by Burns. Bird et al. studied the problem of building community between school principals and teachers in order to improve students' achievement. In this study, the authors analyzed the relationship that exists between the principals' leadership style and the level of trust, engagement, and teachers' desire to return to their positions the next year. The study compared teachers' perception of leadership and principals' self-perception with emphasis in the characteristics based on the framework of authentic leadership.

Authentic leadership was defined by Burns (1978) as a transformational form of leadership that fosters follower development, is principle oriented, and seeks improvement of the organization through transparency and optimistic views. Even though this study focused on the relationship between principal authenticity and teachers' level of trust, engagement, and intention to return, two other questions were tested in order to investigate the difference between principals' self-perception of authentic leadership and teachers' perception of authentic leadership. The study also focused on the level of trust,

engagement, and intention to return of faculty and how school characteristics and principal background affect that relationship of trust, engagement, and intention to return of teachers.

Bird et al. (2012) used an online version of the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire, administered to 633 teachers from 28 schools, and a different version of the same questionnaire was used for principals' self-evaluation. Trust was measured using the Workplace Trust Survey, and engagement was measured through the administration of the Gallup Organization's Q12 Survey. Teachers were also asked to answer an additional question regarding their intention to return. Correlation tests used in the analysis of the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire showed a strong relationship between trust and engagement and also between trust and authentic leadership. The level of trust increased when teachers rated their principals as authentic leaders. The study also found significant differences in the level of trust and engagement of teachers who reported a positive intention to return. School characteristics and demographics had no impact on the level of trust, engagement or authentic leadership ratings of principals. The study concluded that there is a positive relationship between trust, engagement, and intention to return of teachers and the level of authentic leadership exhibited by the principals.

More research on the relationship between principal leadership and teacher satisfaction was conducted by Masewicz and Vogel (2014) in a research study that analyzed the behavior, practices, and sense making of effective principals capable of improving learning and teaching. The authors developed a grounded theory and provided recommendations for leadership improvement by observing and evaluating effective principals in order to inform educators in leadership positions about the strategies used by

principals who are able to consistently improve students' achievement. The mixed-methods study collected quantitative data from surveys constructed by the Consortium on Chicago School Research in 2003 on teachers' perception about instructional leadership and environment, and quantitative data were obtained from four direct interviews conducted by the principal researcher.

The study used as the population high academic growth schools as identified by Colorado Accountability Reports from the 2007-2008 school year (Masewicz & Vogel, 2014), which included 35 schools with high-poverty and high-minority levels. The principals selected for interviews had been in their positions for more than 5 years. The findings from this study helped Masewicz and Vogel (2014) to develop the stewardship leadership model theory, based on the "concepts of tenacious leaders, collective efficacy, personal mastery, and critical theorist" (p. 1077) as reported by teachers' responses and principals interviews. Tenacious leaders were defined by Masewicz and Vogel as courageous and focused on students' achievement by opposing, when necessary, the culture of low expectations.

Collective efficacy, according to Masewicz and Vogel (2014), is the common effort to do what is best for increasing students' achievement and separates low from high achieving schools. Principals in this setting organize and structure collaboration. It is the personal mastery exhibited by principals what makes sense of the stewardship model as principals set the example for vision, service, and understanding of the organization they lead (Masewicz & Vogel, 2014). Critical theorist principals believe that all children must have access to quality education and challenge the status quo by actively pursuing change. Masewicz and Vogel viewed effective principals as servant principals who seek collaboration, foster the development of subordinates, and empower teachers and

students. The study concluded that the stewardship as a sense-making model is based on moral and democratic values shared by the entire school for the benefit of the students.

Teacher burnout and stress. According to McCarthy, Lambert, O'Donnell, and Melendres (2009), teachers have a high risk of suffering stress and ultimately professional burnout. Lambert and McCarthy (2006) reported that, during the past 30 years, studies on teacher burnout have extensively explored the relationship between burnout and teacher attrition. Burnout caused by stress has been at the center or research while teacher burnout due to personal factors is still a rather unexplored field. Teachers often perceive as insufficient the available resources to deal with the stressors and the demands of their jobs. Research indicates that psychological causes of teacher burnout include emotional exhaustion, manifested when the individual feels that his or hers emotional resources have been depleted, and depersonalization, which occurs when the individual isolates himself or herself from students and coworkers (McCarthy et al., 2009). Teachers often refer to students' misbehavior as a stressful factor, which, if ignored by the school administration, contributes to a teacher's decision to leave the school in search of an institution with fewer behavioral issues (Geving, 2007).

Blase, Blase, and Du (2008) cited the lack of support from administrators as contributing factors of teacher stress and burnout, and Ingersoll and Smith (2004) also mentioned as stressors the excessive amount of paperwork and other administrative tasks that teachers are required to perform. According to Johnson (2006), administrators often demonstrate lack of support when they try to minimize the effects of attrition in their schools by assigning teachers excessive workloads, unreasonable large classes or out-of-field teaching assignments. Other levels of dissatisfaction with the workplace included split teacher assignments, itinerant assignments, or the lack of teaching autonomy.

According to Johnson (2006), teacher collaboration is stronger in successful and high-performing schools, as demonstrated through meaningful professional development, frequent professional interactions between teachers and administrators, common goals, and a shared vision for increased student achievement. High-stakes testing at the federal and state levels and principals' leadership attitudes and behaviors play a major role in defining teachers' perceptions of working conditions and job satisfaction as it relates to stress (Thibodeaux, 2015). Galton (2008) concluded that pressuring teachers to increase students' achievement through standardized test preparation negatively impacts their health and commitment to the teaching profession while contributing to increasing teacher attrition and turnover due to job dissatisfaction and stress.

Teacher Retention Strategies

Teacher retention refers to the ability to keep teachers in their current teaching positions, thus reducing teacher turnover (Lasagna, 2009). Retaining teachers in their current schools ensures continuity in the curriculum and directly contributes to the wellbeing of students (Boggan, Jayroe, & Alexander, 2016). According to Baker-Doyle (2010), retention of teachers begins with the development of human capital through the design of appropriate professional social networks as a vehicle to shape and define positive and negative experiences and choices. Research conducted by Baker-Doyle concluded that teachers are more likely to seek employment in areas that relate to their personal social network and are less likely to leave if they become an active part of the community.

Retention of novice teachers through induction and mentoring programs has been a priority for many school districts in recent years (Alvy, 2005). Although induction and mentoring programs have a positive effect on teacher retention, in many instances, there

are not sufficient candidates to ensure that subjects such as mathematics, science, and special education vacancies are covered by highly qualified teachers (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). Ingersoll et al. (2012) considered teacher preparation at the pedagogical and educational level an essential element for teacher retention.

Across the nation, school districts are implementing strategies intended to help retain the most qualified teachers by offering new benefits or extending those benefits already in place. The initiatives include the following: signing bonuses, competitive salaries, and opportunities for professional development and collaboration during school hours (Borman & Dowling, 2008). According to O'Keefe (2001), the most effective strategies for teacher recruitment and retention include offering signing bonuses, offering to new hires housing assistance, offering beginning teachers higher starting salaries, not limiting recruiting to local institutions, making efforts to recruit teachers early, providing teachers with opportunities for career advancement, rewarding experience, offering teachers with opportunities to design and implement specific school-based instructional programs, implementing teacher cadet programs in partnership with local colleges and universities, tapping into a pool of qualified substitutes who could potentially be certified, offering incentives to retired teachers, offering child-care opportunities for teachers with young children or those who are thinking about starting a family, improving the capabilities of Internet recruitment, and offering help to teacher assistants and non-certified teachers in preparation for licensure exams or course work to complete teaching programs.

