ABSTRACT

Gregory E. Monroe, A STUDY ON THE TEACHER TURNOVER RATE IN A RURAL SCHOOL DISTRICT IN SOUTHEASTERN NORTH CAROLINA (Under the direction of Dr. William Rouse, Jr.). Department of Educational Leadership, August 2017.

The purpose of this study was to examine the variables that contributes to high teacher turnover rate in one Southeastern rural school district. The study used the Gap Analysis for Problem-solving, Planning, and School Improvement (GAPPSI) method approach to improve the current state of the problem by determining if there were common variables contributing to the high rate of teacher turnover. Participants responded to a survey based on a five-point scale with a mid-point or neutral selection choice. Furthermore, the study included interviews with participants who were currently employed or had been previous employed in the study school district. Two study questions guided this study. First, what factors contributed to teachers leaving the study school district, and the second, what factors contributed to teachers staying in the study school district? The findings of the data collected did not note any trends or a single variable that contributed to teachers' decisions to leave the study school district. However, having a more precise perspective and understanding of the problem will help the study school district in addressing its teacher retention efforts and decreasing its teacher turnover rate.

A STUDY ON THE TEACHER TURNOVER RATE IN A RURAL SCHOOL DISTRICT IN SOUTHEASTERN NORTH CAROLINA

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Gregory E. Monroe

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A STUDY ON THE TEACHER TURNOVER RATE

IN A RURAL SCHOOL DISTRICT IN SOUTHEASTERN NORTH CAROLINA

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DEDICATION

To Christa, Gabrielle, Ra'mya, and Rayna, who are my heart and who I love to the core of my very being. You were my inspiration throughout this journey. You are my joy and delight of my life, despite the frown often on my face. I love you with all my heart. Also, to Raymond (dad) rest in peace, Ann (mom), Brad, and LaShonda, all my family too numerous to list, and friends who has believed in me, encouraged me, and supported me at every turn.

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On October 8, 2014 at the start of this journey I was inspired to write: *"My purpose to obtain my doctorate is not for a position or status. It is for God's glory, and my entire life's purpose is for the glory of God."*

First and foremost, I would like to acknowledge and thank God for all his promises in my life. This journey was more than just about obtaining a degree. It was about growth as a person in every area of my life; as a father, husband, son, sibling, as well as a leader. So, along with my family who I have dedicated this to, I would also like to thank the past and current administration of the former school districts in which I gained invaluable experience, and drove me to my finding my purpose. I also want to thank two individuals who helped me change my trajectory by changing my perspective about myself and the educational profession. Thank you, Dr. Marvin Thompson and Mrs. Dana King, your contribution to my life is immeasurable. Finally, I want to thank Dr. Art Rouse and my dissertation committee. Your insight helped me finish strong to present a scholarly study in which I am proud to be associated with.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Today, in schools and school districts across the United States (US), there is a demand for quality teachers (Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, & Carver-Thomas, 2016; Watson, 2017). In 2008, during what was coined as the Great Recession, Watson (2017) and Sutcher et al. (2016), stated that many U.S. teaching positions and educational programs were cut from state and local budgets; thus, exhausting the need for teachers. They go on to say that since the cuts, there are signs of economic improvements, and districts across the nation are hiring again. However, continual improvements such as lower student to teacher ratios, the reinstatement of nontraditional classes, and educational programs that were cut during the Great Recession are driving the demands for teachers (Sutcher et al., 2016; Watson, 2017). However, despite economic improvement, reinstatement of instructional programs, and improved classroom conditions, Sutcher et al. (2016) noted that the increased demands have revealed a shortage of teachers needed to fill the vacant positions. Watson (2017) and Ingersoll (2001) stated that the demand for new teachers is not just the result of isolated phenomena, but is also compounded by the teacher turnover.

Ingersoll (2001) stated that from 1994-1995 about 418,000 teachers (out of 3,000,000) left the teaching workforce, which placed the national teacher turnover rate around 13%. The current average teacher turnover rate in the United States is about 8% annually, with about two-third leaving before retirement (Sutcher et al., 2016). Based on the estimates of Sutcher et al. (2016), the shrinking supply of teachers may result in fewer than 200,000 teachers being available to fill vacant teaching positions by 2025. The dilemma that many school systems encounter when seeking quality teachers to fill vacant teaching positions is compounded by the

fact that there are fewer new entrants into the professions through the teacher preparatory programs. These programs provide foundational structure for new teachers, such as content knowledge, pedagogy and classroom experience. However, teacher preparation program enrollment has dropped by 35% and the number of graduates has dropped by 23% between 2009 and 2014 (Sutcher et al., 2016).

When considering the teacher turnover problem from a macro level, Ingersoll (2001) stated that if the supply of teachers equaled the demand for teachers is an ideal situation, but data suggests that the supply of teachers is not the sole or dominant factor behind staffing problems. Ingersoll (2001), stated that any level of staff problems varies greatly among the different types of schools even in the same geographic region or jurisdiction. The Condition of Education 2016 report (Kena, Hussar, McFarland, de Brey, Musu-Gillette, Wang, Zhang, Rathbun, Wilkinson-Flicker, Diliberti, Barmer, Bullock Mann, & Dunlop Velez, 2016), stated that in 2013-2014 high poverty schools accounted for 25% of all public schools and that these schools have a higher concentration of Black, Hispanic, and American Indian/Alaska native students. This supports the claim by Ingersoll (2001) that stated the teacher turnover rate is historically higher in urban, rural, and high poverty public schools than the more affluent public schools. In contrast, according to the North Carolina's Annual Report on Teachers Leaving the Profession (2015-2016), the rate in which teachers are leaving is minimum stating that generally teachers are remaining in North Carolina (NC) classrooms. Teachers who remain in the profession, the school, or district are often those teachers who have strong community bonds, receive favorable evaluation ratings, and have higher teacher effectiveness, as measured by Education Value-Added Assessment Systems (NC Annual Report on Teachers Leaving the Profession, 2015-2016).

In many cases the reasons for teacher shortages cannot be isolated into just one or two categories. There are reasons that are the results of budgetary shortfalls, as seen during the most recent U.S. recession that lead to many teachers being terminated. Other factors which are beyond the teachers control, but contributes to them having to leave their position or school district include a spouse's new job requiring relocation, family emergencies and care for children or elderly parents. Retirement contributes to less than one-third of the attrition rate and family or personal factors contributes for about 43% of teacher attrition (Sutcher et al., 2016). Teachers also cite dissatisfaction with the administration, lack of support, a lack of input and control as a major contributor to them leaving the profession. Other areas included testing, pressures of accountability, and unhappiness with various working conditions (Sutcher et al., 2016).

NC teacher turnover rate has averaged consistently around 14% as reported in the NC Annual Report on Teachers Leaving the Profession (2013-2014, 2014-2015), while the 2015-2016 Annual Report on Teachers Leaving the Profession notes that the teacher turnover rate is 9.04%, which is a significant drop. However, it is also noted in the report that the 2015-2016 Annual Report on Teachers Leaving the Profession reflect changes in how employment trends are defined and the resulting data cannot be compared to prior years, and that the difference in employment trends from prior years are not comparable and cannot attribute to any program of policies implemented in the prior years. The changes to the annual report brings NC rate of teacher turnover closer to the U.S. national average of 8%. Another noted change to the 2015-2016 report is the elimination of term *turnover* and replaced with the term *attrition,* which reflects a reduction of employees that occur when employees leave the employing unit that can be measured at the state and local education agency (LEA) level (NC Annual Report on Teachers Leaving the Profession, 2015-2016), which is significant for NC in that the State Board of

Education is required by general statue §115C-12(22) to report on teachers leaving the profession that includes specific data on teacher turnover. The changes to the NC Annual Report on Teachers Leaving the Profession further emphasis the importance of employee turnover specifically when addressing the demand for quality teachers.

South Carolina (SC) reports their teacher turnover data by school districts and Virginia's state report focuses on critical teacher shortage areas. By comparison, SC overall teacher turnover rate is only calculated by school districts, and does not calculate a state average as NC, and although the NC Report on Teachers Leaving the Profession also measures teacher turn over by school districts, comparisons of the teacher turnover rates would have to be measured based on common factors, such as demographics and district size or population. J. J. Garrett (personal communication, April 12, 2017) stated it has been several years since SC has calculated an average teacher turnover rate, and the formula used to calculate the teacher turnover rate for the state was the same formula used to measure the teacher turnover rate in each school district, the state's average teacher turnover rate is measured as a separate district. Furthermore, J. J. Garrett (personal communication, April 12, 2017) stated an attempt to calculate the state's average by using the district's averages is not comparable and will yield a higher teacher turnover rate. For example, the last year that the state teacher turnover rate was calculated was 2011-2012, and the rate then was 8.1%, using the district averages for that year calculated the SC state average for teacher turnover at 14.4% (J. J. Garret Personal Communication, April 12, 2017).

Based on the Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement (CERRA) SC reported a slight decrease in the total number of full-time equivalent (FTE) teacher in 2016 (Garrett, 2017). In some districts the teacher turnover rate reached was as high as 24%. Approximately one-quarter of the FTE teachers hired in the 2016-2017 school year were

beginning teachers from SC teacher education programs, which is a decrease of about 29% compared to the 2015-2016 data (Garrett, 2017). According to Garrett (2017) reported to CERRA, nearly 6,482 teachers did not return to their teaching positions in 2016-2017, which represents a 21% increase based on the data from 2015-2016. The teacher turnover numbers, according to Garrett (2017) do not have the same affect statewide, in districts that consistently lose teachers the impact is extreme especially in districts where there is a high poverty rate.

The growing number of teachers leaving SC classrooms has a continuous and negative impact on SC public schools (Garrett, 2017). SC school districts with ongoing trends of losing teachers are faced with even greater challenges. SC teacher education programs are graduating fewer candidates eligible for teacher certification (Garrett, 2017). Furthermore, the teacher turnover issue is compounded by the number of teachers, according to Garrett (2017) who leave the teaching profession early. In the report to CERRA, Garrett (2017) reported that 38% of SC teachers left within the first five years of teaching, and 12% left after only one year or less. Through the CERRA, efforts to address SC teacher turnover have included various initiatives that started in 2015-2016, such as pay incentives for teachers in high turnover, high poverty districts (Garrett, 2017). Through the programs school districts are hopeful that there will be fewer vacancies each year.

In 2012, The New Teacher Project (TNTP) conducted a study of four urban districts comprised of 90,000 teachers that focused on the experiences of exceptional teachers. These teachers were identified as teachers who are highly effective in helping students make two to three more months of unexpected academic growth in a school year. When compared to teachers who were considered low-performing, these exceptional teachers' students averaged five to six months more academic growth ("tntp.org/The Irreplaceables Understanding the Real Retention

Crisis in America's Urban Schools", 2012). These teachers are considered *Irreplaceable* teachers, and when an irreplaceable teacher leaves an average school there are one in six chances that the replacement will be similar in quality. Furthermore, the research cited in the *Irreplaceables* stated that it takes 11 new hires to replace an Irreplaceable teacher with another teacher of equal quality in low performing schools ("tntp.org/The Irreplaceables Understanding the Real Retention Crisis in America's Urban Schools", 2012).

When examining education through different lenses the condition of education is measured and assessed differently from various perspectives. Regardless of the vantage point in which education is seen, what is consistent is that there is a need for improvement, and it begins with having quality educators. Nationally, there is a shortage of teachers, but as Sutcher et al. (2016) stated, the teacher shortage is not the same in all communities or classrooms, it affects some states, subject areas, and student population more than others. The shortage has been attributed to factors such as a reduction in the workforce, retirement, and teacher attrition. Forgoing the economic factors and reasons that are beyond the teacher's control, teachers leaving the profession, U.S. schools, and school districts, is a major contributor to the U.S. teacher shortage (Ingersoll, 2001; Sutcher et al., 2016). Furthermore, Sutcher et al. (2016) also stated that there is a variation in teacher shortages based on differences in wages, working conditions, a concentration of teacher preparatory institutions, and a range of policies that influence the recruitment and retention of teachers. Therefore, any improvement to education, will require efforts from school and school district leaders to increase the teacher retention and decrease teacher turnover.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine variables that are contributing to teachers' decisions to leave one local school district in Southeastern NC, and to make recommendations that may help the district's administrators reduce the teacher turnover rate. Langley, Moen, Nolan, Nolan, Norman, and Provost (2009) stated that when thinking of doing things better it is much easier than making the change. To address the teacher turnover rate in the study school district, the researcher would have to examine the variables in which the district has the most influence and is contributing to teachers' decision to leave the school district at a rate that is consistently above the state average (see Figures 1 & 2). According to the NC State Board of Education Annual Report on Teachers Leaving the Profession (2013-14 & 2014-2015), teachers reported that they left the study district but remained in education at a rate consistently higher than any other reported reason, which was 55%. The other reasons reported by teachers for leaving the study school district was because of actions initiated by the administrators in the study school district, and for personal reasons. In some cases, teachers involuntarily resigned to stop the actions of the district and school leaders in the study school district that would make future employment difficult (see Figure 3). When examining the list of teachers who left the study school district each school year, the number of teachers who left involuntarily to avoid or stop further actions initiated by the administrators, and the number of teachers who received favorable ratings on their yearly evaluations accounted for more than half of the teacher turnover rate (NC State Board of Education Annual Report on Teachers Leaving the Profession, 2013-2014 & 2014-2015). The number of teachers who would have been subject to actions initiated by study school district administrators, teachers who were in good standing, and teachers who left for personal reasons are the major contributing factors to the study school district's consistently

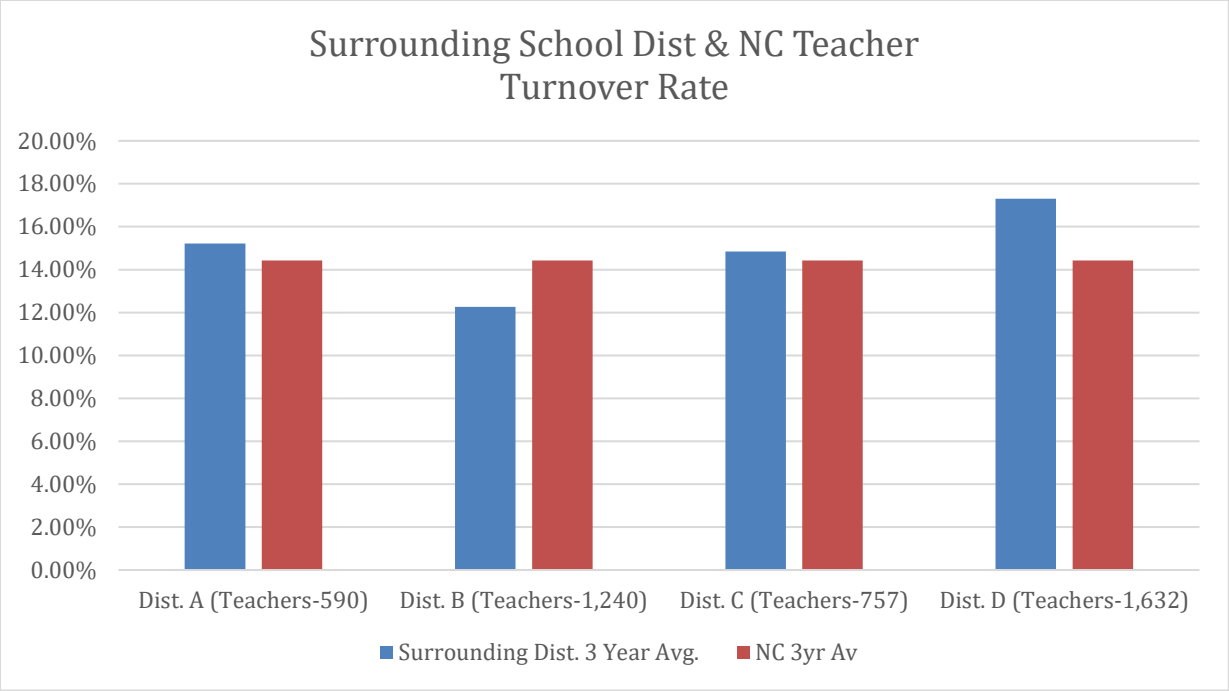

Figure 1. A comparison of the surrounding school districts and NC three-year teacher turnover average.

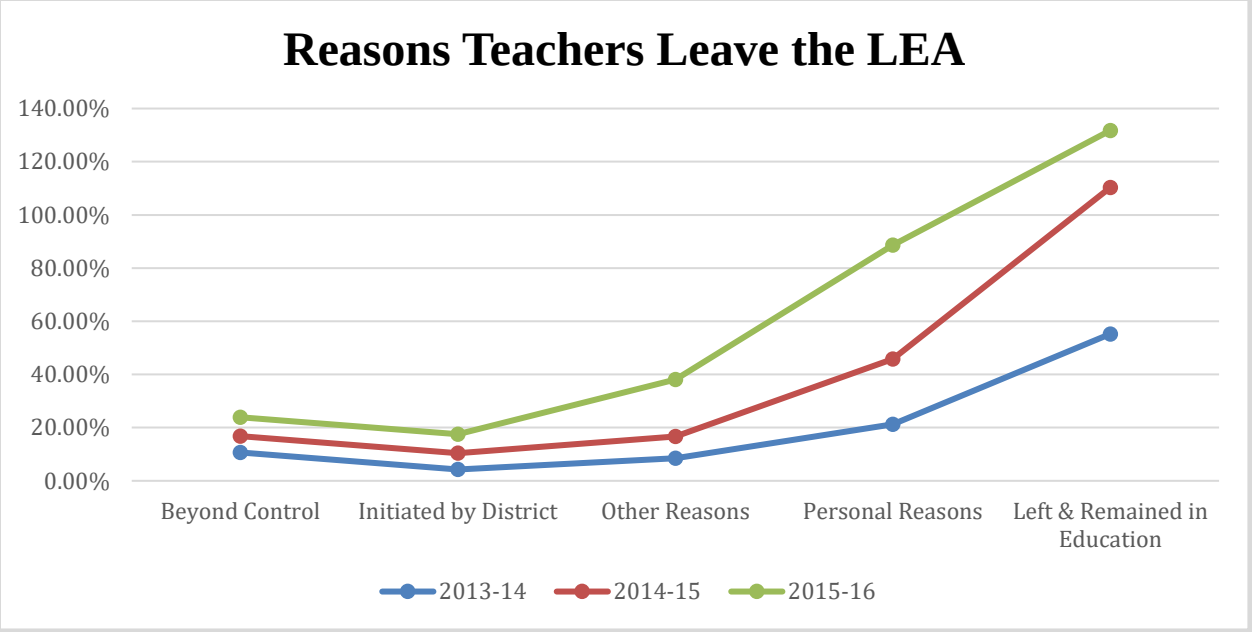

Figure 2. Reason cited in the NC Annual Report on teachers leaving the profession.

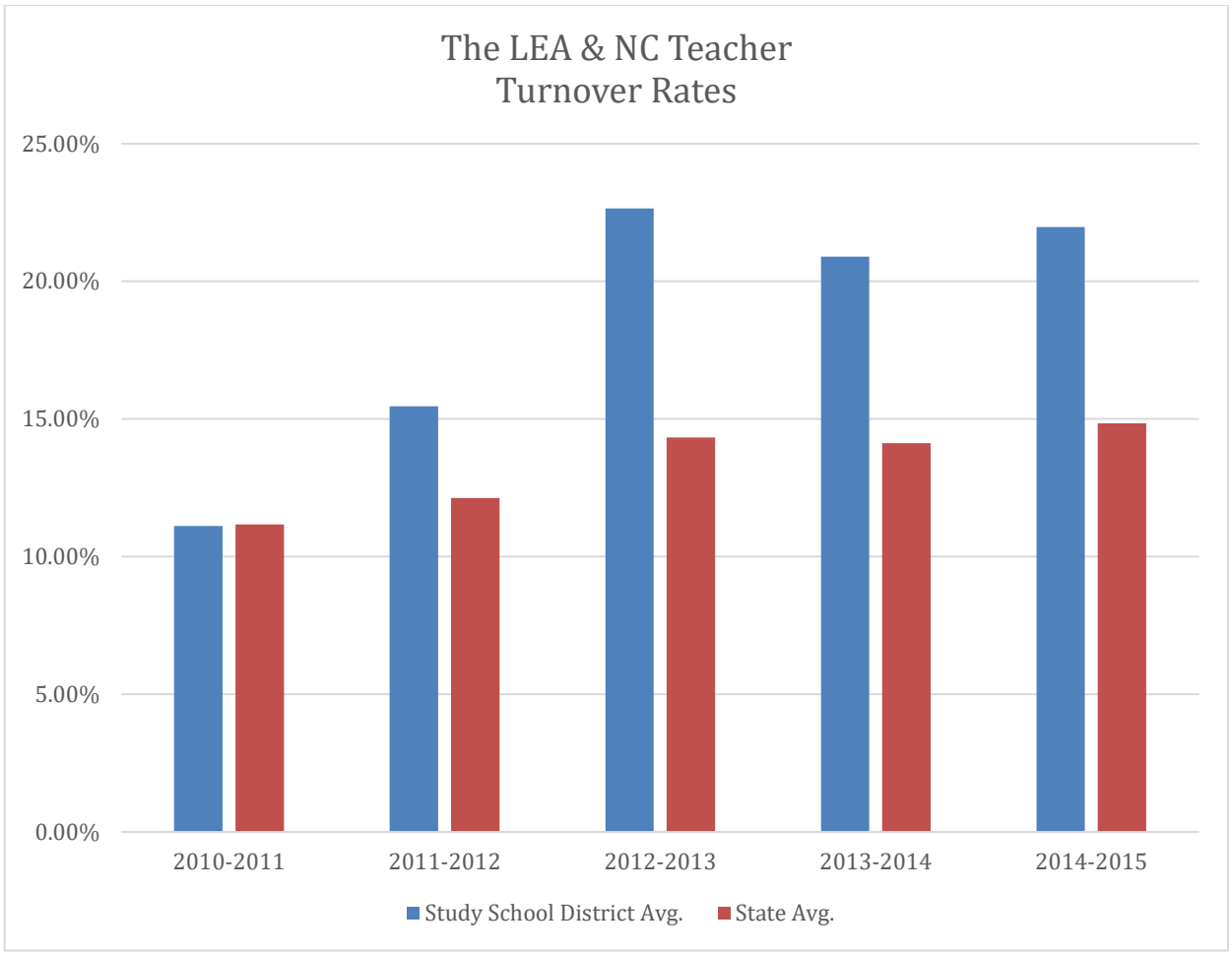

Figure 3. A comparison of the study school district and NC teacher turnover rate.

high teacher turnover rate. Byerly (2012) stated not all termination is equal and can be categorized as good, bad, and perhaps neutral, as well as employee loss for the company.

