

ABSTRACT

Andi Webb, EXAMINING THE IMPACT OF IMPLEMENTING EFFECTIVE ONBOARDING ON BEGINNING TEACHER AND NEW HIRE TURNOVER IN A TITLE I ELEMENTARY SCHOOL (Under the direction of Dr. Travis Lewis). Department of Educational Leadership, May 2022.

Teacher retention has been a growing nationwide concern for years that has exponentially worsened as a result of the COVID-19 global pandemic. Schools serving students from low socioeconomic backgrounds tend to be most negatively affected by high rates of teacher turnover. This study examined the impact of implementing effective onboarding on beginning teachers and new hires in a Title I elementary school in an effort to reduce teacher turnover. A mixed methods action research design was utilized whereby an onboarding program was implemented across three phases of improvement using the Plan, Do, Study, Act model. Data were collected using surveys and interviews with the teacher participants. Teacher preparation, teacher retention, benefits and compensation, mentor support, onboarding, and self-efficacy were factors analyzed. Teacher and staff turnover continued to occur throughout each phase of the study. The findings indicate that while the onboarding program implemented had a positive effect on the participants, the results were inconclusive overall due to the numerous confounding variables that arose and could not be controlled by the scholarly practitioner.

EXAMINING THE IMPACT OF IMPLEMENTING EFFECTIVE ONBOARDING
ON BEGINNING TEACHER AND NEW HIRE TURNOVER
IN A TITLE I ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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by

Andi Webb

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DEDICATION

This dissertation almost did not happen. I am most thankful to the Lord for guiding me each step of the way and knowing far more than I ever could. Mama, you are the perfect mom for me, and it is not even possible to love you more. Thank you for every single thing you have sacrificed to make my dreams possible. Paul, you are the absolute best brother I could have, and I am so grateful for you. I am unbelievably proud of you and your accomplishments but mostly I am proud because of the person you are. Dad, I miss you every day. I know you would be proud of me. I love you so much.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

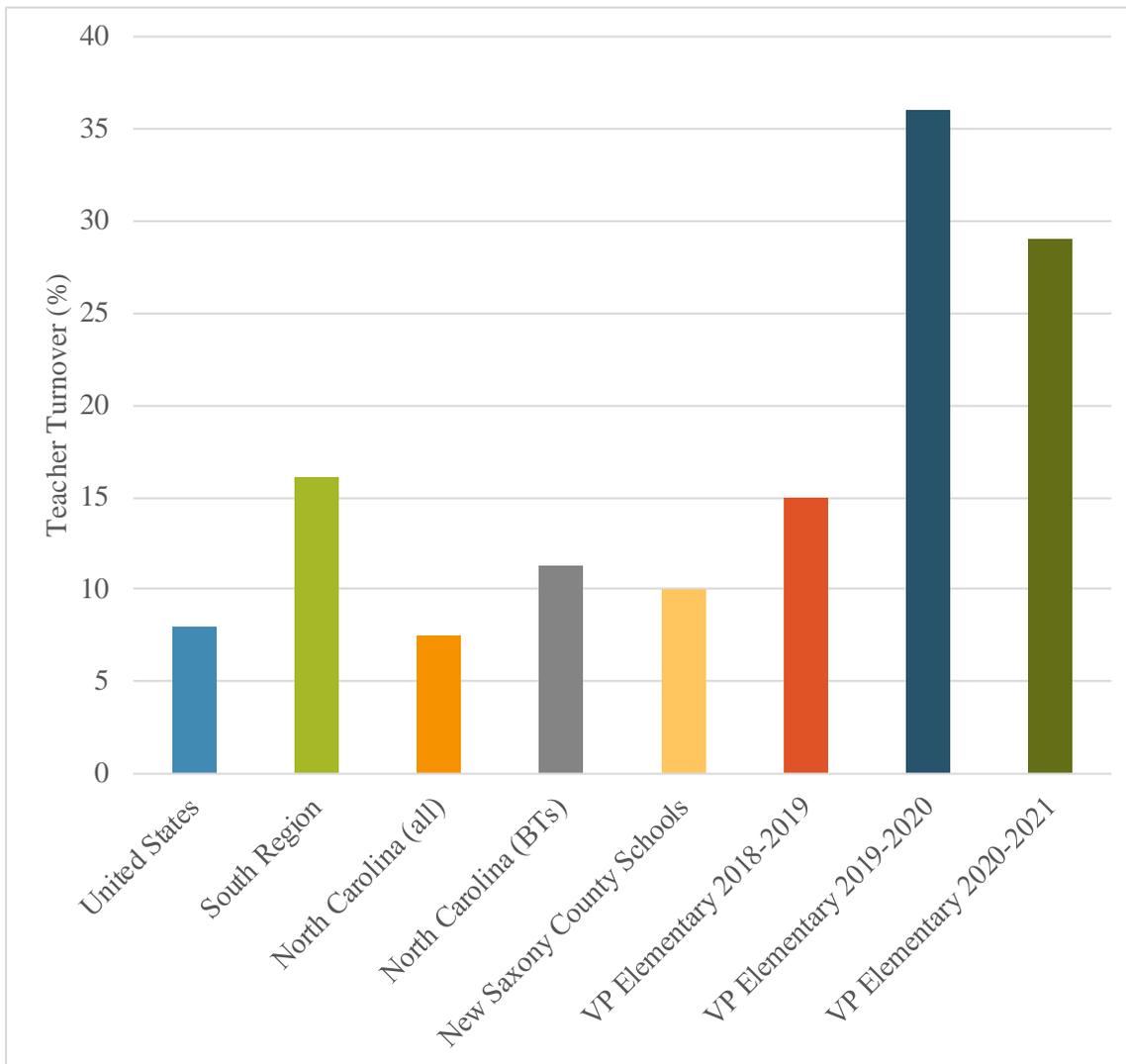
Teaching is a rewarding, yet challenging profession with a national concern regarding turnover rates within the profession (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). This turnover exacerbates the teacher shortage, costs are significant for schools and districts when teachers leave, and student achievement is negatively affected as a result. Nationally, teacher turnover is approximately 8% (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). In the South of the United States of America, teacher turnover is highest at a rate of 16.7%. Title I schools, those with a high number of children in poverty, have a teacher turnover rate at 50% higher than non-Title I schools. Schools that serve the largest percentages of students of color have a 70% higher teacher turnover rate. Many different reasons contribute to the alarming number of teachers leaving the field. Dissatisfaction with teacher working conditions, lack of administrative support, financial factors, and personal circumstances are some of the explanations teachers cite for their decision to abandon the profession.

As of the 2018-2019 school year, the teacher turnover rate in North Carolina was 7.5% but was significantly higher for beginning teachers, those in their first, second, or third year of teaching, at a rate of 11.3% (Report to the North Carolina General Assembly, 2020). The turnover rate for lateral entry teachers, an alternative pathway for teacher certification, was 14% and Teach for America teachers, a two year commitment for noncertified members to teach, left at a rate of 20.1%. Teachers cited choosing to change careers as the reason for leaving teaching at a rate of 12.5%. Overall, the state turnover rate for beginning teachers in 2018-2019 was 60.4% higher than that of their colleagues with more experience. Lateral entry teachers' turnover rate was 91.5% higher than those of their counterparts who entered the profession through traditional teacher certification, leading North Carolina to discontinue lateral entry and

implement the residency licensure process for prospective teachers to earn their teaching license via an alternate pathway.

Within North Carolina, New Saxony County is one of one hundred counties that comprise the state. New Saxony County is located directly on the coast in the southeastern part of the state. New Saxony County Schools, the public school district serving the county, is home to 43 schools to include prekindergarten schools and schools at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. Additionally, there are two alternative schools. The state teacher turnover rate during the 2018-2019 school year was 7.5% (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction [NCDPI], 2020). The district turnover rate, which indicates the percentage of teachers who left New Saxony County Schools, was 10.0%. The teacher turnover rate at Vox Populi Elementary, one of the schools in New Saxony County, during the 2018-2019 school year was approximately 15% and was based on school data. During the 2019-2020 school year at Vox Populi Elementary, the teacher turnover rate was 36% and during 2020-2021, it was 29% (see Figure 1). Throughout the past several years, the teacher turnover rate at Vox Populi Elementary has been higher than the national, state, and district averages. Additionally, it has been higher than North Carolina's beginning teacher turnover rates and, in most cases, higher than the teacher turnover rates in the South of the United States.

Vox Populi Elementary is a high-poverty, low-performing Title I elementary school situated in an urban fringe area. It is challenging to provide effective, continuous, year-long onboarding for beginning teachers and new hires. Teacher turnover rates are highest in the South of the United States of America (Darling-Hammond, 2017). Vox Populi Elementary is in the South, is a Title I school, and serves approximately 80% students of color. All students are able to receive no cost breakfast and lunch due to the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP).



Note. Teacher turnover rates for the U.S. and for the South region from *Teacher turnover: Why it matters and what we can do about it* by D. Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond (2017), Learning Policy Institute; for North Carolina and for New Saxony County Schools from the NC DPI Report to the North Carolina General Assembly (NCDPI, 2020).

Figure 1. Teacher turnover rates for United States 2018-2019, south region 2018-2019, North Carolina 2018-2019, New Saxony County Schools 2018-2019, and Vox Populi (VP) Elementary School 2018-2021.

HUSDA Food and Nutrition Service, 2019). With CEP, families are not required to submit a household application for meal support services because the school is in a low-income area. Lack of support and poor working conditions are major contributing factors teachers cite when leaving a school or the teaching profession, which is consistent with teacher turnover at Vox Populi Elementary.

The focus of this inquiry was to address the high teacher turnover rate in a public, Title I urban fringe elementary school by establishing an effective and continuous year-long onboarding program for beginning teachers and new hires. Teachers tend to leave the profession at higher rates in schools serving large percentages of students of color, schools that lack administrative support, Title I schools, and smaller schools (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). As a Title I school, Vox Populi Elementary serves approximately 80% students of color, has had significant administrative turnover, and is a relatively small school serving between 350-475 students each school year since 2018-2019. Schools serving the largest concentrations of students of color more frequently employ less experienced teachers. Each of these factors negatively influence student achievement, demonstrated in state mandated standardized assessments at Vox Populi Elementary. For example, for the 2018 and 2019 school years, student proficiency scores on end-of-grade tests in reading and math were 48%. The end-of-grade assessment scores for students in grades third, fourth, and fifth at Vox Populi Elementary demonstrated 16.5% proficiency in reading at the end of the 2020 school year. Mathematics assessments demonstrated proficiency at a level of 8%. During school years of highest teacher turnover, student achievement declined by over half in proficiency.

Teachers who leave the profession often cite poor working conditions, lack of administrative support, and lack of adequate preparation as reasons for leaving the teaching

profession (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). Schools serving students from low-income backgrounds often have a revolving door of teachers. These conditions negatively affect student achievement. The purpose of this study, in the short-term, was to increase teacher retention. For the long-term, the purpose was to increase student achievement. Additionally, this study was anticipated to provide insight on the following areas related to effective and continuous year-long onboarding for beginning teachers and new hires: teacher preparation, teacher retention, benefits and compensation, mentor support, onboarding practices, and self-efficacy. The knowledge gained herein was used to improve teacher retention for beginning teachers and new hires through effective, continuous year-long onboarding.

This study entailed the implementation of a continuous year-long onboarding program and analysis of its effects, if any, on the retention of beginning teachers and new hires. This chapter outlines the background of the focus of practice, the context of the study, statement of the focus of practice, focus of practice guiding questions, an overview of inquiry, inquiry partners, the conceptual framework, and definitions of key terms. Additionally, this chapter outlines assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, the significance of inquiry as it pertains to advancing equity and social justice, as well as advancing practices, and concludes with an overall summary of the chapter. The knowledge gained through this study was used to improve teacher retention and student achievement at this elementary school.

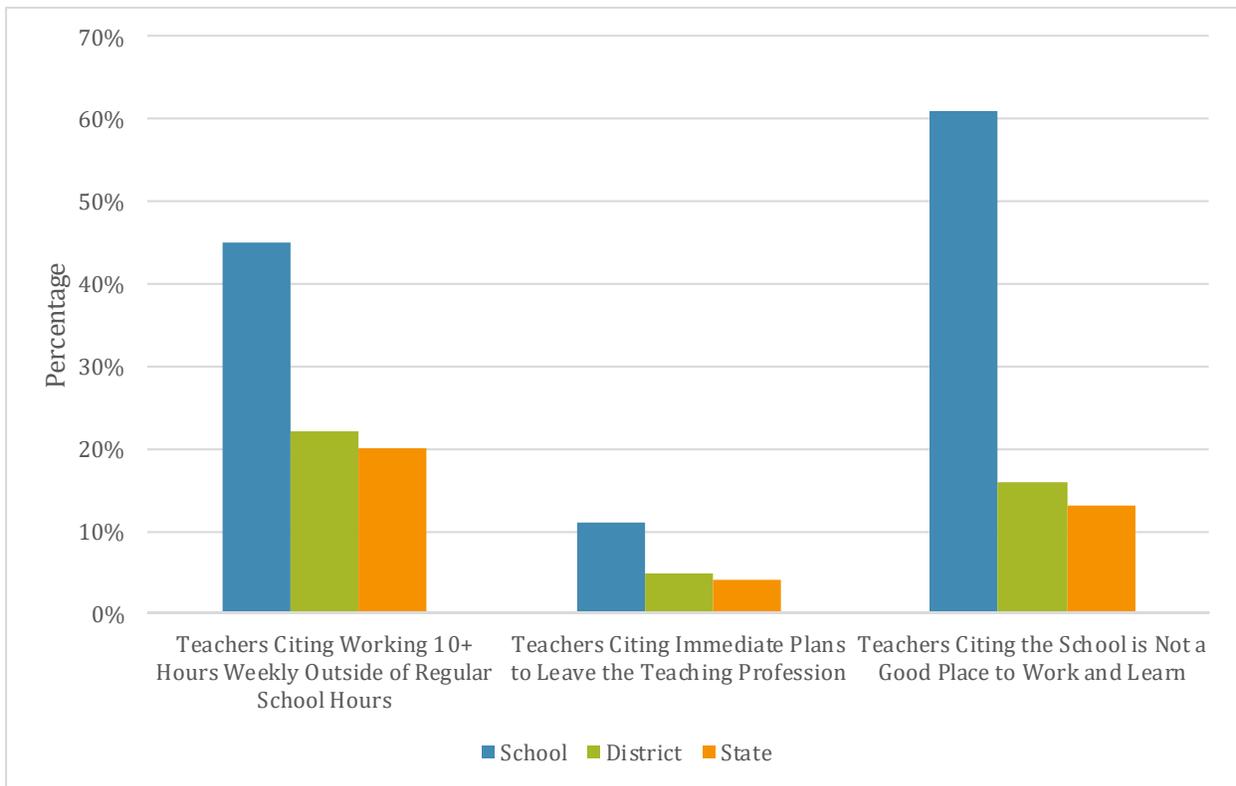
Background of Focus of Practice

There is a strong relationship between teacher turnover and the challenges faced in the United States with the national teacher shortage (Ingersoll et al., 2014). Teaching is complex, and pre-employment preparation is typically not enough to support beginning teachers and new hires (Ingersoll, 2012). Much of the knowledge needed to be a successful teacher is acquired on

the job. Effective, continuous year-long onboarding is focused on improving the performance and retention of beginning teachers and new hires, while ultimately improving student achievement. The teacher turnover rate for those with fewer than three years of teaching experience is high in all schools but significantly higher in Title I schools (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019). Retirement contributes to less than one-third of teacher attrition nationally (Sutcher et al., 2019). Experienced teachers have a higher turnover rate in Title I schools at almost 80%. Additionally, teacher turnover is often higher with teachers entering the profession through alternative certification. This turnover has a significant impact on schools and the students they serve. Teacher turnover disrupts student learning, affects school climate and culture, is very costly, and consumes much time on the part of administrators and mentors (Redding, 2018). There are national patterns relative to teachers' decisions to change schools or leave the teaching profession altogether. These include teacher preparation, age and experience, characteristics of the students, working conditions within the school and profession, and mentoring (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019). Teachers in the United States tend to work more hours than others in the teaching profession around the world (Darling-Hammond, 2017). U.S. teachers tend to have the least amount of time for adequate planning and preparation. When teachers lack appropriate preparation, feel there is a lack of administrative support, serve predominantly low-income students, and do not have necessary ongoing support, they tend to leave the profession. Teachers leaving the profession means that substitute teachers are needed, inexperienced or unqualified teachers may be hired to replace more experienced teachers, classes may be cancelled, financial costs are high, and student achievement is negatively affected. For low-income students and students of color, student achievement is disproportionately affected. According to the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey for Vox Populi

Elementary, 45% of teachers cite working ten or more hours per week in addition to the regular school work day (see Figure 2). This included before and after school, as well as on the weekends. Ninety-four percent of teachers said hunger is a problem for their students and most agreed that the school has measures in place to combat student hunger. Other areas of concern teachers expressed in the survey included lack of family involvement, student behavior, and lack of consistency with administrative support regarding student behavior. Eleven percent of teachers cited their immediate professional plans were to leave education entirely. This rate is more than twice the rate of 4% for the state. Aspects of working conditions that would most affect teachers' willingness to keep teaching at the school were cited as school leadership, managing student conduct, and time during the workday. One hundred percent of beginning teachers cited they did not have a reduced workload and 71% cited there was not time to meet formally with their mentors during school hours. One hundred percent of beginning teachers, however, disagreed that they had received no additional support as a beginning teacher. Sixty-one percent of teachers cited the school was not a good place to work and learn.

Years of research have demonstrated five significant ways to improve teacher retention: (1) Strengthen preparation, (2) Improve hiring, (3) Increase compensation, (4) Provide support for new teachers, (5) Improve working conditions (Poldosky et al., 2017). Providing an effective onboarding program and mentoring support during the beginning of a teacher's career can improve teacher retention (Redding, 2018). Within the school of focus for this study, Vox Populi Elementary, it was not possible to increase compensation through the onboarding program, but it was possible to work to improve hiring practices, improve working conditions, and to provide much needed support for beginning teachers and new hires. Because the school of focus for this study was low-performing based upon North Carolina end-of-grade testing results for third,



Note. Teacher working conditions survey for Vox Populi Elementary, New Saxony District, and the state of North Carolina from the *NC Teacher Working Conditions Survey Results. 2020 NC ASQi Survey (2021).*

Figure 2. 2020 Teacher working conditions survey results.

fourth, and fifth graders, it was labeled as a “D” school on a traditional letter grade scale, just above an “F” or failing (NCDPI, 2020). A short-term goal of this study was to improve teacher retention. The long-term goal of this study was to increase student achievement and allow both students and teachers the opportunity to be successful while demonstrating proficiency in their studies as students or craft as teachers. If teacher retention at Vox Populi Elementary could be improved, students could be taught by certified teachers with experience who were qualified to meet the high demands of a low-performing, Title I elementary school.