Hughes (2012) stated that teachers tend to stay in schools that offer a higher level of independence, autonomy, and support from the administration. The author argued that some of those strategies appeal directly to the heart and minds of veteran teachers. The

strategies include giving experienced teachers mentoring opportunities, promoting job sharing experiences for veteran teachers close to retirement of who are no longer interested in a full-time job, offering differentiated professional-development opportunities tailored to meet the specific needs of veteran teachers, and implementing initiatives to honor and empower veteran teachers at the central office level (Alvy, 2005). Jalongo and Heider (2006) noticed that schools with low rate of teacher turnover value teachers as professionals, give teachers easy access to professional development and instructional resources, encourage the formation and continuity of professional learning communities, and allow teacher participation in the decision-making process at the organizational and instructional level.

Bennett et al. (2013) concluded that some of the positive in-school and out-of-school life experiences cited by veteran teachers included personal and spiritual values, love for teaching, teaching profession as a calling to service, intrinsic love for children, and the opportunity to transform students into good and responsible citizens. The fact that teaching affords the opportunity of spending summers and other holidays with family and friends was also cited by teachers as a positive working experience. According to Bennett et al., teachers who see the classroom as a family, establish positive relationships with students, feel they are positively impacting students' learning and behavior, and present relevant and engaging lessons enjoy a better working experience than teachers who do not have such qualities.

Summary

According to Johnson (2006), teachers often become frustrated due to the limited income that the profession offers, student behavior in class, poor instructional approach that results in limited students' progress, accountability for their performance, lack of

autonomy, poor content knowledge, and lack of principal support. Bennett et al. and Johnson cited that frustration with the school system or the place of work can be a leading indicator of teachers' decisions to leave the school or the profession. The current study sought to gain a better understanding of how the in-school and out-of-school life experiences of a group of veteran teachers affects their decision to remain not only in the profession, but also with this district. It was believed that this understanding would likely be helpful in designing and implementing strategies to increase teacher retention rates and decrease teacher dropout.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of the research was to investigate the in-school and out-of-school life experiences affecting veteran teacher retention in a southeastern school district. This research sought to determine what factors have influenced the decision of a group of veteran teachers to remain with the district for at least 5 years. This chapter presents a description of the procedures for gathering and analyzing the data to answer the research questions. The research questions were organized around Lackey's (2010) dissertation. The research questions are presented followed by the description of procedures for gathering and analyzing the data. The limitations and time line for the study are also presented at the end of the chapter. The following research questions guided this study:

1. What are the in-school life experiences that may have affected the decision of a group of veteran teachers to remain with their school district?

2. What are the out-of-school life experiences that may have affected the decision of a group of veteran teachers to remain with their school district?

Research Design

The research was a quantitative study and gathered veteran teachers' perceptions regarding their in-school and out-of-school experiences. According to Creswell (2012), quantitative studies allow researchers to seek understanding of trends while explaining the possible relationship between variables. This study was designed to collect data regarding the personal experiences of veteran teachers using a computer-administered survey, analyze the results, and make inferences that took into consideration prior research.

Participants

The potential participants for the study were veteran teachers currently working in the focus district. All teachers who had been working in the district for at least 5 years were invited to participate in the study. The estimated number of potential respondents was 75. A list of possible participants was requested from the district's department of human resources.

Instrument

The study's instrument was adapted from Lackey's (2010) dissertation. The survey (see Appendix) included three sections: (a) relationships and support in and out of school, (b) in-school experiences, and (c) out-of-school experiences. The section regarding support included six items regarding the level of satisfaction with the working environment and support received in the school. The items related to the level of satisfaction with administrators, parents, colleagues, and administrators that veteran teachers perceived in their schools. The section of the survey devoted to in-school experiences included 12 items related to the level of satisfaction with day-to-day school operations as perceived by veteran teachers. The section pertaining to out-of-school experiences contained five items that referenced family support and living conditions as perceived by veteran teachers. The instrument had been reviewed for reliability, validity, accuracy, and appropriateness by the director of secondary education and two veteran teachers from neighboring districts. The overall survey had 23 items and used a 5-point Likert scale for the responses ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

Data-Gathering Procedures

The identified teacher population was asked to respond to an online survey regarding personal in-school and out-of-school life experiences during the time with the

district. The survey's responses were compiled and analyzed to determine any similarities

and trends related to the teachers' decision to remain with the district. The survey used

Survey Monkey. Survey Monkey is a web-based survey program that allows creating,

editing, and analyzing personalized surveys. This online platform also allows participants

to anonymously answer questions by accessing a link provided by the researcher.

The researcher sent an invitation letter to the potential survey respondents using

the district's secure e-mail server. The letter described the nature of the study and invited

the teachers to participate in the research. The letter assured them that their participation

in the study was voluntary and will not affect their future employment in any way. Seven

days after the invitation letter was sent, a participation email and a link to the survey were

sent using the district's secure sever. The email included directions to access the survey

and reiterated the voluntary nature of participation and the anonymity of participants'

answers.

Data-Analysis Procedures

The responses to the survey were individually tabulated using the Survey Monkey

software. The responses were tallied, transformed into percentages, and represented using

tables in order to find similarities and differences between the responses. Digital data

were securely kept in a password-protected computer in the researcher's office. A copy of

all digital data was also transferred to a memory stick and stored in a separate locked

cabinet. All written data were also stored in separate a locked file cabinet in the

researcher's office. All written data would be shredded and digital data would be erased 3

years after the conclusion of the study.

Limitations

There was a potential of researcher bias because she was solely responsible for

compiling and analyzing the data. Another limitation was the size of the study.

Delimitations

The study was conducted in only one district; therefore, the conclusions would be difficult to generalize to other school districts. Further research on the topic and the extension of similar studies to more districts would be necessary in order to form a valid and general conclusion.

Time Table

The study started after full approval from the university's Institutional Review Board and the district's research department. The study was scheduled as follows.

Week 1. The researcher emailed a cover letter to potential participants. The letter informed possible participants of the nature of the study and asked for their participation.

Weeks 2 and 3. The researcher emailed the participation letter and the link to the Survey Monkey online survey, along with pertinent instructions on how to access the survey. The survey was open to participants for a period of 10 days.

Weeks 4 and 5. The survey responses were tabulated and analyzed.

Weeks 6 through 9. The final report was prepared.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of the research was to investigate the in-school and out-of-school life experiences affecting veteran teacher retention in a southeastern school district and to determine the factors that affected the teachers' decision to remain in their positions for a period of 5 or more years. This chapter presents the results and data gathered from the administration of an online survey using Survey Monkey. The survey platform was secured and the responses to the survey were anonymous. No personal or demographic information regarding individual teachers was collected. The survey contained 23 items and used a 5-point Likert scale for the responses ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Items in the survey were divided in there sections: (a) relationships and support in and out of school (i.e., Survey Items A1 through A6), (b) in-school experiences (i.e., Survey Items B1 through B12), and (c) out-of-school experiences (i.e., Survey Items C1 through C5). The survey was distributed to 75 teachers who had been employed by the focus district for 5 or more years, and 24 teachers responded.

Results for Research Question 1

What are the in-school life experiences that may have affected the decision of a group of veteran teachers to remain with their school district? The survey included 18 items directly related to the first research question. Survey Items A1 through A6 explored the relationships and support that teachers receive in the school. Survey Items B1 through B12 investigated the experiences that teachers had in their schools and that could influence their decision to remain at their current positions. As noted above, the survey received answers from 24 participants. The survey used a Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) for all items in these sections.