By way of example, based on the NC State Board of Education Annual Report on Teachers Leaving the Profession (2014-2015), after the 2014-2015 school year, 49 teachers left the study school district, and out of those 49 teachers, 31 of them had reached career status. Career status is defined in NC as a teacher who has a Standard two teacher's license, had taught in a LEA four consecutive years, and granted tenure by the LEA. Career status or tenure could be earned after one year of probation if a teacher had obtained tenure in a previous North Carolina LEA and receives a recommendation from the principal. Therefore, the study school district not only loss teachers who were considered less effective, but also quality teachers with years of experience. Comparison of the surround school districts' teacher turnover rate, further highlights the teacher turnover rate problem in the study school district.

By comparison, the four surrounding school districts have also experienced teacher turnover, but has a three-year teacher turnover average rate that is slightly higher or lower than the state's three-year teacher turnover average rate. The surrounding school districts, *A, B, C, & D* are larger counties, with larger LEAs, and have multiple teacher placements that provides opportunities for teachers to change worksite locations or positions without leaving the school district. According to the North Carolina Annual Report (2012-2013, 2013-2014, & 2014-2015), school district *A* has a three-year teacher turnover average rate of 15.22%, school district *B* has a three-year teacher turnover average rate of 12.27%, which is slightly lower than the state's three-year teacher turnover average rate (North Carolina Annual Report, 2012-2013, 2013-2014, & 2014-2015). School district *C* has a three-year teacher turnover average rate of 14.84%, and school district *D* has a three-year teacher turnover average rate of 17.30%, which is higher that

the state's three-year average rate (North Carolina Annual Report, 2012-2013, 2013-2014, & 2014-2015). However, according to the North Carolina Annual Report (2012-2013, 2013-2014, & 2014-2015), school district *D* has over 1,600 teachers, which is about 400 more teachers than the next largest school district and 1,400 more than the study school district (see Figure 1).

Demographics of the Study School District

The study school district is a rural school district in Southeastern North Carolina. The study school district is one of the largest employers in the county, second to the North Carolina Department of Corrections that staffs three prisons. The state budget formula includes additional funds because the study school district is considered a rural, low-wealth district, and a small school district. The study school district is a microcosm of the teacher turnover challenges experienced on the national and state levels. The efforts of the study school district to support teachers through investments in literacy, technology, and instructional coaches; as well as support for beginning teachers at all grade levels the rate of teacher turnover remains above the state average. The investment by the study school district's administration in materials human and capital has yielded minimum measures and the school district's return on the investments marginal since their teacher turnover rate consistently remains above the national and state averages (NC State Board of Education Report on Teachers Leaving the Profession, 2013-2014 & 2014-2015).

The comprehensive Pre-Kindergarten through grade 12 school district average enrollments is about 3,200 students. The study school district has six schools and two educational programs. The schools are separated by grade levels, with no grade levels overlapping on any campus, except for the comprehensive high school and the early college high school. The Pre-Kindergarten Center and Primary school share the same campus with separate

administration. The Pre-Kindergarten Center's average enrollment is about 100 students and the Primary school contains kindergarten and first grades and enrolls about 500 students. The first of the Elementary schools contains second and third grades and with an average enrollment of 500 students, and the Intermediate Elementary school has fourth and fifth grades with an average enrollment of 500 students. When students in the study school district enter middle school in sixth grade the average enrollment is around 700, which remains consistent through eighth grade. After middle school students have an option to apply to the Early College High School (ECHS). This school averages about 100 students, or enter the comprehensive High School (CHS), which is the traditional high school for ninth through twelfth grades. ECHS and CHS has the largest span of grade levels and the CHS has the highest enrollment of about 900 students. The students in the study school district who enter kindergarten together and in some case pre-kindergarten will remain together through graduation in the twelfth grade at CHS or ECHS. However, seniors who graduate from the ECHS could graduate as Super-Seniors, a term coined by the administrators in the study school district. *Super-Seniors* are students who graduate from the ECHS and have earned their high school diploma but also have earned college credits to be awarded an Associate Degree(s) from the local community college.

The steady rise in the teacher turnover rate may be linked to several factors contributing to teachers are leaving the study school district. However, in the study school district the number one reason reported consistently on North Carolina Annual Report on Teachers Leaving the Profession (2013-2014, 2014-2015), was to work in other districts. 24.5% of teachers reported leaving the study school district for personal reasons. Six percent of the teachers in the study school district, who left the district stated that their reason for leaving was beyond their control, likewise 6% of teachers in the study school district who left also stated their reason for leaving

was due to actions initiated by the district and school administrators in the study school district (North Carolina Annual Report on Teachers Leaving the Profession, 2014-2015), which is down from the 10% who reported they left for reason beyond their control in 2013-2014 and an increase of the 4% in 2013-2014 as reported in the North Carolina Annual Report on Teachers Leaving the Profession (2013-2014) (see Figure 1).

The counties that surround the study school district all have larger LEAs. It is estimated that greater than 50% of the staff in the study school district that commute to work are coming from the surrounding counties. North Carolina's teacher salary schedule sets the annual salary for every teacher, but the local supplement for teachers is set by the local board of education in each LEA. This is significant because the study school district is competing with the LEAs in these counties that offer higher local supplements, which raises teachers' annual salaries. The teachers in the study school district receive a $1,000 local salary supplement. Compared to the surrounding LEAs where teachers are commuting in from offers a supplement that is significantly greater, which could be a factor in the decision to leave the study school district. For example, the supplement for the largest of the surrounding school districts is two% of teachers' annual salary the first year and increases to 5% after the first year. Another school district's local supplement is $1,500, while another pay a local supplement of 8% of the teachers' salary, and 11% in schools designated as high priority schools. Having to compete with other LEAs when recruiting and retaining teachers becomes a challenge, especially when the choices are to have a shorter commute and a higher supplement, teachers may elect not to come or are choosing to leave the study school district. Chetty, Friedman, and Rockoff (2012) stated it is a more cost-effective strategy to replace teachers with low value-added data than offering incentives and bonuses to teacher who have high value-added to retain them, however in the long

run higher salaries could attract more teachers with high value-added data to the profession. This could also contribute to lowering the teacher turnover and attrition rate.

This hypothesized situation, that teachers are deciding to leave the study school district for higher local supplements, shorter commutes to work, and greater opportunities and flexibility to teach in different setting, is only one factor influencing the turnover rate in the study school district. As previously stated, a few factors listed as the top reasons why teachers left the study school district, such as retirement and family relocation (NC Annual Report on Teachers Leaving the Profession, 2013-2014 & 2014-2015) are factors that any LEA cannot control. However, when considering other reasons why teachers are leaving the study school district and the challenges that the district faces it necessitates that the study school district develop a plan to retain teachers and lower its teacher turnover rate. Such a plan must address the challenges highlighted in the hypothesized scenario that focuses on recruiting teachers who live in surrounding counties, are willing to commute, receive a lower supplement, and with fewer options in teaching assignments. Chetty et al. (2012) stated polices that raise the quality of teachers is likely to have significant economic and social benefits, and good teachers are of great value to their students. The teacher turnover in the study school district is a microcosm of the teacher turnover issues faced nationally, especially in urban, high poverty, low wealth, and rural school districts.

The teacher replacements hired to fill the vacancies left by the teachers in 2014 may or may not have an immediate influence on student growth data. The study school district relies heavily on filling many teaching vacancies with new graduates from the local university, and many of these novice teachers lack the required tools of an effective teacher. Because these novice teachers' lack of experience, they will not have an immediate positive impact in the

classroom. Furthermore, teachers who come with experience, unless they transferred from another NC district will not have EVAAS data as evidence that they will have an influence on student growth. In 2014, the study school district hired 39 new teachers and only two of the positions were newly funded positions. Of the 39 hired 13 came from other LEAs, two were Visiting International Faculty, and the remaining 22 were beginning teachers. Principals in the study school district are faced with the challenge of recruiting and retaining quality teachers who will help the school and the district meet the expectations to raise student achievement and establish and maintain safe and orderly learning environments. Despite making tremendous gains with one-to-one technology, S.T.E.M, and other instructional innovations the rate of teacher turnover in the study school district is the highest in their Regional Education Service Agency (RESA), and the 15th highest in the state. It should also be noted that the LEAs with the 13th and 14th highest turnover rate are two city school districts that operate within larger counties in NC. According to data from North Carolina Annual Report on Teachers Leaving the Profession (2013-2014, 2014-2015), since 2010 the top reason for teacher turnover in the study school district has been to teach in another school district. It is worth noting that the top reasons listed in the annual report for teachers leaving NC LEAs were for personal reasons, reasons beyond the teacher's control, to work in other positions in education, and other undisclosed reasons (North Carolina Annual Report on Teachers Leaving the Profession 2013-2014, 2014-2015).

Problem Statement

Nationwide teacher attrition is a significant concern (Ulfert, 2016). Zhang and Zeller (2016) stated, in 2005 school systems in the US spent over four billion dollars in teacher turnover. The state average teacher turnover rate in North Carolina (NC) has averaged about 14% according to the North Carolina State Board of Education Annual Report on Teachers

Leaving the Profession (2012-2013 & 2013-2014), which is above the national average. The study school district's teacher turnover rate continues to exceed NC's average teacher turnover rate (see Figure 4). The teacher turnover rate in the study school district has consistently increased since 2009. According to the Public Schools of North Carolina State Board of Education Annual Report on Teachers Leaving the Profession (2013-2014), the five-year teacher turnover rate in the study school district was 17.02%, which was the 15th highest in the state and second highest in region two of their Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA). In 2012-13 the turnover rate in the study school district reached a high of 22.64%, and according to the 2013-2014 data the teacher turnover rate in the study school district was at 20.89%; compared with the state's average of 14.12%. Based on data from the Public Schools of North Carolina State Board of Education Annual Report on Teachers Leaving the Profession (2014-2015), the five-year teacher turnover rate in the study school district decreased to 18.41%, which was still the 15th highest in the state, but was the highest rate of teacher turnover in region two. The five-year teacher turnover rate average in the study school district was 4.09% higher than the cumulative five-year average for all the school districts in region two of their RESA (see Figure 4). The 2014-2015 teacher turnover rate in the study school district was 21.97%, which was only one percentage point lower than the previous school year. Therefore, the problem to be addressed in this study is the high teacher turnover rate in the study school district.

Study Questions

Considering the problem of the study, the teacher turnover rate in the study school district, there are two questions this study will answer.

1. What factors contributes in the decision of teachers who leave the study school district?

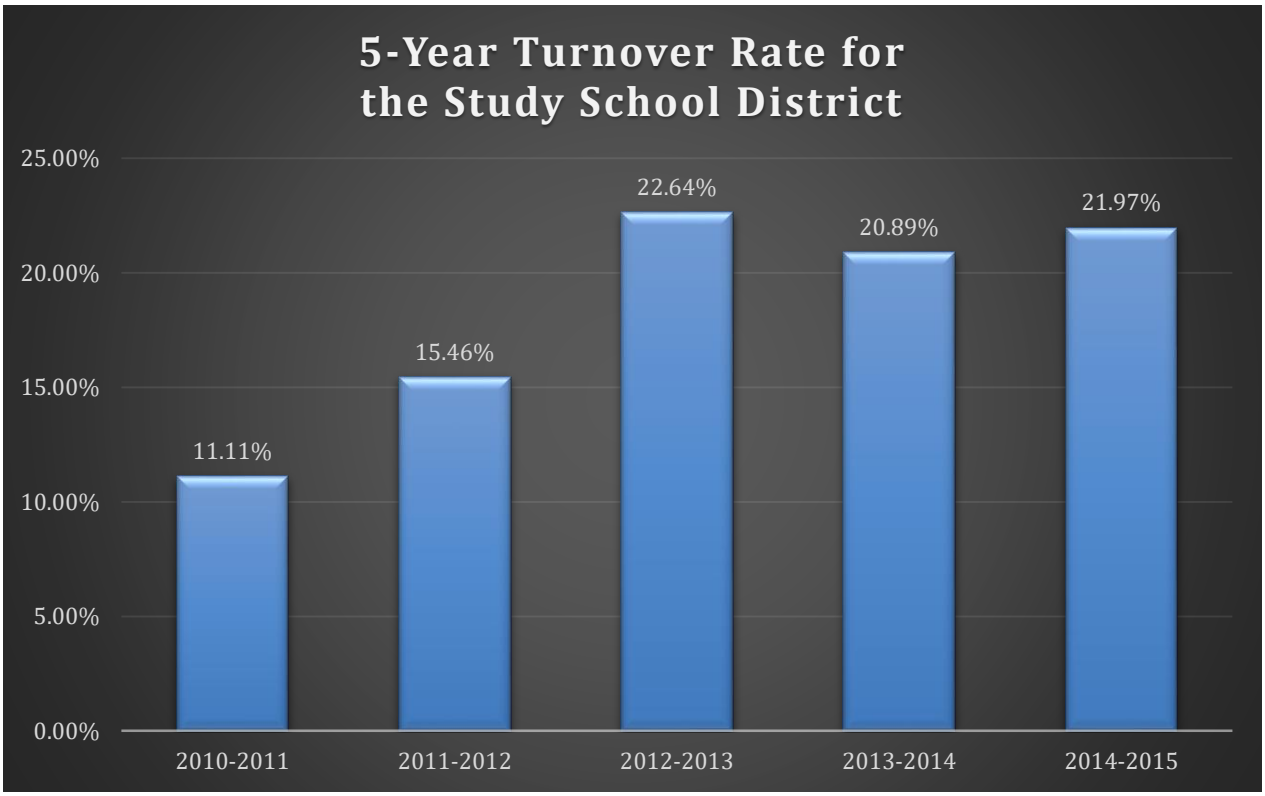

Figure 4. Schools teacher turnover rate for the study school district.

2. What factors contributes in the decision of teachers who stay in the study school district?

Study Design

The demand and need to find quality teachers in urban, high poverty, low wealth and rural school districts are great, and makes recruiting and retaining quality teachers a daunting task (Ingersoll, 2001; Kena et al., 2016; TNPT, 2012). In examining the rate of teacher turnover in the study school district, it will only be deemed problematic if it is an issue that leaders in the study school district view as a barrier to continuous school and district improvement (Archbald, 2014). However, the most effective study design for a study considers multiple research approaches and can allow the researcher to contemplate and find a pathway from one's natural research inclination (O'Donoghue, 2007). For the purpose of this study, the most effective study design is to employ the Gap Analysis for Problem-solving, Planning, and School Improvement (GAPPSI) method.

Summary

In most organizations, there is the reality that employee turnover will occur. Based on the responses from the Public Schools of North Carolina State Board of Education Annual Report on Teachers Leaving the Profession (2014-2015), 21 teachers stated that they left the study school district to work in another school district. What is not clear is the reason why they left the study school district to work in other school districts. Implications from district leaders are that some teachers were given the option to leave voluntarily or face action initiated by the district or school leaders in the study school district, such as not having their contract non-renewed or receiving negative rating on their annual evaluation. Subsequently, these actions, along with the other factors teachers are deciding to leave the study school district, which has led to the study

school district having a teacher turnover rate that is consistently higher teacher turnover rate than the state average.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on the topic of employee turnover and retention is often examined through the lens of corporate businesses. In the literature related to employee attrition, retention, and turnover, findings focus on the human resource aspects of turnover, the cost to an organization that has significant turnover, and recommend that employers consider the investment in their employees as a return on investment (ROI) as a means of keeping the right people in the organization (Byerly, 2012). When narrowing the search for literature on teacher turnover or teacher attrition the literature, studies, and reports typically focus on teacher shortage and possible causes for teacher shortages, the challenges school districts share in finding qualified teachers, and the difficulty of finding teachers for hard to fill positions; such as math, science, and special education. Additionally, and the literature highlights the most frequent reasons why teachers are leaving not only the classrooms, but also the school district and in some case the teaching profession. However, what is not consistently found in the literature are education specific recommendations that could reduce employee lost and teacher attrition, with some exceptions in studies that examine urban and rural school districts. Therefore, this literature review focused on six areas. These areas were as follows, school culture and leadership, understanding human capital and the cost of teacher turnover, the effects of teacher turnover on rural schools, examining the growing teacher shortage, exploring the reasons why teachers are leaving the profession, and a review of teacher retention strategies.

School Culture and Leadership

The demand and need to find quality teachers in urban, high poverty, low wealth and rural school districts are great, and makes recruiting and retaining quality teachers a daunting task (Ingersoll, 2001; Kena et al., 2016; TNPT, 2012). Staffing the nation's schools with well-

qualified teachers has been a long and prominent issue for elementary and secondary schools (Hampden-Thompson, Herring, & Kienzl, 2008). Monk (2007) stated rural schools and small schools have a below average share of highly-trained teachers. According to Schaefer, Long, and Clandinin (2012), the lack of leadership support was found to be a significant contributing factor for beginning teachers who left the teaching profession. Boyd, Grossman, Ing, Hamilton, Lankford, Loeb, and Wyckoff (2011), stated several studies have linked teacher attrition to multiple school contextual factors as influences on teachers' career decisions, such as administrative support, staff relations, facilities, and safety.

Arnup and Bowles (2016) stated teachers who leave the profession attributed it to poor job satisfaction, which was influenced by low salary, poor student motivation, and the lack of administrative support. According to Arnup and Bowles (2016), teachers also indicated other negative factors that influenced job satisfaction, such as external stressors, high incidence of discipline, the lack of resources, and time constraints. Martin, Buelow, and Hoffman (2015), stated research findings indicated that teacher turnover rates are closely related to the school's environment and support received than other factors, such as socioeconomics or student ethnicity. According to Gulosino, Franceschini, and Hardman (2016), school climate influences teachers' decisions to leave their teaching assignments, and contributes to the teacher turnover rate. Hanawalt (2015) stated the challenge of supporting beginning teachers is complex, and despite the best mentoring and induction programs, it cannot overcome an unhealthy school climate or unsupportive school culture. When employees feel connected to their work environment they are more likely to enjoy their work (Watson, 2017). Once leaders understand the strategies and factors associated recruitment and retention they can positively influence

teacher retention and recruitment, especially school leaders in rural school districts (Ulfert, 2016).

Furthermore, Ulfert (2016) also stated leaders must understand that the sphere of influences that attracted a teacher to a school district are not the same factors that determines whether the teacher will remain in the same school district. According to the TNPT (2012), retention patterns consistently places the lowest achieving schools in cycles of failure because they are unable to keep or have enough good or great teachers that are able to facilitate consistent and stainable school improvement. Teachers tend to leave their teaching assignments when they encounter a school environment that lack essential professional supports, such as support from school leaders, and working conditions that do not convey respect or value for the teachers. (Gulosin et al., 2016). Boyd et al. (2011) stated the quality of the school's leadership is a significant factor in teacher turnover, and that teacher perception of the school's leadership are predictive of the teachers' intention to stay or leave the school.

Human Capital and the Cost of Turnover

Byerly (2012) stated employee changes can remove unproductive employees and bring in new ideas, however there is a cost associated with employee turnover. The business sectors measure their profit based on gains and losses. Included in the formula is how resources are appropriated and used with fidelity, this includes human capital. Echols (2005a), stated human capital should not be a matter-of-fact overhead expense, and employers should invest in employees' continual education and professional development. Likewise, Echols (2005b) stressed the perspective in which employers should view human capital as a commodity worth investing. The value in most modern companies is intangible, and the asset of the company is not found in the inventory, factories, or receivables (Byerly, 2012). However, the asset of the

company is in the employees, intellectual property, expertise, relationships, and business processes, and when an employee leave the organization, there is a measureable loss to the organization especially if the employee was a highly skilled worker (Byerly, 2012). Furthermore, Byerly (2012) stated there is a cost to organizations associated with employee turnover, which should be considered.

However, the idea that human capital is as inter-changeable as mechanical parts is delusional. Ultimately, an organization's bottom line is impacted by the cost to replace human capital (Echols, 2005b). Byerly (2012) asserted that a key aspect for any organization is not to just keep their employees, but to keep the right employees who are an asset to the organization. Allen (2008) identified three key reason why organizations should consider employee turnover as important. Employee turnover is important according to Allen (2008), because it is expensive, has an impact on the organization's performance, and finding qualified employees has become difficult. Allen (2008) said the cost associated with employee turnover includes factors such as time, money, and other tangible and intangible resources, and finding the right employees with the right skills or skill set is a challenge that is becoming more difficult.

In education, calculating the cost is not easily measured by the financial bottom line, however, there is the cost to train and equip novice or new teachers on the dynamics of teaching not just associated with content knowledge. The cost for professional development for teachers in some cases can be measured in dollars, especially if the cost is associated with a specific learning program or school district initiative, such as Thinking Map®, which involves staff training and course material. Merrow (1999) stated U.S. presidents since Harry Truman have warned about teaching shortage, and millions of federal dollars have been spent on strategies to recruit more people into teaching. However, the dire warnings are not new and neither are the

strategies (Merrow, 1999). Ronfeldt, Loeb, and Wyckoff (2013) argued that teacher turnover has a broader organization impact on student learning that reaches beyond the teacher leaving, replacing the teacher, and their students. There is not only a loss in institutional knowledge, but also in established relationship between the students and the teachers. The cost is not limited to replacing lost workers, but also their skills, and knowledge (Echols, 2005a). Byerly (2012) also agreed that costs associated with employee turnover can be seen in the cost of recruitment, loss of expertise, and orientation for new employees. Echols (2005b), stated executives understanding of strategic investment in human capital is a critical part of the organization's financial performance, yet they struggle with the best ways to invest in their employees and how to improve the financial ROI on human capital.