Context of Study

Vox Populi Elementary is a public, Title I elementary school that is high-poverty, low-performing, and experienced numerous changes in leadership over the course of one year during the 2020-2021 school year. The leadership changes were due, in large part, to the challenges administration faced throughout the 2020-2021 COVID-19 global pandemic. The workload on educators increased exponentially during this time as they had to quickly pivot instruction from face-to-face to remote/virtual instruction (Kaufman & Diliberti, 2021). Throughout the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years, administration faced continuously shifting requirements from the district regarding mask mandates, social distancing, school cleaning requirements, expectations for quarantine and contact tracing, increased needs of staff and students, and the need for remote instruction without adequate training on how to implement instruction virtually. Accessing needed technology for students in a high-poverty school was also a challenge administration faced.

During the 2020-2021 school year, the school was led by three different principals. The third principal remained at the school for the 2021-2022 school year but was new to the district. The assistant principal resigned in December 2020 and was not replaced for the school year. As

of the 2021-2022 school year, the principal hired in December 2020 continued to serve as the principal of the school. A new assistant principal was hired in June 2021 and was serving her first year as an administrator at Vox Populi Elementary in the 2021-2022 school year. A staff member previously serving as the global coordinator moved to the position of instructional coach for third, fourth, and fifth grades after the previous instructional coach for these grade levels transferred to another school in the district to serve as an assistant principal.

During the 2020-2021 school year, there were five kindergarten teachers, four first grade teachers, four second grade teachers, four third grade teachers, a second and third grade combination class, four fourth grade teachers, and four fifth grade teachers. For the 2021-2022 school year, changes included an increase of two teachers in first grade, a decrease of one teacher in second grade, an increase of one teacher in fourth grade, and a decrease of one teacher in the fifth grade. Two instructional coaches served within the school. Instructional coaches worked with teachers on curriculum and instruction, classroom management, and served as part of the leadership team. I, the scholarly practitioner conducting this study, served as the kindergarten, first, and second grade instructional coach. Another staff member served as the third, fourth, and fifth grade instructional coach. For the 2019-2020, 2020-2021, and 2021-2022 school years, there was one Multi-Tiered Systems of Support Teacher (MTSS) staff member, one English Language Learners teacher, Deaf and Hard of Hearing support staff, three exceptional children teachers, teacher assistants, support staff, one social worker, two guidance counselors, one Community in Schools staff member, one nurse, and clerical/custodial cafeteria staff members.

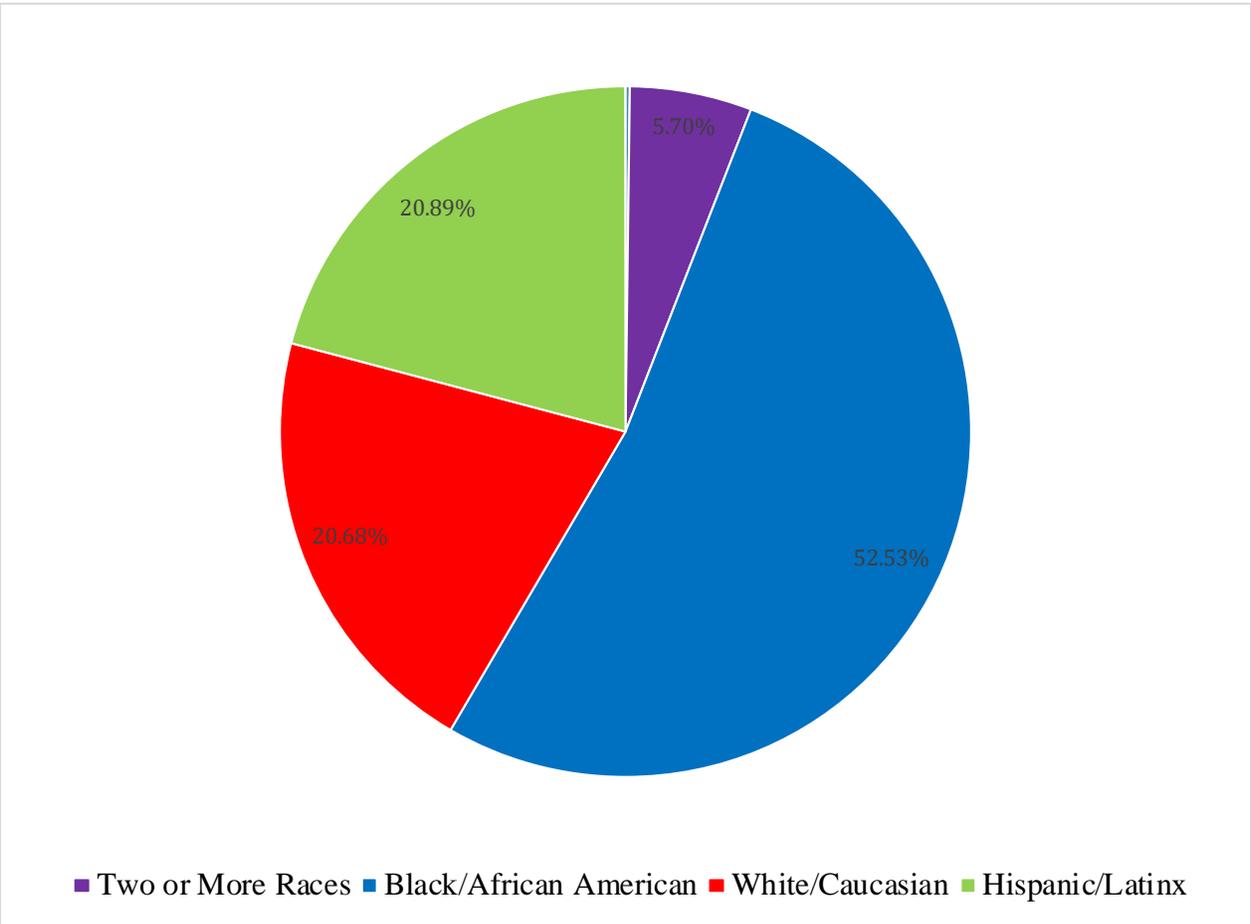
NCDPI 2018-2019 school report card data indicated the school's high poverty levels and, based on school enrollment data, the school's minority enrollment of 52.53% Black/African American, 20.68% Caucasian, 20.89% Hispanic/Latinx, and 5.7% Two or More Races (North

Carolina School Report Card, 2020d) (see Figure 3). One hundred percent of the students received no cost breakfast and lunch through Community Eligibility Provision.

NCDPI 2018-2019 school report card data showed that incoming student readiness was 32.8% as of the 2018-2019 school year (North Carolina School Report Card, 2020). As of 2019, the district percentage of beginning teachers was 8.3% and Vox Populi Elementary's percentage was 20.6% (North Carolina School Report Cards, 2020). School suspension rates were higher than the district and state averages during the 2019-2020 school year. There were 11.40 criminal acts listed at Vox Populi Elementary. There were fewer student devices and wireless access points at Vox Populi Elementary than in the district and state. The district had 3.98 criminal acts during the same year and the state had 4.69. Vox Populi Elementary had the highest number of students experiencing homelessness than any other school in the district. The school is one of 45 schools in New Saxony County Schools (NHCS, 2021). It was home to a regional public university that housed a school of education offering kindergarten through sixth-grade certification. It was the university where many of the beginning teachers and new hires at Vox Populi Elementary received their pre-service training.

This study began by examining the strengths and challenges of the current onboarding practices within Vox Populi Elementary. The scholarly practitioner collaborated with inquiry partners within the school and district to design a plan for improvement to the onboarding strategies while also designing an onboarding program that could potentially be replicated in other high-poverty, low-performing elementary schools in the district.

As a result of the improvements to the limited onboarding strategies in place and the creation of a consistent and strategic onboarding program, beginning teachers and new hires may feel more supported, be significantly more prepared for their teaching assignments, receive



Note. Student demographics of Vox Populi Elementary School, New Saxony District, and the State of North Carolina from the *NC School Report Cards* (2020).

Figure 3. Student demographics of Vox Populi Elementary School.

professional development with classroom management and organization that is differentiated based on need and remain not only in the teaching profession but at this specific urban fringe elementary school that has faced consistent teacher turnover over an extended period of time. New Saxony County Schools required all teachers to remain at the same school for three years before being allowed to consider transferring to another school within the district.

Teachers with less than three years at their current school may not request a transfer to another school within the district. As it stood at the time of the study, it was a concern that beginning teachers may complete their mandated three years at Vox Populi Elementary and immediately request a transfer, although anecdotally some expressed a desire to transfer prior to the completion of three years at the school. Since the 2019-2020 school year, some teachers have remained at the school only because they were not selected for transfer. There was significant disparity within the district between the elementary schools that were located in close proximity to the beaches of this coastal southeastern city and the Title I elementary schools located downtown. For the higher socio-economic schools, there tended to be little room for teachers to transfer into the schools, making it more challenging for teachers leaving Vox Populi Elementary to have options for transfer.

Statement of Focus of Practice

The focus of this inquiry was to address the high teacher turnover rate in a public, Title I urban fringe elementary school by establishing an effective and continuous year-long onboarding program for beginning teachers and new hires. As the scholarly practitioner, I examined the strengths and weaknesses of the current onboarding program and its effect on teacher turnover. Next, I collaborated with stakeholders to establish a year-long onboarding program for all beginning teachers and new hires. By establishing this program, beginning

teachers and new hires were expected to feel more welcomed, supported, better prepared for their teaching assignments, and therefore remain in the teaching profession, particularly at this elementary school, ultimately improving the teacher turnover rate as a short-term goal and student achievement as a long-term goal.

Teacher turnover is a major concern, particularly in high-needs schools and in the South of the United States (Strauss, 2017). Approximately 90% of yearly teacher demand is due to teachers leaving the profession and leads to teacher shortages. This concern is most evident in schools like Vox Populi Elementary. Teacher turnover negatively affects student achievement, and this was evident at the school of focus for this study as it was significantly low-performing. Beginning teachers leave teaching at a higher rate than those with more experience. Teachers who lack effective onboarding and mentoring support leave the teaching profession at a rate that is twice as high as those who receive effective, continuous onboarding. An attempt to improve teacher turnover should include a thorough examination of the varying factors that contribute to teachers choosing to leave certain schools or the teaching profession altogether (Billingsly, 2004). The work environment of a teacher is a critical factor in a teacher's decision to remain at a school or to leave. Teachers want to feel included within their school, have cooperation among their colleagues, and work in an environment viewed as positive. Teachers are more likely to remain at a school when they feel supported by their administrators (Billingsly, 2004). Because beginning teachers often struggle with classroom management and student behavior issues, providing induction and mentoring support early in their careers is crucial. Being supportive with teachers' needs in regard to resources, time for planning, and management of paperwork can encourage teachers to remain at a school and, particularly, working to help beginning teachers

and new hires manage their often extremely high levels of stress can contribute to the reduction of teacher turnover.

Focus of Practice Guiding Questions

This study was guided by the following primary question and related subquestions:

What effect does continuous, year-long onboarding have on teacher retention in a Title I elementary school?

1. What effect does continuous, year-long onboarding have on retention of beginning teachers?
2. What effect does continuous, year-long onboarding have on retention of new hires?

These questions aided in determining if continuous year-long onboarding was effective in improving teacher retention, specifically as it related to beginning teachers and new hires. I collected data and collaborated with inquiry partners to develop a continuous, year-long onboarding program to support beginning teachers and new hires in the hopes that it would improve teacher retention as a short-term goal and student achievement as a long-term goal. From there, I identified additional supports that may be beneficial to include, monitor, and adjust within the onboarding program as needed based upon feedback from ongoing surveys and interviews conducted for the purpose of the focus of practice.

Overview of Inquiry

To answer these guiding questions, I, as the scholarly practitioner, used three phases of a mixed methods action research design. The action research design focused on the previous two years of teacher turnover at Vox Populi Elementary from 2019-2020 and 2020-2021, as well as the current school year of 2021-2022. Three years was selected as the time frame and included pre-COVID-19 pandemic data regarding teacher turnover. Interviews were used for collecting

qualitative data and surveys for collecting quantitative data. This study occurred in three phases of action research utilizing survey and interview data.

Phase I included implementation of the continuous, year-long onboarding program. Additionally, it included conducting surveys followed by interviews with beginning teachers who were employed at the school of focus during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years to assess the previous onboarding practices or lack thereof. These two years were selected because they were the timeframe that could include pre-COVID-19 pandemic data. It was important to consider the pandemic challenges and if teacher turnover and student achievement had been affected in comparison to pre-COVID-19 data. It also included interviews with teachers who chose to leave Vox Populi Elementary to transfer to a different school or who chose to leave the teaching profession. Phase II included interviews and surveys with beginning teachers and new hires to evaluate the effectiveness of the onboarding program created for the purpose of this study. As the data from the interviews and surveys was evaluated, needed adjustments were made to the onboarding program in an effort to yield positive changes and meet the needs of the beginning teachers and new hires. Phase III continued with interviews and surveys for evaluative feedback to determine the program's effects on teacher retention and concluded with recommendations for the onboarding program that can be replicated each year with minor changes regardless of any changes in leadership.

Inquiry Partners

To aid in implementation of and reflection upon this study, numerous inquiry partners were utilized. These partners included the principal, assistant principal, the third through fifth grade instructional coach, the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) coordinator, all beginning teachers and new hires for the 2021-2022 school year who are willing to voluntarily

participate, and the two district beginning teacher support coordinators. Additional inquiry partners included teachers that chose to transfer to another school within the district or leave the teaching profession since the 2019-2020 school year. Engagement with inquiry partners was captured through meeting notes, ongoing interviews, and surveys throughout the 2021-2022 school year.

Theoretical Foundation

Albert Bandura defined self-efficacy as a person's particular set of beliefs that determine how well one can execute a plan of action in prospective situations (Bandura, 1977). A person's strength of convictions affects if they feel able to cope with challenging situations or abandon them if they feel they cannot cope. Efficacy expectations affect the amount of effort a person will put toward a task and the length of time they may be willing to endure challenges. Four areas influence a person's self-efficacy: (1) Performance accomplishments or personal mastery experiences, (2) Vicarious experience in seeing others perform successfully, (3) Verbal or social persuasion that includes meaningful feedback, and (4) Emotional and physiological states affected by one's perception that they are not capable of completing their tasks and therefore may have induce anxiety and stress.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is foundational in terms of understanding student needs. It is often not considered how Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs pertains to the educator. A proposed hierarchy that is specific to education includes considerations for numerous factors of motivation for educators (Wish, 2020). Employment provides one's physiological needs. A beginning teacher considers that they need a job to provide food, shelter, and all of their basic needs. A need to be respected can lead some to enter the education field. Additionally, most beginning and

experienced teachers alike want to do a good job. There is a sense of partnership in that teachers and students are “in this”, the learning process, together.

The foundation for a teacher’s well-being can begin with their self-efficacy (Lopez-Garrido, 2020). To support a beginning teacher and new hire, emphasis can be placed on the importance of peer observations with master teachers, provide frequent and meaningful feedback, encourage teachers to actively participate in their own learning and be purposeful in asking questions, and provide some choice and opportunities for self-accountability. In order to improve teacher turnover at this school, it is anticipated that the year-long onboarding program needs to improve teacher self-efficacy. This can improve the performance of beginning teachers and new hires. It can also help them develop resiliency and an ability to deal with stressful situations and establish healthy lifestyle choices. Beginning teachers and new hires often work long hours and neglect their personal health or hobbies that bring them joy. This adds to their stress and dissatisfaction with their working conditions. Ultimately, if teacher self-efficacy is strong, it is anticipated that their performance can improve, and student achievement can be positively impacted. When a teacher has a strong sense of self-efficacy, the ability to persist with challenging students is greater and teachers’ commitment to their job increases (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). This persistence can be beneficial for student achievement.

Definition of Key Terms

The following terms will be used throughout the study and are defined herein:

Beginning Teacher - Teachers in their first three years of teaching (NCDPI, 2010).

Economically Disadvantaged - A title for students whose families qualify to receive free or reduced prices for breakfast and lunch for their children attending a public school (Allen, 2018).

edTPA - A performance-based assessment that is utilized by programs throughout the US for teacher preparation to determine if teachers are prepared to begin teaching (edTPA, n.d.).

Induction or Onboarding - A critical time during the first years teaching when supports are provided to help the teacher (National Academies Press, 2001).

Lateral Entry - An alternative pathway to enter the teaching profession. Candidates must have a bachelor's degree and a 2.5 grade point average. They must additionally have 24 semester hours in teaching coursework or 5 years of relevant teaching experience with the local education agency that is deemed relevant (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction Lateral Entry, 2019).

Local Education Agency or LEA/District - A system of administration within a city, town, or state (Definitions of selected terms, CDE, n.d.).

Mentor - A teacher with demonstrated mastery in the classroom who can provide guidance to those with less experience in the teaching profession (National Academies Press, 2001).

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support or MTSS - A framework for providing needed support for students with academics and behavior. It is a data-based system to better understand and solve concerns with student achievement (Riverside County Office of Education, n.d.).

New Hire - A new employee that is in need of an induction for support to be successful with job performance (New hires definition, n.d.).

Teacher Attrition/Turnover - A teacher that leaves the district or the teaching profession or may change to a different position within education (Definitions of selected terms, CDE, n.d.).

Tenure - A practice that provides teachers with a permanent contract and protections against being fired without just cause (Education.com, 2013).

Title I School - A school receiving federal financial support because 40% or more of the students enrolled are from low-income families (U.S. Department of Education, 2018).

Veteran or Experienced Teacher - A teacher with more than three years of full-time teaching experience and is considered to no longer be a novice (What is a veteran teacher, n.d.).

Assumptions

For the purpose of this study, it is assumed that beginning teachers and new hires have a genuine desire to improve their practice. It is also assumed that mentors want to provide support for beginning teachers so that they improve in the quality of their instruction and persist in the profession. Finally, because New Saxony County Schools compensated mentors with a monthly stipend, it was assumed that mentors were serving in this capacity to provide support to beginning teachers and not solely to receive the relatively small compensation.

Scope and Delimitations

This inquiry engaged only the inquiry partners who provided their informed consent prior to the phases of research. Any participant could choose to withdraw from participation at any time for any reason without fear of retribution. While the continuous, year-long onboarding program may be able to be replicated in other schools, the research was specific to Vox Populi Elementary based on the high teacher turnover, the demographics of students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds, the fact that the school is deemed low-performing and was in an urban fringe area. Additionally, it was a public, Title I elementary school. Adjustments may need to be made if the research is considered with secondary schools, schools in rural areas, private schools, or any other educational setting outside of the school selected for this focus of practice.

Limitations

The research for this study was impacted by the fact that New Saxony County Schools did not allow teachers to transfer to a different school within the district until they have served at their current school for a minimum of three years. It was after the third year that the teacher turnover was occurring most often, based upon the data available. The school had employed a high number of beginning teachers and after completion of their third year teaching, many sought to transfer to a school with fewer challenges than Vox Populi Elementary. Trust with the community and students was diminished because of the lack of consistency with staff. Providing necessary professional development to new hires due to the necessity of filling positions as a result of teacher turnover costs significant money and time.