Survey Item A1. Twenty-three teachers responded to this item. One participant did not answer the item. Nine of the participants (39.13%) strongly agreed that the working environment had a positive impact on their decision to remain at their current school, four teachers (17.49%) agreed that the working environment had a positive impact on their decision to continue employment at their current schools, five teachers (21.74%) had a neutral opinion regarding their working conditions, four teachers (17.49%) disagreed that their working conditions had a positive impact on their employment decision, and one of the respondents (4.35%) strongly disagreed that the working conditions at his or her school had a positive impact on his or her employment decision. Table 1 summarizes the responses to this item.

Table 1

Responses to Survey Item A1

Rating	No. responses	%
Strongly disagree	1	4.35
Disagree	4	17.39
Neutral	5	21.74
Agree	4	17.39
Strongly agree	9	39.13

Survey Item A2. Twenty-three teachers responded to this survey item. One participant did not answer the item. Three teachers (13.04%) responded that they strongly agreed that parent-teacher relations at their school had a positive impact on their decision to remain at their current teaching position, six teachers (26.09%) agreed that the parent-teacher relations at their school had a positive impact on their decision to continue employment at their current school, eight teachers (34.78%) had a neutral opinion, and

six teachers (26.09%) disagreed with the statement regarding that satisfaction with

parent-teacher relations at their school had a positive impact on their decision to remain

at their current school. Table 2 summarizes the responses to this item.

Table 2

Responses to Survey Item A2

Rating	No. responses	%
Strongly disagree	0	0.00
Disagree	6	26.09
Neutral	8	34.78
Agree	6	26.09
Strongly agree	3	13.04

Survey Item A3. Twenty-four teachers responded to this survey item. Nine

teachers (37.50%) strongly agreed that the administration-teacher relations at their school

had a positive impact on their decision to remain at their current teaching position, six

participants (25.00%) agreed that the administration-teacher relations at their school had

a positive impact on their employment decision, two responses (8.33%) indicated a

neutral level of satisfaction, three teachers (12.50%) disagreed that the administration-

teacher relations at their school had a positive impact on their decision to continue

employment at their current schools, and four participants (16.67%) strongly disagreed

that the relations between administrators and teachers at their school had a positive

impact on their decision to remain at their current schools. Table 3 summarizes the

responses to this item.

Survey Item A4. Twenty-four teachers responded to this survey item. Twelve

teachers (50.00%) strongly agreed that the level of help and support that they receive

from coworkers at their current school had a positive impact on their decision to remain

at their current teaching position, eight respondents (33.33%) agreed that the level of

collegial support had a positive impact on their decision to remain at their current school,

three teachers (12.50%) were somewhat indifferent to the positive impact that support

from other teachers in the building had on their employment decision, and one teacher

(4.17%) disagreed that the level of support received form colleagues had a positive

impact on his or her decision to remain at his or her current school. Table 4 summarizes

the responses to this item.

Table 3

Responses to Survey Item A3

Rating	No. responses	%
Strongly disagree	4	16.67
Disagree	3	12.50
Neutral	2	8.33
Agree	6	25.00
Strongly agree	9	37.50

Table 4

Responses to Survey Item A4

Rating	No. responses	%
Strongly disagree	0	0.00
Disagree	1	4.17
Neutral	3	12.50
Agree	8	33.33
Strongly agree	12	50.00

Survey Item A5. Twenty-four teachers responded to this survey item. Nine

respondents (37.50%) strongly agreed that the level of support and help received from administrators at their school had a positive impact on their decision to remain at their current school, seven teachers (29.17%) agreed that the level of support and help received from administrators had a positive impact on their decision to continue employment at their current school, five teachers (20.83%) had an indifferent opinion, two teachers (8.33%) disagreed that the level of support and help received from administrators had a positive impact on their decision to remain at their current teaching position, and one teacher (4.17%) strongly disagreed that the support and help that he or she received from administration had a positive impact on his or her employment decision. Table 5 summarizes the responses to this item.

Table 5

Responses to Survey Item A5

Rating	No. responses	%
Strongly disagree	1	4.17
Disagree	2	8.33
Neutral	5	20.83
Agree	7	29.17
Strongly agree	9	37.50

Survey Item A6. Twenty-four participants responded to this survey item. Ten participants (41.67%) strongly agreed that the leadership style of their principals had a positive impact on their decision to stay at their current school, five teachers (20.83%) agreed that their principals' leadership styles had a positive impact on their decision to continue employment at their current schools, five participants (16.67%) responded to the question with indifference, two teachers (8.33%) disagreed that the leadership style of

their principals had a positive impact on their employment decisions, and three teachers

(12.50%) strongly disagreed that the leadership style of their current principals had a

positive impact on their decision to remain at their current teaching positions. Table 6

summarizes the responses to this item.

Table 6

Responses to Survey Item A6

Rating	No. responses	%
Strongly disagree	3	12.50
Disagree	2	8.33
Neutral	4	16.67
Agree	5	20.83
Strongly agree	10	41.67

Survey Item B1. Twenty-four teachers responded to this survey item. Six

teachers (25.00%) strongly agreed that classroom management had a positive impact in

their decision to remain at their current position, ten teachers (41.67%) agreed that

classroom management had a positive impact in their decision to continue at their current

position, four teachers (16.67%) responded with indifference to the positive impact that

classroom management had on their decision to remain at their current job, three

participants (12.50%) disagreed that classroom management had a positive impact on

their decision to continue employment, and one teacher (4.17%) strongly disagreed that

that classroom management had positive impact on his or her decision to continue

employment. Table 7 summarizes the responses to this item.

Survey Item B2. Twenty-three teachers responded to this survey item. One

teacher did not answer the item. Five teachers (21.74%) strongly agreed that the handling

of students' discipline in their schools had positive impact in their decision to remain at

their current positions, six teachers (26.09%) agreed that the handling of discipline had a

positive impact on their employment decisions, four respondents (17.39%) had a neutral

opinion on the impact that handling of discipline had on their decision to remain at their

current positions, six teachers (26.09%) disagreed that the handling of discipline had a

positive impact in their employment's continuity decision, and two teachers (8.07%)

strongly disagreed that the handling of discipline had a positive impact in their decision

to remain at their current schools. Table 8 summarizes the responses to this particular

item.

Table 7

Responses to Survey Item B1

Rating	No. responses	%
Strongly disagree	1	4.17
Disagree	3	12.50
Neutral	4	16.67
Agree	10	41.67
Strongly agree	6	25.00

Table 8

Responses to Survey Item B2

Rating	No. responses	%
Strongly disagree	2	8.70
Disagree	6	26.09
Neutral	4	17.39
Agree	6	26.09
Strongly agree	5	21.47

Survey Item B3. Twenty-three teachers responded to this survey item. One

teacher did not answer the item. Six respondents (26.09%) strongly agreed that

collaborative planning had a positive impact in their decision to remain at their current

schools, seven teachers (30.43%) agreed that collaborative planning had a positive impact

in their decision to remain at their current teaching position, three teachers (13.04%)

found indifferent the impact that collaborative planning had in their employment

decisions, five teachers (21.74%) disagreed that collaborative planning had a positive

impact in their decision to remain at their schools, and two respondents (8.70%) strongly

disagreed that collaborative planning had a positive impact in their decisions to continue

employment at their schools. Table 9 summarizes the responses to this item.

Table 9

Responses to Survey Item B3

Rating	No. responses	%
Strongly disagree	2	8.70
Disagree	5	21.74
Neutral	3	13.04
Agree	7	30.43
Strongly agree	6	26.09

Survey Item B4. Twenty-four teachers responded to this survey item. Seven

responses (29.17%) strongly agreed that collaboration with other teachers in the school

had a positive impact on their decision to remain at their current teaching position, nine

teachers (37.50%) agreed that collaboration with colleagues had a positive impact on

their employment decisions, four teachers (16.67%) had a neutral opinion on the positive

impact of collaboration and their decision to continue employment, two teachers (8.33%)

disagreed that collaboration had a positive impact on their employment decisions, and

two teachers (8.33%) strongly disagreed that collaboration with other teachers in the

school had a positive impact in their decision to remain at their current schools. Table 10

summarizes the responses to this item.