Rural Schools

Many rural communities are impoverished and associate with an aging population (Monk, 2007). Furthermore, rural areas have also experienced a drop-in population in response to the decline in traditional rural areas industries (Monk, 2007), such as textile and farming. According to Tippett (2015), North and South Carolina have had significant population growth at a faster rate than the national average since 2000, and it is projected to continue. However, the population growth has not occurred evenly across the counties in each state, and in the coming decade NC population growth is projected to be highly uneven (Tippett, 2015). NC population growth according to Tippett (2015), will occur in counties that belong to either metropolitan or urban areas. At the same time 30 of NC counties are projected to lose population by 2020. The study school district is projected to experience a population loss by 2020, and has experienced a population loss between 2010 and 2014 (Tippett, 2015).

Arnup and Bowles (2016) stated trusting relationships between colleagues and between teachers and students are disrupted by teacher attrition, which can lead to negative student achievement outcomes. This is an advantage for teachers in rural schools, according to Monk (2007). Classes in rural schools are relatively small, and teachers tend to report satisfaction with their working conditions. However, Monk (2007) added, that teacher turnover in rural school districts are often high and hiring replacement teachers is a challenge and can be difficult. In examining teacher recruitment and retention in rural areas, Monk (2007) characterized rural communities as small, with sparse populations, and economic reliance on agriculture or other place-bound industries, such as meatpacking. Many, though not all, according Monk (2007) say they are seriously impoverished. The economic reliance on agriculture and other place-bound industries hire immigrant workers that minimize the labor cost that causes the economic base to shift (Monk, 2007). Ulferts (2016) stated teacher recruitment and retention efforts add to the economic distress of rural schools. Likewise, the shifts and instability of the economic base in rural areas has far-reaching effects on the school districts' ability to recruit and retain teachers; and in particular, high-quality teachers.

Furthermore, the resources that rural school districts must invest into professional development of new staff affects and stretches their financial budget as well as student achievement, which makes recruitment and retention of highly qualified teachers the number one concern for superintendents in rural school districts (Ulferts, 2016). Jimerson (2003), stated that the turnover challenges rural schools face has resulted in the practice of hiring under-prepared, less experienced teachers, assigning teachers to teach out of their field, teach larger classes, offer fewer advanced course options, and fragmented curriculum and professional development. In 2007, according Ulfert (2016) stated The National Commission on Teaching and America's

Future warned the effects of high teacher turnover on rural schools, supporting Jimerson's (2003) claim that rural schools are frequently forced to hire under-prepared or inexperienced teachers, and that inexperienced teachers are less effective than teachers with experience. Additionally, Rice and the Urban Institute (2010), stated the impact of having less experienced teachers is greater at the elementary and middle school. High rates of teacher attrition have a negative impact on student achievement and schools (Ingersoll, 2001). Ulfert (2016) likewise stated that the challenges of recruitment and retention faced by rural school districts have a detrimental impact on student achievement. Therefore, in many school improvement plans, teacher retention and recruitment objectives are often included.

Teacher Shortage

The shortage of teachers is symptomatic of two issues, first the decreased number of teacher candidates enrolling in teacher preparatory programs and the large number of teachers eligible for retirement, especially those born during the Baby Boomer era. Both issues are contributors to the shortage, but are not limited to just these two factors alone. The second focus of the literature is on the rate of teacher turnover, which is often interchanged most frequently with the term of teacher attrition. The literature on turnover in education highlights various reasons for teacher attrition, the most common causes found in most studies or listed in reports are for personal or family reasons, which are often related to their spouse job relocation or illness, family changes to care for a new born or an elderly or ill parents, or personal fatigue or burnout (Kena et al., 2016; NC Report to the General Assembly on Teacher Turnover, 2013-14; 2014-15; & 2015-2016). Other causes for teacher attrition and associated with why teachers are leaving the profession are because teachers moving to a different school or school district, or negative working conditions, such as administrative support, student discipline, or actions

initiated by the school district. Actions initiated by the school district includes factors such as budget cuts, contract non-renewal, or negative evaluation ratings. According to Merrow (1999), the nation's 1,300 universities and colleges produce more than enough teacher, however 30% of those do not go into classrooms.

Education's real problem Merrow (1999) asserted lie within the antiquated educational system that remains in place. System wide patterns of mediocrity and incompetence that has infected the entire system, which began in the schools of education responsible for preparing new teachers. Recruiting teachers is a simple solution to a complex problem according to Merrow (1999), but it the wrong approach. Teacher shortage exits where schools underpay and mistreat teachers, where school districts cannot find qualified teachers, and where professional development is substandard (Merrow, 1999). Teachers are leaving the profession in droves for two simple reasons; they are poorly trained and then treated badly (Merrow, 1999).

In school districts across the United States (US) school district leaders and principals are devoting great efforts, time, and resources to find qualified teachers (Watson, 2017), to fill vacant teacher positions. However, there are challenges that some face that are unique to their situations, such as rural, urban, or high poverty schools (Sutcher et al., 2016). The challenges range from finding qualified candidates with the required certification to retaining the teachers currently employed. According to the U.S. Department of Education Title Two Report (2016), since the 2012-2013 academic year there has been a continual downward trend of enrollees in teacher preparatory programs, reporting that the 499,800 enrolled in 2012-2013 was down 20% from the 623,190 enrolled in the 2011-2012 academic year. It further reports (U.S. Department of Education Title Two Report, 2016) that the 623,190 enrolled was down 9% of the 684,801 enrolled in the 2010-2011 academic year.

Along with the facts that the pool of candidates to select from has decreased, Watson (2017) also stated that many U.S. workers have reached the age of retirement, and many born during the Baby Boomer era are retiring in droves. However, this only accounts for only a portion of the attrition of teachers. Watson (2017) and Sutcher et al. (2016) stated that despite the U.S. economic recovery and improvement efforts by many school districts, such as increased wages and smaller class sizes, the student population in public schools continues to grow and there are not enough teacher candidates to fulfill the growing needs. So, while the teacher shortage is in part is the result of the decreased enrollment in teacher preparatory programs and the increase enrollment of students across U.S. school districts the other major factor to the teacher shortage is teacher turnover or teacher attrition. Brown and Wynn (2009) stated the rate of teacher turnover has become an issue across the educational spectrum, and despite compensation structures that offer monetary incentives the rate of teacher turnover continues to increase.

Teacher turnover and retention are complex dynamics according to Ingersoll (2001), and failure of the organization to recognize the subtle difference can lead to faulty interpretations of their teacher turnover data. Ingersoll (2001) reported that empirical research over the last two decades on teacher turnover has focused on determining which kinds of teachers are more prone to leave teaching, and why. The findings show a strong correlation to the characteristics of the teacher, which Ingersoll (2001) stated is a limitation of these studies, and they rarely focus on explaining teacher turnover because of any actions of school or school district. Furthermore, findings also show higher teacher turnover rates in certain content areas. Despite the considerable amount of studies conducted on teacher turnover the findings, Ingersoll (2001), Ingersoll and Strong (2011) admitted is inconsistent, but typically special education, math, and

science are content areas with high teacher turnover (Ingersoll, 2001). Iasevoli (2017) also stated there are isolated shortages in certain subject areas like science, math, and special education, as well as in certain geographic area such as rural and high need schools. Hampden-Thompson et al. (2008) stated the number of mathematics and science teachers who left the teaching profession between 1988-1989 and 2004-2005 did not show any measurable change, but the percentage of public school teachers who left the profession in other content areas did show a measurable increase over the same time periods. Maintaining a sufficient supply of mathematics and science teachers depends on two rates, according to Hampden-Thompson et al. (2008), the rates in which the number of teachers leaving the profession and the of number teachers entering the profession are balanced. This would also apply to teacher turnover in general.

Teachers Leaving

Resilience and job satisfaction are possible predictors of teachers' decision to the profession, which can be influenced by school leaders and policy makers (You & Conely, 2014). The U.S. Department of Education (2014) reported that 59% of public school teachers who moved from one public school to another were in the same school district, and 38% moved from one public school district to another public-school district. Likewise, the U.S. Department of Education (2014) also reported that about 51% of teachers who left the profession in 2012-2013 stated that the manageability of the work load in their current position was better than it was as a teacher, and 53% stated that the working conditions of their new positions were better than the working conditions when they were teaching. Melvin (2011), stated merely recruiting new staff to replace those who have left will not get any organization better results or out of their retention dilemma. Perhaps through purposeful and supportive leadership actions teachers who are electing to leave could be influenced to stay, according to Brown and Wynn (2009).

Federal and state legislations have influenced teacher turnover. President George W. Bush's administration attempted to influence improvements in education when reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), through the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation. One element of NCLB was to ensure that every student was being taught by a highly qualified (HQ) teacher (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Many of public schools worked frantically to screen and fill vacant positions with teachers who were considered HQ. Again, the cost to organizations were increased exponentially to meet the requirements of the NCLB legislation. Despite the legislation and the hiring practices there were still teaching positions that were hard to fill, for example, math, science, and Special Education positions. Often these teachers who were HQ were recruited away from one district to another. As districts exchanged teachers who were HQ from the limited talent pool, colleges and universities graduated a smaller number of students from their teacher preparation programs, which was out paced by the attrition rate of teachers who were eligible to retire, the teachers who were leaving the profession, or recruited to teach out of state.

In 2008 President Obama entered office with the support of educators based on the promises to repeal NCLB, which was an unfunded mandate placed on public education. However, the reauthorization of ESEA under the Race to the Top (RttT), which was a state competition that rewarded states with millions of dollars to fund innovate educational initiative. RttT did roll back many of the NCLB mandates. The requirement to have HQ teachers was relaxed with the caveat that states adopt new evaluation instruments that measured teachers impact on student growth on state assessments. Yet again, teachers were scrutinized and efforts were taken to remove teachers who had negative student achievement data. According to Re (2013), even President Obama understands that incompetent teachers do more harm than good

and should be removed, but only after they have been provided the chance to succeed. This can be achieved by providing them with resources such as professional development (PD) and peer mentoring, which are key elements to improving teacher quality. It is more economical to invest in developing new skills with employees than it is to seek out those skills on the open market (Echols, 2005a).

The NC State Board of Education Annual Report on Teachers Leaving the Profession (2014-2015), reported NC had a low of 928 teachers in 2012-2013 who left due to actions initiated the district. The following year the number of teachers who left due to actions initiated by the district reached a high of 1,122. The North Carolina Policy on Teacher Appraisal System outlines the requirements for observing and evaluating teachers' performance. For teachers that are newly licensed requirements are different than those teachers who are fully licensed or have career status. This manual is the standard for each district in evaluating teachers and reporting it to the state. It also explains the process for putting teachers on monitored or directed development plans when deficiencies are observed. The process must be followed to recommend dismissal of a teacher if their job performance does not improve (North Carolina State Board of Education: Policy Manual, 2015). Over the last 20 years the NC teacher appraisal instrument has evolved from a scripted or narrative tool to a rubric based instrument. Prior to the implementation of the rubric or NCEES instrument observers collected raw data or took notes during a classroom observation. The observer would use the information to write out a scripted narrative of the observation that focused on different aspects of the lesson. At the end of the evaluation cycle teachers would receive an evaluation summary that noted whether they were above standard, at-standard, or below standard. Teachers who were rated below standard were subject to an action plan. Since this time, NC has adopted a new instrument that is a rubric that

lists behaviors that teachers would demonstrate if he was a developing teacher, a proficient teacher, an accomplished teacher, or a distinguished teacher. Again, at the end of the observation cycle teachers received an evaluation. Teachers receiving a summative rating of developing on any of NCEES standards or elements and are not recommended for dismissal, demotion or non-renewal are placed on Monitored Growth Plan or a Directed Growth Plan by the principal, according to North Carolina State Board of Education Policy Manuel (2015). The significant of this is that teachers who receive summative rating of developing on NCEES and are placed on directed or monitored plan or in previous years were placed on an action plan must disclose this to future employers, which make the teacher less likely to be hired. Most often this is the leverage that some districts use to initiate actions to remove a teacher. Many teachers will decide to involuntarily resign in exchange for a positive reference and avoid the actions of being place on a corrective plan that allow them the opportunity to be hired in another school district.

In comparison of the NC State Board of Education Report on Teachers Leaving the Profession (2013-2014 & 2014-2015) there are districts that show a reduction in their teacher turnover rate. The report does not cite any actions taken by those districts or factors that contributed to the change over time. Based on the reported reasons why teachers leave there are only a few factors in which the district has a direct influence over, which are the actions initiated by the district, such as, contract non-renewal, budget cuts, or a reduction in the workforce. However, based on the federal and state reports the reasons for teacher turnover is wide ranging and vary based on preference, perception, location, and situation. When school and districts lose qualified teachers it not only depletes the veteran educational staff, according to Melvin (2011), it also depletes the district of resources that could be put into school improvement and student achievement.

Teacher Retention Strategies

Ingersoll (2001) stated that one way to reduce teacher attrition is to understand and improve teacher job satisfaction. De Stercke, Goyette, and Robertson (2015) stated that to understand why new teachers are leaving the profession one must first appreciate the individuals point of view. This could be applied to teachers who leave or remain regardless of their teaching experience, according to Arnup and Bowles (2016), teachers are more likely to look for alternative, more attractive job opportunities if they are dissatisfied that supported by Ingersoll (2001) who also stated teacher attrition is largely explained by job dissatisfaction, and not retirement as previously hypothesized. De Stercke et al. (2015) stated that most studies focus largely on employment and working conditions, however, other aspects to retention are found through action, research, and educational policy. De Stercke et al. (2015) shared 10 approaches grouped in three distinct themes that education leaders could do to help teachers in remain the profession. According to De Strecke et al. (2015), Educational Advising and Orientation, Mindfulness, and Emotional Intelligence are positive elements that if integrated into the profession could offer a more pragmatic view of the problem, which could lead to a proper diagnosis and potential solution in teacher retention.

Job satisfaction an individual's opinion of how a job meets their needs, values, and expectations (Arnup & Bowles, 2016). Cockburn and Haydn (2004) reported teachers gain job satisfaction through various factors that are conducive to a positive school climate. Supportive and collaborative environments as well as positive colleague relationships are associated with job satisfaction (Arnup & Bowles, 2016; Petty, Fitchett, & O'Connor, 2012). In most teacher induction programs, new teachers are assigned mentors who are tasked with providing support for new teachers in becoming familiar with their school climate, culture, and procedures, helping

to organize their classroom, and establishing a positive working relationship. Mentoring programs have been shown to reduce turnover (Byerly, 2012). A supportive school culture, including mentoring early in a teacher's career may increase their resilience, the ability to overcome adversity, cope with less satisfying aspects of their work life, and bounce back (Arnup, & Bowles, 2016). Furthermore, they are more likely to become committed to teaching over the long term (Arnup & Bowles, 2016).

Monk (2007) discussed the challenges the rural schools face in recruiting and retaining teachers and suggested to offer higher wages and benefits to teachers to work in hard to staff schools. This would attract potential candidates and perhaps increase the number qualified teachers, but Monk (2007) also stated there are many drawbacks such as expense and who would bear the burden of the cost. Ingersoll (2001) stated retention in rural schools are greater and that teachers leave smaller schools at a higher rate. Monk (2007) stated aspiring teachers have the tendency to return home to teach, and suggested that districts implement grow-your-own strategy. Many states, according to Monk (2007) are pursuing grow-your-own strategies, such as working with teacher aide already employed with the school district and develops requisite teaching skills. Echols (2005b), stated it is imperative to strategically manage the investment in human capital. Human capital is key for all organizations (Byerly, 2012), and understanding how to retain the talent, which was built at a great cost is crucial. Petty et al. (2012) stated a strategy to retain teachers would be for more college training, early, and consistently in high-need schools to give teaching candidates a better feel for the realities school cultures and classrooms experience with veteran teachers; instead of spending a lot of time on theory and isolated coursework. Petty et al. (2012) also noted that money is a significant contributor to teacher retention, but respect and recognition for student achievement, and additional teaching resources

were also key factors in teacher retention. Investing in employees has also come in the form of training or professional development. Echols (2005a) stated myths that employees will leave with their valuable training has be a major concern of employers, but a review of the literature refutes that claim, even in tuition reimbursement programs such as the grow-your-own initiatives.

Summary

To understand an organization's turnover and retention one must look at the data specific to the organization (Byerly, 2012). Failure to recognize the dynamics of the organizational characteristics and its nuances according to Byerly (2012), can lead to faulty interpretation of employee turnover and retention numbers or whether it indicate if the turnover and retention is important. Furthermore, employee retention and turnover more complex than it look (Byerly, 2012). The literature on employee turnover and retention whether it is in the corporate sector or education highlights similar issues that both have in common for the causes of turnover and strategies in retaining a skilled workforce. Although the focus of this study is on the teacher turnover in one school district. The concepts discussed by the literature applies to all organizations. To address turnover and retention in the educational setting one should understand there is a shortage that is the results of various factors such as retirement and declining enrollment in teacher preparation programs. Furthermore, an understanding of why employees are leaving will help in determining appropriate strategies to retain a skilled workforce through positive work environments, training, and in some cases, monetary incentives. The specific causes and recommended solutions are unique to each organization in addressing recruitment and retention

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study as stated in Chapter One is to examine the variables that are contributing to teachers' decisions to leave one LEA. This chapter describes the study design using the GAPPSI method, participants, and the proposed methods of collecting data.

Statement of the Problem

Nationwide teacher attrition is a significant concern (Ulfert, 2016). Zhang and Zeller (2016) stated, in 2005 school systems in the US spent over four billion dollars in teacher turnover. The state average teacher turnover rate in North Carolina (NC) has averaged about 14% according to the North Carolina State Board of Education Annual Report on Teachers Leaving the Profession (2012-2013 & 2013-2014), which is above the national average. The study school district's teacher turnover rate continues to exceed NC's average teacher turnover rate. The teacher turnover rate in the study school district has consistently increased since 2009. According to the Public Schools of North Carolina State Board of Education Annual Report on Teachers Leaving the Profession (2013-2014), the five-year teacher turnover rate in the study school district was 17.02%, which was the 15th highest in the state and second highest in region two of their Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA). In 2012-13 the turnover rate in the study school district reached a high of 22.64%, and according to the 2013-2014 data the teacher turnover rate in the study school district was at 20.89%; compared with the state's average of 14.12%. Based on data from the Public Schools of North Carolina State Board of Education Annual Report on Teachers Leaving the Profession (2014-2015), the five-year teacher turnover rate in the study school district decreased to 18.41%, which was still the 15th highest in the state, but was the highest rate of teacher turnover in region two. The five-year teacher turnover rate average in the study school district was 4.09% higher than the cumulative five-year average for

all the school districts in region two of their RESA. The 2014-2015 teacher turnover rate in the study school district was 21.97%, which was only one percentage point lower than the previous school year. Therefore, the problem to be analyzed in this study is the high teacher turnover rate in the study school district.

Study Questions

Two study questions were considered for this study. They are:

1. What factors contributes in the decision of teachers who leave the study school district?
2. What factors contributes in the decision of teachers who stay in the study school district?

Study Design

In considering the most effective study design for this study there are various options to consider. Archbald (2014) the Gap Analysis for Problem-solving, Planning, and School Improvement (GAPPSI) method can assist in addressing a systemic problem. This method of research guides educational leaders in problem analysis and problem solving for school improvement. The GAPPSI method would allow the leaders in understanding the barriers that impede improvement based on their present status and the desired status (Archbald, 2014). However, the most effective study design considers multiple research approaches and can allow the researcher to contemplate and find a pathway from one's natural research inclination (O'Donoghue, 2007). Understanding and acknowledgement are two important steps required in researching a problem (O'Donoghue, 2007). When proceeding into research one should view the initial stages in the research process, the first is observation and then moving from an ordinary question to a researchable question, and focusing on one aspect of the issue (O'Donoghue,

2007). Through a methodical approach to problem-solving, the study school district could also implement actions, reflections, and improvement steps to institute sustained improvements (Langely, Moen, Nolan, Norman, & Provost, 2009). Langley et al. (2009) outlines for leaders the Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) steps in isolating the problem based on specific factors related to the organization.

The prescriptive actions of the GAPPSI method and the PDSA cycles found in the Improvement Science model could both be utilized to understand and analyze the teacher turnover rate in the study school district. For the purpose of this study, GAPPSI method. The GAPPSI method will allow analysis of descriptive and perceptional data collected in examining the variables contributing to teachers leaving the study school district. There is according to Bamberger (1999), a growing body of experience that demonstrates the benefits of multi-method research integrating quantitative and qualitative methods. The factors that are contributing to the decisions of teachers to leave the study school district can be analyzed from perception data collected through descriptive statistical analysis and contextual means. Bamberger (1999) stated that most attempts to draw clear distinctions between quantitative and qualitative research have floundered in the face of many counter examples that challenge each categorization.

Furthermore, despite the need for additional work in developing guidelines for integrated approaches, there is a growing consensus regarding its value (Bamberger, 1999). Likewise, in examining the factors impacting the study school district's teacher turnover rate, Connaway and Radford (2017) stated when *fact* is the purpose of the study there is little use for hypothesis, however the researcher should focus on answering research questions that will help guide the research in which the quantitative approach is most effective. However, when the purpose of the study is to understand the unique characteristics of a community, organization, or group the

qualitative approach allows more flexibility for the researcher to capitalize on what is learned and to pursue certain preliminary findings (Bamberger, 1999). Bamberger (1999) also stated that direct research in both the quantitative and qualitative approaches use similar sampling methods, follow standard measurement, and reporting procedures with careful observation and documentation requirements.

Data Collection

For this study, the researcher will identify variables that are consistent reasons why teachers are making career decisions to leave the study school district. The data collected for the study will require two different approaches discussed in the study design. The first approach will be to administer a survey, to collect perceptive data based on participants' responses, which is their perception on the school culture, school leadership, and district leadership. The second data collection method for this study will involve individual interviews with participants identified by the primary researcher. The interviews will be designed to collect perceptional data that focuses on the top contributing factors for teachers leaving the study school district, collected from the survey results. The survey to be administered will have questions that aligns with the questions from Leadership construct of the NC Teacher Working Condition Survey administered in 2016 in the study school district by the New Teaching Center. The questions were sent to three experts in the field to assure construct validity.