Another limitation of the study was that I, as the scholarly practitioner, served as the instructional coach for kindergarten, first, and second grades. I also served as the lead mentor working with all beginning teachers and mentors. Any teacher hired prior to the 2021-2022 school year had met and worked with me in some capacity, whether directly or indirectly. I, as the scholarly practitioner, was diligent in remaining impartial throughout the research conducted within this study. Voluntary participants were made aware that their answers to all surveys and interviews, to the extent possible, would remain anonymous with all inquiry partners. Survey and interview findings were not used in any way as a factor in evaluations of voluntary participants and was only used to improve the onboarding program for beginning teachers and new hires. As the kindergarten, first, and second grade instructional coach and lead mentor, I did not formally evaluate any teacher and, because of my position as lead mentor, could not conduct peer observations using the NC Teacher Evaluation tool. Voluntary participants were informed of this and would not be required in any way to participate in research if they chose not to do so. This

had no effect on their evaluations formally or informally. All participation was completely voluntary.

A final limitation was that only one school was used to conduct the research. District data was included in some aspects of the study, but the focus was predominately on a single school site. Replicating the continuous, year-long onboarding program in other schools may likely require adjustments to be made to meet the needs of each particular school.

Significance of Inquiry

The significance of this inquiry was to address the high teacher turnover rate in a public, Title I elementary school by establishing an effective and continuous year-long onboarding program for beginning teachers and new hires. It was anticipated that a continuous, year-long onboarding program would help decrease the teacher turnover rate in the short-term and improve student achievement in the long-term. Additionally, it was anticipated that the onboarding program would save the district money in teacher recruitment and training and would be beneficial to students because consistent relationships impact student engagement and, ultimately, their performance academically. Nationally, other schools struggle with teacher turnover that results in teacher shortages and leaves classrooms without a certified, well-prepared teacher. The findings of the research surrounding this focus of practice may be beneficial to other schools struggling with teacher turnover. It was the goal of this study to reduce the 2021-2022 teacher turnover or anticipated teacher turnover at Vox Populi Elementary. Anticipated teacher turnover needed to be considered due to the three-year transfer requirement New Saxony County Schools implements that specified teachers must serve within the same school for three years before being allowed to request a district transfer to another school. By the end of the 2021-2022 school year, the goal was to increase teacher retention with beginning teachers and new hires at

Vox Populi Elementary, but also that teachers would want to remain, regardless of the limiting three year transfer rule in New Saxony County Schools. The overarching goal of this focus of practice was to increase student achievement by decreasing teacher turnover.

Advancing Equity and Social Justice

This study sought to address the inequities in a high-poverty, low-performing elementary school by providing support to beginning teachers and new hires that would enable them to meet the needs of a diverse student population. Schools that serve students from backgrounds that are predominantly low-income need the strongest teachers in order to significantly raise student achievement (The Education Trust, 2016). The high teacher turnover at this elementary school did not allow for consistency and community building with parents and students. Vox Populi Elementary practiced the use of seclusion rooms and had specific support in place for students with intensive behavior needs. The use of seclusion rooms occurred when students were a danger to themselves or others and may have been a result of continued outbursts even after being physically restrained by a teacher trained in crisis prevention techniques. There were two seclusion rooms at Vox Populi Elementary, although only one was used on a regular basis. The room was inside a classroom and had a separate door. Students who may have been a danger to themselves or others may have been placed in this room that was padded with blue padding on all four walls. Informally, it was called “the blue room.” The door to the seclusion room may or may not have closed, depending on the extent of the outburst the student displayed. The school was one of approximately nine schools in the district that was identified as needing additional support relative to student misconduct. By providing beginning teachers and new hires with effective, continuous year-long onboarding, the ultimate goal was to improve student achievement through improving teacher retention. To this end, components of the onboarding

program included improving classroom management and creating a more positive, inclusive educational environment for all children.

Advances in Practice

It was anticipated that this study would provide additional data regarding the effect of a continuous, year-long onboarding program on the teacher turnover rate for beginning teachers and new hires at a public, low-performing, Title I elementary school. An expectation with the creation of such an onboarding program was that it can be easily sustained and replicated regardless of changes in leadership. It was additionally an expectation that this study would potentially be shared with other similar schools in the district and beyond.

Summary

In order to improve student achievement in high-poverty, low-performing elementary schools, teacher turnover needed to improve. Approximately half a million teachers change schools or leave the profession annually (Redding, 2018). Teacher turnover continues to be one of the most significant problems facing education in the United States and negatively affects students in high-poverty schools the most. Students from low socio-economic backgrounds are more likely to be taught by a beginning teacher than schools serving affluent populations, contributing to continued challenges with equity in education. The purpose of this study was to determine if an effective, continuous year-long onboarding program could improve teacher retention with beginning teachers and new hires at a public, Title I elementary school in an urban fringe area that was high-poverty and low-performing. The following chapter includes a review of literature on teacher turnover and ways to improve it, specifically for beginning teachers and new hires. Chapter 2 will address the theoretical foundation of self-efficacy and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, teacher preparation, teacher retention, benefits and compensation, mentor

support for beginning teachers, onboarding for beginning teachers and new hires, and self-efficacy.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter will share a review of literature relevant to this study. The purpose of this study was to address teacher retention at an urban fringe elementary school through implementation of a structured onboarding program for beginning teachers and new hires. As such, the following topics will be discussed: Albert Bandura's research on self-efficacy and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs as the theoretical foundation of the study, teacher retention, teacher preparation, benefits and compensation, mentor support for beginning teachers, onboarding, and self-efficacy.

National Teacher Turnover

National data demonstrates that teacher turnover not only significantly undermines student achievement but also consumes valuable time and resources. On average, an urban district can spend approximately \$20,000 on a new hire (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). This cost includes expenses related to recruitment, hiring, and training. The investments do not pay their full dividend if teachers leave a district within only a few short years. Approximately 90% of teaching positions that are open are due to teachers leaving the profession. While some are retiring, about two-thirds of teachers leave for other reasons, many due to dissatisfaction with the teaching profession. The teacher turnover rate in the United States of America is approximately twice as high than regions of the world demonstrating high-achievement in education such as Finland, Singapore, and Ontario, Canada. In the United States, the highest teacher turnover rates can be found in the South, Title I schools serving more low-income students, and in schools that serve the largest concentrations of students of color (Darling-Hammond, 2017). Teacher turnover is lowest in the Northeast.

Pathways to Teaching

Teachers may enter the teaching profession through several different methods. These methods may affect their likelihood to remain in the profession. Prospective teachers may complete a regular, university-based teacher preparation program where they receive foundational understanding of pedagogy and content knowledge (Feuer et al., 2013). Within a teacher preparation program, prospective teachers also have opportunities to work alongside a partnering teacher with experience. Often, teacher preparation programs require prospective educators to begin teaching one or two subjects or classes at a time until they build up to teaching for an entire day over an extended period of time. They work with the partnering teacher to better understand how to establish classroom management procedures, create lesson plans, evaluate student understanding of subject content, and experience what teaching may be like without being completely on one's own. Teachers are exposed early on to classroom experiences that are realistic and have continuing feedback from the partnering teacher and university supervisor. As with many other professions, teachers learn a significant amount through on-the-job exposure but programs that prepare teachers to work in the classroom can add valuable quality to the instruction delivered. Teachers need to learn how to problem-solve with their colleagues so they can focus on their classroom practice, as well as their role within a school (Spector, 2019). Teacher preparation programs develop a strong foundation for future teachers while allowing them to learn from a master teacher, learn how to meet the varying needs of students, and learn strategies to create a positive emotional climate within their classrooms. Throughout the nation, schools in urban areas have the highest percentages of teachers that are not certified and have little experience (Cardichon et al., 2020).

Additionally, until 2019, teachers were able to enter the profession through the lateral entry alternate pathway. Lateral entry has now been replaced with the Residency Licensure pathway as of June 30, 2019 (NCDPI, n.d.a.). Qualified individuals have the option to obtain a position as a teacher while they earn their teaching license. The newly instated Residency Licensure is valid for one-year and is renewable twice. Those entering the teaching profession through this method must hold a bachelor's degree, complete coursework related to the licensure area or pass the content area exams, be enrolled in a school of education, meet all requirements of the NC State Board of Education, and be supervised from the educator program in which they are enrolled. In North Carolina, teachers entering the teaching profession through this alternate pathway must complete preservice requirements as established by the NC State Board. Teaching licenses that lead to a Residency Licensure include an emergency license and a permit to teach. With the emergency license, individuals with a bachelor's degree and minimally eighteen hours of coursework that relates to the licensure area in which they are requesting, have not completed a preparation program for teaching, and do not yet qualify for Residency Licensure are able to serve as a teacher. A permit to teach is another alternative and is non-renewable for one year. It can be granted to someone requesting to enter the teaching profession who does have a bachelor's degree but cannot qualify for a teaching license via any other pathway.

Teachers in North Carolina may enter the profession and convert their Residency Licensure to a North Carolina Professional License through other approved programs such as through the North Carolina Teachers of Tomorrow program, #T.E.A.C.H., Aspire Teacher Prep, Central Carolina Teaching Initiative, CMS Teaching Residency, and Pathway to Practice NC (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction Approved Programs, n.d.). With Teachers of Tomorrow, individuals with an emergency permit, working as a teacher assistant or substitute

teacher, or have no experience at all can work toward a teaching license while simultaneously receiving full teacher pay and benefits for up to three years. The total cost of the program is \$4,895 (North Carolina Teachers of Tomorrow, n.d.). With #T.E.A.C.H., individuals with a bachelor's degree and minimally a 2.7 grade point average can apply to be considered for enrollment in the program. Candidates receive 433 hours of instruction while teaching and the program offers the support of instructional coaches. The cost of the program in full is \$5,530 (North Carolina #T.E.A.C.H., n.d.). The Aspire Teacher Prep Program requires individuals to complete online coursework, they have the support of virtual instructional coaches, and have a beginning teacher support network. It is a fifteen-month program, and the cost is \$6,000 (RTI Education Services, n.d.).

The Central Carolina Teaching Initiative offers a blended approach to coursework through face-to-face and online instruction that can be completed in three semesters or less and the cost is \$4,750. One-on-one instructional coaching support is offered (Central Carolina Teaching Initiative-Helping Professionals Become Teachers, n.d.). The Charlotte-Mecklenburg School System offers the CMS Teaching Residency. The tuition cost for one year is \$2,000 but there are additional fees not included within the tuition amount (CMS Teacher Residency, n.d.). With Pathway to Practice in NC, the program is completely online, and the cost is \$1,250 every three months with an average overall cost of \$4,800. Individuals are considered a student at both the University of North Carolina and North Carolina State University (Pathway to Practice NC, 2020).

In North Carolina, individuals who would like to become a teacher must pass the Praxis Core Academic Skills for Educators if applicable, pass one or more of the Praxis subject assessments as required for their certification area, complete the PPAT assessment or other state-

approved performance assessment, such as edTPA (Overview of North Carolina Testing Requirements, n.d.). The edTPA process requires all candidates seeking initial licensure in North Carolina to complete this performance-based, subject-specific assessment (edTPA, n.d.).

Waivers were allowed with edTPA requirements during the 2020-2021 school year due to the pandemic (NCDPI FAQ & Updates, 2019). The PPAT assessment is required in North Carolina for those going through one of the state approved educator preparation programs (North Carolina Testing Requirements, n.d.). If not going through a traditional university based teacher preparation program, North Carolina allows individuals who meet necessary requirements, such as having a bachelor's degree and a minimum grade point average of 2.7, to begin teaching while enrolled in an educator preparation program. While teaching and completing a state approved educator preparation program, individuals receive the same state mandated salary and benefits as a traditionally certified educator (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction Approved Programs, n.d.).

Until 2020, there was a program titled Troops to Teachers (Troops to Teachers Proud to Serve Again, n.d.). This was a program that helped military Veterans transition into a second career of teaching. One of the fifteen grant offices for Troops to Teachers was located in North Carolina. As of 2020, the Department of Defense realigned the resources for this program to higher priority areas.

A somewhat controversial pathway to teacher preparation has included Teach for America. It is a program that requires individuals to hold a bachelor's degree, minimum of 2.5 grade point average, and undergo an interview process. A two-year commitment in the teaching profession is required and an onboarding program is provided (Teach for America, n.d.). As with many alternative teacher preparation programs, there are many critics of Teach for America.

Individuals who have not received formal training on how to serve as a teacher are placed in the classroom as a teacher with very minimal, if any, experience or preparation while being paid the same salary and receiving the same benefits as a certified teacher. Some school districts have retracted their contracts with Teach for America because of candidates being unprepared to teach and due to low rates of retention (Brewer, 2015). One of the most controversial aspects of Teach for America is that it tends to be more of a preparation for professionals outside of the classroom. Fellows may serve their two years and move on to different professions yet serve in educational leadership positions sometimes making decisions for the very profession they were in for a duration of two years.

All programs have different experiences and requirements. As such, individuals interested in entering the teaching profession are prepared in a variety of ways and to varying degrees. This can affect how well an individual is prepared to successfully enter the teaching profession (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). Alternative teacher preparation programs have faced scrutiny over the years. Once a teacher enters their own classroom, many find they did not receive practical preparations. These include classroom management strategies and differentiating for a wide range of needs and abilities of their students. Additionally, there are often disconnects from teaching preparation programs to the daily needs within the classroom and school.

Research has demonstrated that both the traditional method of teacher preparation through a college of education and alternate pathways can be effective. Traditional teaching preparation methods have been found to often provide better self-efficacy (Darling-Hammond et al., 2002). Deliberate strategies to develop teachers' instructional knowledge and preparedness for working with students who may not speak English as a first language, students who struggle

academically or behaviorally, and teaching with technology are aspects of a traditional teaching program that can positively impact teacher retention.

Due to the COVID-19 global pandemic during the end of the school year in 2020 and throughout the 2020-2021 school year, many teacher candidates were not able to complete state required edTPA expectations and were provided with waivers to complete their student teaching or course work in a virtual learning environment (edTPA, n.d.). Completing work in a virtual environment made the student teaching experience very different for tens of thousands of teacher candidates who could not complete their student teaching in a more traditional face-to-face experience (Choate et al., 2021). To provide additional support for those receiving waivers, new teachers may attend monthly webinars offered to them or asking for on-demand support through the edTPA website (NCDPI FAQ & Updates, 2019).

Despite the numerous alternative pathways to the teaching profession, North Carolina legislation defines a teacher as someone who is certified to teach in North Carolina or holds a certificate or license issued by the State Board of Education that meets the professional license requirement for National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certification (Article 20, Teachers, 2017). A national teacher shortage has been identified as a crisis in education (Sutcher et al., 2016). Districts often find it a challenge to find qualified teacher candidates. Student enrollment has grown, thus increasing the demand for teachers. Teachers entering the profession decreased by 35% between 2009 and 2014. Additionally, high teacher turnover has added to the teacher shortage crisis (Uncertified Teachers and Teacher Vacancies by State, n.d.). In North Carolina, emergency waivers have more recently been allowed in an effort to address the teacher shortage. The emergency waivers can allow teacher assistants to take on the role of teacher or allow those holding a Bachelor's Degree outside of education to assume a teacher role while

taking courses to achieve teacher licensure. These emergency waivers do not allow for these staff members to have a formal mentor, participate in regular onboarding in which beginning teachers would participate, and quite often sets these unprepared teachers up for significant challenges as they take over the role of teacher in the classroom.

During the end of the 2020 school year and throughout the 2020-2021 school year, beginning and experienced teachers alike faced many additional challenges outside of the regular struggles often associated with teaching. The COVID-19 global pandemic shortened the face-to-face student teacher experiences for preservice teachers, sent the majority of teachers into a virtual teaching experience with little or no preparation, and took quite a toll on the mental health of educators struggling to maintain their personal and professional lives in a time not faced by any educators within the past century. Unprecedented demands were placed on teachers. Workloads increased, stress levels rose, and morale fell. Approximately one fourth of all teachers cited they were most likely going to leave the teaching profession by the end of the school year (Steiner & Woo, 2021).

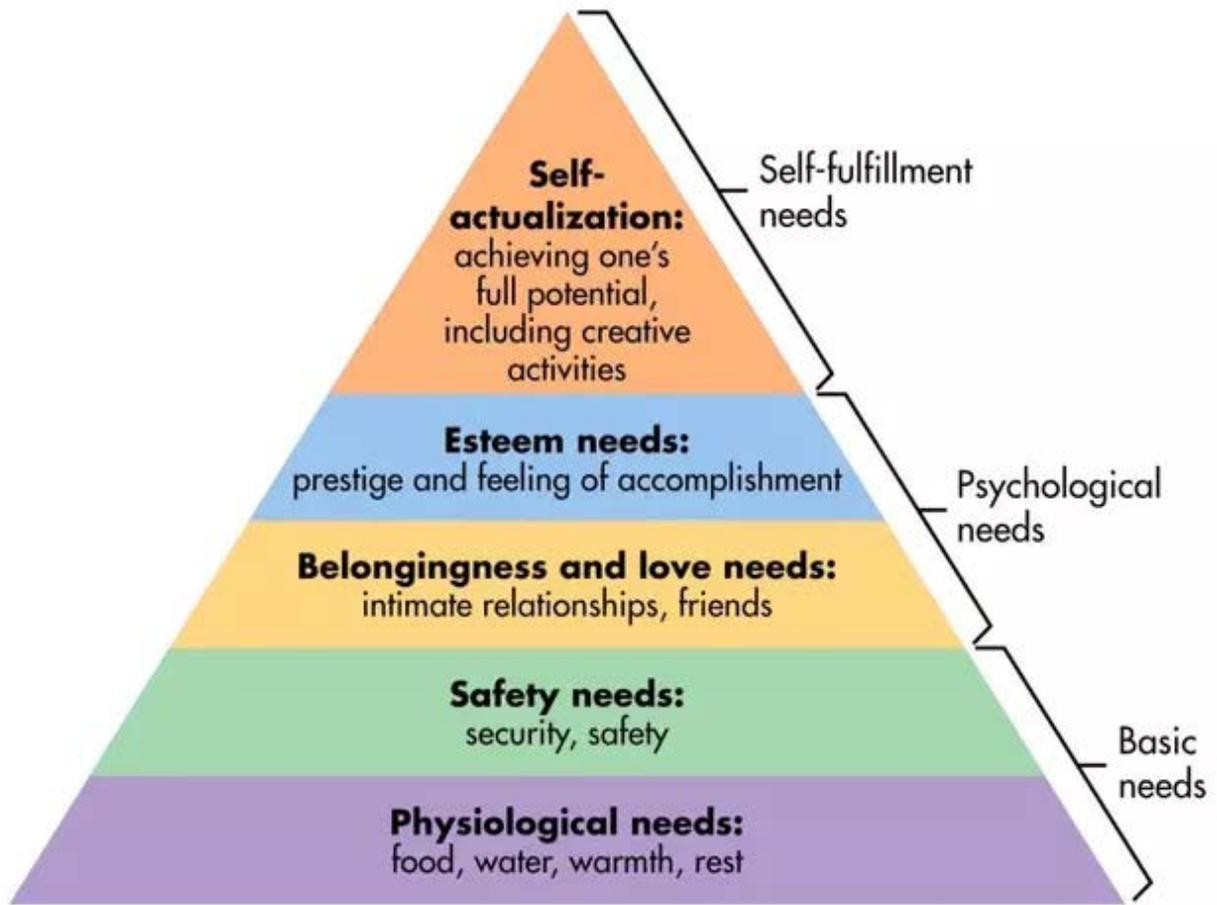
During a pandemic or not, an effective onboarding program within the school can be the first crucial step in building relationships with beginning teachers and new hires. Benefits of strategic onboarding include beginning teachers and new hires feeling supported, being better prepared for their teaching assignments, creating a more positive culture within the school and considering teacher morale, and reducing teacher turnover that negatively affects the progress of student achievement (Meisenheimer, 2019).