Table 10

Responses to Survey Item B4

Rating	No. responses	%
Strongly disagree	2	8.33
Disagree	2	8.33
Neutral	4	16.67
Agree	9	37.50
Strongly agree	7	29.17

Survey Item B5. Twenty-four teachers responded to this survey item. Six

teachers (25.00%) strongly agreed that the availability of instructional materials had a

positive impact on their decision to remain at their current teaching position, twelve

respondents (50.00%) agreed that the availability of instructional materials had a positive

impact on their employment decisions, two teachers (8.33%) provided a neutral answer to

this survey item, three teachers (12.50%) disagreed that the availability of instructional

materials had a positive impact on their decision to stay, and one (4.17%) teacher

strongly disagreed that the availability of instructional materials had a positive impact on

his or her employment decision. Table 11 summarizes the responses to this item.

Survey Item B6. Twenty-four teachers responded to this survey item. Seven

teachers (29.17%) strongly agreed that school's setting and maintaining high academic

expectations for students had a positive impact in their decision of remaining at their

current schools, nine teachers (37.50%) agreed that setting and maintaining high

academic expectations for students had a positive impact in their employment decision,

four teachers (16.67%) provided a neutral response regarding the impact that setting and

maintaining school-wide high academic expectations for students had in their decision to

remain at their current school, three teachers (12.50%) disagreed that setting and

maintaining high academic expectations for students had a positive impact in their

employment decision, and one teacher (4.17%)strongly disagreed that setting and

maintaining high academic expectations for students had a positive impact in his or her

decision to remain at their current teaching position. Table 12 summarizes the responses

to this item.

Table 11

Responses to Survey Item B5

Rating	No. responses	%
Strongly disagree	1	4.17
Disagree	3	12.50
Neutral	2	8.33
Agree	12	50.00
Strongly agree	6	25.00

Survey Item B7. Twenty-four teachers responded to this survey item. Six

teachers (25.00%) strongly agreed that school's setting and maintaining high behavioral

expectations for students had a positive impact in their decision to remain at their current

schools, eight teachers (33.33%) agreed that setting and maintaining school-wide high

behavioral expectations for students had a positive impact in their employment decisions,

six teachers (25.00%) provided a neutral response with regards to the impact that setting

and maintaining school-wide high behavioral expectations for students had in their

decision to remain at their current teaching position, and four (16.67%) disagreed that

school's setting and maintaining high behavioral expectations for students had a positive

impact on their employment decision. Table 13 summarizes the responses to this item.

Table 12

Responses to Survey Item B6

Rating	No. responses	%
Strongly disagree	1	4.17
Disagree	3	12.50
Neutral	4	16.67
Agree	9	37.50
Strongly agree	7	29.17

Table 13

Responses to Survey Item B7

Rating	No. responses	%
Strongly disagree	0	0.00
Disagree	4	16.67
Neutral	6	25.00
Agree	8	33.33
Strongly agree	6	25.00

Survey Item B8. Twenty-four teachers responded to this survey item. Seven

teachers (29.17%) strongly agreed that the school's fostering of an environment

conducive to learning had a positive impact in their decision to remain at their current

school, eight teachers (45.83%) agreed that school-wide fostering of a learning

environment conducive to learning had a positive impact on their employment decisions,

four teachers (16.67%) provided a neutral response regarding the impact that a school

which fosters the creation of an environment conducive to learning had on their decision

to remain at their current school, one teacher (4.17%) disagreed that the fostering of an

environment conducive to learning had a positive impact on his or her employment

decision, and one teacher (4.17%) strongly disagreed that fostering of an environment

conducive to learning had a positive impact in his or her employment decision. Table 14

summarizes the responses to this item.

Table 14

Responses to Survey Item B8

Rating	No. responses	%
Strongly disagree	1	4.17
Disagree	1	4.17
Neutral	4	16.67
Agree	11	45.83
Strongly agree	7	29.17

Survey Item B9. Twenty four teachers responded to this survey item. Five

teachers (20.83%) strongly agreed that the amount of time they have for planning made a

positive impact on their decision to continue at their current school, eight teachers

(33.33%) agreed that the amount of planning time had a positive impact on their

employment decision, five teachers (20.83%) provided a neutral answer to the question

regarding the impact that the amount of planning period had on their decision to remain

at their current teaching position, four teachers (16.67%) disagreed that the amount of

planning period had a positive impact on their employment decision, and two teachers

(8.33%) strongly disagreed that the amount of planning period had a positive impact on

their decision to remain at their current schools. Table 15 summarizes the responses to

this item.

Table 15

Responses to Survey Item B9

Rating	No. responses	%
Strongly disagree	2	8.33
Disagree	4	16.67
Neutral	5	20.83
Agree	8	33.33
Strongly agree	5	20.83

Survey Item B10. Twenty four teachers responded to this survey item. Three

teachers (12.50%) strongly agreed that the amount of paperwork and non-instructional

duties assigned to them had a positive impact in their decision to continue employment at

their current schools, three teachers (12.50%) agreed that the amount of paperwork and

non-instructional duties had a positive impact on their employment decision, nine

teachers (37.50%) provided a neutral answer regarding the positive impact that the

amount of paperwork and non-instructional duties had on their decision to remain at their

current school, four teachers (16.67%) disagreed that the amount of paperwork and non-

instructional duties had a positive impact on their decision to continue employment at

their schools, and five teachers (20.83%) strongly disagreed that the amount of

paperwork and non-instructional duties had a positive impact on their employment

decision. Table 16 summarizes the responses to this item.

Survey Item B11. Twenty four teachers responded to this survey item. Nine

teachers (33.33%) strongly agreed that access to technology made a positive impact on

their decision to remain at their current schools, seven participants (29.17%) agreed that

access to technology had a positive impact on their employment decision, seven teachers

(29.17%) responded with indifference to the impact that access to technology had on their

decision to remain at their current teaching positions, and one respondent (8.335) strongly

disagreed that access to technology had a positive impact on his or her employment

decision. Table 17 summarizes the responses to this item.

Table 16

Responses to Survey Item B10

Rating	No. responses	%
Strongly disagree	5	20.83
Disagree	4	16.67
Neutral	9	37.50
Agree	3	12.50
Strongly agree	3	12.50

Table 17

Responses to Survey Item B11

Rating	No. responses	%
Strongly disagree	1	8.33
Disagree	0	0.00
Neutral	7	29.17
Agree	7	29.17
Strongly agree	9	33.33

Survey Item B12. Twenty four teachers responded to this survey item. Six

teachers (25.00%) strongly agreed that the level of community support had a positive

impact on their decision to remain at their current school, five participants (20.83%)

agreed that the level of community support they receive had a positive impact on their

employment decision, seven teachers (29.17%) responded with indifference to the impact

that community support had on their employment decision, five teachers (20.83%)

disagreed that the level of community support had a positive impact on their decision to

stay at their current schools, and one teacher (4.17%) strongly disagreed that the level of

community support had a positive impact on his or her employment decision. Table 18

summarizes the responses to this item.