Participants

The current employees of the study school district, which includes those employees who will not return to the school district the following school year. Likewise, former employees of the study school district will also serve as participants for this study. Participation in the study is voluntary with assurance of anonymity. Participants who volunteer and participate in interviews

will receive Informed Consent agreements, which are approved by the Institution Review Board. The participants' responses to the survey will not include any demographic information or descriptive information that can be used to isolate the participants' identity by the primary investigator, district representatives, or the study's committee members. Selection of participants for the individual interviews will be based on criteria that provides a sampling size representative of the study school district's teacher workforce. Upon the review of the survey data and identifying variables, the primary researcher will seek the assistance of the study school district's Human Resources to identify teachers with zero to five years of experience, six to ten years of experience, and fifteen to twenty or more years of experience to inquire to volunteer for this study. Participants who are no longer employed by the district will receive the same assurance of anonymity as the participants who are current employees of the study school district. These participants will be identified using various networks and contacts of the primary researcher, however the selection of the participants will also focus on teachers who left the study school district for different positions, as well as those who left the district for lateral teaching positions. A final group of participants will include school district leaders who administrate district programs on each of the campuses within the study school district.

Data Analyzed

The analysis of the data collected will be conducted by the researcher with guidance from the study committee's chairperson. The data collected from the survey will be analyzed to find common variables that contributes to teachers leaving the study school district. The descriptive statistical data collected from teachers' perceptions will assist the primary researcher in three areas. First, to broaden the scope in examining the variables identified in the survey as contributing factors in teachers making the decision to leave the study district. Secondly, to

examine if there are counter variables that are also contributing to teachers making the decision to remain in the school district, and finally to make study recommendation that could be utilized in addressing the teacher turnover rate in the study school district.

Security of Data

The researcher of this study will secure the data collected for this study in two forms. The survey data collected will be maintained on a secure server maintained by a survey data collection site. Although the survey is voluntary and participants are anonymous, only the researcher will have access to the data. The data collected through individual interviews will be secured by the researcher password protected device and electronic files on mass storage drives. Upon the completion of the study and committee review all data will remain secured and archived via a password protected device and electronic files on mass storage drives, and will subsequently deleted by the researcher.

Summary

The proposed study is designed to examine the variables that are contributing to the study school district's high teacher turnover, which is above the NC state average. The data will be collected through the GAPPSI method approach. Descriptive Statistical data will be collect through an anonymous participant survey. The data collected from the survey will be analyzed and disseminated by the primary researcher to understand the factors contributing to teachers leaving the study school district. The perceptional data will be collect through individual interviews with teachers noted in the participant section. The data collected from individual interviews could provide a broader understanding of the problem and the factors that contributes to teachers leaving and why some teachers remain in the study school district. Both sets data can be used to answer the two proposed study questions. Further analysis will support

recommendations to the school district's leaders that could assist in lowering the study school district's teacher turnover rate.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

The teacher turnover issue in the study school district is a microcosm of the teacher turnover problems that other school districts face in surrounding counties, neighboring states, and across the nation (Sutcher et al., 2016). Chapter four presents the findings of the data obtained in this problem of practice study. The descriptive data based on participants' perceptions regarding the study school district will be presented based on the results from the instruments used to capture the participants' responses. As discussed earlier, the study design used the Gap Analysis for Problem-solving, Planning, and School Improvement (GAPPSI) method, utilizing a perception survey and individual interviews to generate the data being analyzed in this study.

Using the GAPPSI method for this study provided the framework in which to analyze the current state of the teacher turnover rate in the study school district and established an understanding of the common variables of why teachers are leaving or remaining in the study school district. Furthermore, the GAPPSI method also provided a format in which the study could provide problem-solving and planning recommendations to address the study problem stated in previous chapters, which is the high teacher turnover rate in the study school district.

Participant

There were no demographic data collected on participants in this study that could identify a participant's age, gender, or race. For this study, the only participant descriptors collected were their total years of service in education and in the study school district, and their current position in the study school district. The participants were comprised of individuals who work in various job roles in the study school district. Many of the participants are current employees in the study school district. Participants in the study survey were only current employees. When recruiting

participants to interview, participants were current employees who were *stayers* and *leavers*, as well as former employees who worked in the study school district and left, but remained in education. The former employees of the study school district were only recruited to participate in the interviews. Both current and former employees were recruited to participate in the interviews after the study survey had been administered and the response data had been analyzed.

The current employees were grouped into three distinct groups. The first group, referenced as *stayer*s, are employees who have indicated that they will return to the study school district for the next academic school year. The second group of current employees, also considered as *stayers*, but are in non-teaching roles, such as school level and district administrators, instructional coaches, or program directors. The third group of current employees, referenced as *leavers*, are current employees who have indicated that they will not return to the study school district at the beginning of the next academic school year.

As stated earlier, former employees who left the study school district, but remained in education also participated in the study. These participants are also referenced as *leavers* in the study and classified into two distinct groups. The former employee groups are based on one of two reasons for leaving the study school district. Participants in one group stated they left for a lateral position that did not require any additional certification and it was a similar position vacated in the study school district. The other group of former employees stated they left for a positional change, which may or may not have required additional certification. For example an administrative position, or for a position that was not offered or not available in the study school district, such as an instructional coach or facilitator.

As previously stated there were no demographic data collected on the participants. There were three study survey questions that asked for the participants for basic descriptors, such as the

total number of years of service and their current position in the study school district. The first question was question twenty-one, which asked participants to indicate the total number of years worked in education. There were 16.67% of participants who had zero through four years of experience, 20.83% of participants with five through ten years of experience, 22.92% of participants with eleven through fifteen years of experience, 17.71% of participants who indicated that they had sixteen through twenty years of experience, and 21.88% of participants who had twenty-one or more years of experience. Sixteen of the participants' responses were recorded as a skipped question (see Figure 5). The second of the three questions asked participants to indicate the number of years of experience in the study school district. When asked in question twenty-two, 40.62% of them had zero through five years of experience in the study school district, 21.88% of participants had six through ten years of experience, 28.12% had eleven through twenty years of experience, while only 9.38% of the participants had twenty or more years of experience in the study school district. Again, sixteen participants had a recorded response of skipped question twenty-two (see Figure 6). Question twenty-three, the third of the three descriptor questions asked the study survey participants to identify their current role in the study school district. Two% of the participants were district administrators, 7.29% of the school based administrators responded, and 6.25% of the participants were Instructional Support staff based at a school or the district's central office. There were 11.46% of the participants who selected the non-descriptive choice of other as their current role, while 22.92% of the participants were kindergarten through fifth grade teachers. There were 23.96% of the participants who were sixth through eighth grade teachers, and 26.04% of the participants were ninth through twelfth grade teachers (see Figure 7).

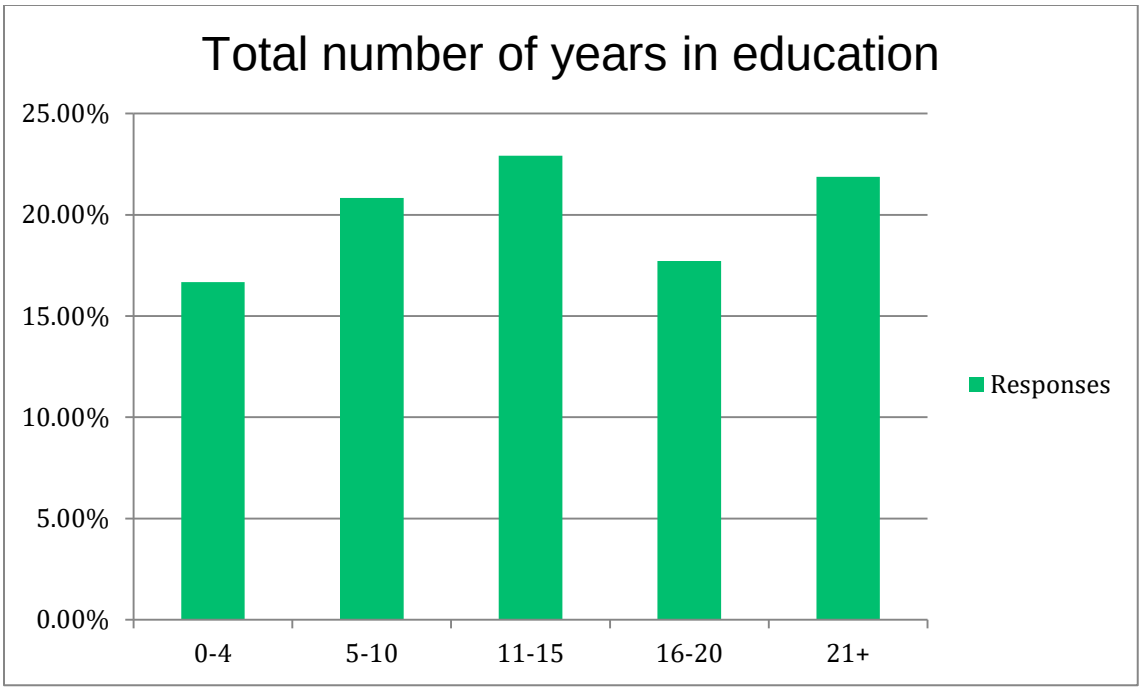

Figure 5. Total years of experience of survey participants (study survey question 21).

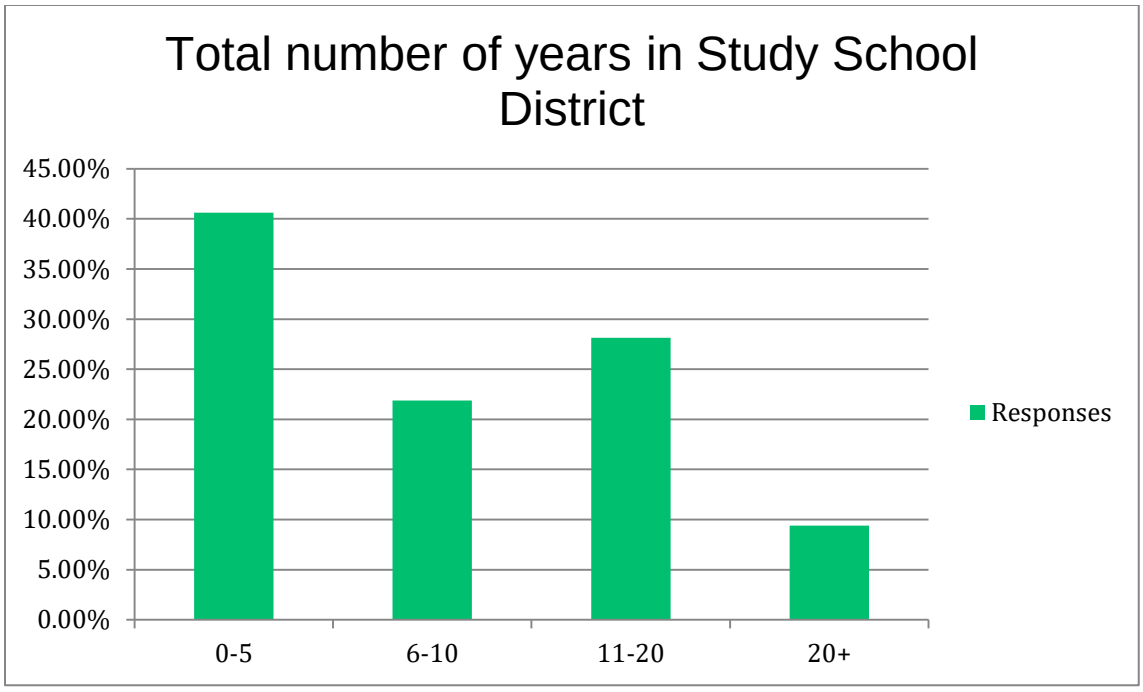

Figure 6. Total number of years in the study school district (study survey question 22).

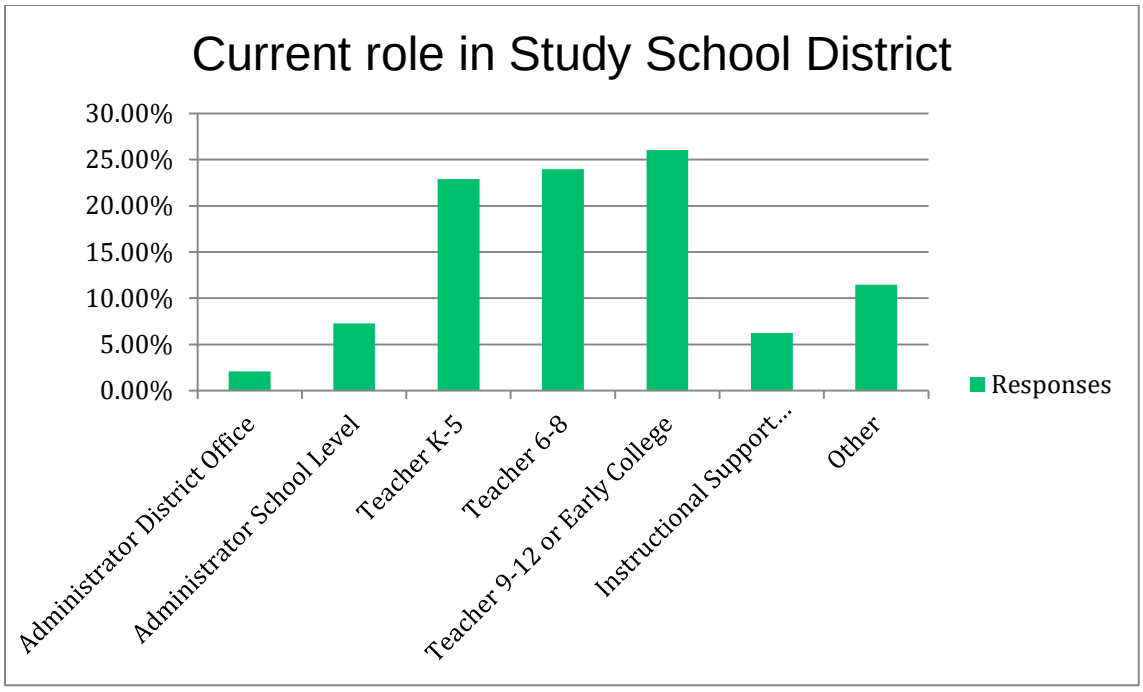

Figure 7. Current roles in the study school district (study survey question 23)

Study Survey Results

The study survey administered was aligned with the School Leadership Construct from the North Carolina Teacher Working Condition Survey (NCTWCS) administered in the Spring of 2016. The study school district participant response rate in the NCTWCS was 93.47%. Three out of the six schools had a participant response rate of 100% (North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions, 2016). The purpose for aligning the survey question with the School Leadership Construct from the NCTWCS was based on the review of the literature presented in Chapter two. Based on the literature, school leadership support and school culture were consistently referenced as key contributing factors in teacher turnover and retention. However, the survey administered in this study also included questions that included aspects or actions of leadership at the district level, for example, the superintendent and other program directors. The survey administered in this study was open to the 245 educators in the study school district based on the total number of educators cited in the NCTWCS administered in the Spring of 2016. All participants who responded were current employees of the study school district with no distinction between *stayers* or *leaver*. There was a total of 112 responses, which is a response rate of 45.7%.

The survey consisted of twenty-three questions. Questions one through eleven asked participants to base their response on school and district leadership, while questions twelve through twenty focused on various factors that would influence their decision to leave or stay in the study school district. The final three questions, twenty-one through twenty-three asked the participants to indicate the number of years in education, the total time of service in the study school district, and current position. Participants could respond to most questions by selecting one of five choices. The response choices were as followed; *strongly-agree, agree, strongly-*

disagree, disagree, or, *neither agree or disagree*. In presenting the findings the participants' responses for *strongly-agree* and *agree* were calculated together, noting a positive response and participants' responses of *strong-disagree* and *disagree* were calculated together, noting a negative response. The fifth choice participants could select was *neither agree or disagree*, noting a neutral response.

In questions one through eleven participants were asked to respond to questions asked about the school building leaders and district leadership. The survey's first two questions asked participants to respond to the overall culture of the study school district.

When asked if there was a culture of trust and mutual respect despite positions or titles, and if teachers felt comfortable in raising issues and concerns that were important. 73.22% of the participants agreed that there was a culture of trust and mutual respect. 11.6% of the participants who disagreed that there was a culture of trust and mutual respect, while 15.18% of the participants did not agree or disagree regarding the culture of trust and mutual respect (see Figure 8).

Question two of the study survey asked participants if they felt teachers were comfortable in raising issues and concerns that were important. 71.43% felt comfortable in raising issues and concerns that they felt were important. 15.18% of the participants did not agree that teachers did feel comfortable in raising issues or concerns, with 13.39% neither agreeing nor disagreeing (see Figure 9).

Questions three and four asked participants the same question, but of school based leadership and district leadership. When asked if school based leadership or district leadership consistently supported teachers 71.43% of the participants agreed that school based leadership consistently supported teachers, while 73.22% of the participants responded that district

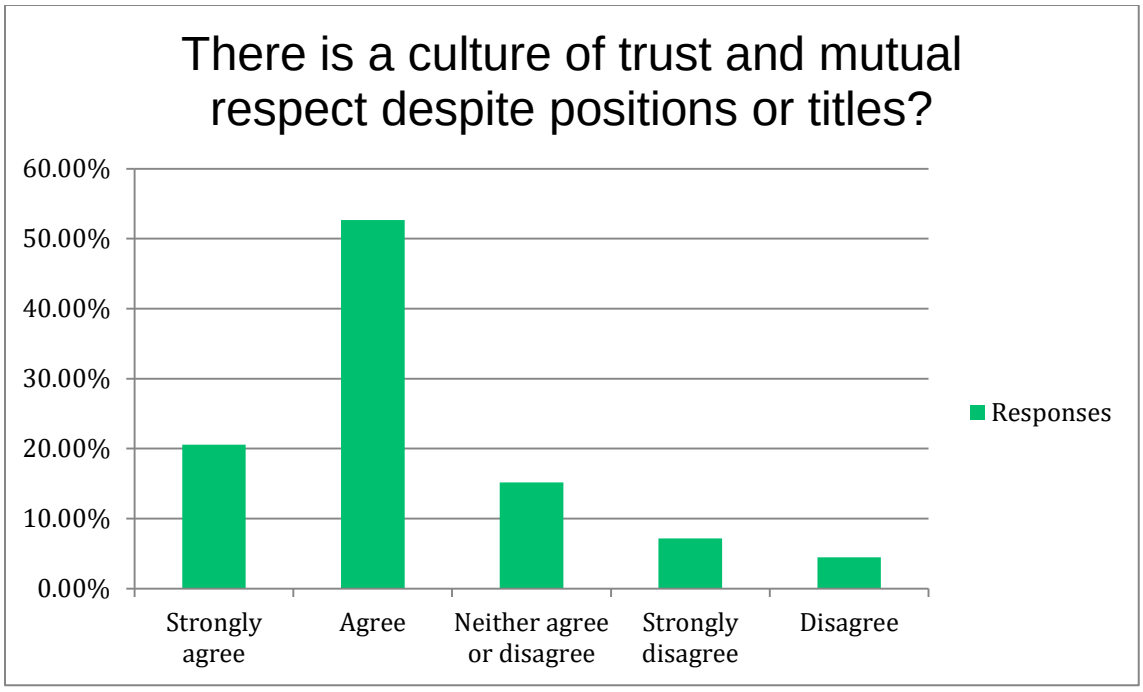

Figure 8. There is a culture of trust and mutual respect (study survey question 1).

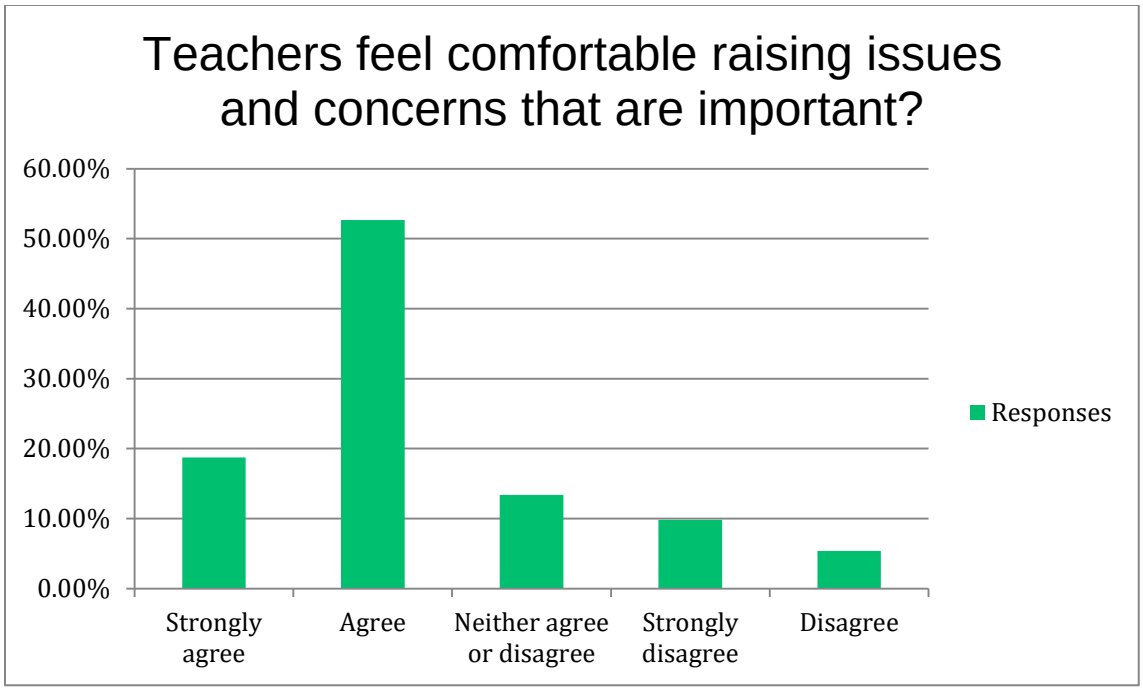

Figure 9. Teachers feel comfortable raise issues that are important (study survey question 2).

leadership consistently supported teachers. There were 10.71% of the participants who disagreed that school based leadership consistently supported teachers and 8.03% disagreed that district leadership consistently supported teachers. The participants who did not agree or disagree that school base leadership or district leadership consistently supported teacher only had a .92%age difference, with 17.86% responding that they neither agree or disagree that school base leadership consistently supported teachers and 18.75% of the participants responded that they did not agree or disagree that district leadership consistently supported teachers (see Figures 10 & 11).