Theoretical Foundation

Albert Bandura (1977) defined self-efficacy as a person's particular set of beliefs that determine how well one can execute a plan of action in prospective situations. A person's

strength of convictions affects if they feel able to cope with challenging situations or abandon them if they feel they cannot cope. Efficacy expectations affect the amount of effort a person will put toward a task and the length of time they may be willing to endure challenges. Challenging teacher retention rates are harmful for teacher recruitment and this, in turn, negatively affects students (Zakariya, 2020). These factors affect school climate and job satisfaction rates. Teachers who tend to be more satisfied with their jobs also often have higher self-efficacy. Improved job satisfaction and self-efficacy can positively affect teacher recruitment and retention.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is foundational in terms of understanding student needs (see Figure 4). For this particular study, teachers are working in an educational setting during the COVID-19 pandemic. Consideration of the basic needs of teachers is more paramount than ever. A proposed hierarchy that is specific to education includes considerations for numerous factors of motivation for educators (Wish, 2020). Employment provides one's physiological needs. A beginning teacher considers that they need a job to provide food, shelter, and all of their basic needs. A need to be respected can lead some to enter the education field. Research has demonstrated that students appreciate when teachers maintain disciplinary control, have patience, share a sense of humor, are fair, and clearly communicate their expectations (Smith, 1945). In considering Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs as it pertains to educators, teaching is often isolating (Wish, 2020). With experience, teachers learn ways to communicate with their students and meet the needs of their students. Additionally, most beginning and experienced teachers alike want to do a good job. There is a sense of partnership in that teachers and students are "in this", the learning process, together. Teachers want their students to learn and grow. Many will have altruistic motivations for working with young people and truly want to make a positive



Note. (McLeod, 2020).

Figure 4. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.

difference in their lives (Gordon & Maxey, 2000). In considering reasons for teacher turnover, it is imperative to reduce the isolation beginning teachers and new hires feel by providing onboarding and mentor support. Specific feedback to help them improve is needed. Since teachers are the single most influential in-school factor regarding student achievement, it is absolutely imperative to provide support to teachers to reduce teacher turnover (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017).

Teacher Preparation

A teacher education program that is effective in preparing teachers for the classroom needs to understand what good teaching is and organize all course work, including field experiences, around that particular vision (Darling-Hammond, 2001). Students in the classroom need to be continuously working alongside master teachers throughout the teacher preparation process while they learn how students learn, how to assess students' learning, and overall effective teaching strategies. Working alongside a master teacher is a major difference with traditional teacher education programs and alternative certification programs.

Teacher preparation and development are key aspects in the development of highly effective teachers. A traditional teacher preparation program is a four-year university program with methodology courses, field experiences, and a formal student teaching experience with a master teacher and oversight by a university professor. In an unfortunate era of teacher bashing in some regions of the world, often in the United States, other nations that have a strong professional ideal for the teaching profession are strategic in celebrating teachers and treating teaching as a valuable profession with content knowledge that must be mastered in order to be effective as educators (Darling-Hammond, 2017). For example, Finland places emphasis on belief in having an equitable education system that is high quality. In order to do so, all teachers

must hold at least a two-year master's degree that focuses on subject matter, pedagogy, research, and practice. As a result, teaching has become a sought after profession. The Finnish view is that teaching should be long-term and allow educators to grow and develop over time. In a similar fashion, Singapore has moved from simply *getting* teachers to providing teachers of quality. To do so, the role of teachers was specifically defined. The Prime Minister stated publicly that teachers and administration will continuously search for new ideas and practices, and constantly be willing to hone their knowledge. The reform in Singapore changed recruitment, preparation, compensation, and status of teachers. Singapore has a career ladder that allows time over the course of one's teaching career, to be allotted for master teachers to mentor others in the teacher preparation and induction process.

North Carolina allocated \$7.7 million from Race to the Top (RttT) funds in 2010 in an effort to create the New Teacher Support Program (NTSP), an induction model that was created and implemented by North Carolina's public university system and particularly aimed at low-performing schools where beginning teachers are often concentrated (Bastian & Marks, 2017). Through NSTP, faculty and staff from these universities' Colleges of Education provided coaching that was both face-to-face and virtual, six professional development sessions, and multi day training sessions held prior to the beginning of school or very early on in the school year. Because universities are typically the final touch point before beginning teachers enter the teaching profession, helping teachers succeed during their early career is a very natural extension of the university. Findings of the NSTP concluded that participating teachers were much more likely to return to their low-performing schools. This is of particular importance because low-performing schools need to keep experienced and effective educators.

Additional findings from the study concluded that teacher performance and retention rates were more positive overall for NTSP teachers. For the purpose of this study, understanding the role a public university can play in teacher support is of particular importance as the low-performing school this study is based upon is in close geographical proximity to a university home to a College of Education that has served a vast majority of teachers serving within the district. A potential partnership with our school's beginning teachers could possibly lead to an improved teacher turnover rate. The NTSP focused on implementation in the state's lowest-performing schools, a criterion of the RttT grant. Throughout the study, it was found that teachers participating in NTSP were much more likely to return to the low-performing school, not only where they were teaching but in which they began teaching.

Teachers who receive less pedagogical training and are less adequately prepared for the teaching profession are much more likely to leave it (Ingersoll et al., 2012). Teacher preparation can be a highly contentious issue in education policy as there are many varying perspectives. The path teachers take to enter the profession can significantly impact their overall preparation, thus affecting their likelihood to remain in the teaching profession. Opportunities to observe others teaching and to receive feedback regarding their own teaching result in teachers being more likely to remain in the profession. In a study focused on how preparation affects teacher retention, results demonstrated that some teachers leave the profession because they realize it is simply not right for them and they pursue different career paths. Others leave to pursue administrative roles or other positions in education. However, the costs are high for any educator leaving the profession. The retention of teachers is paramount. Findings from the study yielded results that showed those who received more pedagogical training were more likely to remain in

the teaching profession. While it is important that teachers know the content they teach, it is also important to prepare teachers with how to teach content if we want to improve teacher retention.

Teacher Retention

It is no secret that teachers face many challenges, particularly beginning teachers (Voss & Kunter, 2019). They often feel disillusioned and stressed. Beginning teachers can experience emotional exhaustion. Many teachers leave their university experience ready and eager to change the world only to realize that teaching is much harder than they expected. The first few years of teaching can be a reality shock.

Teaching is a craft, and it requires time to experience mastery (Gagnon & Mattingly, 2012). While the first few years of one's teaching career can offer significant opportunities for growth as a professional, a challenge that remains is that new teachers have fewer experiences to draw on than experienced teachers. Beginning teachers may find challenges with lesson planning, classroom management, and understanding how to assess students. Because of this, beginning teachers are often less effective than their colleagues with more experience. Beginning teachers are more likely to leave the profession than more experienced teachers. Schools in high-poverty areas tend to employ a greater number of beginning teachers than those schools in lower areas of poverty. Schools with higher minority populations tend to have more beginning teachers. With more beginning teachers, districts tend to spend more funding on the development of teachers and teacher turnover is often higher. A high percentage of beginning teachers in a district may indicate concerns with teacher quality, leading to hiring challenges. Teachers tend to move out of high-minority and high-poverty schools at a disproportionately high rate. Districts that are large and urban also tend to struggle with unique staffing challenges.

Approximately 450,000 teachers leave the teaching profession annually (Carlson, 2012). A significant contributing factor to this teacher turnover is the lack of support teachers receive from administration. School environments that do not create supportive environments cause teachers to be more likely to leave their positions than those in environments that are more supportive and positive. The leadership style of principals and aspiring principals has a direct impact on the job satisfaction of teachers working within their schools. Effective principals create environments that allow teachers to feel supported, encouraged, able to collaborate and, thus, are dedicated to their jobs.

When teachers cannot be retained in a school or district, it may at times be due to the demoralization they feel (Walker, 2018). At times, teachers no longer want to be a part of a system that is far too often failing students. Lack of very necessary resources, creativity, and a sense of overall helplessness to adequately address students' needs contributes to teachers leaving the profession.

Over the past several decades, two approaches have been utilized to help address teacher recruitment and retention concerns (Kang & Berliner, 2012). One approach has been to recruit potential teachers from programs that allow for alternative licensure. The second approach is to provide induction and mentoring programs in an effort to retain teachers in the teaching profession, especially at the outset of their careers.

Benefits and Compensation

Much can be said about teacher pay in the United States today (Garcia & Weiss, 2020). If speaking with a teacher, politician, or someone from the general public outside of education, opinions may vary significantly. However, the financial hardships often shared as concerns by teachers are real. After accounting for education, experience, and other factors that typically

affect earnings, teachers' weekly wages in 2018 were 21.4% lower than those of their non-teaching, college graduate peers. Findings show that this percentage has significantly increased in recent years. In 1996, this difference was 6.3%. Teacher pay continues to decline. During the 2015-2016 school year, 59% of teachers took on additional work to supplement their income either within the school system or outside of it. These jobs may include coaching, mentoring teachers, teaching classes after school, or working outside of the school system. Financial burdens can be more significant for teachers in high-poverty schools. Low pay can lead to teachers quitting and, as a result, increase teacher turnover.

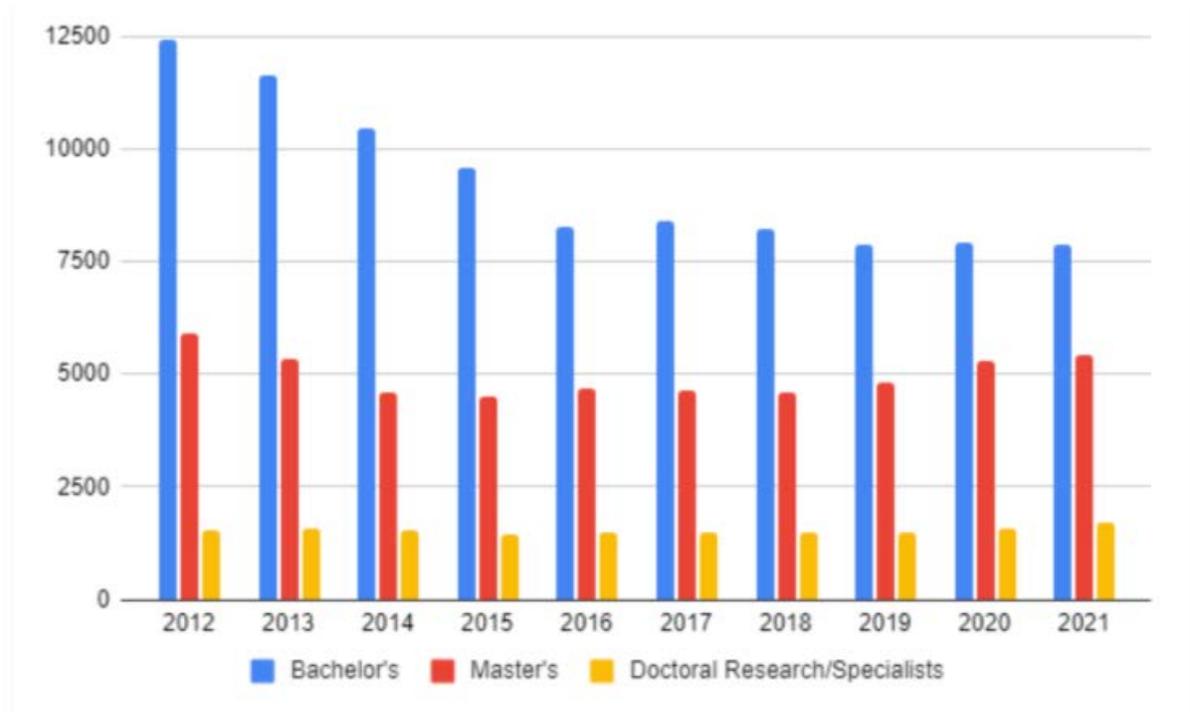
The school of focus for the purpose of this study was located in the Southern region of the United States, an area of the U.S. that has higher teacher turnover rates than anywhere else in the country (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). Teacher turnover rates are 16.7% in the South and lowest in the Northeast at 10.3%. Teachers in the South tend to be paid less whereas teachers tend to be paid higher salaries in the Northeast. Salaries for teachers have actually declined since the 1990s and, at times, are so low that a teacher with ten years of experience who is the head of the household in a family of four would qualify for several different types of government assistance. During the recruitment phase, salaries may be particularly important to consider for beginning teachers, but the salary schedule affects overall teacher retention rates.

While many professions value employees continuing their education, North Carolina has ceased to provide additional compensation to teachers who hold an advanced graduate degree, effective in spring 2014 (Kiley, 2013). The North Carolina state legislature passed a state budget in 2013 that eliminated pay raises to public school teachers who successfully complete a

graduate's degree, thus leading to a significant decrease in enrollment in graduate education programs throughout North Carolina and the teacher pipeline has been shrinking (see Figure 5).

Because advanced pay for those graduating after the spring of 2014 was eliminated, potential teachers may have chosen to no longer consider entering the teaching profession as there are limited avenues to increase salary over time. Simultaneously, the North Carolina Legislature also voted to end tenure. For teachers who had already completed a portion of their master's degree at the time of the decision, they could be left with debt and no salary increase for the additional degree. Remaining in the profession could be more challenging and raising a family on a teacher's salary even more so.

After the 2008 financial crisis, many school systems implemented hiring freezes and had to lay off staff (Russell, 2011). In 2011, the North Carolina state budget did not include a pay raise for teachers. It was the fourth consecutive year without a pay raise and came on the heels of salary step increases being frozen during the tenure of Governor Beverly Perdue. In North Carolina in 2014, state legislators removed teacher longevity, additional pay that may be offered to teachers remaining in the profession for an extended time and rolled it into base salary even though state legislative staffers kept their longevity pay (Kane, 2015). In 2019, the National Education Association released a report that the average salary of teachers had declined by 4.5% after inflation. Nationwide, many teacher strikes have occurred with a focus on teacher pay and working conditions. Going into the pandemic in 2020, teacher pay had long been a source of contention for many. A truly disheartening fact is that with McDonald's Corp. announcing that it would raise wages to an average \$13 per hour in 2021, some McDonald's workers would inevitably earn more money than a substitute teacher (Sen, 2021). Even more disheartening and a factor for beginning teachers to consider as they enter the teaching profession in North Carolina



Note. (The University of North Carolina System, 2021).

Figure 5. UNC System interactive data dashboard enrollment in education programs 2012-2021.

is that state employees who begin their jobs on or after January 1, 2021, no longer receive health benefits when they retire (Vaughan, 2020).

With longevity pay being done away with for educators in North Carolina, additional pay for teaching while holding an advanced degree being eliminated after 2014, and after a pandemic school year that brought challenges no educator had ever faced previously, the love of the work as a teacher that has previously kept so many in the classroom, even despite the lack of financial support, may now be eroding (Schwartz, 2021). In a national survey, teachers were asked what their school or district could possibly do that would make a difference in reducing the likelihood they would leave the teaching profession within the next couple of years (Heubeck, 2021). The top response? Increasing salary with a resounding 57% saying it would make a difference in their decision. North Carolina ranks 43rd in beginning teacher pay and 33rd in average teacher pay in comparison to other states throughout the country. At any given time, there are at least 1,000 vacancies in teacher positions in North Carolina, as well as a shortage of substitute teachers.

Mentor Support for Beginning Teachers

An effective mentor can be key to helping a beginning teacher remain in the teaching profession (Hudson et al., 2019). While mentoring can be key, the quality of a mentoring program makes all the difference. If a mentor does not want to serve in that role, it can be clear to the beginning teacher. Beginning teachers want to have some choice in their mentor assignments and they prefer a mentor they can respect and trust. If experienced teachers are required to serve as mentors, the mentoring program can be burdensome, perfunctory, and, in return, actually discourage novice teachers (McCann & Johannessen, 2004).

The overarching objective of mentoring programs for teachers is to provide beginning teachers with a guide to help them along the way. Mentoring programs vary greatly. Mentoring may stem from a single meeting between a mentor and beginning teacher or extend to a very structured program with regular meetings and support over the duration of two or three years. An effective match between mentor and mentee is important in an effective mentoring program, (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004).

North Carolina, like other states, is expected to have a rigorous mentor selection process (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2010). Mentors should be qualified teachers who can serve as experienced, excellent mentors. Mentor selection is supposed to include input from a variety of stakeholders and articulated by leadership. In North Carolina, there are mentor standards established for mentors of beginning teachers. Additionally, there should be mentor training provided that includes ongoing professional development.

There is some flexibility allowed for states in how exactly these expectations are implemented. In North Carolina, mentors are expected to make the initial contact with beginning teachers either before the start of the school year, as close to it as possible, or at the time of hire if after the beginning of school. Mentors are expected to meet regularly with their mentees throughout the school year and there should be some time during the school day, as well as outside of the school day. Additional expectations to provide support for beginning teachers include formal orientation, formative assessment of teaching, classroom observations, and ongoing support. In terms of funding, North Carolina expects funding provided for mentoring programs is up to the local education agency (LEA) to do so if they choose. North Carolina state law does require LEAs to not only develop a program for addressing mentor support as it relates

to teacher retention, but the plans must be submitted to the Department of Public Instruction by October 1st of each year.

In North Carolina, state legislation deems that mentors should be minimally rated as “proficient” on the NC Teacher Evaluation System, can be retired teachers with priority consideration for those achieving “accomplished” or “distinguished” (NCDPI, n.d.b.). For teachers to be rated as proficient, they must have moved beyond a “developing” rating in their classroom instruction and management and demonstrate a minimum mastery of teaching expectations. Higher ratings for teachers in North Carolina include “accomplished” and “distinguished.” Mentors in North Carolina have specified standards they are expected to meet, must be trained and receive ongoing professional development, and meet regularly with the beginning teacher (Goldrick et al., 2012). Mentor funding varies widely from state to state and even within school districts throughout a single state. In some cases, mentor funding is not provided to mentors who accept the role of supporting beginning teachers.

Many studies conducted provide evidence that providing beginning teacher support and assistance can positively impact teacher retention, classroom instruction, and student achievement. Teachers participating in induction programs often perform better with establishing positive emotional classroom environments, classroom management, and time on task. Beginning teachers who receive induction support tend to have higher rates of job satisfaction and retention. The teaching profession needs to be focused on the fact that teachers must continually learn throughout their career and the process of establishing this philosophy begins with those just entering the profession - beginning teachers (Wong, 2004).