Table 18

Responses to Survey Item B12

Rating	No. responses	%
Strongly disagree	1	4.17
Disagree	5	20.83
Neutral	7	29.17
Agree	5	20.83
Strongly agree	6	25.00

Results for Research Question 2

What are the out-of-school life experiences that may have affected the decision of

a group of veteran teachers to remain with their school district? The survey included five

items directly related to this question. Survey Items C1 through C5 investigated the

experiences that teachers had outside their schools and that could influence their decision

to remain at their current positions. These survey items received answers from 23

participants. The survey used a Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5

(*strongly agree*) for all items in this section.

Survey Item C1. Twenty-three teachers responded to this survey item. One

teacher did not answer the item. Three teachers (13.04%) strongly agreed that the

monetary compensation they receive for their work had a positive impact on their

decision to remain at their current school, eight teachers (34.78%) agreed that the

monetary compensation they receive had a positive impact on their employment decision,

four teachers (17.39%) responded with indifference to the level of impact that monetary

compensation had in their decision to remain at their schools, four teachers (17.39%)

disagreed that monetary compensation had a positive impact on their decision to continue

employment at their current school, and four teachers (17.39%) strongly disagreed that

monetary compensation had a positive impact on their decision to remain at their current

teaching position. Table 19 summarizes the responses to this item.

Table 19

Responses to Survey Item C1

Rating	No. responses	%
Strongly disagree	4	17.39
Disagree	4	17.39
Neutral	4	17.39
Agree	8	34.78
Strongly agree	3	13.04

Survey Item C2. Twenty-three teachers responded to this survey item. One

teacher did not answer the item. Seven teachers (30.43%) strongly agreed that commuting

time to their schools had a positive impact on their decision to remain at their current

teaching position, six teachers (26.09%) agreed that commuting time to work had a

positive impact on their employment decision, three teachers (13.04%) disagreed that

commuting time to work had a positive impact on their employment decision, and seven

teachers (30.43%) strongly disagreed that commuting time to their schools had a positive impact on their decision to remain at their current teaching positions. Table 20 summarizes the responses to this item.

Table 20

Responses to Survey Item C2

Rating	No. responses	%
Strongly disagree	7	30.43
Disagree	3	13.04
Neutral	0	0.00
Agree	6	26.09
Strongly agree	7	30.43

Survey Item C3. Twenty-three teachers responded to this survey item. One teacher did not answer the item. Seven teachers (30.43%) strongly agreed that finding appropriate housing had a positive impact on their decision to stay at their current schools, four teachers (17.39%) agreed that finding appropriate housing had a positive impact on their decision to continue employment at their current location, ten teachers (43.48%) responded with indifference to the level of impact that finding appropriate housing had on their employment decision, and two teachers (8.70%) strongly disagreed that finding appropriate housing had a positive impact on their decision to remain at their current teaching position. Table 21 summarizes the responses to this item.

Survey Item C4. Twenty-three teachers responded to this survey item. One participant did not answer the item. Five teachers (21.74%) strongly agreed that availability of services such as doctor's offices, shopping, and entertainment had a very positive impact on their decision to remain at their current schools. Seven teachers

(30.43%) agreed that availability of services had a positive impact on their decision to stay at their current schools, five teachers (21.74%) responded with indifference to the impact that availability of services had on their employment decision, two teachers (4.35%) disagreed that availability of services had a positive impact on their employment a positive impact on their decision to remain at their current teaching positions. Table 22 summarizes the responses to this item.

Table 21

Responses to Survey Item C3

Rating	No. responses	%
Strongly disagree	2	8.70
Disagree	0	0.00
Neutral	10	43.48
Agree	4	17.39
Strongly agree	7	30.43

Table 22

Responses to Survey Item C4

Rating	No. responses	%
Strongly disagree	5	21.74
Disagree	2	4.35
Neutral	5	21.74
Agree	7	30.43
Strongly agree	5	21.74

Survey Item C5. Twenty-three teachers responded to this survey item. One teacher did not answer the item. Five teachers (21.74%) strongly agreed that community involvement opportunities had a positive impact on their decision to remain at their

current schools, three teachers (13.04%) agreed that community involvement

opportunities had a positive impact on their employment decision, nine teachers (39.13%)

responded with indifference to the impact that community involvement opportunities had

on their decision to continue employment at their current schools, two teachers (8.70%)

disagreed that community involvement opportunities had a positive impact on their

strongly disagreed that community involvement opportunities had a positive impact on

their decision to remain at their current schools. Table 23 summarizes the responses to

this item.

Table 23

Responses to Survey Item C5

Rating	No. responses	%
Strongly disagree	4	17.39
Disagree	2	8.70
Neutral	9	39.13
Agree	3	13.04
Strongly agree	5	21.74

Summary

The first research question sought to explore the in-school experiences of a group

of veteran teachers and the level of positive impact that such experiences had in their

decision to remain at their schools for a period of 5 or more years. Survey Items A1

through A5 focused on the positive impact that administrative, collegial, and parent

support had on teachers employment decision. Responses to Survey Item A1 indicated an

overall favorable degree of satisfaction with teachers working conditions after combining

the responses of teachers who strongly agreed and agreed with the statement presented in

the survey item (56.62%). The level of dissatisfaction with the conditions of the working environment (22.29%) reflects the opinions of teachers who disagreed and strongly disagreed with the statement presented in Survey Item A1. The percentage of teachers who thought that the working environment did not have any effect on their decision to remain at their current positions was 21.74%.

Responses to Survey Item A2 reflected an overall low degree of satisfaction with parent-teachers relations after combining the responses of teachers who strongly agreed and agreed with the statement presented in the survey item (39.13%). The level of dissatisfaction with parent-teachers relations (26.09%) reflects the opinions of teachers who disagreed and strongly disagreed with the statement presented in Survey Item A2. The responses to this survey item showed a relatively high percentage of teachers who expressed a neutral position regarding their level of satisfaction with parent-teachers relations at their school.

Responses to Survey Item A3 indicated that 15 teachers (62.50%) were overall satisfied with administration-teachers relations at their school, whereas seven teachers (29.17%) were unsatisfied with the relations between teachers and administrators. There was a relative low percentage of teachers (8.33%) who had an indifferent perception of the administration-teachers relationship at their current school. Responses to Survey Item A4 indicated a high level of overall satisfaction with collegial relationships. Twenty of the surveyed teachers (83.33%) were satisfied or very satisfied with the level of collegiality among teachers in the building, and only 4.17% of the participants found unsatisfactory the level of help and support received from other teachers.

Responses to Survey Item A4 indicated that 16 teachers (66.67%) were satisfied or very satisfied with the level of help and support that they receive from administration

at their schools. Although the overall level of satisfaction with administration support is high, it is also noticeable that 20.83% of responses showed indifference with regard to the level and help and support that teachers receive from their administrators. Only three participants (12.50%) indicated a low or very low level of satisfaction with administrative support at their school. Responses to Survey Item A6 indicated an overall high level of satisfaction with the leadership of the school principals. Fifteen teachers (62.50%) reported that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the leadership style of their current principals while five teachers (20.83%) were unsatisfied or very unsatisfied with their principals' leadership style. About one fifth of the respondents had indifferent or no opinion on the leadership style of their principal.

Survey Items B1 through B12 explored in-school experience of veteran teachers and the impact that such experiences had on teachers' decision to remain employed at their current schools. Responses to Survey Item B1 indicate that classroom management had a strong or very strong positive influence on teachers' decision to remain at their current teaching positions. Sixteen teachers (66.67%) reported that classroom management positively affected their employment decision. The same percentage of teachers (16.67%) found no relation between classroom management and their decision to remain at their current position or reported that classroom management had little or no positive effect in their final employment decision.