The response to question five that asked participants if school leadership facilitated the use of data to improve student learning had a response rate of 92.85%, which was the highest rate of consensus by the participants. Out of the 112 responses four participants, 3.58% did not agree. There was an almost equal participant response rate of 3.57% that did not agree or disagree that school leadership used data to improve student learning (see Figure 12). Question six was intended to have participants relate back to the previous question, which asked the participants if teachers are held to high performance standards, and if they were assessed objectively in which 84.82% of the participants agreed, and 2.68% did not agree. Again, based on the participants' perception, 12.50% did not agree or disagree that teachers were held to high performance standard or that they were assessed objectively (see Figure 13).

Along the same lines, questions seven through nine were intended to have the participants relate back to the previous question, which focused on teachers' evaluation, leadership feedback, and assessment of teachers by school leadership, with question nine focusing on support or other actions from district leadership. In question seven, the participant rate of agreement that teachers received feedback from school leadership that could help teachers improve was 81.25%, 6.25%

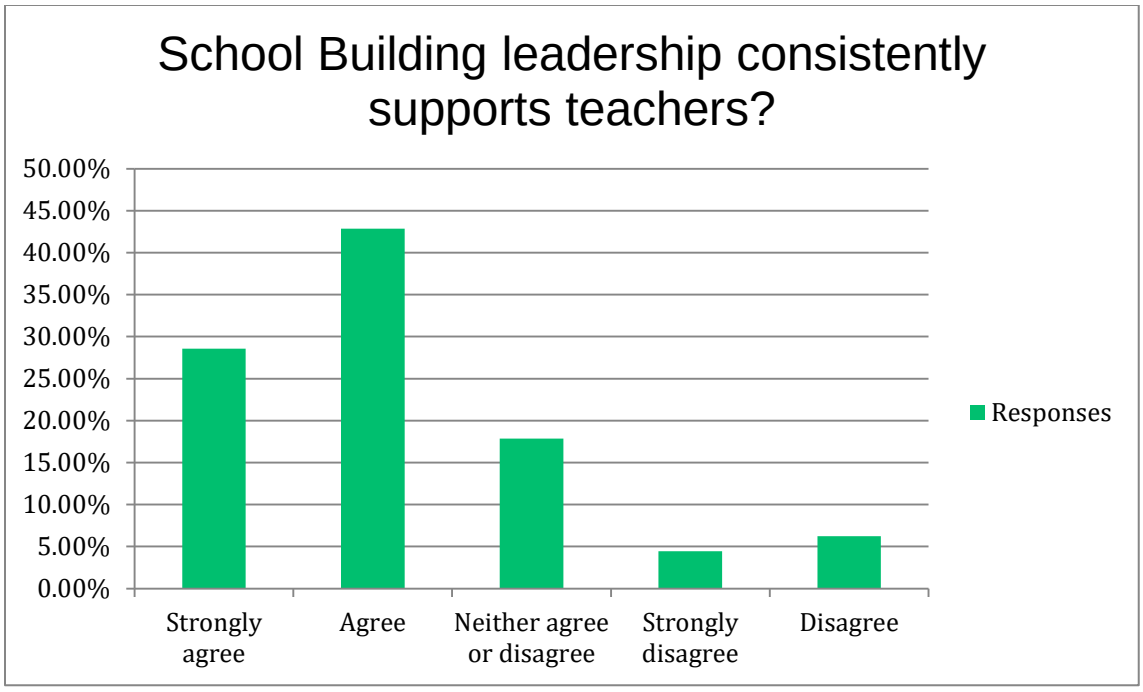

Figure 10. School leadership provides consistent support (study survey question 3).

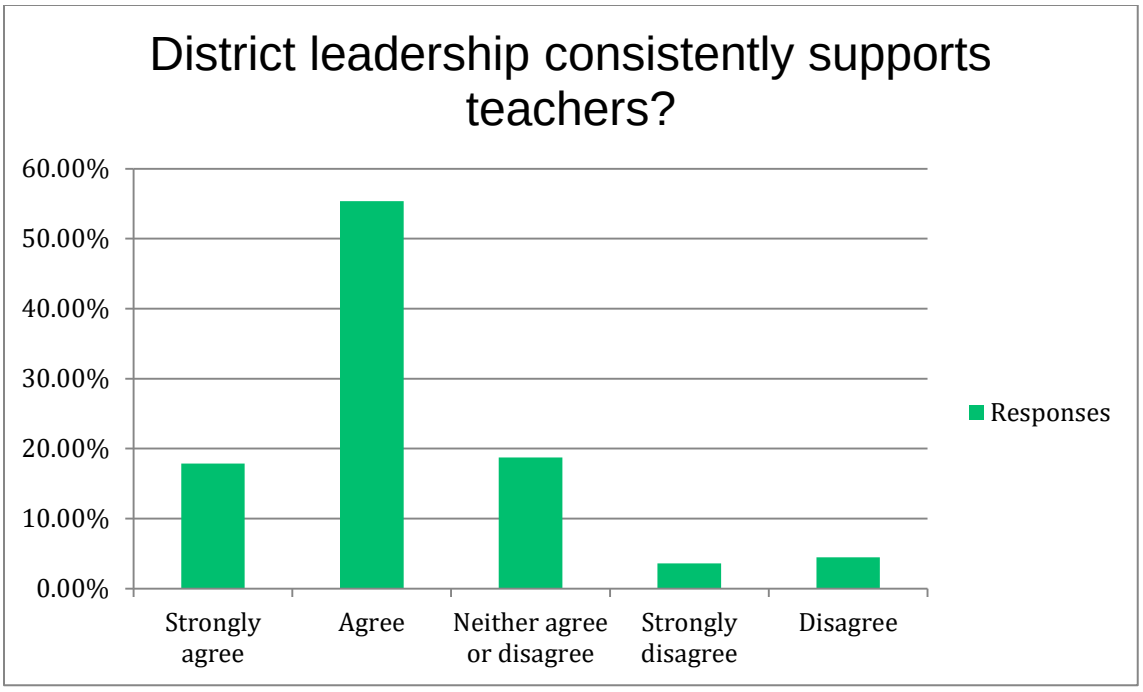

Figure 11. District leadership provides consistent support (study survey question 4).

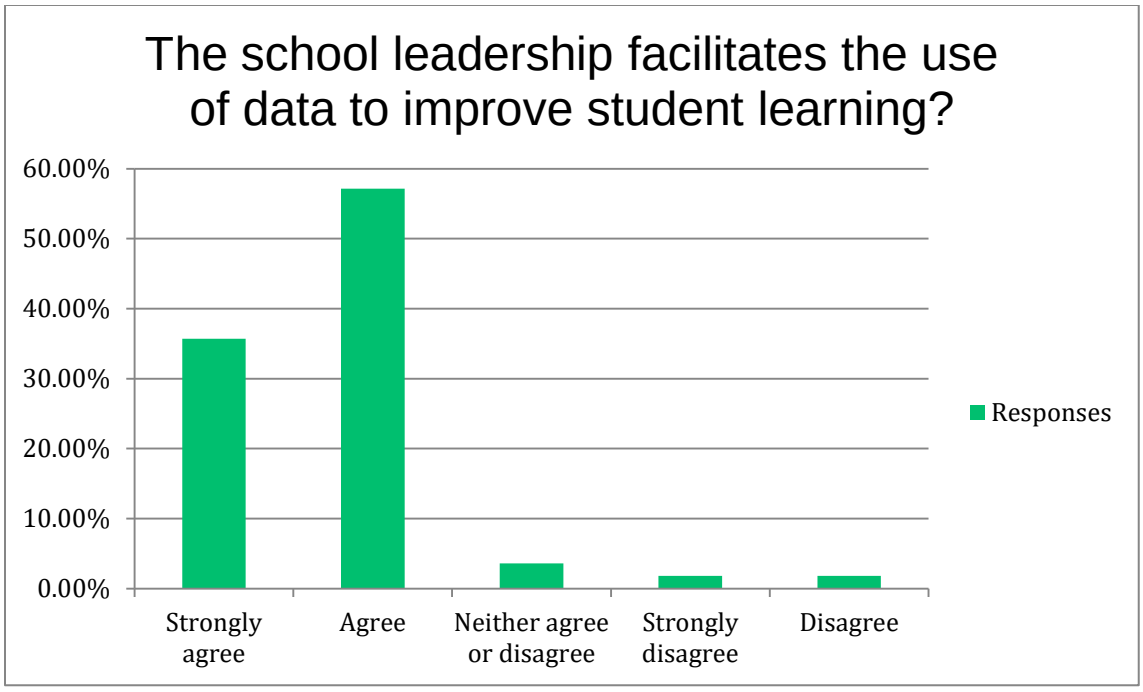

Figure 12. School leadership facilitates the use of data (study survey question 5).

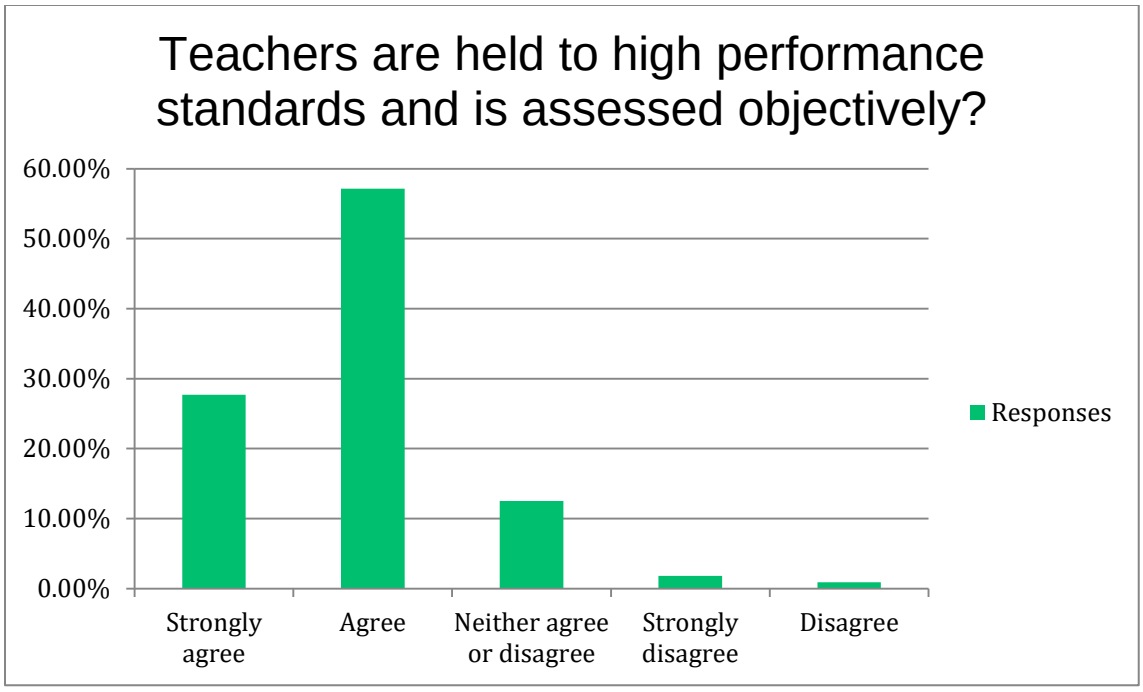

Figure 13. Teachers are held to high performance standards (study survey question 6).

disagreed, and 12.50% did not agree or disagree (see Figure 14). When asked about the evaluation process in question eight 83.04% of participants agreed that the evaluation procedures for teachers was transparent, consistent, and clearly articulated, and only 3.57% disagreed while 13.39% did not agree or disagree (see Figure 15). However, when asked in question nine regarding district leadership support for teachers when there are disputes between the school leadership over evaluations and performance assessment the participant rate of agreement was 37.50%. The percentage of participant who did not agree was 8.93, while more than half of the participants, 53.57% did not agree or disagree, which is the highest percentage of participants' response to a question that had a neutral response (see Figure 16).

When participants were asked in question ten if the school improvement team and school leadership provided effective leadership and a voice for teachers' concerns, grievance, and input on school based decisions 67.85% of the participants agreed, and 14.28% disagreed. There was 17.86% that did not agree or disagree that the school improvement team or school leadership provided effective leadership or a platform for teachers to have a voice for concerns, grievance, or input into school decisions (see Figure 17). The final questions that asked participants to focus on school or district leadership was question eleven (see Figure 18). Participants were asked if teachers in their school were recognized by school leadership for accomplishments great or small, 70.53 of the responses agreed that teachers were recognized in their building. However, a nearly equal number of participants, 14.29% disagreed that teachers were recognized for any accomplishments, as the number of participants, 15.18% who had a neutral response and neither agreed or disagreed.

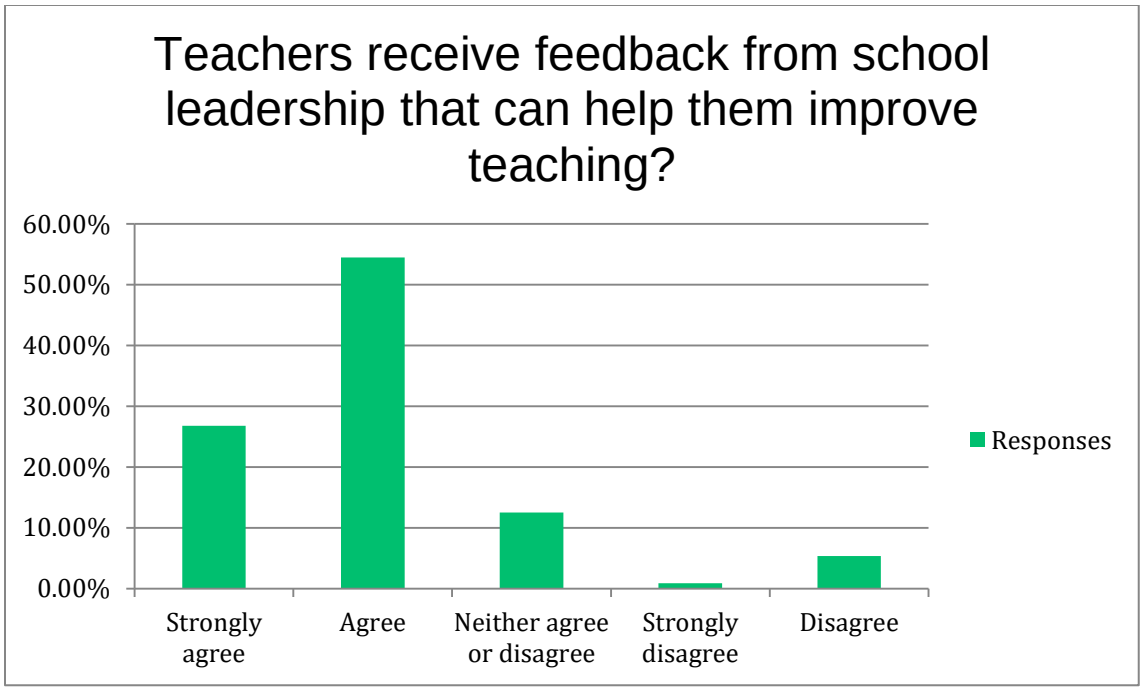

Figure 14. Teachers receive feedback from school leadership (study survey question 7).

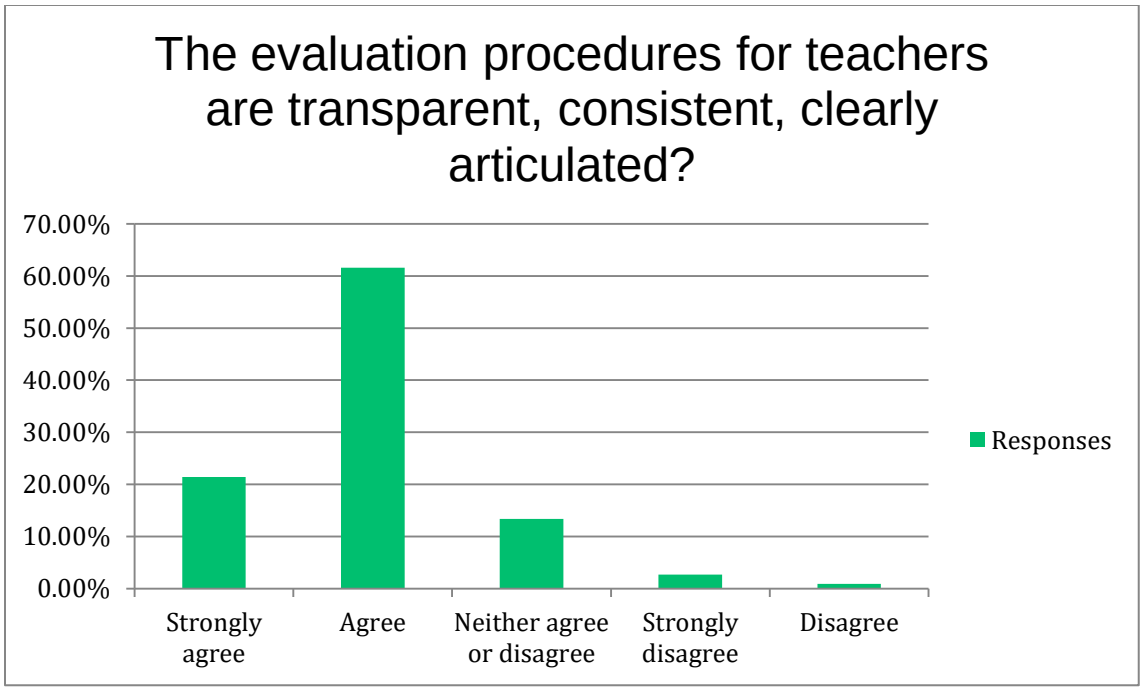

Figure 15. The evaluation procedures are transparent, consistent, and articulate clearly (study survey question 8).

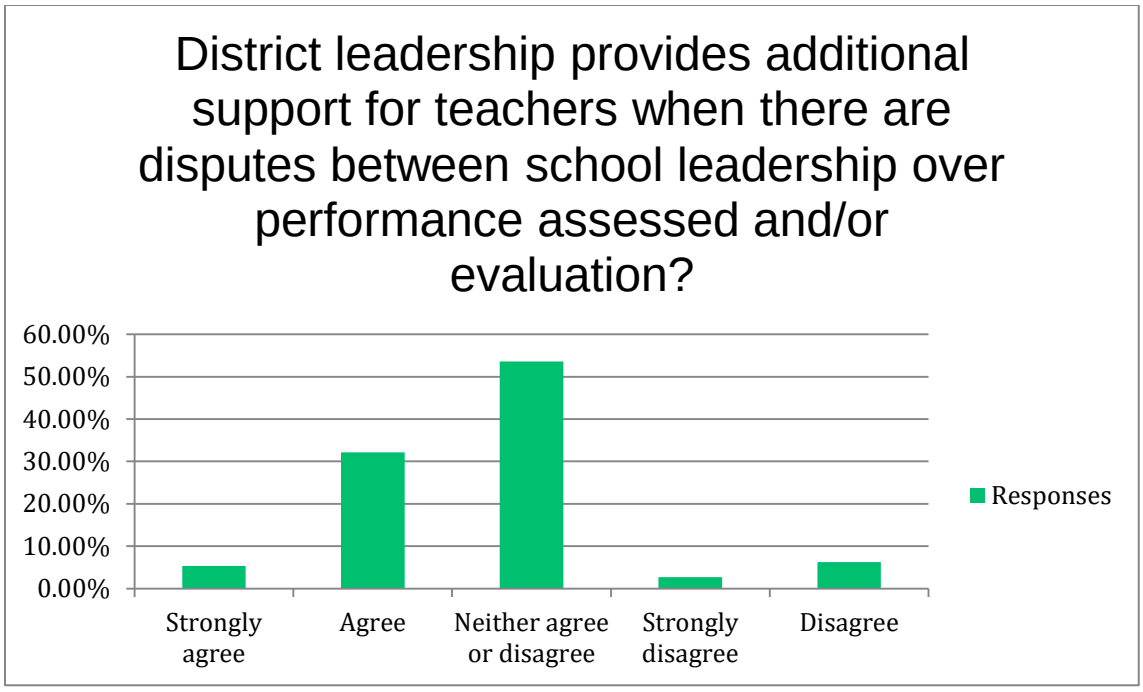

Figure 16. District leadership provides additional support (study survey question 9).

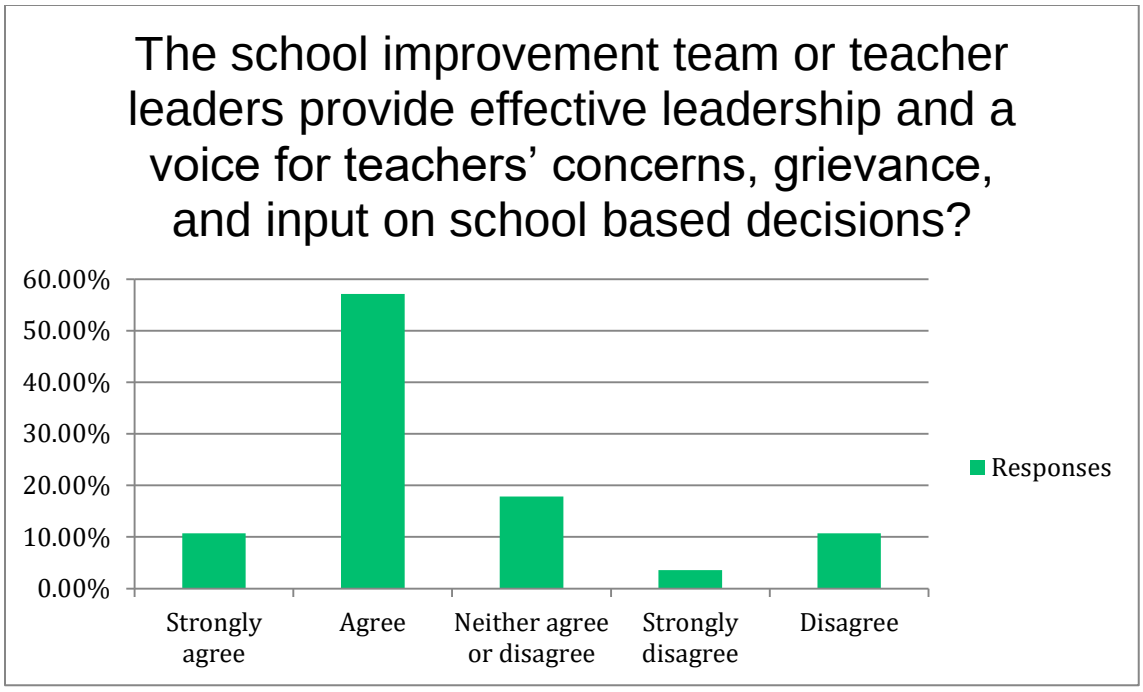

Figure 17. The school improvement team/teacher leaders provide effective leadership and a voice for teachers' concerns (study survey question 10).