Not all teacher turnover is, of course, negative; an early departure of a low-caliber teacher can be beneficial for the teacher, the students, and the school (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). But

there is a growing consensus that high levels of teacher attrition, especially among beginners, are not cost-free. Teachers are an important resource, their production, training, and recruitment all entail costs, and the performance of newcomers improves if given sufficient time is not as high as that of experienced teachers. Overall, there is support that induction and mentoring programs have a positive impact on beginning teachers, but the support needs to be comprehensive to be most effective. In turn, not all teacher attrition is negative. The departure of a low-caliber teacher can be beneficial for the individual, students, and school. Additionally, comprehensive support may not be enough to retain teachers in high-poverty, urban public schools.

Onboarding for Beginning Teachers and New Hires

Beginning teachers often enter the teaching profession eager to change the world. Many times, they feel adequately prepared to teach prior to their first day of teaching. Without effective onboarding or what some deem as “induction,” beginning teachers can realize extremely quickly that they may be completely unprepared for the challenges of a highly demanding profession while simultaneously performing many of the same duties that are expected of experienced teachers. Teaching is a hard job, requires many hours of work outside of the paid salary, and can take an emotional, mental, and physical toll on educators. Once the hiring process has taken place, the crucial steps regarding teacher retention begin (Meseinheimer, 2019). Supporting beginning teachers and new hires through continuous onboarding is one of the best ways to retain teachers. Orientation and ongoing support and guidance are often known as induction (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004).

North Carolina requires that beginning teachers receive support through an induction program for the duration of their first three years spent teaching and the state has formally adopted induction program expectations (Goldrick et al., 2012). For new hires with more than

three years of teaching experience, the induction process would not be required. Induction programs in North Carolina allow beginning teachers to have the choice to forgo any extracurricular duties outside of the regular expectations of all teachers.

Once a teacher has been hired, they should be welcomed into the school (Meisenheimer, 2019). A phone call or email welcome is important in offering immediate support for the teacher. Time to collaborate with other teachers and focus on curriculum prior to the beginning of school is a valuable aspect of onboarding. A welcome or “back-to-school” meeting for only those new to the school is an important part of onboarding, particularly if master teachers share information with beginning teachers and new hires. This can begin to build relationships from the outset. Because onboarding should not end when school begins, monthly meetings with beginning teachers and new hires provide continued support for those new to the school and help them feel like a welcomed member of the school.

Onboarding is not an orientation (Daniel, 2016). Orientation is short in nature, but effective onboarding practices are ongoing. During the onboarding process that typically lasts at least one year, the district’s values and culture should be conveyed, expectations and performance need to be aligned for the beginning teacher, and personal and professional resources should be developed for the beginning teacher. Onboarding for teachers is the very first and one of the most valuable elements of talent development within a school district. A 3-5 day orientation for beginning teachers can be effective but is not nearly enough to provide a beginning teacher with the support that is needed to be successful throughout the school year. Unfortunately, the teaching profession has not traditionally had a structured induction process that is so often characteristic of other professions. Teaching is largely an isolated profession, particularly for beginning teachers who can find themselves left to their own devices. Teacher

induction is different from pre-service and student teaching experiences and should form a sort of bridge between the student teaching experience and being the sole teacher of one's own classroom. Induction may include, but not be limited to, orientations, professional development, and mentoring. Mentor programs have become, over time, the dominant method of teacher induction for beginning teachers (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004).

The support provided to beginning teachers initially is a crucial part of the foundation of their careers (Gordon & Maxey, 2000). From the outset, beginning teachers need support with understanding their teaching assignment, workload, and work environment. The arrival of a beginning teacher within a district and school should be celebrated and should be a time they feel most welcomed. Luncheons, dinners, receptions with district and school administration, and other types of social events should be a part of the onboarding of beginning teachers. School administration and the mentor of the beginning teacher should work diligently to establish trust, respect, professionalism, and assurance that confidentiality is most important early on with the beginning teacher.

Onboarding should be far more than what may be considered a glorified orientation and should strategically engage new hires over minimally the first year of their tenure (Stein & Christiansen, 2010). Onboarding should include early career support, orientation to the culture of the workplace, an understanding of the direction of the workplace, and experiences that allow the new hire to build relationships that can be beneficial. Including the perspectives of the new hires and encouraging them to improve their personal contributions can be beneficial both to the new hire and to the workplace. Onboarding that is effective for new hires can decrease the amount of time it takes for the new hires to achieve proficiency in their performance and their overall contribution.

Self-Efficacy

According to psychologist Albert Bandura, self-efficacy is the belief people have in themselves to exercise control over their functioning and events that affect their lives. Self-efficacy can be viewed as foundational for one's motivation, well-being, and personal accomplishment (Bandura, 1977). Self-efficacy that is high has been linked to many varying benefits including resilience to adversity and stress, lifestyle habits that are healthy, and improved performance as an employee (Lopez-Garrido, 2020). The causes of stress, as well as the outcomes of stress, are interrelated. Self-efficacy is affected by this interrelatedness and can decrease a beginning teachers' perceived lack of sufficient learning. Teachers with higher levels of job satisfaction tend to have higher self-efficacy levels (Zakariya, 2020). Improved job satisfaction and self-efficacy can positively impact teacher recruitment and retention. With the teacher shortage affecting education, many vacancies are filled by beginning teachers. However, 25-40% leave the teaching profession at some point during the first five years. Different factors lead to teachers leaving the profession so early in their careers. These factors include lack of support from administration and mentors, student discipline/classroom management, and poor compensation/access to resources. For young adults just leaving university and entering the teaching profession, the transition can be demanding and challenging. Emotional exhaustion early on can be high (Klussman et al., 2012). Prior qualification and teacher experience, or lack thereof, can contribute to teacher turnover (Helms-Lorenz et al., 2011). There is no doubt that the teaching profession is stressful. To deal with this stress and in an effort to prevent burn-out, beginning teachers should not be made to feel failure or a sense of guilt. Chronic stress leads to exhaustion and burnout (Blazer, 2010). Burnout is a very serious issue in the teaching profession. It not only negatively affects teachers but also negatively affects student achievement. Teacher

self-efficacy can help teachers endure the challenges of the profession and improve teacher retention. Minimizing stressors for all teachers is important but especially needs to be done for beginning teachers and new hires. Supporting teachers in their own self-efficacy and helping them work through stress management strategies and regular mentorship can provide much needed guidance for beginning teachers and new hires. Schools in which staff members collectively judge themselves capable of promoting academic success imbue their schools with a positive atmosphere for development that promotes academic attainments regardless of whether they serve predominantly advantaged or disadvantaged students (Bandura, 1977).

During a year neither experienced teachers nor beginning teachers had ever experienced in the midst of a global pandemic in 2020-2021, the majority of teachers were forced to move their teaching from in person to online (Etchells et al., 2020). Some beginning teachers reported feeling the pandemic took many of the joys they may have experienced outside of the pandemic. Teachers struggled in their work and personal lives trying to navigate the demands of teaching, challenges of being thrown into a virtual teaching environment, lack of childcare, and worrying about all of it. Mental health of teachers suffered during this time. Teachers experienced fatigue and stress. The amount of time needed to spend planning for synchronous and asynchronous instruction was exponential. Ultimately, the retention of beginning teachers and new hires is even more paramount now than it was prior to the COVID-19 global pandemic. Children need teachers to remain in the teaching profession so they can benefit from the knowledge and expertise gleaned from experienced educators who are lifelong learners and who contribute to the successful achievement of our students. Yet, concerns regarding teacher turnover increased during the pandemic as teachers experienced increased isolation and beginning teachers navigated a new profession while also trying to learn how to teach during unprecedented times.

Summary

The retention of competent teachers is of the utmost importance. When beginning teachers enter the teaching profession or new teachers change schools, providing an onboarding program that meets their needs may mitigate teacher attrition in the long run. Induction and onboarding programs have demonstrated significantly positive effects on the improvement of teacher attrition (Kelley, 2004). Providing induction, onboarding, mentor support, and financial resources that support beginning teachers and new hires allows for meaningful transitions into the teaching profession or a new school, provides opportunities for growth, and encourages teachers to remain in the teaching profession.

The retention of good teachers should be one of the most important roles of school leaders (Darling-Hammond, 2003). Highly effective teachers have the most impact on positive student achievement. Teacher attrition, particularly within the first few years of teaching, leads to heavy financial burdens on school systems and has detrimental effects on students. Teacher preparation, induction, onboarding, mentoring support, positive working conditions, and salaries are factors that significantly influence teacher retention. Throughout Chapter 3, areas of focus will include methods of inquiry, focus of practice guiding questions, inquiry design and rationale, context of the study, inquiry partners, ethical considerations, instrumentation, inquiry procedures, the three phases of data collection, baseline data collection, and data analysis. Additionally, Chapter 3 will address the inquiry approach and intervention, analysis of approach, summaries of each phase of action research, inquiry design rigor, delimitations, limitations, assumptions, and the role of the scholarly practitioner.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS OF INQUIRY

The focus of this inquiry was to address the high teacher turnover rate in a public, Title I urban fringe elementary school by establishing an effective and continuous year-long onboarding program for beginning teachers and new hires. As of the 2018-2019 school year, the teacher turnover rate in North Carolina was 7.5% but was significantly higher for beginning teachers at a rate of 11.3%. The turnover rate for lateral entry teachers was 14% and Teach for America teachers left at a rate of 20.1%. Teachers cited choosing to change careers as the reason for leaving teaching at a rate of 12.5%. Overall, the state turnover rate for beginning teachers in 2018-2019 was 60.4% higher than that of their colleagues with more experience. Lateral entry teachers' turnover rate was 91.5% higher than those of their counterparts who entered the profession through traditional teacher certification, leading North Carolina to discontinue lateral entry and implement the residency licensure process.

For North Carolina, the state turnover rate during the 2018-2019 school year was 7.5% (NCDPI Report to the North Carolina General Assembly, 2020). The district turnover rate was 10.0%. Teacher turnover was the highest in the Southeastern region of North Carolina at 9.0%. The teacher turnover rate at Vox Populi Elementary during the 2018-2019 school year was 15% based on school data. During the 2019-2020 school year, the teacher turnover rate was 36% at Vox Populi Elementary, almost five times the state turnover rate. Teacher turnover during the 2020-2021 school year, it was 29% at Vox Populi Elementary.

This chapter will address the focus of practice guiding questions, the inquiry design and rationale, the context of the study, the inquiry partners involved in the action research, ethical considerations, each phase of the inquiry procedures, the rigor of the inquiry design, delimitations of the study, limitations, assumptions, and the role of the scholarly practitioner.

Focus of Practice Guiding Questions

This study was guided by the following primary question: What effect does continuous, year-long onboarding have on teacher retention in a Title I elementary school? In order to help answer this question, the following subquestions were explored:

1. What effect does continuous, year-long onboarding have on retention of beginning teachers?
2. What effect does continuous, year-long onboarding have on retention of new hires?

To answer these guiding questions, I used three phases of a mixed methods action research design. The action research design focused on the previous two years of teacher turnover at Vox Populi Elementary from 2019-2020 and 2020-2021, as well as the current school year of 2021-2022. Three years were selected as the timeframe to include pre-COVID-19 pandemic data regarding teacher turnover. Interviews were used for collecting qualitative data and surveys for collecting quantitative data. This study occurred in three phases of action research utilizing survey and interview data. Ultimately, findings included teachers' intentions about remaining at Vox Populi Elementary after the conclusion of the 2021-2022 school year if teachers were allowed the choice to transfer.

Inquiry Design and Rationale

For the purpose of this study, an action research design was utilized in collaboration with the inquiry partners in order to work directly with the teachers most affected by the focus of practice, to include both beginning teachers and new hires. This method of research allowed me, as the scholarly practitioner, to seek practical solutions to the high teacher turnover rate at Vox Populi Elementary, as action research enables one to investigate real-life problems negatively affecting, in this instance, beginning teachers, new hires, experienced teachers, the school, the

community, and, most importantly, students (Stringer & Aragón Ortiz Alfredo, 2020).

Additionally, this approach allowed me, in collaboration with inquiry partners, to observe, reflect, and take needed action throughout the implementation of the onboarding program to help lead to an improvement in the teacher turnover rate of beginning teachers and new hires (Sagor, 2000). Action research is conducted with the goal of improvement always at the forefront of the research and is relevant to participating inquiry partners. There are seven steps of action research that include selecting a focus, clarifying theories, selecting research questions, obtaining data, analyzing the collected data, reporting results, and taking action.

In the educational setting, action research allows teachers to be reflective, connect theory to the practice of everyday teaching, and allows for opportunities to develop and test solutions to problems that a scholarly practitioner has identified within the school or district (Mertler, 2020). In the instance of this study, I identified a problem with teacher turnover within Vox Populi Elementary and proposed the use of inductive reasoning to formulate an onboarding program for beginning teachers and new hires that could decrease teacher turnover and improve student achievement. Data collection that is not mutually exclusive may be the most beneficial feedback to better inform the collaborative inquiry partners and me; therefore, both qualitative and quantitative data was utilized through interviews and surveys with participants for a mixed-methods design approach to the study.

With the cyclical approach to action research, the scholarly practitioner utilized the Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA) method of implementation (Langley et al., 2009). The PDSA cycle was predicted to allow me and the collaborative inquiry partners opportunities to evaluate the onboarding program as it is implemented, seek feedback from inquiry partners, take time to

reflect, and adjust the onboarding program as needed to achieve as much success as possible for beginning teachers, new hires, and the students at Vox Populi Elementary.

According to Langley et al. (2009), the first stage of the PDSA cycle is to plan. This includes determining questions that need to be answered, making predictions, and preparing for all data that will need to be obtained. The second stage is to attempt to do the research and begin collecting data. The third stage is to study the data collected while comparing and contrasting data with the predictions made. The fourth stage of PDSA is to act on what has been learned and reflect on each stage of the PDSA cycle (see Figure 6).

Vox Populi Elementary was a public, Title I elementary school that was high-poverty, low-performing, and had experienced numerous changes in leadership over the course of one year and significant teacher turnover. The changes in leadership were due, in large part, to the challenges administration faced throughout the 2020-2021 COVID-19 global pandemic. The workload on educators increased exponentially during this time as they had to quickly pivot instruction from face-to-face to remote/virtual instruction (Kaufman & Diliberti, 2021). The ability to replicate successful onboarding strategies consistently and effectively is imperative due, in large part, to significant leadership changes and the high teacher turnover rate with beginning teachers and new hires.

For the local context of this study, the New Saxony County School System was comprised of 45 schools (NHCS, 2021). According to the state report card, Vox Populi Elementary had 61.1% of its students listed as economically disadvantaged and the state average was less at 43.4% (North Carolina School Report Cards, 2020). The percentage for Vox Populi Elementary was likely higher as the school had a Community Eligibility Provision for 100%

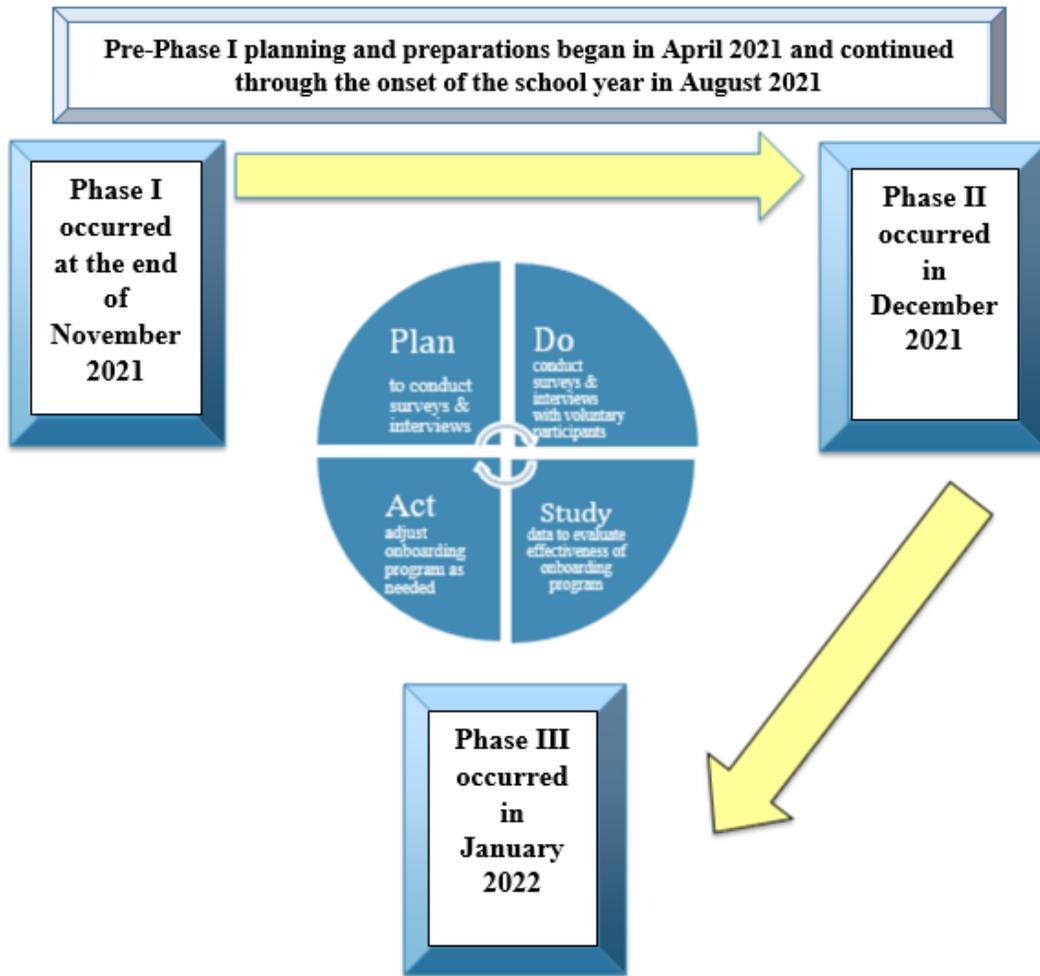


Figure 6. Plan-Do-Study-Act Cycle for the three phases of inquiry.

of its students to receive no cost breakfast and lunch. The incoming student readiness rate was 32.8% as of 2018-2019. As of the 2019-2020 school year, 20.6% of the teachers were classified as beginning teachers. This was in comparison to a district rate of 8.3%. Student enrollment was approximately 474, an increase from the previous average of 351 during the 2019-2020 school year. The increase was a result of redistricting with the school district. The short-term suspension rate as of 2019-2020 was 113.96 per 1,000 students, higher than both the district and state averages of 89.75 and 97.97 respectively. Criminal acts were calculated at a rate of 11.40, significantly higher than the district average of 3.98 and the state average of 4.69. 41.67 of these criminal acts were reported to be committed by students with disabilities. New Saxony County Schools practiced the use of restraint and seclusion, and Vox Populi Elementary had a self-contained class for students in need of intensive behavior support. To provide a district perspective of inequalities, another elementary school that was home to several teachers who were involuntarily transferred to Vox Populi Elementary during the 2020-2021 school year has 15.4% of its students as economically disadvantaged and an incoming student readiness rate of 79.4%. The neighboring elementary school had zero beginning teachers as of the 2019-2020 school year. Vox Populi Elementary had eleven beginning teachers during the 2021-2022 school year and had one of the highest numbers of beginning teachers in the district.