Responses to Survey Item B2 indicated that 11 teachers (47.83%) take into consideration how the school handles discipline when deciding to remain at their current teaching positions. Eight of the teachers (34.16%) reported that handling of discipline did not positively affect their employment decisions, and four teachers (17.39%) reacted with indifference to the impact that school discipline had in their decision to continue

employment. Responses to Survey Item B3 indicated that 13 teachers (56.52%) found

that collaborative planning had a positive impact on their decision to remain at their

current schools, whereas seven teachers reported that collaborative planning had little or

very little positive impact on their employment decisions. Only three teachers (13.04%)

responded with indifference to the question.

Responses to Survey Item B4 indicated that collaboration with colleagues has a

positive impact on teachers' decision to remain at their schools. Sixteen teachers

(66.67%) reported that collaborating with other colleagues in their school positively

impacted their employment decision. Four teachers (16.67%) indicated that collaboration

with colleagues had little or no impact on their decision to remain at their school and four

teachers (16.67%) provided a neutral response. Responses to Survey Item B5 stressed the

positive influence that availability of instructional materials has on teachers' decision to

remain at their current schools. Eighteen teachers (75.00%) reported that availability of

instructional materials had a positive impact on their decision to remain at their schools,

whereas only four (16.67%) reported little or no impact in the decision making process.

Responses to Survey Item B6 indicated that working in a school that sets and

maintains high academic expectations for students has a positive impact in their decision

to continue employment at their current schools. Sixteen teachers (66.67%) considered

that setting and maintaining high academic expectations had a positive impact in their

decision to stay while four teachers (16.67%) responded that setting and maintaining high

academic expectation had little positive impact in their decision to continue employment,

and four teachers responded with indifference to the item.

Responses to Survey Item B7 indicated that a high percentage of teachers

(58.33%) considered that school-wide setting and maintaining high behavioral

expectations for students had a positive impact on their employment decision. Four teachers (16.67%) indicated that high behavioral expectations did not have a positive impact on their employment decision. Responses to Survey Item B8 indicated that 18 teachers (75.00%) considered that working in a school that fosters an environment conducive to learning had a positive impact on their decision to remain employed at their current school while two teachers (8.33%) reported that the creation of an environment conducive to learning had no impact on their employment decision.

Responses to Survey Item B9 indicated that 13 teachers (54.16%) considered that the amount of planning time had a positive impact on their decision to remain at their current schools. Six teachers (25.00%) reported that the amount of planning period had little impact on their employment decisions. Responses to Survey Item B10 indicated that most participants (75.00%) were somewhat indifferent to the amount of paperwork and noninstructional duties that are assigned to them at their current school or considered that such duties had no impact on their decision to stay at their current schools. Six participants (25.00%) responded that paperwork and other noninstructional duties had a positive impact on their employment decisions.

Responses to Survey Item B11 indicated that, for 16 participants (62.5%), access to technology had a positive impact on their decision to continue employment at their current schools. Responses to Survey Item B12 indicated that 11 teachers (45.83%) considered that the level of support they receive from the community had a positive impact on their decision to remain at their current teaching position, whereas six teachers (25.00%) responded that the level of community support had little or no impact on their employment decision.

The second research question sought to explore the out-of-school experiences of a

group of veteran teachers and the level of positive impact that such experiences had in their decision to remain at their schools for a period of five or more years. Survey Items C1 through C5 explored out-of-school experiences regarding compensation, commuting time, access to housing, access to services, and community involvement opportunities. Responses to Survey Item C1 indicated that, for 11 teachers (47.82%), the monetary compensation received for their work had a positive impact on their decision to continue employment at their current schools, whereas eight teachers (34.78%) responded that monetary compensation had little or no impact on their decision to stay at their schools.

Responses to Survey Item C2 indicated that 13 teachers (56.52%) considered that commuting time to work had a positive impact on their employment decision, whereas 10 teachers (43.47%) reported that commuting time had little or no positive impact on their decision to remain at their current schools. Responses to Survey Item C3 indicated that, for 11 teachers (47.82%), being able to find appropriate housing that meets the needs of their families had a positive impact on their decision to remain at their current teaching positions, whereas 10 teachers (43.48%) provided a neutral response on the impact that finding appropriate housing had on their employment decisions.

Responses to Survey Item C4 indicated that 12 teachers (51.90%) found that availability of services had a positive impact on their decision to continue employment at their current schools, five teachers (21.47%) provided a neutral answer to the question regarding availability of services and its impact on their employment decision, and seven teachers (26.09%) reported that availability of services had little or no positive impact on their decision to remain at their current schools. Responses to Survey Item C5 indicated that eight teachers (34.78%) found that availability of community involvement opportunities had a positive impact on their decision to remain at their current schools,

whereas six teachers (26.09%) reported that the opportunity to get involved in their community had little or no positive impact on their employment decision. Nine teachers (39.13%) were indifferent with regard to the positive impact that community involvement opportunities had on their decision to remain at their schools.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

The purpose of the study was to investigate the in-school and out-of-school life experiences affecting veteran teacher retention in a southeastern school district. The literature offered numerous studies on the causes of teacher attrition and turnover and strategies that districts and schools could implement to increase teacher retention rates, but there is little research that focused on the factors affecting teachers' decisions to remain with their district for long periods of time. This study investigated the factors that may have influenced a group of veteran teachers to remain with the focus district.

The research questions investigated the positive impact that in-school and out-of-school experiences had on teachers' decision to remain at their current positions. Participants in the study were veteran teachers currently working in the focus district. The research collected qualitative data through the administration of an anonymous online survey adapted from Lackey's (2010) dissertation. Participants ranked the statements presented in the survey using a Likert scale that ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). All teachers who had been working in the district for at least 5 years were invited to participate in the study. A link to the online survey was sent to 75 veteran teachers and 24 teachers completed the survey. Responses to the survey were tabulated, converted into percentages, and analyze in order to draw conclusion of the positive impact that in-school and out-of-school experiences had on teachers' employment decision.

Summary of Results

The first research question sought to explore the in-school experiences of a group of veteran teachers and the level of positive impact that such experiences had in their

decision to remain at their schools for a period of 5 or more years. Survey Items A1 through A5 focused on the positive impact that administrative, collegial, and parent support had on teachers employment decision. Responses to Survey Item A1 indicated an overall favorable degree of satisfaction with teachers working conditions after combining the responses of teachers who strongly agreed and agreed with the statement presented in the survey item (56.62%). The level of dissatisfaction with the conditions of the working environment (22.29%) reflects the opinions of teachers who disagreed and strongly disagreed with the statement presented in Survey Item A1. The percentage of teachers who thought that the working environment did not have any effect on their decision to remain at their current positions was 21.74%.

Responses to Survey Item A2 reflected an overall low degree of satisfaction with parent-teachers relations after combining the responses of teachers who strongly agreed and agreed with the statement presented in the survey item (39.13%). The level of dissatisfaction with parent-teachers relations (26.09%) reflects the opinions of teachers who disagreed and strongly disagreed with the statement presented in Survey Item A2. The responses to this survey item showed a relatively high percentage of teachers who expressed a neutral position regarding their level of satisfaction with parent-teachers relations at their school.

Responses to Survey Item A3 indicated that 15 teachers (62.50%) were overall satisfied with administration-teachers relations at their school, whereas seven teachers (29.17%) were unsatisfied with the relations between teachers and administrators. There was a relative low percentage of teachers (8.33%) who had an indifferent perception of the administration-teachers relationship at their current school. Responses to Survey Item A4 indicated a high level of overall satisfaction with collegial relationships. Twenty of

the surveyed teachers (83.33%) were satisfied or very satisfied with the level of collegiality among teachers in the building, and only 4.17% of the participants found unsatisfactory the level of help and support received from other teachers.