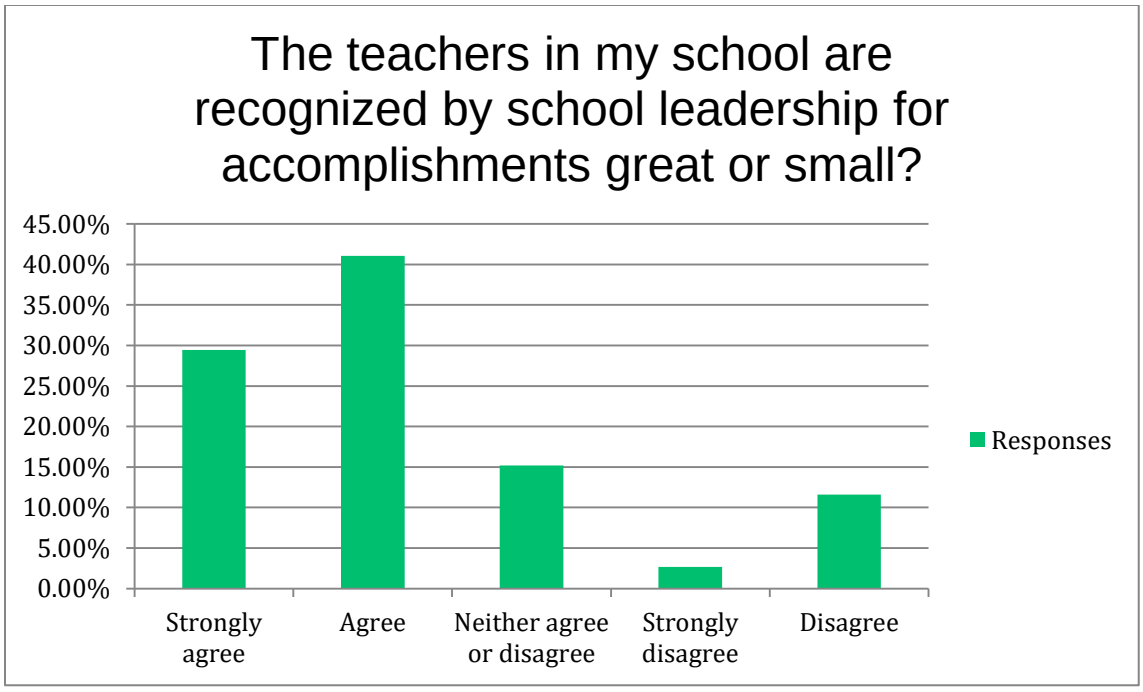

Figure 18. Teachers are recognized by school leadership (study question 11).

In analyzing the participants' responses to questions one through eleven the participants' responses were not absolute. In some instances, the participants' response of *neither agree or disagree* had a response rate higher than the participants' response rate of disagree. In assuring complete anonymity and giving the participants a neutral response, and the participants not agreeing or disagreeing to certain questions created some ambiguity regarding the overall influence that school leaders or school culture had on teachers' decisions to leave or stay in the study school district (see Figure 19).

Study Survey Data Findings on Contributing Variable

Question twelve in the study survey asked participants to respond to the specific variables that would influence their decision to leave or stay in the study school district. In question twelve participants were asked to select all the variables that would factor into their decisions to leave or stay in the study school district. The data displayed is the rate of response to each variable. The top three variables were time and distance from home to work, 69.64%; school leadership support, 61.61%; and time already invested in the study school district, 51.79% (see Figure 20).

Participants were asked to respond specifically in questions thirteen through twenty to the likeliness of certain variables contributing to their decision to leave or stay in the study school district. Again, participants were given the response choices of; *strongly-agree, agree, strongly-disagree, disagree,* and *neither agree or disagree*. However, the data presented for questions thirteen through twenty does not represent of the 112 participants' responses. Because the study survey was open to all certified staff in the study school district to participate, which included media specialists, instructional coaches, school level and district administrators, therefore certain questions were not applicable to some participant, and recorded by the survey instrument as a

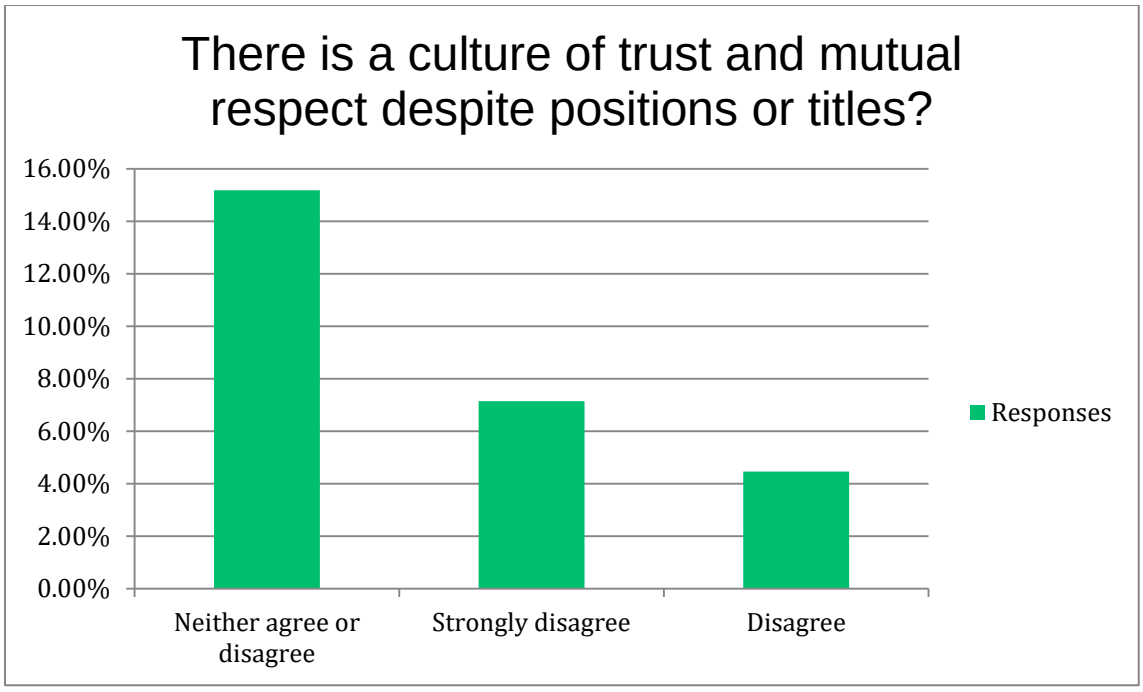

Figure 19. Comparison of neutral response to negative response.

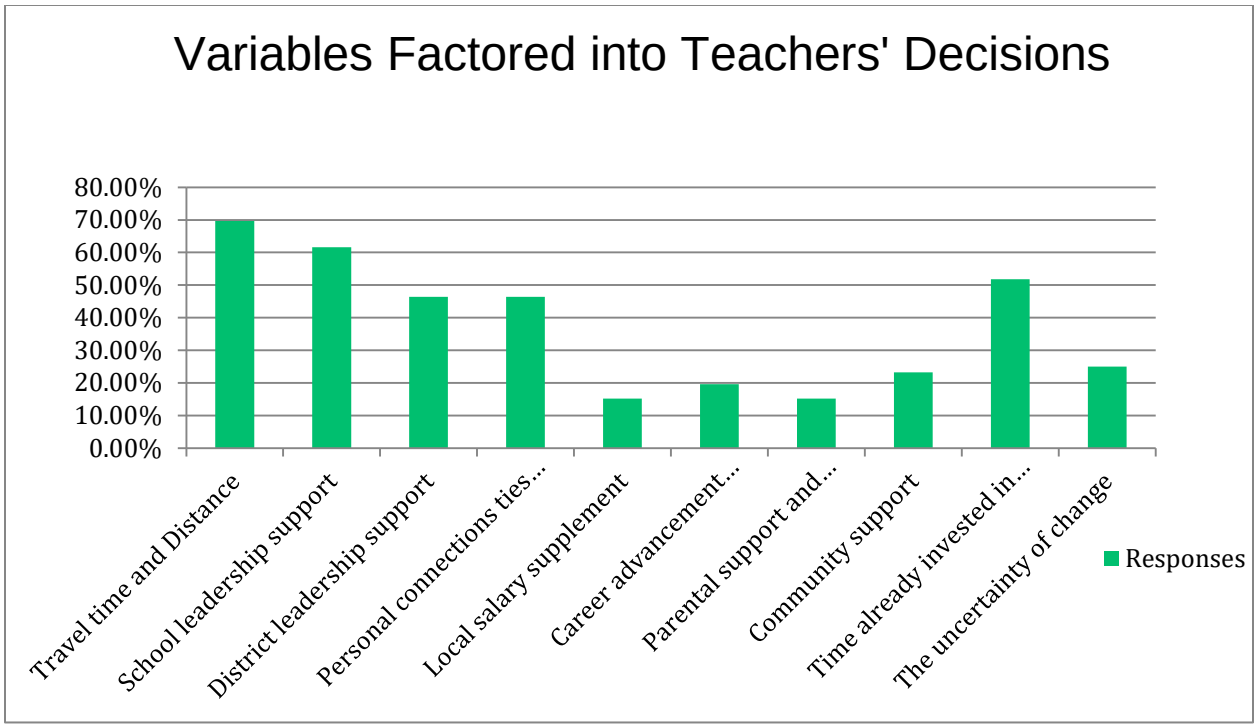

Figure 20. Variables that teachers would consider in their decision to stay or leave the study school district. Participants selected all that applied to them (study survey question 12).

skipped question. The previous questions analyzed did not allow participants to skip any question and does represent the responses from all 112 participants (see Figures 21-28).

Based on the survey data analyzed there are two key factors that has the greatest influence on teachers' decisions to stay or leave the study school district. Those two factors are leadership and support. The rate of agreement compared to the rate of disagreement by participants show that the perceived actions of the study school district's leadership, and the perception of support had the greatest influence. For example, in questions three participants overwhelmingly felt that there was leadership support, with 71.43% agreeing and 10.71% disagreeing. Another example can be found in question 19 in which 71.13% agreed that support for beginning and new teachers is an important factor in deciding to leave or remain in the study school district, with only 4.12% of participants disagreeing. In both examples the perspective of the question was based on teachers' perceptions. Question three asked participants to respond to the current actions of the study school district leadership, while question 19 asked participants to respond to perceived future and ongoing needs.

In some instances, the participants' response of *neither agree or disagree* was higher than the participants' response rate of *disagree*. To insure participant anonymity and giving the participants a neutral response, and the participants not agreeing or disagreeing to certain questions created some ambiguity regarding the overall influence of the specific variables has in the decisions of the teachers who are electing to stay or leave the study school district. Adelson and McCoach (2010) said one of the most commonly utilized tools in measuring attitudes in social research is the Likert summated rating scale, and according to Croasmun and Ostrom (2011), the Likert scale is useful in social sciences especially in determining participants' attitudes or opinions.

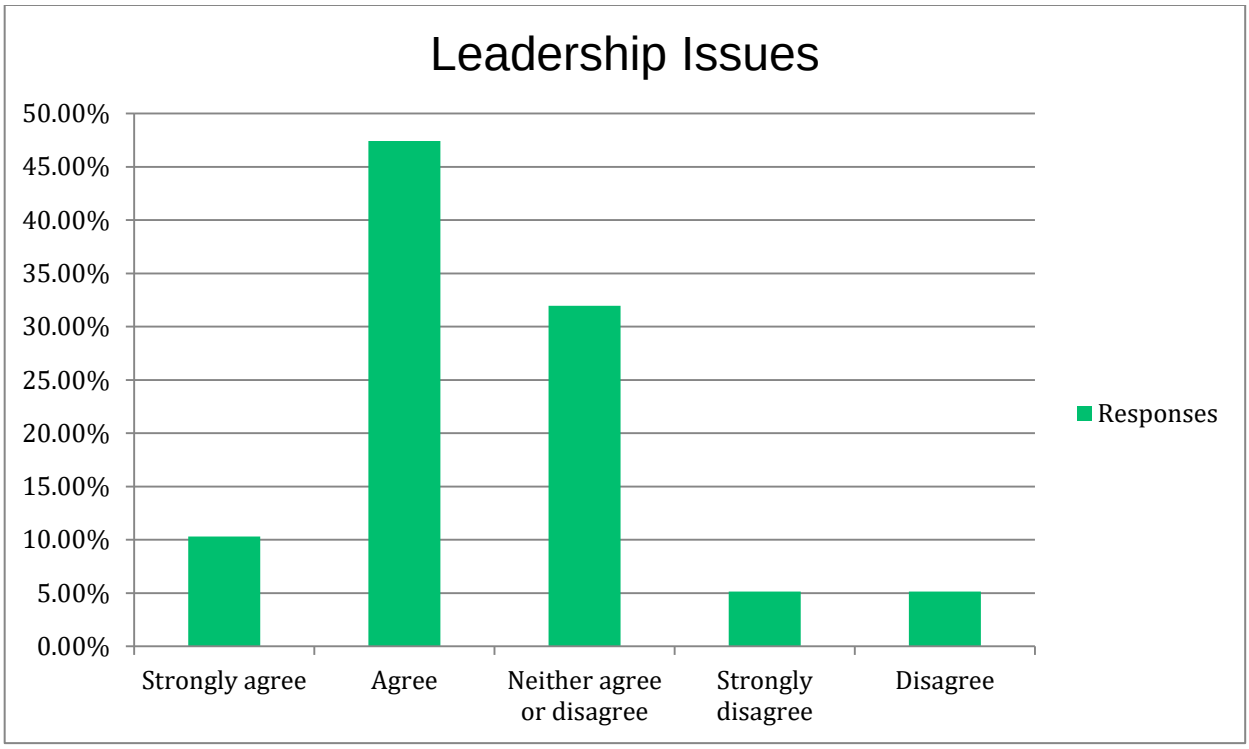

Figure 21. School or district leadership issues as a contributing factor (study survey question 13).

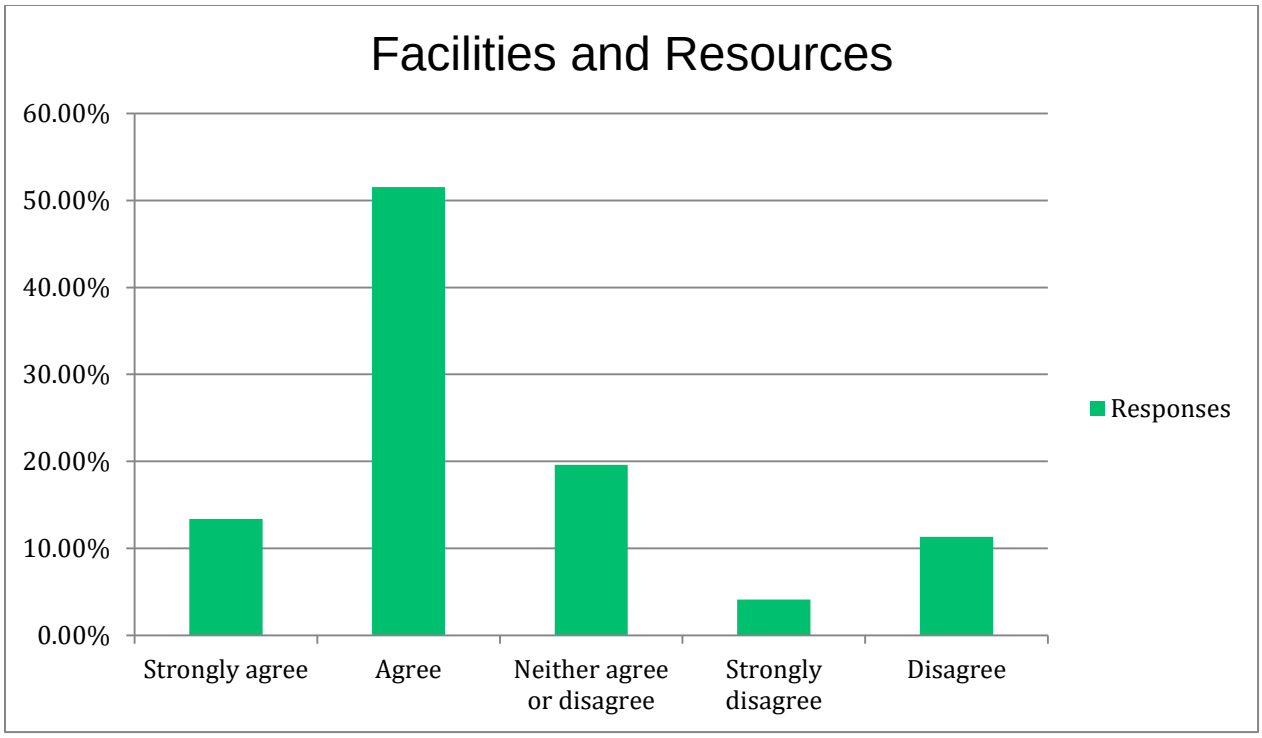

Figure 22. Study school district facilities and resources as a contributing factor (study survey question 14).

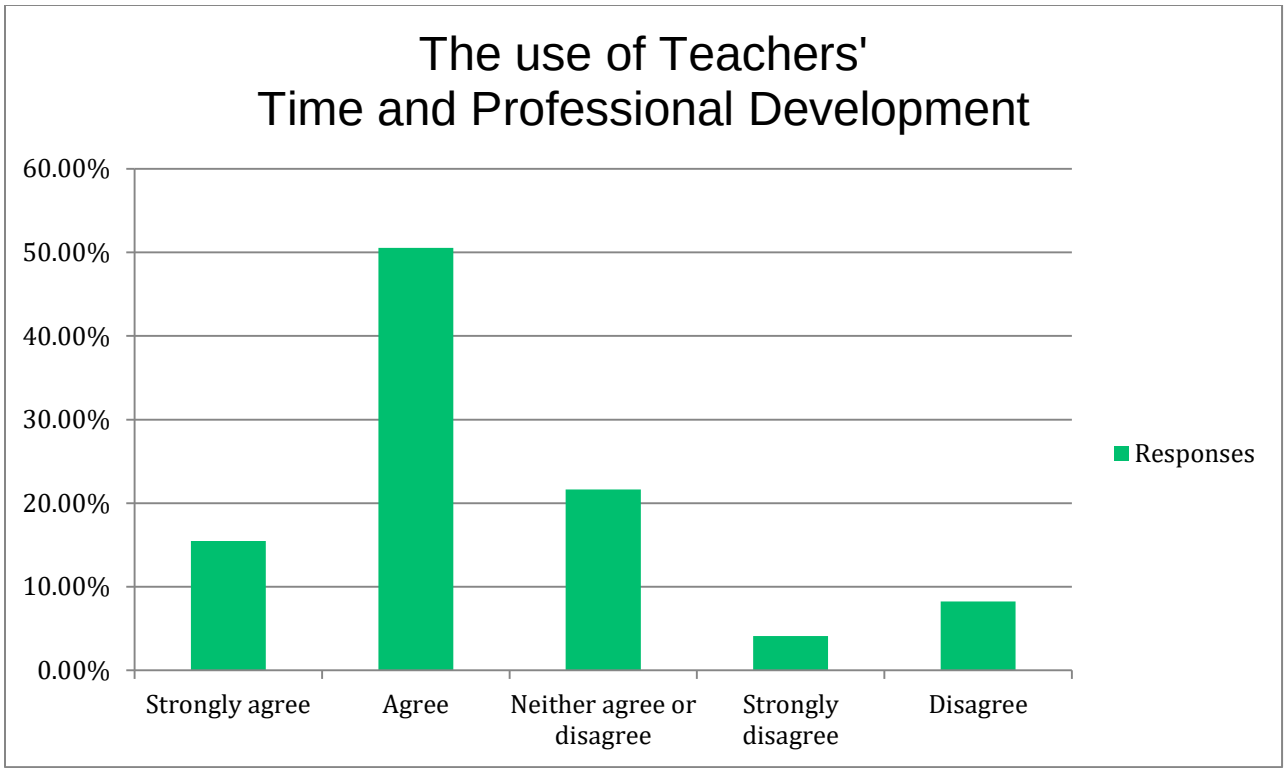

Figure 23. The use of teachers' time and relevant professional development (study survey question 15).