I began working at Vox Populi Elementary during the 2019-2020 school year. At the time, there were 18 classroom teachers in grades kindergarten through fifth. At the end of the school year, seven out of 18 teachers left the school. There were also four teachers of exceptional children and one left at the end of the school year. For a total of 22 teachers, eight left at the end of the 2019-2020 school year. Several teachers who remained at the school submitted a request

to transfer to another school within the district but were not selected for a transfer. The teacher turnover rate was approximately 36% at the conclusion of the 2019-2020 school year.

During the 2020-2021 school year, redistricting added approximately 100 additional students to the school roster. There were 26 classroom teachers and five teachers of exceptional children. There were several teachers who received an involuntary transfer to the school. A few months into the school year, one teacher left. At the end of the school year, seven of the 26 teachers left the school. Several requested a transfer to another school in the district but were not selected for a transfer. Others did not have a choice to transfer within the district as they had not completed the required three years of teaching at the same school within the district. Out of the five teachers of exceptional children, two left at the end of the school year. The teacher turnover rate was approximately 29% at the conclusion of the 2020-2021 school year. Since teachers are the single most influential in-school factor regarding student achievement, it is absolutely imperative to provide support to teachers to reduce teacher turnover (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017).

Inquiry Partners

For this study, numerous inquiry partners were included. These partners included the principal, assistant principal, the 3rd-5th grade instructional coach the scholarly practitioner serves with, the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) coordinator, all beginning teachers, all new hires for the 2021-2022 school year, and the two district beginning teacher support coordinators. The principal and assistant principal were both new to the school. The principal had served at Vox Populi Elementary for eight months as of the beginning of the 2021-2022 school year. Additionally, it was her first experience in New Saxony County Schools, having previously transferred from another district in North Carolina. The 2021-2022 school year was

the first year serving as an administrator for the newly hired assistant principal. Additional inquiry partners included teachers that chose to transfer to another school within the district or leave the teaching profession since the 2019-2020 school year. I did not include any inquiry partners that chose to leave the teaching profession due to retirement. Engagement with inquiry partners was captured through three phases of action research to include interviews and surveys throughout the 2021-2022 school year.

Ethical Considerations

As required by East Carolina University, I completed Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) modules prior to submitting the study application to the Institutional Review Board (IRB). CITI training is a self-paced course that addresses current information on conducting ethical research with human participants and maintaining both the integrity and the confidentiality necessary for research to be conducted (Citi Training-ECU, n.d.). Certification with CITI training takes several hours and is valid for three years.

As the scholarly practitioner, I sought the required district approval necessary to conduct an action research study within Vox Populi Elementary. Following anticipated district approval, I submitted a formal request to the IRB and received permission to conduct this study (see Appendix A). With all necessary research requests approved or adjusted as needed, I sent an introduction letter to each inquiry partner. An introductory email was sent to beginning teachers and new hires requesting their voluntary participation in the action research study. Once voluntary participation was confirmed via email, an informed consent document was shared with each voluntary participation to obtain their signature confirmation of their willingness to voluntarily participate in the action research study (see Appendix B).

Participant data was kept confidential and any private identifiable information was removed to the extent possible and as required by New Saxony County Schools research guidelines. This included using Qualtrics software for survey distribution and collection and identifier numbers instead of participant names. Participants were informed of the procedures to maintain their confidentiality, were reminded that participation was completely voluntary, and that they could conclude participation at any time they so choose.

Instrumentation

Collaborative inquiry partners and I utilized surveys within Qualtrics, a software management tool, to ensure confidentiality of all voluntary participants' responses in the collection of data (see Appendix C for the survey for beginning teachers and Appendix D for the survey for new hires to the school). Within the surveys, I utilized Likert-type scales. Likert scales ask respondents to answer questionnaires based on a continuum (Mertler & Charles, 2011). Voluntary participants responded to statements that ask them to select a rating on a continuum of one to five with one being the lowest and five being the highest. Surveys additionally included several yes or no questions. To ensure the validity of the surveys, I piloted them with non-participants prior to conducting research with voluntary participants.

Interviews were utilized to allow me to ask voluntary inquiry partners to respond to questions via a face-to-face format either in person or via a secure virtual format such as Zoom (see Appendix E). The interview questions allowed for additional follow-up questions to be asked for clarification as necessary. Interviews included open-ended questions, as well as structured and semi-structured questions. Interviews allowed for a more personal option for data collection than the less personal survey method. While interviews are more time-consuming than surveys, they provide more in-depth insight into the research question and subquestions.

Interviews were recorded and transcribed utilizing Microsoft Stream. Notations were also utilized during interviews based on observations of the scholarly practitioner. To ensure the validity of the interview protocol, I piloted them with non-participants prior to conducting research with voluntary participants.

Inquiry Procedures

Implementation

During the summer of 2021, I began implementing a new onboarding program with a goal of adjusting as necessary based on the input of all inquiry partners and as a result of research participant interviews and surveys. As I participated in interviewing potential new staff members with administration in May and June 2021, the principal of Vox Populi Elementary shared with me the email address of each new hire once their employment was approved through the Human Resources Department of New Saxony County Schools. Subsequently, I sent a welcome email to each new hire within 24-48 hours as soon as administration notified me. Within the email, I requested the home mailing address of new hires if they were willing to share it and invited them to a welcome brunch at the school prior to the official beginning of school for the 2021-2022 school year. The brunch was to be a part of the new onboarding program and was approved by the principal with all decision-making for the schedule to be done by me. The brunch was scheduled to take place after beginning teacher orientation held by the district but prior to the first required workday of the new school year. The welcome brunch was meant to welcome for all new hires, provide a tour of the school, provide refreshments, and allow for an informal time to get to know each other and allow all new hires to ask any pertinent questions they may have outside of the hectic nature that is the typical back-to-school time. New hires

were also able to see their classrooms. This enabled them to have at least a brief idea of how they may want to set up their classrooms in the coming weeks.

After all new hires voluntarily shared their mailing addresses with me, I mailed each a welcome packet. The packet included a welcome card with the school mascot, a school pencil and stickers, a school lanyard, a schedule for all August workdays in an effort to communicate effectively and allow all staff members to plan ahead, and a New Saxony County Schools yearly calendar with all pertinent contact information for district staff members. The schedule also included all necessary registration information for the required district professional development. This was done in an effort to allow all teachers to have time to understand expectations for the beginning of school, register for all required professional development, and hopefully reduce the anxiety often felt during a hectic time of the school year. One major challenge during this time that was outside of my control was the extensive length of time it took for each new hire to have access to their school-based email. Because so many of the resources needed were online and required a school-based email account, this was a stressor for beginning teachers and new hires, especially as they could not formally register for required professional development without their school-based email accounts. Once the email addresses were received, there was no district communication for how new hires were expected to receive credit for their professional development. In some cases, it took weeks for their accounts to be finalized by the district, even after the start of the school year. New hires expressed much concern and frustration during that time as the lack of a district email address limited them in many areas.

In addition to the welcome information and brunch for all new hires, I sent all beginning teachers from the 2020-2021 school year a welcome back to school postcard at the end of July 2021 so the postcards would arrive by early August and prior to the first official workday on

August 10, 2021. I acknowledged any summer birthdays of staff members prior to the end of school in June 2021 and during the summer. This was done to continue to foster the relationships with beginning teachers that were established during the 2020-2021 school year and to begin building relationships with new staff members. Building relationships and a sense of overall community with beginning teachers and new hires is a key to decreasing teacher stress, providing needed support, and encouraging quality teachers to remain in the teaching profession (Katkus, 2007). All current staff members received the schedule for the August 2021 work days prior to the end of school during the 2020-2021 school year in an effort to allow everyone to plan accordingly with their summer schedules and improve communication with expectations for the return of school. Additionally, the schedule for workdays was posted online within the school platforms utilized.

I served as the school-based lead for all beginning teachers and mentors. Mentor assignments for beginning teachers were shared with all mentors and beginning teachers prior to the first day of school for teachers. This was done to allow mentors to contact their mentees, begin establishing relationships for any beginning teachers new to the school, help alleviate anxiety for the beginning teachers, and allow time for mentors to answer important questions beginning teachers may have before the hectic back-to-school time begins. Monthly meetings were held for all beginning teachers throughout the year. Dates were added to the school calendar during the summer of 2021 to allow for planning and improved communication. As the scholarly practitioner, I collaborated with administration to plan the monthly meetings for 2021-2022 school year to provide ongoing support for all beginning teachers. I also established a quarterly lunch for all beginning teachers and administration throughout the school year. Lunch at the beginning and end of the school year included the principal and assistant principal.

Administration alternated for the lunches during the second and third nine weeks. Coverage was provided for each beginning teacher and an outside lunch was purchased for beginning teachers and administration. The goal of these lunches was to help administration build relationships with beginning teachers, help beginning teachers to know they are valued and supported and allow for informal time to get to know each other. All dates for monthly meetings and lunches with administration were scheduled for the 2021-2022 school year prior to the first official teacher work day and shared with beginning teachers and mentors via online platforms the school utilizes and as a hard copy at the August mentor and mentee meeting. For new hires, members of the school leadership team were assigned to informally mentor each new hire. A schedule was made for each month and will rotate each school leadership team member with a different new hire each month. This was anticipated to provide needed support for new hires who were not beginning teachers and allow for relationships to be built between new hires and school leadership team members.

I maintained a Google classroom throughout the 2021-2022 school year specifically for beginning teachers and mentors. It was a central location for all pertinent information beginning teachers and mentors need to include state-required paperwork, monthly meeting dates for the school year, classroom management ideas, strategies for building relationships with students and their families, articles of interest to stay current with best practices and trends in education, and any other pertinent information. Each month, a different beginning teacher was highlighted within the google classroom and provided a certificate to let them know how appreciated they were at the school.

Once district research approval and the Institutional Review Board (IRB) had granted permission for research to be conducted in the form of surveys and interviews, I sent a formal

letter to all inquiry partners in November 2021. An email followed to serve as a reminder and to include a survey through Qualtrics to determine if candidates would voluntarily participate in the action research and provide informed consent.

For the interviews to take place, I selected a quiet room within the school to meet with each current Vox Populi Elementary interview participant individually. A sign was placed on the door asking for there not to be any interruptions to maintain focus during the interview, be mindful of the interviewee's time, and provide for confidentiality. Each interview was conducted within the span of a half hour or less. Following each interview, I thanked the participant. Upon conclusion of all surveys and interviews, I gave a handwritten thank you note to each participant that thanked them for their honesty, time, and participation.

Data collection was conducted in three phases. The first phase began in November 2021. The second phase occurred in December 2021. The final phase was in January 2022. The reason for the second and third phases being conducted closely together was because beginning teacher paperwork was due in early spring, district transfer requests to move to other schools were typically shared in late winter or early spring, and the results of the action research needed to be concluded prior to that time. To allow for ample time to review data, participants were asked in January to determine if they would voluntarily choose to remain employed at Vox Populi Elementary for the 2022-2023 school year. None of the voluntary participants had a choice to transfer schools as New Saxony County Schools required teachers to serve in the same school for three years before being allowed to request a transfer, so participants were asked to predict what their decision would be by the end of the 2021-2022 school year. The following is a description of the procedures for each of the three phases of action research.

Phase I

Plan. Phase I began in November 2021. As the scholarly practitioner, I sent an introduction email to each inquiry partner in an effort to explain the focus of practice and request voluntary participation in the action research to be conducted. An email followed with a survey to confirm participation if beginning teachers and new hires would so choose. The Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA) cycle was utilized throughout Phase I. Surveys and interviews shared both qualitative and quantitative data. Qualtrics was used through East Carolina University for data collection and to maintain anonymity and confidentiality. Microsoft Stream was utilized for recording and transcribing interviews. Data collection for Phase I concluded by the end of November 2021. Action research findings were shared utilizing tables and graphs to clearly convey findings of this study as outlined in Phase I.

Participants were beginning teachers all in their first, second, or third year of teaching. Participants also included new hires that were first employed by New Saxony County Schools during the 2021-2022 school year but were not considered beginning teachers. All beginning teachers and new hires during the 2021-2022 school year were invited to participate but only those voluntarily agreeing to participate were included. Recruitment strategies included sending a formal introduction to inform all participants of the action research, to explain confidentiality procedures of the research, and request voluntary participation. A survey followed via email within to document quantitative data of those willing to voluntarily participate in the requested research. All procedures are described in greater detail in the paragraphs below.

Do. Once I received district permission to conduct research and IRB approval, a formal email request was sent to all 2021-2022 beginning teachers and new hires in the early fall of 2021 to explain the focus of practice for this study and request voluntary permission to

participate. An email followed with a Qualtrics survey to obtain written confirmation for all voluntary participants during Phase I. Predetermined survey and interview questions were reviewed by inquiry partners in an effort to be as unbiased as possible. Surveys and interviews followed and were conducted with all voluntary participants. Data through Qualtrics was kept confidential and secure. Participants were able to cease participation at any time they chose and for any reason without fear of repercussion. Confidentiality was maintained throughout the entire action research process.

A survey developed using Qualtrics through East Carolina University was analyzed to determine which beginning teachers and new hires were willing to voluntarily participate in the research to be conducted. This particular survey was not anonymous as I needed to determine which participants were willing to volunteer. All information was kept confidential. I designed the survey and shared it with all beginning teachers and new hires for the 2021-2022 school year. Inquiry partners reviewed the survey questions for any necessary revisions. Surveys that followed throughout each phase of action research no longer included participant names. The surveys, however, asked participants to share if they were a beginning teacher or new hire.

For each interview conducted, I, as the scholarly practitioner assigned all voluntary participants a number. This information was kept confidential within field notes and were kept secure when not being analyzed. All interview documents included only the participant's number and did not include their first or last name at all.

Study. Each survey and interview question was organized as either qualitative or quantitative data. Qualitative data was analyzed and categorized, depending on what was heard and seen throughout the survey and interview data collection process. Quantitative data gathered through surveys was collected and analyzed statistically through Qualtrics. Interview data was

collected and analyzed using Microsoft Stream. Data collection of Phase I concluded by the end of November 2021. The results were presented utilizing tables and graphs to clearly and succinctly convey the action research findings of the scholarly practitioner.

Act. Based on feedback from Phase I, adjustments did not need to be made to the onboarding program. I, as the scholarly practitioner, met with the leadership team serving as inquiry partners that included the principal, assistant principal, the 3rd-5th grade instructional coach, and the MTSS coordinator to review the data evaluated from Phase I in an anonymous and confidential process. This meeting took in a quiet room that allowed for confidentiality with a closed door.

Phase II

Plan. Phase II of the action research began in December 2021. Surveys and interviews continued to be utilized for quantitative and qualitative data collection. I used survey and interviews with predetermined questions that were evaluated by the inquiry partners. The survey and interview questions provides me with insight on how participants felt about being welcomed to Vox Populi Elementary, how effective their mentor support was, how benefits and compensation affected their decisions to remain in the teaching profession, how participants viewed the support of administration, and aspects of what onboarding program factors were most valuable and least valuable in their decision to remain at Vox Populi Elementary.

Do. Surveys were shared, and interviews were conducted with all voluntary participants to gauge their level of support during the winter of 2021. If it is determined that adjustments did need to be made in the onboarding program during Phase II. During this time, monthly meetings continued to be held for all beginning teachers and mentors attended quarterly meetings. Mentors submitted quarterly meeting logs. Quarterly beginning teacher lunches with administration

continued to take place. The mentor and mentee google classroom continued to be updated and a beginning teacher was highlighted each month. Additionally, the leadership team continued to rotate assigning new hires to each leadership team member to provide needed support and to allow everyone to have a chance to build relationships with each other.

Study. I, as the scholarly practitioner, analyzed all interview and survey data. I reviewed all data collected from the beginning of the research through the conclusion of Phase II. The leadership team serving as inquiry partners were unable to confidentially discuss the anonymous data collection at the time due to constraints on the team members' time.

Act. Based on feedback from Phase II, adjustments did not need to be made to the onboarding program. Interview and survey questions were adjusted based on the data reviewed. As the scholarly practitioner, I began to reflect on the interviews and surveys that would need to occur during Phase III.

At that point in the school year, the leadership team serving as inquiry partners evaluated if there were any beginning teachers or new hires who may be struggling in certain areas and needed additional support. If more support was found to be needed, I met with the necessary mentors and monitored and adjusted the support provided as needed to ensure that the beginning teachers and new hires could be effective in their teaching assignment. Mentors and beginning teachers celebrated achievements with each other in December 2021. This celebration took the place of the regular monthly meeting for beginning teachers and mentors. It was a time for everyone to reflect on the progress made from August to December 2021, celebrate with each other prior to the winter holiday break, and individually consider adjustments that may need to be made for the second half of the school year.

Throughout Phase II, I conducted surveys and interviews with the voluntary participants using predetermined questions created with Qualtrics through East Carolina University and Microsoft Stream. The quantitative and qualitative data analyzed during Phase II allowed me insight to monitor and adjust the continuous, year-long onboarding program as needed. Phase III allowed me, along with the inquiry partners, to analyze data that would evaluate if participants would voluntarily choose to remain at Vox Populi Elementary for the 2022-2023 school year if given the choice. This data helped me analyze the effectiveness of the continuous, year-long onboarding program.

Phase III

Plan. During Phase III, I conducted the third cycle of surveys and interviews utilizing predetermined questions. Voluntary participants were asked, as of January 2022, to determine if they would choose to remain at Vox Populi Elementary if they had to decide at that time and if they would have been given a choice considering the three-year transfer guidelines through New Saxony County Schools. I was unable to meet with inquiry partners to discuss all findings from the interview and survey data collection due to time constraints on their schedules.

Do. Surveys were shared and interviews were conducted with all voluntary participants to gauge their level of support during the remaining part of the winter from December 2021 until January 2022. It was not determined that adjustments needed to be made in the onboarding program, at that time. During this time, monthly meetings continued to be held for all beginning teachers and mentors attended quarterly meetings. Quarterly beginning teacher lunches with administration continued to take place. Mentors continued to submit quarterly mentor logs. The mentor and mentee google classroom continued to be updated and a beginning teacher was highlighted each month. Additionally, the leadership team serving as inquiry partners continued

to rotate assigning new hires to each leadership team member to provide needed support and to allow everyone to have a chance to build relationships with each other.

Study. I, as the scholarly practitioner, analyzed all interview and survey data. I reviewed all data collected from the beginning of the research through the conclusion of Phase III. The leadership team serving as inquiry partners met to confidentially discuss the anonymous data collection. This meeting took place in a quiet room that allowed for confidentiality with a closed door.

I compared the potential teacher retention for the 2021-2022 school year with that of the 2018-2019, 2019-2020, and 2020-2021 school years. Confidentiality continued to occur as the analysis of all qualitative and quantitative data was conducted. Through the data collection analysis, I, as the scholarly practitioner and working with the inquiry partners, determined if the continuous, year-long onboarding program had been successful for beginning teachers and new hires. If anticipated teacher turnover decreased by minimally 10%, the onboarding program would be deemed as successful.