Responses to Survey Item A4 indicated that 16 teachers (66.67%) were satisfied or very satisfied with the level of help and support that they receive from administration at their schools. Although the overall level of satisfaction with administration support is high, it is also noticeable that 20.83% of responses showed indifference with regard to the level and help and support that teachers receive from their administrators. Only three participants (12.50%) indicated a low or very low level of satisfaction with administrative support at their school. Responses to Survey Item A6 indicated an overall high level of satisfaction with the leadership of the school principals. Fifteen teachers (62.50%) reported that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the leadership style of their current principals while five teachers (20.83%) were unsatisfied or very unsatisfied with their principals' leadership style. About one fifth of the respondents had indifferent or no opinion on the leadership style of their principal.

Survey Items B1 through B12 explored in-school experience of veteran teachers and the impact that such experiences had on teachers' decision to remain employed at their current schools. Responses to Survey Item B1 indicate that classroom management had a strong or very strong positive influence on teachers' decision to remain at their current teaching positions. Sixteen teachers (66.67%) reported that classroom management positively affected their employment decision. The same percentage of teachers (16.67%) found no relation between classroom management and their decision to remain at their current position or reported that classroom management had little or no positive effect in their final employment decision.

Responses to Survey Item B2 indicated that 11 teachers (47.83%) take into consideration how the school handles discipline when deciding to remain at their current teaching positions. Eight of the teachers (34.16%) reported that handling of discipline did not positively affect their employment decisions, and four teachers (17.39%) reacted with indifference to the impact that school discipline had in their decision to continue employment. Responses to Survey Item B3 indicated that 13 teachers (56.52%) found that collaborative planning had a positive impact on their decision to remain at their current schools, whereas seven teachers reported that collaborative planning had little or very little positive impact on their employment decisions. Only three teachers (13.04%) responded with indifference to the question.

Responses to Survey Item B4 indicated that collaboration with colleagues has a positive impact on teachers' decision to remain at their schools. Sixteen teachers (66.67%) reported that collaborating with other colleagues in their school positively impacted their employment decision. Four teachers (16.67%) indicated that collaboration with colleagues had little or no impact on their decision to remain at their school and four teachers (16.67%) provided a neutral response. Responses to Survey Item B5 stressed the positive influence that availability of instructional materials has on teachers' decision to remain at their current schools. Eighteen teachers (75.00%) reported that availability of instructional materials had a positive impact on their decision to remain at their schools, whereas only four (16.67%) reported little or no impact in the decision making process.

Responses to Survey Item B6 indicated that working in a school that sets and maintains high academic expectations for students has a positive impact in their decision to continue employment at their current schools. Sixteen teachers (66.67%) considered that setting and maintaining high academic expectations had a positive impact in their

decision to stay while four teachers (16.67%) responded that setting and maintaining high academic expectation had little positive impact in their decision to continue employment, and four teachers responded with indifference to the item.

Responses to Survey Item B7 indicated that a high percentage of teachers (58.33%) considered that school-wide setting and maintaining high behavioral expectations for students had a positive impact on their employment decision. Four teachers (16.67%) indicated that high behavioral expectations did not have a positive impact on their employment decision. Responses to Survey Item B8 indicated that 18 teachers (75.00%) considered that working in a school that fosters an environment conducive to learning had a positive impact on their decision to remain employed at their current school while two teachers (8.33%) reported that the creation of an environment conducive to learning had no impact on their employment decision.

Responses to Survey Item B9 indicated that 13 teachers (54.16%) considered that the amount of planning time had a positive impact on their decision to remain at their current schools. Six teachers (25.00%) reported that the amount of planning period had little impact on their employment decisions. Responses to Survey Item B10 indicated that most participants (75.00%) were somewhat indifferent to the amount of paperwork and noninstructional duties that are assigned to them at their current school or considered that such duties had no impact on their decision to stay at their current schools. Six participants (25.00%) responded that paperwork and other noninstructional duties had a positive impact on their employment decisions.

Responses to Survey Item B11 indicated that, for 16 participants (62.5%), access to technology had a positive impact on their decision to continue employment at their current schools. Responses to Survey Item B12 indicated that 11 teachers (45.83%)

considered that the level of support they receive from the community had a positive impact on their decision to remain at their current teaching position, whereas six teachers (25.00%) responded that the level of community support had little or no impact on their employment decision.

The second research question sought to explore the out-of-school experiences of a group of veteran teachers and the level of positive impact that such experiences had in their decision to remain at their schools for a period of five or more years. Survey Items C1 through C5 explored out-of-school experiences regarding compensation, commuting time, access to housing, access to services, and community involvement opportunities. Responses to Survey Item C1 indicated that, for 11 teachers (47.82%), the monetary compensation received for their work had a positive impact on their decision to continue employment at their current schools, whereas eight teachers (34.78%) responded that monetary compensation had little or no impact on their decision to stay at their schools.

Responses to Survey Item C2 indicated that 13 teachers (56.52%) considered that commuting time to work had a positive impact on their employment decision, whereas 10 teachers (43.47%) reported that commuting time had little or no positive impact on their decision to remain at their current schools. Responses to Survey Item C3 indicated that, for 11 teachers (47.82%), being able to find appropriate housing that meets the needs of their families had a positive impact on their decision to remain at their current teaching positions, whereas 10 teachers (43.48%) provided a neutral response on the impact that finding appropriate housing had on their employment decisions.

Responses to Survey Item C4 indicated that 12 teachers (51.90%) found that availability of services had a positive impact on their decision to continue employment at their current schools, five teachers (21.47%) provided a neutral answer to the question

regarding availability of services and its impact on their employment decision, and seven

teachers (26.09%) reported that availability of services had little or no positive impact on

their decision to remain at their current schools. Responses to Survey Item C5 indicated

that eight teachers (34.78%) found that availability of community involvement

opportunities had a positive impact on their decision to remain at their current schools,

whereas six teachers (26.09%) reported that the opportunity to get involved in their

community had little or no positive impact on their employment decision. Nine teachers

(39.13%) were indifferent with regard to the positive impact that community involvement

opportunities had on their decision to remain at their schools.

Conclusions

Based on the results, it can be concluded that in-school teachers' experiences and

in-school support have a greater positive impact on teachers' decision to remain at their

current positions than out-of-school experiences. The results indicated that that the level

of satisfaction with working conditions, administrator-teacher relations, high levels of

collegiality among faculty and staff, satisfaction with the level of support teachers receive

from administration, and satisfaction with the leadership style of their principals had the

greatest positive impact on teachers' decision to remain at their current schools.

The study also sought to investigate the degree of positive impact that in-school

experiences had on teachers' employment decisions. The results suggested that such

things as classroom management, school ability to handle students' discipline, allocation

of class periods for collaborative planning, collaboration among faculty, availability of

instructional materials, working in a school that sets and maintains high academic and

behavioral expectations for students, working in a school that fosters the creations of an

environment conducive to learning, access to technology, and receiving support from the

community all had a positive impact on their decision to continue employment at their current schools.

The results from the study seem to support previous research on the topic of teacher retention. According to Kukla-Acevedo (2009), many of the teachers who leave the profession reported that working conditions and low support from the administration were influential factors in their decision to leave. Research from Johnson (2006) also suggested that supportive working conditions improved teacher retention. The working relationships between teachers and their principals were cited by Boyd et al. (2011) as one of the most influential factors for teacher turnover. According to Watkins (2005), other causes of teacher attrition relate to the leadership style of their principals and their ability to provide support and professional-development opportunities for their teachers.

Sass et al. (2011) explored some of the causes of teacher attrition and concluded that teachers' decisions to leave the profession or migrate to a new district or school are rooted on a series of stressors such as student engagement and behavior, school administration of discipline, workload, and social support from both superiors and colleagues. According to Ingersoll (2001), teacher retention could improve as working conditions in the school setting changed. The results indicated that improving the organization's conditions, increasing administrative support, improving the decision-making process by including teachers' opinions and perspectives would increase teacher retention.