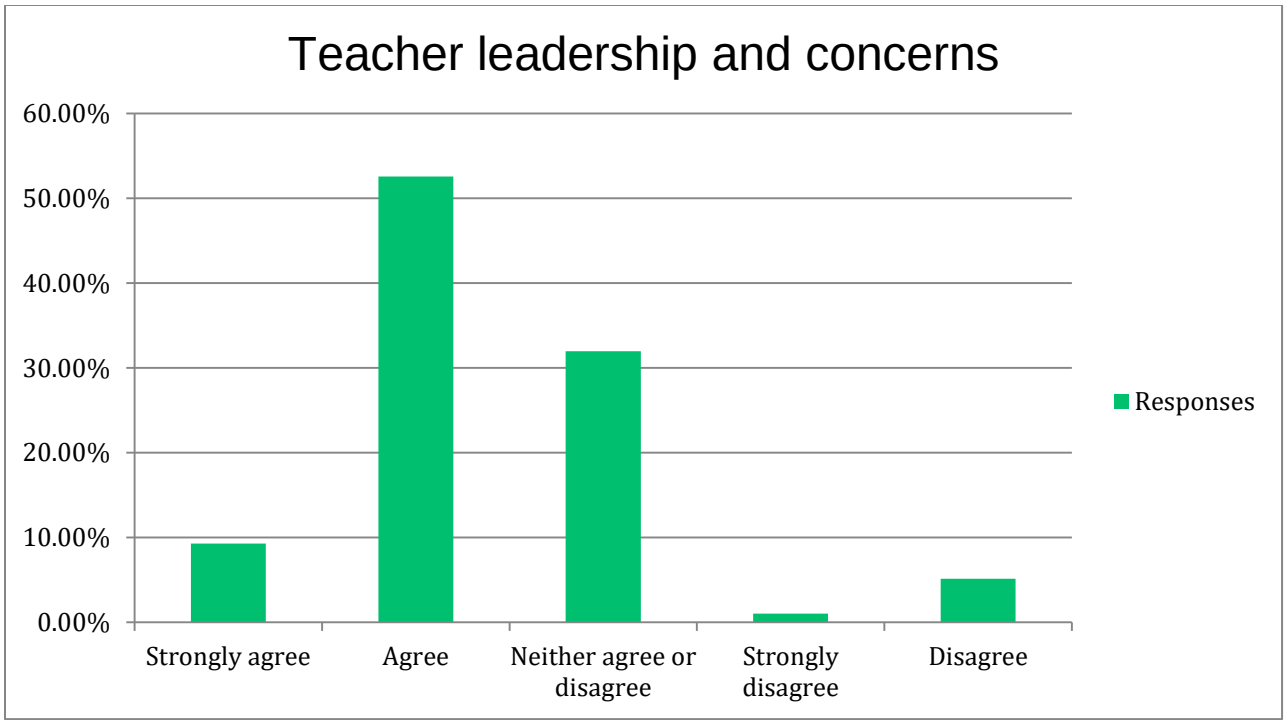

Figure 24. If there were teacher leadership or other significant concerns (study survey question 16).

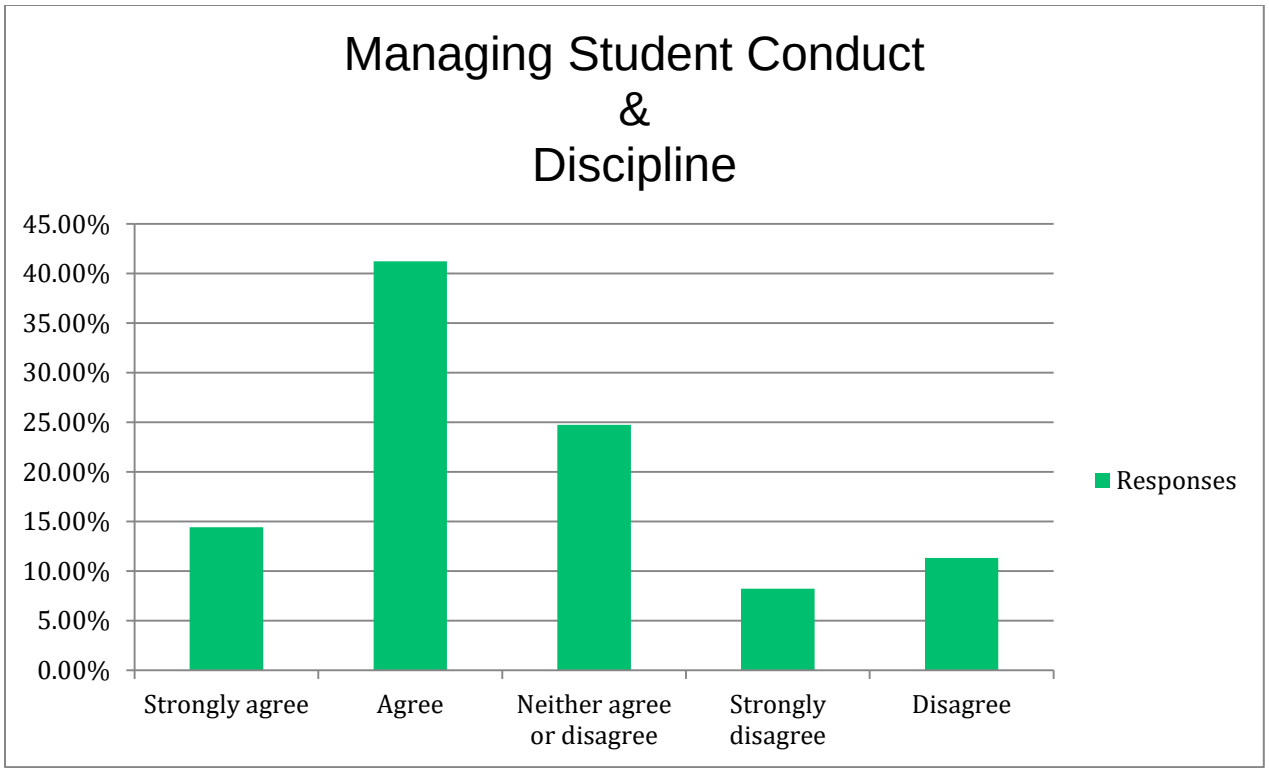

Figure 25. Having to manage student conduct and discipline (study survey question 17).

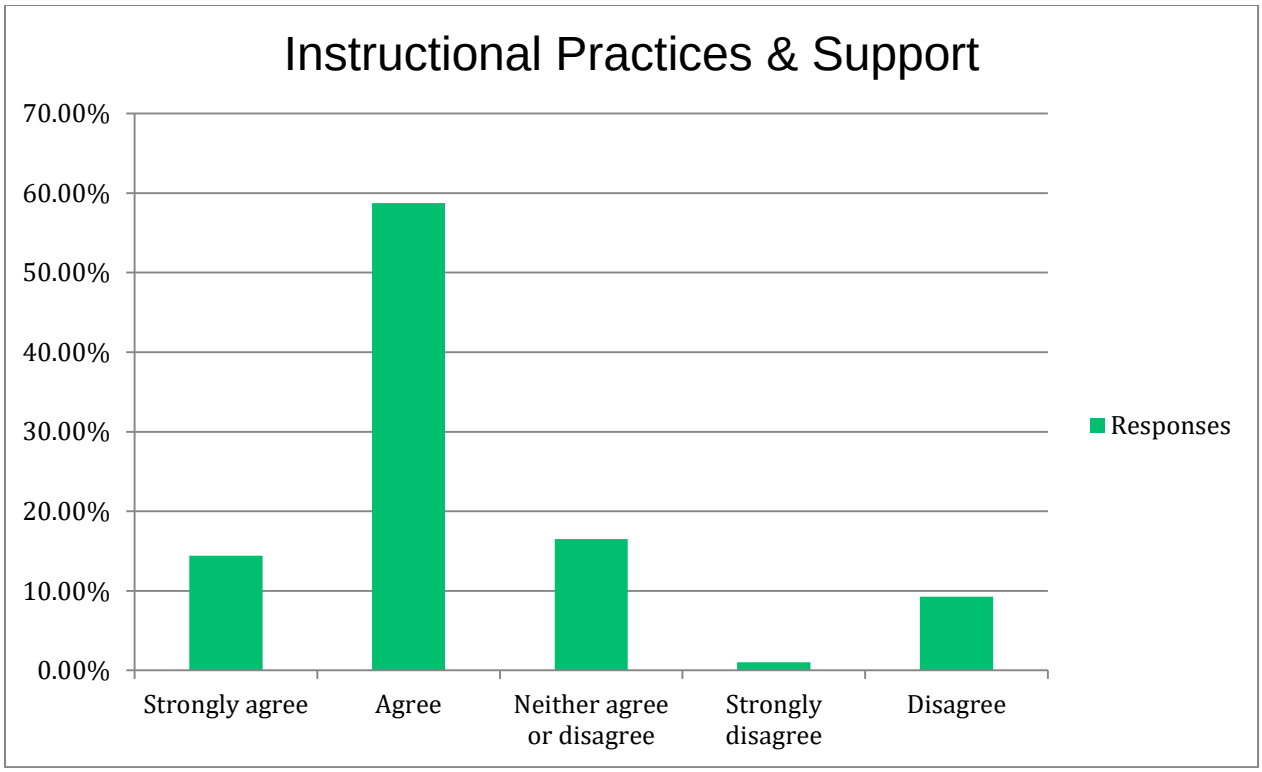

Figure 26. Study school district instructional practices and support (question 18).

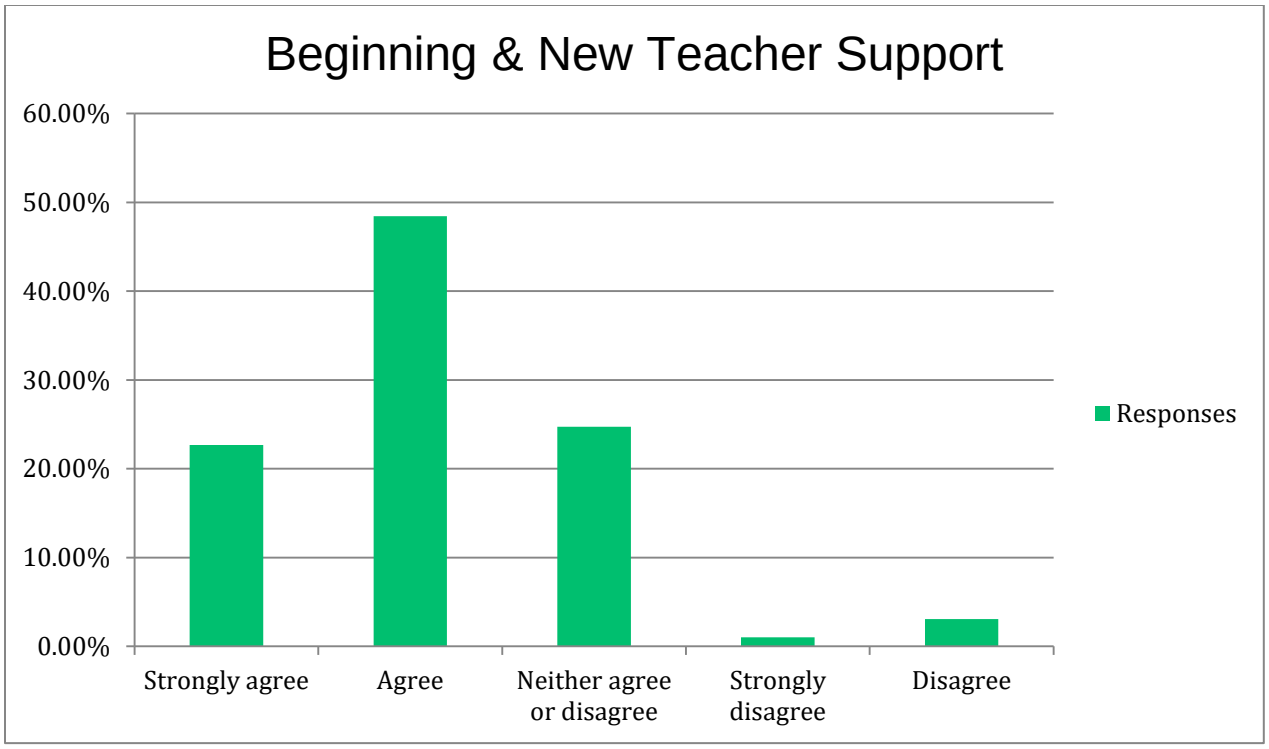

Figure 27. District and school support for beginning or new teachers to the study school district (question 19).

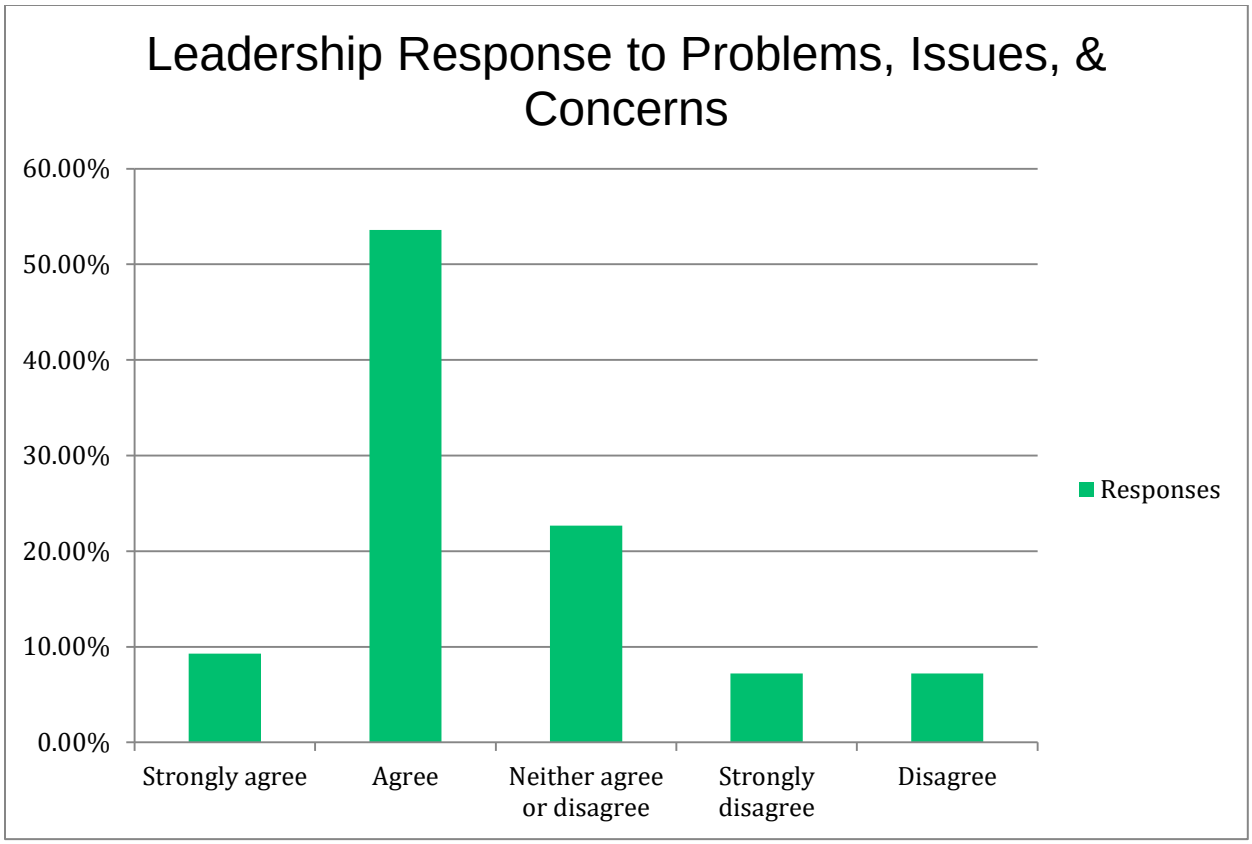

Figure 28. District and leadership addressing problems that are obvious and apparent pertaining to teachers' performance, students' behavior and/or district initiatives (study survey question 20).

Participant Interviews Analysis

For this study, participants were recruited for individual interviews after the study survey was administered. Participants were assured anonymity, that data collected would remain secure, and given informed consent documentation regarding the study, informing them of their rights as a study participant. The participants recruited were current employees, previously noted as *stayers* and *leavers*, as well as former employees of the study school district. Additionally, current employees were also recruited for interviews based on total years of experience in the study school district, and their intent to return to the study school district for the next academic school year. Many of the participants were teachers either in traditional classroom roles or support roles that were not administrative. There were two participants who were in administrative roles, but do not have any supervisor role over teachers.

Some participants as previously noted, were recruited to participate in the individual interviews were former teachers of the study school district. For this study, the former teachers are also referenced as *leavers* in the data analysis, and have remained in the teaching profession after leaving the study school district. The reason why the participant left the school district was not a recruiting factor. However, many of the participants who volunteered to be interviewed left the study school district for a different position not available or offered in the study school district, or they left the study school district for lateral position in another school district. A lateral move in this study, is defined as leaving a position from the study school district for the same type of position in a new school district.

The study interview consisted of five questions. The participants referenced as leavers where asked one additional question. Follow-up questions were only asked to gain clarity to a participant's response to the question asked or regarding a statement made that expounded upon

the initial question. As with the study survey, there was no demographic data collected. The only participant descriptor was the total number of years in education and the total number of years in the study school district, which was question three for the stayers and question four for the leavers. Any names, images, or voice recording that could be used to identify a participant remain secured by the primary researcher throughout the study, and the primary researcher only having access to the participants' information. For data analysis purposes and participant anonymity, a random participant code was assigned to each participant by the primary researcher, and only the primary researcher has access to the key with participants' codes.

Question one asked participants how do they describe the study school district to others. Despite the participant being a leaver or a stayer, most listed positive characteristics that focused first on the community. The most used descriptors in describing the community were small, close knit, family oriented, and rural. Similar descriptors were used in describing the school district. Again, stayers and leavers both stated that there is a degree of support from their peers, instructional coaches, and administration. Likewise, most participants believed that the study school district was a leader in technology and provided an abundance of resources. However, leavers more often shared that support was inconsistent and feedback was not specific in addressing concerns or noted deficient. Participant A18, a stayer who was new to the study school district stated that prior to being hired that there appeared to be more support, everyone share with peers, continual colleague dialogue, and administrative support and expectations. However, since being hired according to participant A18, there appears to be less colleague support, teachers are not sharing, or working as a team, and there is lack of visible administrative support and expectations. Participant A18 also stated, they felt that teachers were staying on their

own islands, and if there were no improvements in the next academic school year, it would be a factor in their decision to leave the study school district and exploring other options.

Question two for leavers asked what in their opinion had changed about the study school district from their initial hire up to the time they left the study school district. Only participant A10 stated that there was no change from their initial hire to the present time. Participant A10 stated a family situation is what influenced their decision to leave the study school district. Other leavers however, stated a lack of support, a loss of instructional focus, and the limited opportunities for growth were significant changes that occurred from the time of their initial hire date up to the time they left the study school district. The leavers also believed that the support from administration what the greatest change. Participant A12 shared that no support from school administration was received the entire school year prior to making the decision to leave. Furthermore, participant A12 also shared that when asking for support it was in the form of critiques and observed deficits with not suggestions or strategies for improvement. In some instances, participants A12 felt that there was no administrative support in dealing with student behavior. Again, some stayers stated when expounding on other questions, that they also perceived that administrative support was not as strong as it had been in previous years. Consistently, both stayers and leavers believed that sometimes decisions and other actions were driven by the influence of parents. Other leavers also noted changes in administrative support, but also a perceived changed in instructional focus. The participants felt that certain standards or expectations were lowered as well as initiatives that were not student centered or were designed for only a few select students. Ironically, a few stayers also eluded to a lack of rigor and actions that were not in the best interest of students even though this question was not asked of them. The leavers who had left the study school district prior to the study, recalled a time in which they

believed there was a real push and focus on student achievement, and that there was synergy around instruction, with plenty of instructional support, and had a shared vision by the school and district leadership.

There were some leavers who stated that a major shift they felt was different from their initial hire date was the anticipation of advancement and promises of professional growth. At least three leavers, participants A2, A17, and A14 who left the study school district for a new position stated they observed a culture in the study school district that had become toxic. According to participants A2, it had become frustrating to see individuals with years of experience and the required credentials passed over for opportunities and given to individuals who were less experienced, currently enrolled in credentialing programs, or did not have any credentials at all. Before leaving the study school district participant A14 had been passed over for open positions on multiple occasions, stated they experienced earlier in their time in the study school district many teacher leadership development opportunities and support, but realized after being passed over and leaving that the lack of professional advancement opportunities would have hinder their professional growth and goals had they stayed in the study school district. Furthermore, participant A14 and A17 stated the amount of professional development invested by the study school district in them and others who left was a great loss to the study school district, which was an asset to them and a benefit for their new school district, especially in the areas of curriculum and technology.

Question two for the stayers and question three for the leavers asked the participants to give their rationale of the study school district's teacher turnover data. Based on the NCTWCS and the study survey many teachers agreed that there was a culture of trust and mutual respect despite positions or titles. Furthermore, many agreed that there was consistent teacher support by

the school leadership. Many stayers believe that this was an accurate assessment of the district, and understood that those who left or were leaving the district had issues that were unrelated to the school leadership, had family issues, or personal reasons. Participant B11, a stayer with years of experience believed that the response to the survey question was not accurate and believed that teachers did not trust that their responses were anonymous and answered positively to avoid retaliation from the leadership at the school or the district. Many of the leavers stated the results are misleading and could only speculate on why teachers were electing to leave, many leavers believed that there were factors that were like their situation, the lack of advancement and life changes and factors that could only be explained by those who left. Participant B1 a district administrator, also believe that some factors could not be avoided and has impacted the overall teacher turnover rate. Participant B1 stated many of the new teacher hired, as many as thirty-five are beginning teachers who have various issues or situations that the study school district cannot resolve or in some cases compete with. According to participant B1, many of the young teachers start out in the study school district immediately after graduating and accept the first job offer, many of the new teachers when hired are single and on several occasions got engaged and married and opted to relocate with their spouse. Participant B1 also shared that many of the young teachers also desire to return to their childhood home or realize they prefer to be in a setting that offers a variety of life-style choices, which cannot be anticipated when they are hired. Participant A13, another stayer acknowledged that their decision to stay in the study school district makes them an exception to their peers who elected to accept teaching positions in larger school districts. Despite the higher supplement and short drives, participant A13 believed that the small setting is a personal choice and that the study school district just is not an ideal setting for those who do not like the slower pace or micro-political dynamics that come with being in a

small school district. According to participant A13, the peers that they were aware of that are leaving the study school district, many have admitted that they were leaving for more pay, and that the experiences in the study school district provided them the proverbial stepping stone to advance in another district.