Act. Based on feedback throughout Phase III, adjustments were not made to the onboarding program. Interview and survey questions were adjusted based on the data reviewed and through the findings of the leadership team. I reflected on the interviews and surveys that needed to occur during Phase III and throughout the remainder of the school year for 2021-2022.

At that point in the school year, the leadership team serving as inquiry partners evaluated if there were any beginning teachers or new hires who may be struggling in certain areas and needed additional support. If more support is found to be needed, I met with the necessary mentors and will monitor adjusted the support provided as needed to ensure that the beginning teachers and new hires could be effective in their teaching assignment.

Phase III allowed me, as the scholarly practitioner, to analyze data that evaluated if participants would voluntarily choose to remain at Vox Populi Elementary for the 2022-2023 school year if given the choice. This data helped me, as the scholarly practitioner, to analyze the effectiveness of the continuous, year-long onboarding program. If anticipated teacher turnover decreased by minimally 10%, the onboarding program would be deemed as successful. I met with the inquiry partners to analyze the data findings and determine if adjustments needed to be made to the continuous, year-long onboarding program prior to the end of the school year and how they may need to change for the upcoming school year. Additionally, I determined if potential teacher turnover was reduced by 10% or more for the 2021-2022 school year. If the teacher turnover rate was reduced by 10% or more based on the decisions voluntary participants share in January 2022 regarding their desire to remain employed as teachers at Vox Populi Elementary, I would be able to determine that the continuous, year-long onboarding program for beginning teachers and new hires had been effective for the 2021-2022 school year. Table 1 provides a timeline for the onboarding activities that will occur over the course of the 2021-2022 school year.

Inquiry Design Rigor

To limit bias through data collection with surveys and interview questions, I submitted all surveys and interview questions to the collaborative inquiry partners for review prior to conducting any research with beginning teachers and new hires (Mertler & Charles, 2011). Member checking at the conclusion of each interview transcription process was conducted with participants. Inquiry partners collaborated to review data together in an effort to maintain objectivity to the best extent possible. Because the data collection in this study lent itself to emotional insights, I provided participant debriefing with the interview process.

Delimitations, Limitations, and Assumptions

This inquiry engaged only the voluntary participants who provided their informed consent prior to the phases of research. Any participant could choose to withdraw from participation at any time for any reason without fear of retribution. While the continuous, year-long onboarding program may be able to be replicated in other schools, the research is specific to the selected school based on the high teacher turnover, the demographics of students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds, the fact that the school was deemed low-performing and was located in an urban fringe area. Additionally, it was a public, Title I elementary school. Adjustments may need to be made if the research is considered with secondary schools, schools in rural areas, private schools, or any other educational setting outside of the school selected for this focus of practice. The question may be raised if the results can be effectively applied to similar public, Title I elementary schools that are high-poverty and low-performing. While each turnover is a national and state issue, the focus of practice for this research was intended to address a local concern and is bounded contextually for this particular study.

The research for this study was impacted by the fact that New Saxony County Schools does not allow teachers to transfer to a different school within the district until they have served at their current school for three years. It was after the third year that the teacher turnover was occurring most often. The school had employed a high number of beginning teachers and after completion of their third year teaching, many sought to transfer to a school with fewer challenges than Vox Populi Elementary. Another limitation of the study was that I served as the kindergarten, first, and second-grade instructional coach and lead mentor working with all beginning teachers. Any teacher hired prior to the 2021-2022 school year had met and worked with me in some capacity whether directly or indirectly.

Table 1

Timetable for Onboarding Activities for Vox Populi Elementary in 2021-2022

Onboarding Activity	Time of Completion
Welcome email upon official hiring	24-48 hours
Welcome packet with welcome card, dates of all teacher workdays in August 2021, district calendar for the school year, school items to include a school lanyard, pencils, and sticker	Mailed within one week of official hire
Welcome brunch for all new hires, including any new beginning teachers with a school tour and time for questions and answers, refreshments were provided	Held a week prior to any official teacher workdays
Mentor assignments shared with all beginning teachers and mentors for the 2021-2022 school year	Shared electronically prior to the first official teacher workday
Monthly beginning teacher meetings with mentors attending one meeting per quarter	Monthly throughout the school year
Mentor and Mentee/Beginning Teacher Google Classroom that shares all important paperwork, important meeting dates for the school year, and any necessary information/updates	Shared prior to the first official teacher workday
Monthly beginning teacher highlight within the Mentor and Mentee/Beginning Teacher Google Classroom and weekly school newsletter	Each month throughout the school year
Welcome back/welcome to school postcards mailed to all returning beginning teachers and all new hires	Mailed at the end of July 2021 in an effort for them to be received prior to the first official teacher workday
Beginning Teacher and Administration lunches with food provided ordered from local restaurants and with teacher coverage provided	Beginning teacher and administration lunches held quarterly
The schedule for all lunches for the year was shared with all staff so those providing coverage would know well in advance.	Lunches last approximately 45 minutes

Table 1 (continued)

Onboarding Activity	Time of Completion
Notes, cards, small treats shared regularly for beginning teachers and new hires by me	Ongoing throughout the school year with a particular emphasis during October and November as this tends to be a most challenging time for beginning teachers
Extended time after staff meetings for beginning teachers and new hires to meet with the principal if needed for additional clarification of any matters discussed during the staff meeting	Ongoing throughout the school year
Leadership team assignments for new hires to offer encouraging words, notes, and support	Ongoing throughout the school year, rotations of leadership team members and new hires are done monthly
Assignments for leadership team members to reach out to new hires are rotated throughout the school year so new hires can interact with all leadership team members.	
Celebrations for all beginning teachers to reflect on their successes and accomplishments	At the end of each semester in December and May

Phase I of data collection began in November 2021. It is important to note that this time of year is often seen as the disillusionment phase for beginning teachers (Dabell, 2019). Due to the timing of Phase I data collection, this phase may have affected the qualitative and quantitative responses of teachers.

The focus of practice research occurred during the COVID-19 global pandemic. Due to the necessity at time for remote instruction, the job expectations of teachers were significantly altered. While stress is unfortunately too often a factor in teacher turnover, stress was heightened during this time as teachers were responsible for face-to-face instruction, remote instruction, adjusting for social distancing with children and adults, adhering to mask compliances, and enduring both personal and professional challenges caused by the global pandemic (Dilberti et al., 2021).

For the purpose of this study, it was assumed that beginning teachers and new hires had a genuine desire to improve their practice. It was also assumed that mentors wanted to provide support for beginning teachers. Finally, because New Saxony County Schools compensated mentors with a monthly stipend, it was assumed mentors were serving to provide support to beginning teachers and not to only receive the relatively small compensation.

Role of the Scholarly Practitioner

Because I, as the scholarly practitioner, served as the kindergarten, first, and second grade instructional coach, I was privy to the feedback and thoughts of many teachers regarding the working conditions within the school. I had witnessed the significant teacher turnover at the end of the 2019-2020 school year. It was my goal to not have anyone just starting their teaching career or their career at Vox Populi Elementary to have the same negative experiences as I and others had, to retain teachers that the school invested time, effort, and resources with in an effort

to increase student achievement; and to improve the working conditions within the school so teachers were happier, felt more satisfied, and wanted to remain in not only the teaching profession but at Vox Populi Elementary specifically, all in an effort to ultimately improve student achievement.

With the participants in the study, I had served as their instructional coach. I was not an evaluator in terms of their performance evaluations, but I did serve in a leadership role within the school as a member of the leadership team consisting of the principal, the assistant principal that was hired for the 2021-2022 school year due to increased student enrollment, the MTSS coordinator, and the third through fifth grade instructional coach. I conducted walk-throughs and provided instructional feedback to teachers. Additionally, I served as the lead mentor for all beginning teachers and mentors. As lead mentor, I facilitated monthly meetings, provided support and resources to beginning teachers and mentors throughout the year, and collected and submitted all necessary paperwork for beginning teachers that was required by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction to include logs of required meetings with mentors, documentation of all observations and each beginning teacher's summative evaluation for the school year, and any professional development courses taken by the beginning teacher. At the conclusion of three years of teaching, beginning teachers may move from an initial teaching license to a continuing license if their first three years of teaching had successfully been completed. For the purpose of this study, I remained as objective as possible by informing all participants in the action research that it was completely voluntary to participate and would not in any way negatively affect them whether or not they participated in the action research study. As the lead mentor, I did not evaluate any of the beginning teachers and did not conduct peer

observations in an effort to provide continuous, unbiased support for the beginning teachers and all new hires. In no way did I attempt to influence or bias the participants.

Summary

A mixed methods action research study was conducted to determine if implementing a continuous year-long onboarding program will reduce teacher turnover at a public, Title I elementary school. The research was conducted in three phases and followed the Plan, Do, Study, Act model. One research question and two subquestions guided the research. Inquiry partners included the principal, assistant principal, 3rd-5th grade instructional coach, MTSS coordinator, and two beginning teacher support coordinators for the district. Surveys and interviews were utilized with beginning teachers and new hires who voluntarily participated in the data collection process. Chapter 4 included participant demographics and the results of quantitative and qualitative data collection regarding implementation of onboarding practices.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The focus of this inquiry was to address the high teacher turnover rate in a public, Title I urban fringe elementary school by establishing an effective and continuous year-long onboarding program for beginning teachers and new hires. As the scholarly practitioner, I examined the strengths and weaknesses of the current onboarding program and its effect on teacher turnover. Next, I collaborated with inquiry partners to establish a year-long onboarding program for all beginning teachers and new hires. By establishing this program, the expectation was that beginning teachers and new hires would feel more welcomed, supported, better prepared for their teaching assignments, and therefore remain in the teaching profession, particularly at this elementary school, ultimately improving the teacher turnover rate as a short-term goal and student achievement as a long-term goal.

This study was guided by the following primary question and related subquestions: What effect does continuous, year-long onboarding have on teacher retention in a Title I elementary school?

1. What effect does continuous, year-long onboarding have on retention of beginning teachers?
2. What effect does continuous, year-long onboarding have on retention of new hires?

To answer these guiding questions, I, as the scholarly practitioner, used three phases of a mixed methods action research design. The action research design focused on the previous two years of teacher turnover at Vox Populi Elementary from 2019-2020 and 2020-2021, as well as the current school year of 2021-2022. Three years was selected as the time frame and included pre-COVID-19 pandemic data regarding teacher turnover. Interviews were used for collecting qualitative data and surveys for collecting quantitative data. Throughout each cycle of the action

research study, I followed the Plan, Do, Study, Act model for improvement (Langley et al., 2009).

This chapter outlines the implementation process, the data collection that includes the time frame of the action research, the recruitment process, and response information. It also addresses the data analysis focused on survey and interview implementation. Finally, the results of the action research study are shared in detail.

Implementation

The implementation process was organized by three phases of research and included an initial pre-phase of planning and preparation for the onboarding program. The phases included Pre-Phase I during the spring and summer of 2021, Phase I in November 2021, Phase II in December 2021, and Phase III in January 2022.

Pre-Phase I of Planning and Preparation for Onboarding

Initial planning for implementation involved communication with the principal in the spring of 2021 to obtain approval for the onboarding program. Beginning in April 2021, interviews for staff positions that needed to be filled for the 2021-2022 school year began to occur. With the first interviews, the onboarding program began. Onboarding should be far more than what may be considered a glorified orientation and should strategically engage new hires over minimally the first year of their tenure (Stein & Christiansen, 2010). Onboarding should include early career support, orientation to the culture of the workplace, an understanding of the direction of the workplace, and experiences that allow the new hire to build relationships that can be beneficial. To implement the onboarding program, the principal and I agreed that she would inform me upon notification of the official hiring of a new staff member. Once the hiring process has taken place, the crucial steps regarding teacher retention begin (Meseinheimer, 2019).

Welcoming Components of the Onboarding Program

Within 24-48 hours of the official notification of hire, I sent a welcome email to the new staff member to welcome them to Vox Populi Elementary. In the initial welcome email, I requested the home mailing address of the new staff member if they were willing to share it and invited each new hire to a welcome brunch and tour of the school that would take place prior to the first official workday. For the 2021-2022 school year, each new hire was willing to share their home mailing address. Upon receipt of the return email of the new hire, I mailed them a welcome packet. My timeframe for mailing the welcome packet was within one week of the official hiring. Once a teacher has been hired, they should be welcomed into the school (Meisenheimer, 2019). Each welcome packet was the same to ensure consistency with each new hire. The welcome packet was in a large manila envelope and included a New Saxony County Schools district calendar for the 2021-2022 school year in an effort to allow the new hire to plan ahead and feel more secure about their timeline for the school year.

The welcome packet also included a calendar of events that I created that was approved by the principal. The calendar included all events that would occur throughout the first two weeks of school in August during teacher workdays. The calendar also included school hours for teacher workdays, the school dress code, dates for orientation for all beginning teachers, the open house schedule to meet and greet students with their family members, and information about other meetings that would need to take place within the two-week time frame. The meetings included meeting with grade level teams and mentors for all beginning teachers. The calendar shared with new hires if each teacher workday was designated or undesignated. Designated meant that all employees must be at school. Undesignated meant that employees had the option to work or take leave. Also, within the August calendar, new employees had access to the links

for all required professional development through New Saxony County Schools. Including both calendars allowed the new hires to know what to expect during the beginning of the school year, as well as allowed for planning ahead for personal and professional obligations.

Among the other items included in the welcome packet were a handwritten welcome card, a school lanyard, a school pencil, and school stickers. I paid for all costs to mail the welcome packets and upon submission of receipts to the school, I was reimbursed by the school for the cost of mailing the welcome packets. The welcome packets were sent at different timeframes throughout the spring and summer of 2021 as they were sent upon official hiring of each new employee. Toward the end of July 2021, I sent a welcome postcard with a handwritten message to all new hires. I also sent a welcome back postcard with a handwritten message to all returning beginning teachers.

Mentor Roles in the Onboarding Program

Throughout the summer of 2021, the principal and I worked together to establish mentor and mentee assignments for all beginning teachers. The assignments had to be approved by the district beginning teacher support coordinators. Once all approvals were finalized, I sent the list of mentor and mentee assignments to all mentors and beginning teachers prior to the first official workday. This allowed time for the mentor to reach out to their beginning teacher prior to the beginning of the school year when things are less hectic. The support provided to beginning teachers initially is a crucial part of the foundation of their careers (Gordon & Maxey, 2000). From the outset, beginning teachers need support with understanding their teaching assignment, workload, and work environment. For beginning teachers who were also new employees, it allowed them to know who their mentor assignment was prior to the new teacher orientation for New Saxony County Schools. The goal of this was to begin to build relationships with mentors

and their new mentees, as well as lessen anxiety for beginning teachers who were also new hires. This early connection between mentors and mentees occurred except in the case of one beginning teacher who was also a new hire. I inadvertently left her personal email off the distribution list and her mentor did not check email regularly over the summer. Upon realizing this, I quickly apologized and made sure to notify her of her mentor assignment.

All previous mentors and beginning teachers were included in the mentor/mentee Google classroom which I maintained throughout the year. All new mentors and beginning teachers who were also new hires were invited to the mentor/mentee Google classroom. The Google classroom shared all monthly meeting dates for mentors and beginning teachers for the 2021-2022 school year, all dates for beginning teacher/administration quarterly luncheons, all important paperwork that would need to be submitted, and various articles that may be of interest to the mentors and beginning teachers. Within the Google classroom, a different beginning teacher was highlighted each month. The beginning teacher of the month was also included in the school newsletter for Vox Populi Elementary.

From surveys I asked beginning teachers to complete at the end of the 2020-2021 school year, I received feedback from beginning teachers regarding the effectiveness of their relationship with their mentor. Teachers in their first three years of teaching are assigned a mentor in New Saxony County Schools but new hires not in their initial years of teaching do not receive an official mentor. In an effort to build relationships with each new hire, I created a monthly schedule for the school year that included each member of the leadership team and all new hires. Each leadership team member was assigned a different new hire monthly to provide unofficial mentoring and support. New hires were not made aware of this. Leadership team members were asked to check in regularly with new hires in person, provide notes of

encouragement, and check in on their progress via email. In all partnerships except one, mentors remained the same for the 2021-2022 school year. The partnership changed at the request of the beginning teacher. An effective match between mentor and mentee is important in an effective mentoring program, (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004).

Pre-Phase I During the Outset of the School Year

In early August of 2021 and prior to the first official workday, I hosted a welcome brunch for all new hires. It took place at Vox Populi Elementary. The majority of new hires attended. One new hire was unable to attend but expressed a desire that she wanted to be able to attend. Because of this, I hosted a separate welcome for her individually. The welcome brunch for all new hires included food and drink, a tour of the school, an informal question and answer time, and an opportunity for each new hire to see their classroom. Because the beginning of the school year can be extremely hectic, my goal with the welcome brunch was to begin to build relationships with the new hires and me, as well as for them to begin to build relationships with each other prior to the official start of the school year. Additionally, a goal was to help alleviate fears and anxieties that often accompany beginning a new job. Most of the new hires had also moved from another state. The welcome brunch allowed them to get a feel for the school and to see their new classroom. The refreshments for the welcome brunch were purchased using school funds.

Throughout the school year and even in the summer, I gave all beginning teachers handwritten notes to thank them for their hard work and let them know they were appreciated. To ensure equity and consistency, I maintained a monthly graph with all beginning teachers' names and marked when I shared a note of encouragement with them. At the beginning of the official school workdays, I provided each of our beginning teachers who were not new hires a

welcome back gift of a handwritten card, some candy, and a sticker I had made for them. I funded the cost of the welcome gifts. Because I served as the lead mentor for all beginning teachers and mentors, I wanted to remind them of their importance to me and help them feel appreciated at the outset of the school year.

All of our previously employed staff members received the August calendar for teacher workdays prior to the end of the 2020-2021 school year. Because I utilized google documents for the August calendar, I was easily able to update it as New Saxony County Schools added additional professional development requirements as the beginning of school approached for the 2021-2022 school year.

Beginning in August 2021, I began hosting our monthly meetings for all beginning teachers and mentors. The meetings provided professional development in needed areas for beginning teachers, allowed time for them to bond with each other, and allowed for question and answer sessions. I often asked the beginning teachers to reflect on their successes and what they may want to do differently with the challenges they were facing at the time. Based on survey data I received from beginning teachers during the 2020-2021 school year, I invited mentors to attend only one monthly meeting per quarter. Previously, mentors attended all monthly meetings. Feedback from the beginning teachers was that they wanted time to bond with each other without their mentors present. Because their feedback was valuable to me as their lead mentor, I was more than willing to accommodate their request.

Building Connections with Administration

A new implementation for the 2021-2022 school year that I initiated with the principal's approval was the beginning of quarterly lunches for all beginning teachers and our administration. The luncheons lasted approximately 45 minutes. Food was purchased from

restaurants outside of the school and delivered for the luncheon. I created a coverage schedule to ensure all beginning teachers would have adequate support to monitor their classrooms during the time they attended each luncheon. The schedule was regularly revised due to staff turnover. All luncheon dates and times were shared with all those involved at the beginning of the school year to allow sufficient time for planning purposes. The first beginning teacher luncheon with administration took place in early September 2021. Approximately 450,000 teachers leave the teaching profession annually (Carlson, 2012). A significant contributing factor to this teacher turnover is the lack of support teachers receive from administration. School environments that do not create supportive environments cause teachers to be more likely to leave their positions than those in environments that are more supportive and positive. The leadership style of principals and aspiring principals has a direct impact on the job satisfaction of teachers working within their schools. Effective principals create environments that allow teachers to feel supported, encouraged, able to collaborate and, thus, are dedicated to their jobs. The goal for the beginning teacher luncheons with administration was primarily to allow time for beginning teachers and administration to get to know each other more informally and to establish valuable connections.