Brown (2005) concluded that teachers valued collaboration with colleagues, especially if such collaboration is spontaneous. Isolation was cited by the participants in the study as a major stressor. Teachers often refer to students' misbehavior as a stressful factor, which, if ignored by the school administration, contributes to a teacher's decision

to leave the school in search of an institution with fewer behavioral issues (Geving, 2007). According to Johnson (2006), teacher collaboration is stronger in successful and high-performing schools, as demonstrated through meaningful professional development, frequent professional interactions between teachers and administrators, development of common goals, and a shared vision for increased student achievement.

The research also sought to determine the degree of positive impact that out-of-school experiences had on teachers' decision to remain at their current teaching positions. Results indicated that teachers consider commuting time to work and availability of services such as doctors, shopping, and entertainment had a positive impact on their decision to continue employment at their current schools. With regard to the positive impact that salary had on the employment decision, a relatively low percentage of participants (47.82%) responded that economic compensation had a positive impact on their decision to remain at their schools. This response somewhat contradicted Ingersoll's (2001) research that concluded that increasing teachers' salaries would ultimately improve teachers' retention.

However, it is generally agreed that the primary reason individuals choose to be educators is not the money. Furthermore, the study results seemed to concur with research from Hanushek et al. (2004) that found that salary dissatisfaction has less impact on the decision of teachers to continue employment if working conditions improve or are closer to meeting teachers' needs and ideals. Research conducted by Baker-Doyle (2010) found that teachers are more likely to seek employment in areas that relate to their personal social network and are less likely to leave if they become an active part of the community. Therefore, it is concluded that out-of-school experiences such as access to appropriate housing and opportunities for community involvement had, to some extent, a

positive impact on their decision to remain at their current teaching position, but their in-

school experiences had a greater impact.

Implications

       The results of the survey indicated that in-school experiences and systems of

support positively impacted a veteran group of teachers' decision to remain at their

current schools, probably more than their out-of-school experiences. Teachers' responses

suggested that aspects such as working conditions, collaboration with other faculty

members, schools' discipline and academic expectations, and the leadership style of their

principal had the highest level of positive impact on their employment decision.

According to Baker-Doyle (2010), retention of teachers begins with the development of

human capital through the design of appropriate professional social networks as a vehicle

to shape and define positive and negative experiences and choices. The district focus of

the study appeared to engage in the development of such human capital by fostering a

high level of collaboration and collegiality designed to improve the working conditions of

teachers.

       Hughes (2012) concluded that teachers tend to stay in schools that offer a higher

level of independence, autonomy, and support from the administration. Responses to the

survey suggested that teachers in the focus district perceived a high level of support from

principals. Johnson (2006) concluded that teachers often become frustrated due to the

limited income that the profession offers, student behavior in class, poor instructional

approach that results in limited students' progress, accountability for their performance,

lack of autonomy, poor content knowledge, and lack of principal support. Teachers in the

focus district appeared satisfied with their current income, behavioral and academic

expectations in their schools, and the level of administration support that they received at

their schools. The survey also suggested that out-of-school experiences, while important to many teachers, had a lesser positive impact on their decision to remain at their current schools than in-school experiences and systems of support. Consequently, it appears that the school districts should focus on maintaining and improving teacher in-school experiences.

Limitations

There is a potential for researcher bias because she was solely responsible for compiling and analyzing the data. In addition, the study was conducted in a small rural school district, and the results would be difficult to generalize to larger districts or districts located in urban and suburban areas. The study was limited in scope due to the initial small pool of possible participants and the low number of responses to the survey. Seventy-five teachers were invited to complete the survey, but only 24 participants returned a completed survey. However, the results did seem to support previous research.

Recommendations

Recommendations following this study include further research on aspects of teacher attrition and retention that include larger districts. It is also recommended further research in areas with a higher degree of diversity, urban and suburban areas. It could be of special interest to collect demographic data from participants regarding gender, race, years of experience, and separate participants from elementary and secondary education. Sass et al. (2011) explored some of the causes of teacher attrition and concluded that teachers' decisions to leave the profession or migrate to a new district or school are rooted on a series of stressors such as student engagement and behavior, school administration of discipline, workload, and social support from both superiors and colleagues.

Results of the different subgroups and geographic location could potentially change the type of experiences and the level of positive impact that such experiences have on teachers' employment decision. Although the focus district is providing its teachers with positive in-school experiences and systems of support conducive to teacher retention, the schools should continue improvement in areas such as parent-teacher relations and handling of student discipline, as these are the areas that had the highest percentage of disagreement or indifference from participants in the survey.

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Appendix

Survey

Survey

In order to respond to this survey you will be using SurveyMonkey.com, an online program, which will record your responses while keeping your IP anonymous. After clicking on the link, the survey "Teacher Retention" will open. You need to answer each question. This is the link to the survey: https://www.surveymonkey.com/create/?sm=tI1frk6Il5GY69guDzC5k1kkls6trk80WWtE OPwh0Bo_3D.

The purpose of the survey is to collect information regarding your views and experiences as a veteran teacher. Your responses will help the district to develop and improve its teacher recruitment and retention plans. Remember that all your responses are anonymous and will have no effect in your current or future employment or evaluation.

Relationships and Support In and Out of School

Please, answer each question using the following scale: 1= Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Neutral, 4= Agree, 5= Strongly Agree. If you are not sure about the answer choose the best approximation to your experience.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
A1. I am satisfied with my school's working environment.					
A2. I am satisfied with parent-teacher relationships in my school.					
A3. I am satisfied with teacher-administrator relationships					

in my school.				
A4. Teachers in my school help and support each other.				
A5. Administrators in my school help and support faculty and staff members.				
A6. I am satisfied with the leadership style of my principal.				

In-School Experiences

Please, answer each question using the following scale: 1= Strongly Disagree,

2= Disagree, 3= Neutral, 4= Agree, 5= Strongly Agree. If you are not sure about the

answer choose the best approximation to your experience.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
B1. Classroom management had a positive impact in my decision to remain in my school.					
B2. School handling of discipline had a positive impact in my decision to remain in my school.					

B3. Collaborative planning had a positive impact in my decision to remain in my school.					
B4. Collaboration with colleagues had a positive impact in my decision to remain in my school.					
B5. Availability of school instructional resources had a positive impact in my decision to remain in my school.					
B6. School's setting and maintain of high academic expectations for students had a positive impact in my decision to remain in my school.					

B7. School's setting and maintain of high behavioral expectations for students had a positive impact in my decision to remain in my school.				
B8. School's fostering of an environment conducive to learning had a positive impact in my decision to remain in my school.				
B9. The amount of planning time had a positive impact in my decision to remain in my school.				
B10. The amount of paperwork and non-instructional duties had a positive impact in my decision to remain in my school.				
B11. Access to technology had a positive impact in my decision to remain in my school.				
B12. The support received from the community had a positive impact in my decision to remain in my school.				

Out-of-School Experiences

Please, answer each question using the following scale: 1= Strongly Disagree,

2= Disagree, 3= Neutral, 4= Agree, 5= Strongly Agree. If you are not sure about the

answer choose the best approximation to your experience.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
C1. The monetary compensation I receive for my work had a positive impact in my decision to remain in my school.					
C2. Commuting time had a positive impact in my decision to remain in my school.					
C3. I was able to find appropriate housing that meets my family's needs					
C4. I have close all the services that I need such as doctor's, shopping, and entertainment.					
C5. I found community involvement opportunities.					