Question four asked the stayers if there were any factors that would cause them to consider leaving the study school district. The responses from stayers varied. Most of the responses of stayers with zero through five years of experience were conditional. Participant A15 who is a beginning teacher who had left the study school district once and returned stated that they would not leave again because of the support received and that the study school district was the ideal place for them to work. As previously stated, participant A18 felt the culture of the school, the level of support, and administrative expectations had a negative shift from the previous year. Participant A18 also stated they would remain for at least another academic year with the hope that the issues cited will improve. Participant A13 has been in the study school district for less than three years and feels they are receiving school and district leadership support and has been given opportunities to grow as a teacher leader. Furthermore, participant A13 did not share any factors that would make them consider leaving the study school district. Participant B11 a stayer stated, despite the short commute to work there is only one major factor has them concerned and that would cause them to consider leaving. Participant B11 also stated, if accountability measures continue to not be applied consistently throughout the building and the district for all teachers they would leave the study school district. According to participant B11, the measures of accountability are present, but for some teachers it does not appear that they are held to the same level of accountability. Additionally, participant B11 stated there individuals who have advanced or has been placed in positions of leadership, and it is known by others that

the individual was not an exemplary teacher and did not do all the things asked of them by the administration. The frustration felt is that now the individual is expected to supervise and evaluate teachers who are exemplary and do all that is asked of them and in some instances, go beyond what is expected of them. The stayers with twenty or more years of experience in education and in the study school district participant A6 and A9, stated they had invested the years into the study school district and have endured many changes. Both participants stated there were no factors, other than their health or family that would cause them to consider leaving the study school district.

Question five asked of the leavers if there were any factors that would influence them to consider staying or returning to the study school district. There was only one leaver who stated that their decision to leave was related to their family and if the situation was different they would not leave the study school district. However, regardless of the years of experience in education or in the study school district the current employees who were leavers stated there were no factor that would influence them to change their decision to stay. Likewise, most leavers who had already left the district regardless of the reason, stated there were no factors that would cause them to consider returning to the study school district. Participate A4 stated they had considered returning on an occasion, but after considering family factors, returning to the study school district was no longer an option. The three participants who left the study school district for positions not offered or available felt a return to the study school district would have a negative impact on their professional growth and future advancement. However, participants A2 and A14 did state, if an offer to return to the study school district was an advancement that included a pay increase, they would consider returning to the study school district.

The final question asked of both stayers and leavers was to offer recommendations to the study school district's schools and district leadership on addressing the teacher turnover rate. Again, the stayers' recommendations varied according to the years of experience. The stayers with five or less years of teaching experience and experience in the study school district, felt that the elements to their success already existed in the district, such as support from colleagues, administration, and the community. However, participant B11 with fifteen years of experience or more and twenty or more years of experience in the study school district felt that more should be done to help keep good teachers in the study school district. Participant B11, as previously stated, recommended the measures of accountability be key to retaining teachers. The veteran stayers, participants A6 and A9 felt that effective communication and transparency when decisions are being made are key in establishing trust, which could help in lowering the teacher turnover rate. Many leavers' recommendations aligned with the recommendations from participants A6 and A9 regarding communication, However, they also felt that there is a communication disconnect between leadership and teachers. This communication disconnection is not limited to school administrators, but also school district leadership.

Consistently, the leavers and some stayers referenced the micro-political elements within the study school district. Many felt that there exists an inner circle in which you must belong to receive special treatment or advancement. Some also felt that parents have too much influence and use political influence that often drives district policies that impact instruction and school governance, which has a direct impact on teachers. Participant A3, a district administrator agreed that the perception of an inner circle appears to be a reality in the study school district, and the members in the inner circle are perceived untouchable. Therefore, the suggested recommendations from most leavers and the more experience stayer was to disallow this type of

perceived practice to continue. When asked if they would return to the study school district, participant A7 answered no, but also expounded on the question and added that there is a need for more cultural diversity in leadership as well as a need for those in authority to be more transparent. Another recommendation from participants A5 and B16 was to hold students accountable. Along with the lowered bar of rigor, according to participant A17, students are promoted without demonstrating mastery, which is allowed by the study school district's leadership. Participant B16, stated the lowering of student expectation and the influence of parents over the district leader were the single most important factors that contributed to their decision to leave the study school district. According to participant A3, there seem to be a lot of underlying adult connections in which the response or actions of leadership are not always in the best interest of students.

The findings discussed did not establish any patterns or consistent variables that has any greater influence on teachers' decisions to leave the study school district, based on participants' responses. However, the perception and responses of participants with similar years of experience in education and in the study school district were often closely aligned to each other. The perception of the stayers with less experience were aligned with respect to administrative support at the school and district level, as well as with resources and professional development. Likewise, the experience stayers regardless of the years of experience in the study school district also shared a common perception and in some instances, similar responses. The experienced stayers agreed that the variables contributing to teachers leaving the study school district, besides personal choice, were issues directly related to school and district leadership, school and district support, and micro-political elements. Most leavers perceptions of the study school district varied slightly, not based on years of experience, but based on their reason for leaving. Despite

their reason for leaving, most leavers perception of the study school district and their perspective on why teachers elect to leave the study school district aligned closely to responses of other leavers, but also those of the experienced stayers. Most leavers who left for lateral positions, as well as those who left for advancement or different positions agreed that school and district leadership support was inconsistent, that there is a lack of transparency when decisions are made, there is a perceived inner circle of influencers and that certain micro-political elements and practices favor the perceived inner circle of administrators, teachers, students, and parents.

Summary

The study survey utilized the Likert five-point scale with a mid-point or neutral selection choice. Researchers in education are often interested in assessing the attitudes of students, parents, and teachers and administrators (Adelson & McCoach, 2010). Croasmun and Ostrom (2011) stated using mid-point options influences the data; however, participants are not required to make absolute choices on an issue if they do not have strong feels towards the item or do not have an opinion. The data presented, highlighted instances in which the participants selected the neutral choice, which according to Croasmum and Ostrom (2011) may reduce the chance of response bias. Researchers should not worry about analyzing individual item responses (Croasmun & Ostrom, 2011) stated, because the reliability of the items are at best low and at worst unknown.

Therefore, the analysis of the study survey data alone cannot be used in examining the variables that are contributing to teachers' decisions to leave or stay in the study school district. However, based on the study survey data, the participants' rate of agreement support the literature that leadership, support, and culture are key factors in teachers' decisions to remain or leave a school, school district, or in some case the teaching profession. The survey data also

supports that there are no absolutes in determining the cause for teacher turnover, at best the data showed that teachers perceptions are influenced by certain factors in which teachers use in making their decision to remain or leave the study school district.

The purpose of the study interview was to broaden the scope of the study in examining the variables that are influencing teachers to leave the study school district. The interview questions asked were designed to gain a better perspective of the participants' perception of the study school district and the variables highlighted in the study survey. Furthermore, the study interview was also designed to examine the perception of the participants from the perspective of participants who remained in the study school district and the participants who left the study school district. The data collected as discussed in Chapter three, supported the literature discussed in Chapter two, and findings of the study.

Summary of the Findings

The greatest influence on a teachers' decision to leave the study school district are leadership, teacher support, and district/school culture. The participants interviewed all had a unique perspective about each of those factors, despite the similarities of their reasons for remaining or leaving the study school district.

To address both research questions, descriptive data analysis collected from a perception survey and individual interviews were used to examine the variables that are contributing to the high teacher turnover rate in the study school district. The analysis of the data suggests that there are multiple variables that are contributing to the teacher turnover rate in the study school district, and that there are also variables that are contributing to teachers that remain, which is measured by the retention rate not addressed in this study.

The variables, in either case have positive and negative perceptions that are associated with three major factors. The first factor is the perception of school and district leadership. The second perception is the level support provided, while the third perception is the micro-political elements that are perceived to influence school and district culture, the study school district's leadership, and levels of support offered and received.

Study Question 1

What factors contributes in the decision of teachers who leave the study school district? The analysis of the data from the perception survey administered reveals that the greatest influence is personal preference, personal perceptions, and personal choice. Based on the survey responses using the Likert scale, there were some cases in which the response rate was not a clear indication that the variable was the major cause of teachers leaving the study school district definitively. This was also evident in the data collected in the individual interviews.

The teachers who left the study school district had different preferences regarding the work environment or the school culture, travel time and travel distance to work, and the rationale of their personal choice. Additionally, personal perceptions play a crucial role that influences both personal preference and personal choice. When teachers left for a lateral position in another school district, most participants justified their choice to leave based on certain personal needs, their perception of school leadership, over all support, and advancement opportunities. When the decision was based on personal needs, such as spouse relocation, family support, births or marriages, the greater good to address their need lead to the participant leaving the study school district. In some instances, teachers felt that there was a lack of leadership and support, while others felt there were little to no chances for advancement based on a perceived leadership inner circle or other micro-political elements. Consistently, participants referenced a leadership inner

circle and other micro-political elements, such as parent demands or actions and initiatives that benefited only a few or certain groups.

Study Question 2

What factors contributes in the decision of teachers who stay in the study school district? As previously stated, the perception survey did not indicate any variable that was a greater influence in teachers' decisions to leave or remain in the study school district. However, the data from the personal interviews indicated that a teacher's years of experience in education and in the study school district influenced most participants' perceptions of the study school district, but was not a factor in their decision to remain in the study school district.

The greatest influences on teachers' decision to remain in the study school district were, personal preference, time already invested in the study school district, and personal connections. Participants with less than five years of experience felt that the study school district had a lot to offer and provided all the support needed, with most referencing the abundance of technology, and the notion that its size was an advantage. Many felt some type of connection to certain elements of the study school district, such as the network of support. Unlike the less experienced participants the veteran participants' decisions to remain in the study school district was not based on perception, as much as it was on time invested, the familiarity of the inner workings of the *system*, and in some instances, personal connections. The veteran participants, who had fifteen years of experience or more acknowledged the perceived inner circle and the micro-political elements, but were resolved to it because of their personal connections, such as family connections, the number of years already invested, and the time they have before retirement.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATION, AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary

The summary section of this study provides a brief overview of the information discussed in Chapters one, two and three. This summary includes a review of the problem, the literature, and the study's methodology.

The Problem

Nationwide teacher attrition is a significant concern (Ulfert, 2016). Zhang and Zeller (2016) stated, in 2005 school systems in the US spent over four billion dollars in teacher turnover. The state average teacher turnover rate in North Carolina (NC) has averaged about 14% according to the North Carolina State Board of Education Annual Report on Teachers Leaving the Profession (2012-2013 & 2013-2014), which is above the national average.

As indicated in Chapter one, purpose of this study was to examine the variables that are contributing to teachers' decisions to leave one local school district in Southeastern NC. Based on the responses from the Public Schools of North Carolina State Board of Education Annual Report on Teachers Leaving the Profession (2014-2015), 21 teachers stated that they left the study school district to work in another school district. What was not clear were the reasons why they left the study school district to work in other school districts, which has led to the study school district having a teacher turnover rate that is consistently higher than the state's teacher turnover rate average.

In most organizations, there is the reality that employee turnover will occur. Implications from district leaders were that some teachers were given the option to leave voluntarily or face action initiated by the district or school leaders in the study school district. According to the Public Schools of North Carolina State Board of Education Annual Report on Teachers Leaving

the Profession (2014-2015), actions initiated by the school district accounted for only a small percentage of the teachers leaving the study school district. Other reasons, tracked by the report included reasons, such as to teach in another school district, retirement, family relocation, for a non-teaching position, or a career change. Therefore, the study conducted in the study school district examined the variables that contributed to teachers' decisions to leave the study school district, but also the variables that contributed to teachers remaining in the study school district with a focus on those who left and remained in education.

The Literature

The literature on the topic of employee turnover and retention is often examined through the lens of corporate businesses. Most literature on teacher turnover or teacher attrition are studies and reports that typically focuses on teacher shortage and possible causes for teacher shortages, the challenges school districts share in finding qualified teachers, and the difficulty of finding teachers for hard to fill positions; such as math, science, and special education. Additionally, and the literature highlights the most frequent reasons why teachers are leaving not only the classrooms, but also the school district, and in some case the teaching profession. The literature in this study focused on six areas that influenced teacher turnover. These areas were school culture and leadership, understanding human capital and the cost of teacher turnover, the effects of teacher turnover on rural schools, examining the growing teacher shortage, exploring the reasons why teachers are leaving the profession, and a review of teacher retention strategies.

Byerly (2012) stated to understand an organization's turnover and retention the organizational leaders must look at the data specific to the organization, and failure to recognize the dynamics of the organizational characteristics and its nuances can lead to faulty interpretation of employee turnover and retention numbers or whether it indicates if the turnover and retention

is important. Furthermore, employee retention and turnover is more complex than it look (Byerly, 2012). The literature on employee turnover and retention whether it is in the corporate sector or education highlights similar issues that both have in common for the causes of turnover and strategies in retaining a skilled workforce. Also, an understanding of why employees are leaving will help in determining appropriate strategies to retain a skilled workforce through positive work environments, training, and in some cases, monetary incentives.

The specific causes and recommended solutions are unique to each organization in addressing recruitment and retention. Although, the focus of this study was the teacher turnover in one Southeastern rural school district, the factors and strategies discussed by the literature can be applied to all organizations that are experiencing high attrition and turnover rates. To address turnover and retention in the educational setting educational leaders must understand that there is a shortage of teachers, which is the results of various factors, such as retirement and declining enrollment in teacher preparation programs.

The Study Methodology

The study was designed to examine the variables that are contributing to the study school district's high teacher turnover, which is above the NC state average. The data was collected through the GAPPSI method approach. Descriptive statistical data was collected through two means, first an anonymous participant survey as well as through interviews with volunteer participants, who worked in various roles in the study school district.

The data collected from the survey was analyzed and disseminated by the primary researcher to better understand the factors that contributed to or influenced teachers' decisions to leave or remain in the study school district. Likewise, the perceptional data collect through individual interviews with teachers who were currently teaching in the study school district,

former teachers in the study school district, or teachers who were leaving the study school district at the end of the academic school year. The data collected from individual interviews provided the primary researcher a broader understanding of the problem and the factors that contributed to or influenced teachers' decisions to leave the study school district and why some teachers remained in the study school district. The collected data was used to answer two study questions.

Study Questions

Considering the problem of the study, the teacher turnover rate in the study school district, there were two questions this study answered.

1. What factors contribute in the decision of teachers who leave the study school district?
2. What factors contribute in the decision of teachers who stay in the study school district?

Security of Data

The data collected for this study was protected in two forms. The survey data collected was maintained on a secure server maintained by a survey data collection vendor. Participation in taking the survey was voluntary and participants were anonymous employees currently working in the study school district. The researcher maintained the only access to the survey data. Furthermore, the survey data did not ask for any demographic data that could be used to identify any survey participants, which included the primary researcher.

The data collected through individual interviews was also secured by the primary researcher on password protected device and electronic files maintained on mass storage drives. Participants identity was known only by the primary researcher. All participants who volunteered

to interview were informed of their rights through an informed consent document and by the primary researcher. Furthermore, participants' identity was protected by the primary researcher by assigning all participants with a random code.

Recommendations

The findings from this study suggests that the study school district's teacher turnover problem is not a unique or isolated phenomenon. The following recommendations are based on ideas found in the literature, suggestions, or comments from participants that could be easily implemented or changed within the study school district. The recommendations are made in two categories. These two categories are the following: (1) Practice, and (2) Research.

Practice

As discussed in the Chapter two, national, state, and local leaders are face with challenges in recruiting and retaining qualified teacher candidates. Furthermore, in the literature review it was discussed that the challenges are even greater for rural school districts. The study school district is a small rural school district, that competes with larger surrounding school districts for the limited pool of teacher candidates. Their challenges are compounded by the fact that these larger school districts also have more to offer regarding housing, dining, social gatherings, and greater salary supplements. However, there is literature that recommend strategies in which school district could use in addressing some of the challenges faced in recruiting, supporting, and retaining quality teachers.

The first recommendation is that the study school district should invest more in human capital through *grow your own* type of programs for current employees, such as teacher assistants or bus drivers. Monk (2007) stated that many states are pursuing grow-your-own strategies. For example, the grow-your-own programs work with teacher aides already employed

with the school district and develops requisite teaching skills (Monk, 2007). To expand the pool of potential recruits the study school district should also includes citizens that live in the county. There are in many instances of individuals who are under-employed, working at jobs in which they are over qualified. Recruiting candidates with alternative licensure options could grow the potential candidate pool to replace those who leave. The connections to the small-town atmosphere, family bonds, and community support were overwhelming variables that contributed to the decision to remain in the study school district, which emerged from responses from the study interviews by participants referenced as stayers, but also from anonymous comments submitted with survey responses. Watson (2017) stated when employees feel connected to their work environment they are more likely to enjoy their work, and are more likely to stay. Leaders who understand the strategies and factors associated with recruitment and retention can positively influence teacher retention and recruitment, especially school leaders in rural school districts (Ulfert, 2016).

The literature in this study also discussed the influence that leadership and school culture has on teachers' decisions to stay or leave their current work site. Boyd et al. (2011) stated several studies have found links to teacher attrition based on multiple school contextual factors that influences teachers' career decisions, such as administrative support, staff relations, facilities, and safety. Schaefer et al. (2012) stated the lack of leadership support was found to be a significant contributing factor for beginning teachers who left the teaching profession.

To address this, a second recommendation is that the study school district develop a teacher support system for teachers with five or more years of experience. The study school district should create a teacher's support program that mirrors the beginning teachers support program required for teachers in their first three years as a teacher. The program should target

and focus on teachers with five or more years of experience. Furthermore, the program should not just be for teachers who are struggling, but include teachers who may be meeting or even exceeding desired expectations. It was noted by participants with four or more years in the study school district, teacher support and feedback is inconsistent at best, and if the teacher is struggling the feedback is perceived a critical and as steps to remove the teacher instead of helping them to improve. According to the data captured by the study survey, the district has a greater number of teachers with less than ten years of experience. Therefore, as the teachers with more experience and are connected to the study school district leave to relocate, for a different position, or retirement, the study school district will have a significant number of teachers with less years of experience, which is the group of teachers who are more frequently leaving the study school district for various reasons, and in some cases based on their perception of the lack of support or not feeling connected to the school, the school district, or the community. Petty et al. (2012) state money is a significant contributor to teacher retention, but respect and recognition for student achievement, and additional teaching resources were also key factors in teacher retention.

Participants interviewed and comments collected through the study survey referenced the notion of a leadership inner circle that existed in the study school district. The perception that individuals in this inner circle receives special treatment and are the selected for advancement have micro-political impacts that influences teachers' decisions to leave, but is also an issue of criticism from teachers with 10 or more years of experience in education as well as in the study school district.

Therefore, a third recommendation would be to provide or establish a leadership framework to address teacher retention. This framework should be based on two pillars. The first

pillar would be a superintendent's teacher advisory committee that is comprised of teacher representatives from each school, but also teachers with varying years of experience. This committee would be a platform for teachers to receive information or to inquire of the district's top leader regarding issues and decisions that may have an impact on them directly or indirectly. A second pillar, would be to establish a principal's teacher advisory committee at each school. This committee, unlike the School Improvement Team, required by NC policy would be an advisory council in which non-instructional issues, such as school culture, teacher support, or teacher grievances could be addressed or discussed. The members of this committee should be granted the assurance of transparency and without retaliation from the administration.

Research

De Stercke et al. (2015) stated most studies focus largely on employee working conditions, and happiness, more commonly referred as well-being as a key to retaining new teachers. However, De Stercke et al. (2015) also stated that there are other aspects to retention, which are found through actions, research, and educational policy.

A fourth and final recommendation is to conduct further studies in the study school district that examines school and district leadership, teacher support, and the impact of teacher turnover on student academic achievement. Furthermore, future studies in the study school district could also focus on the teacher turnover issue based on demographics in determining if race or gender is a factor in teacher attrition. Likewise, conduct similar studies in surrounding school districts or in school districts with a similar population, as well as a study that focuses on individual schools with in the study school district. Finally, a future study that explores the transient and non-transient teacher population and how it influences teachers' decisions to stay or

leave the study school district. Having a more precise perspective and understanding of the problem could help the study school district in addressing its teacher retention efforts.

Conclusion

With the consent of the superintendent of the study school district, this study examined the variables that are contributing to the high rate of teacher turnover. Considering the teacher turnover and retention challenges that are faced by many school districts across the nation, the state, and in the Southeastern region, it is imperative that the study school district begin to address this issue. While the data collected in this study did not show any significant distinctive or specific variable as a primary factor for teachers leaving, it did highlight that certain variables are influenced greatly by teacher perception, and if addressed could result in possibly keeping other teachers from leaving the study school district simply based on perception alone. This micro-political issue does warrant further examining by district leaders for understanding regarding the perception that there is a leadership inner circle or sub-culture within the school district in which decisions are made and advancement opportunities are given.

In several instances during the interviews, participants referenced as leavers and with veteran participants referenced as stayers who stated that there is a perceived inner circle within the study school district, and it is not just isolated to the district level, but also at the school level. Although, this is based completely on teacher perception, teacher perception seems to be one of the most significant influences on teachers' personal preference and choice when considering remaining or deciding to leave the study school district.

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APPENDIX A: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL LETTER

EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY
University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board Office
4N-70 Brody Medical Sciences Building· Mail Stop 682
600 Moye Boulevard · Greenville, NC 27834
Office **252-744-2914** · Fax **252-744-2284** · **www.ecu.edu/ORIC/irb**

Notification of Initial Approval: Expedited

From:	Social/Behavioral IRB
To:	Gregory Monroe
CC:	Art Rouse
Date:	8/17/2017
Re:	UMCIRB 16-000657 A Study on Teacher Turnover

I am pleased to inform you that your Expedited Application was approved. Approval of the study and any consent form(s) is for the period of 8/12/2017 to 8/11/2018. The research study is eligible for review under expedited category #7. The Chairperson (or designee) deemed this study no more than minimal risk.

Changes to this approved research may not be initiated without UMCIRB review except when necessary to eliminate an apparent immediate hazard to the participant. All unanticipated problems involving risks to participants and others must be promptly reported to the UMCIRB. The investigator must submit a continuing review/closure application to the UMCIRB prior to the date of study expiration. The Investigator must adhere to all reporting requirements for this study.

Approved consent documents with the IRB approval date stamped on the document should be used to consent participants (consent documents with the IRB approval date stamp are found under the Documents tab in the study workspace).

The approval includes the following items:

Name	Description
Former Teachers Participant Recruitment	Recruitment Documents/Scripts
Interview Participant Inform Consent Form	Consent Forms
Interview Participants Recruitment	Recruitment Documents/Scripts
Monroe COI Disclosure Form Investigator	COI Disclosure Form
Monroe Proposal	Study Protocol or Grant Application
Study District Interview Questions	Interview/Focus Group Scripts/Questions
Study District Survey Question	Surveys and Questionnaires
Survey Content Letter	Consent Forms

The Chairperson (or designee) does not have a potential for conflict of interest on this study.