Phase I

Throughout October and November 2021, I shared surprises of small treats for all beginning teachers to boost morale. The treats included small gifts I purchased. I placed all gifts in a basket and let each beginning teacher choose the gift of their choice. Monthly meetings for all beginning teachers continued to occur and mentors regularly met with their assigned mentees. The second quarter beginning teacher luncheon with administration took place in November. Beginning teachers continued to be highlighted monthly within Google classroom and in school newsletters.

In late November, I received district approval from New Saxony County Schools to conduct the action research study and Phase I began. Immediately following approval, I sent an email to all beginning teachers and new hires at Vox Populi Elementary requesting their voluntary participation in the research. Upon confirmation of willingness to participate by beginning teachers and new hires, I shared an informed consent document. For beginning teachers and new hires I did not receive confirmation from, I sent a follow-up email requesting their willingness to participate or their confirmation that they did not choose to participate in the research. Once all informed consent documents were signed and dated, I began the action research study. Each beginning teacher and new hire was assigned a number. Names were not utilized in the study outside of the informed consent document. Participants were sent an electronic survey through Qualtrics. Participant responses were kept confidential as the surveys were password protected. Using an electronic poll, I requested interview dates and times from each participant. I utilized Zoom to audio record participant interviews. At the request of participants, several interviews took place in the evenings. For those interviews, video and audio recordings were recorded through Zoom. Each interview was uploaded and transcribed utilizing Microsoft Stream and was password protected.

Phase II

Phase II of the action research study took place in December 2021. In early December, I hosted a winter celebration in lieu of a regular monthly meeting for all beginning teachers. Cupcakes were served, games could be played, ornaments could be made, music played in the background, and beginning teachers and mentors had the opportunity to socialize with each other. The principal attended the celebration. We took time to recognize personal and professional achievements of each of our beginning teachers and mentors were thanked for their

service to the beginning teachers. Another celebration was planned for May 2022 at the conclusion of the school year. Teachers with higher levels of job satisfaction tend to have higher self-efficacy levels (Zakariya, 2020). Improved job satisfaction and self-efficacy can positively impact teacher recruitment and retention.

Monthly meetings for all beginning teachers continued to occur and mentors regularly met with their assigned mentees. Beginning teachers continued to be highlighted monthly within Google classroom and in school newsletters. Notes of encouragement additionally continued to be shared with all beginning teachers.

The second electronic survey was sent to participating beginning teachers and new hires through Qualtrics. Using an electronic poll, interview dates and times were requested from each participant. I utilized Zoom to audio record participant interviews. At the request of participants, several interviews took place in the evenings. For those interviews, video and audio recordings were recorded through Zoom. Each interview was uploaded and transcribed utilizing Microsoft Stream.

Phase III

Phase III of the action research study occurred in early January 2022 and took place during teacher workdays prior to students' return to school after winter break. While beginning teachers were on winter break, I sent each a text message of gratitude for their hard work throughout the first semester. I received several return messages of appreciation.

Monthly meetings for all beginning teachers continued to occur and mentors regularly met with their assigned mentees. The second quarter beginning teacher luncheon with administration took place in November. Beginning teachers continued to be highlighted monthly within Google classroom and in school newsletters.

Beginning teachers and new hires were sent a third electronic survey through Qualtrics. Using an electronic poll, interview dates and times were requested from each participant. I utilized Zoom to audio record participant interviews. Because all interviews occurred on a teacher workday, no video recordings were conducted during Phase III. Each interview was uploaded and transcribed utilizing Microsoft Stream. At that point, data collection was complete and data analysis began.

Due to significant staff turnover from October through December and the hectic nature of a school year continuing throughout the COVID-19 global pandemic, communication between the principal and me regarding new hires was not as effective as it had been during the spring and summer of 2021. The staff turnover included several teachers, teacher assistants, and office staff members who resigned, transferred, retired mid-year, or took a leave of absence. Staff members that were hired in the fall and winter of 2021 did not receive the welcome packets previously hired staff members had received. The majority of new hires from October through December were classified staff members who were not included in the original onboarding program.

Data Collection

The recruitment process for the action research study began with a focus on beginning teachers and new hires within Vox Populi Elementary. In the fall of 2021, there were 11 beginning teachers and six new hires who were not considered to be beginning teachers based upon their previous years of experience. The number of new hires fluctuated throughout the fall and winter of 2021 prior to winter break. This fluctuation occurred predominately during Phases I and II of the action research study. Two of the six new hires resigned in October 2021. Two additional classroom teachers were newly hired as replacement for the two resignations. One

replacement submitted a resignation within four days of employment; the other started their employment in mid-December. Classroom teacher assistants were utilized throughout the interim period from October until mid-December to cover the unfilled positions in classrooms and specialist classes. This caused increased anxiety with classroom teachers as there was less support for the youngest students in the school and less support for academic interventions to take place in a school already struggling both academically and behaviorally. My counterpart, our second instructional coach, served as a long-term substitute for a classroom position for approximately 3 months due to teacher turnover. During her substitute timeframe, I served dually in her position as well as my own. Toward the end of our second instructional coach's long-term substitute position, another teacher took a leave of absence. Because of this, my counterpart and I both were asked to help cover the needs of the students no longer receiving services from the teacher on leave. Additional support staff were hired in late fall for positions that had not yet been filled when school began. The staff shortages, teacher turnover, and increased challenges during the Covid-19 global pandemic heightened anxieties and contributed to a situation where fewer walkthroughs occurred that provided support to teachers and fewer model lessons took place.

For the first semester of the school year, students were no longer allowed to eat in the cafeteria due to the need for social distancing. Lunches had to be delivered to classrooms and this took more staff members from their traditional roles in providing support to students and teachers. Teacher assistants, teachers, instructional coaches, and administration delivered lunches. At times, custodians also helped with lunch delivery. Eight school employees resigned, transferred, took a leave of absence, or retired during the fall and winter of 2021. In addition to this, 3 other employees who worked at the school but were employed by another department also

left the school. This significant amount of staff turnover challenged my efforts with onboarding implementation and data collection. Despite the challenges of data collection, the recruitment process for the study continued and the action research study began. It took creativity and a willingness to be flexible on the parts of the voluntary participants to allow time for data collection to occur.

Prior to conducting the proposed action research study, an introductory email was sent to beginning teachers and new hires explaining this study and requesting their voluntary participation. Within the email request for voluntary participation, it clearly stated that no one was required to participate, and all voluntary participants would be assigned a number to maintain confidentiality as no names would be utilized in the action research study. Voluntary participants were informed that pseudonyms would be utilized for the district and school to further maintain confidentiality. Additionally, voluntary participants were informed that they would not be evaluated in any way and could cease participation at any time without fear of retribution. In my capacity at the school, I do not serve as an evaluator of any of the voluntary participants. Following confirmation emails from voluntary participants willing to participate in the action research study, informed consent information was shared with all voluntary participants. Their signature and date of confirmation was received prior to conducting any data collection. For beginning teachers and new hires who did not submit a confirmation, an additional email was sent requesting voluntary participation or a confirmation that they would not like to participate in the research study. Ultimately, six beginning teachers and three new hires voluntarily agreed to participate in the action research study.

The initial plan for interviews was to conduct all interviews in the school setting, in a quiet room, with a sign on the door to request that the meeting not be interrupted. Based on the

requests of voluntary participants and limited time with staffing shortages, a deviation from the planned data collection was that the interview setting changed to include Zoom interviews after school and in the evenings to accommodate hectic schedules. Confidentiality was maintained in the data collection process as no names were utilized, only voluntary participants' assigned numbers were utilized, and all recordings were uploaded to the Microsoft Stream platform to maintain confidentiality as it is password protected. Electronic polls and surveys were utilized to obtain the voluntary participants' requested times for interviews during each of the three phases of action research. Zoom interviews after school and in the evenings allowed for a more focused interview time than interviews during school days when time was very limited. A deviation with data collection was that manual transcription was necessary for a few of the interviews as the transcription process within Microsoft Stream was very lengthy at times.

An additional deviation was that surveys and interviews in Phases II and III did not include questions with answers that would clearly remain the same throughout each phase of the action research study. All questions were included in Phase I of data collection, but it was realized after implementation of all Phase I surveys and interviews that these questions did not need to be repeated in an effort to save time for the voluntary participants and because the information would not change. The questions that were not included in Phases II and III of the action research included if anything was done prior to the first day of school that made voluntary participants feel welcome, what could have been done to help them feel more welcome, types of administrative support provided to them that had been most helpful, and what could be done by administration to provide more support. All data collection from each of the three surveys in Phase I, II, and III was conducted using Qualtrics. All quantitative data were calculated and

analyzed through Qualtrics and monitored to ensure completion of each voluntary participant. Email reminders needed to be occasionally sent to ensure completion.

Data Analysis

The data analysis process included survey and interview results from six beginning teachers and three new hires over the course of Phases I, II, and III of data collection. Surveys provided quantitative data and were conducted through the Qualtrics platform to maintain confidentiality of all voluntary participants. Interviews were recorded through Zoom, then uploaded and transcribed using Microsoft Stream.

Upon collection of the interview data, I utilized an initial coding method for qualitative data analysis (Saldaña, 2021). This included highlighting and making notes of words and phrases from each interview throughout Phases I, II, and III. I made field notes throughout my data analysis and identified patterns within the codes as I analyzed the interviews. In reviewing the patterns, emergent themes were developed by analyzing similarities, differences, frequency of common words and phrases, and correspondence to other events that may have impacted the data, particularly based on the time of the school year interviews occurred. The themes identified were: equitable support of administration, challenges with student behavior and a reset of expectations, and factors that most significantly impacted participants' decisions to stay or leave Vox Populi Elementary.

Additional themes included how onboarding and mentoring created a sense of community and the importance of relationships and staff support. I codified the data as I grouped results to consolidate meaning from each interview. Next, I analyzed the subtle changes in results during each phase and considered the changes that occurred at Vox Populi Elementary during that time frame. All coding was conducted in a solitary manner, and I worked diligently to be

rigorously ethical throughout the data analysis. The data analysis led to the identification of clearly identified themes.

Quantitative data, collected through Qualtrics, included 14 initial survey questions for beginning teachers and new hires in Phase I. The first nine questions included the participant identification number, demographic information, years of experience in teaching, teaching assignment, if a mentor was provided, if participants were welcomed prior to the first official work day, if anyone provided a tour of the school, how prepared participants felt after their pre-service education or alternative teacher certification, and how confident participants felt in their teaching abilities when they entered the teaching profession. These questions were not repeated during Phases II and III surveys as the responses would not differ. The remaining five questions were repeated throughout each survey in Phases II and III. The questions included how supportive participants felt administration was of them as a teacher, participants' level of satisfaction at Vox Populi Elementary, how important benefits and compensation were for participants to continue in the teaching profession, how important benefits and compensation were for participants to continue teaching at Vox Populi Elementary, and if participants would choose to remain at Vox Populi Elementary during the 2022-2023 school year if given a choice. All voluntary participants completed each survey. All descriptive statistics for the Likert scores were calculated within the Qualtrics platform, and I reviewed them for accuracy.

To help ensure the validity of the results, I triangulated the quantitative and qualitative data. Through triangulation, the qualitative data better informed my understanding of the quantitative data results and helped ensure the results of my data analysis were valid. The qualitative results provided a narrative to frame the numerical results of the quantitative data. This was a significant benefit of the mixed methods design of action research (Mertler, 2020).

Demographics

This study included six beginning teachers and three new hires. Of the beginning teachers, all were females. Four participants were Caucasian, and two were Caucasian and Latina as described by the participants (see Figure 7). Of the three new hires, all were females. Two participants were Caucasian, and one was Latina as described by the participants (see Figure 8). All participants together are described demographically based upon gender, race, and years of experience in Table 2.

Results

The results of the action research study are organized by quantitative and qualitative results. The mean for each Likert survey throughout Phases I, II, and III of research are included in the quantitative section. Additionally, the qualitative section is organized by the themes that emerged during data analysis.

Quantitative Results

Electronic surveys were distributed to beginning teachers and new hires during each phase of action research using Qualtrics. Phase I took place in November 2021. Phase II occurred in December 2021. In January 2022, Phase III surveys were conducted.

Mentors Assigned Prior to the First Official Work Day

All beginning teachers participating in the action research study were assigned a mentor prior to the first school work day with the exception of one teacher (see Figure 9). When the mistake was realized, it was quickly shared with the beginning teacher. Staff not frequently checking email while out of school also factored into the mistake. Teachers not in their first three years of teaching are not assigned an official mentor. As a result, new hires were not asked if they were assigned an official mentor but were asked if they had a mentor or buddy teacher.

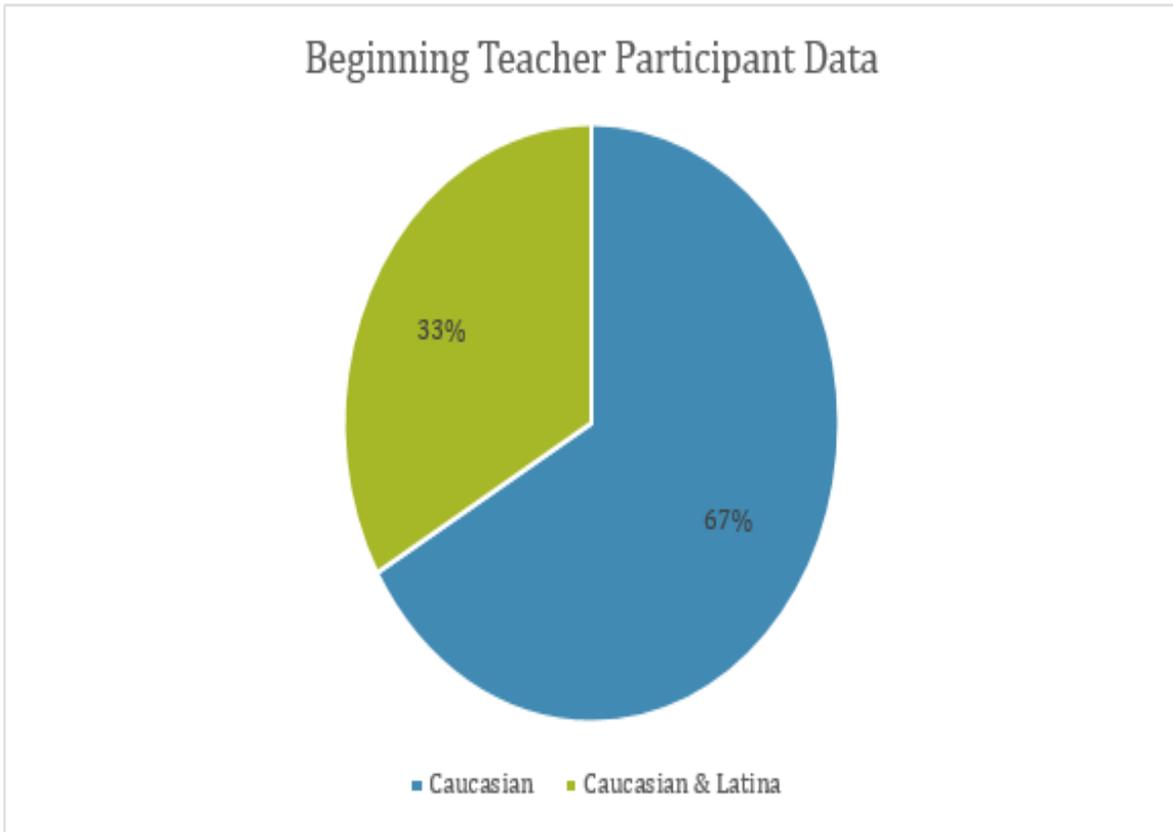


Figure 7. Beginning teacher participant data.

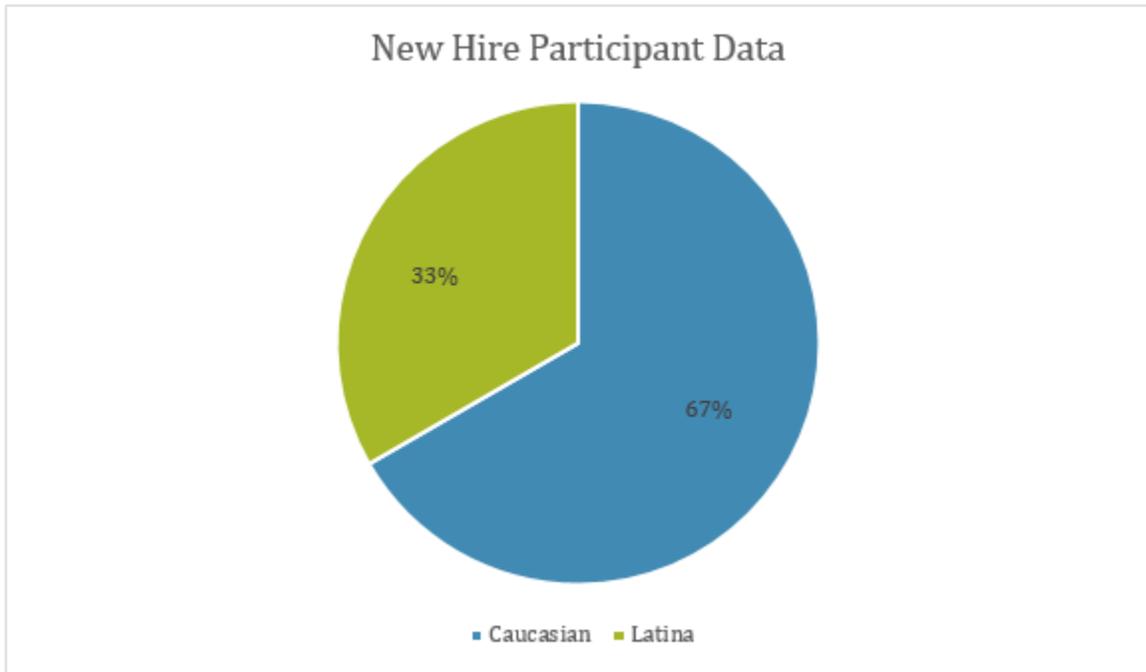


Figure 8. New hire participant data.

Table 2

Demographics of Participants

Participant	Years of Teaching Experience	Ethnicity as described by the participant	Gender
Participant #1	1	White	Female
Participant #2*	7	White	Female
Participant #3*	18	Latina	Female
Participant #4	1	Hispanic, Mixed	Female
Participant #5	1	White	Female
Participant #6	2	White and Hispanic	Female
Participant #7	1	White	Female
Participant #8*	7	White	Female
Participant #9	0	White	Female

Note. * Indicates new hire.

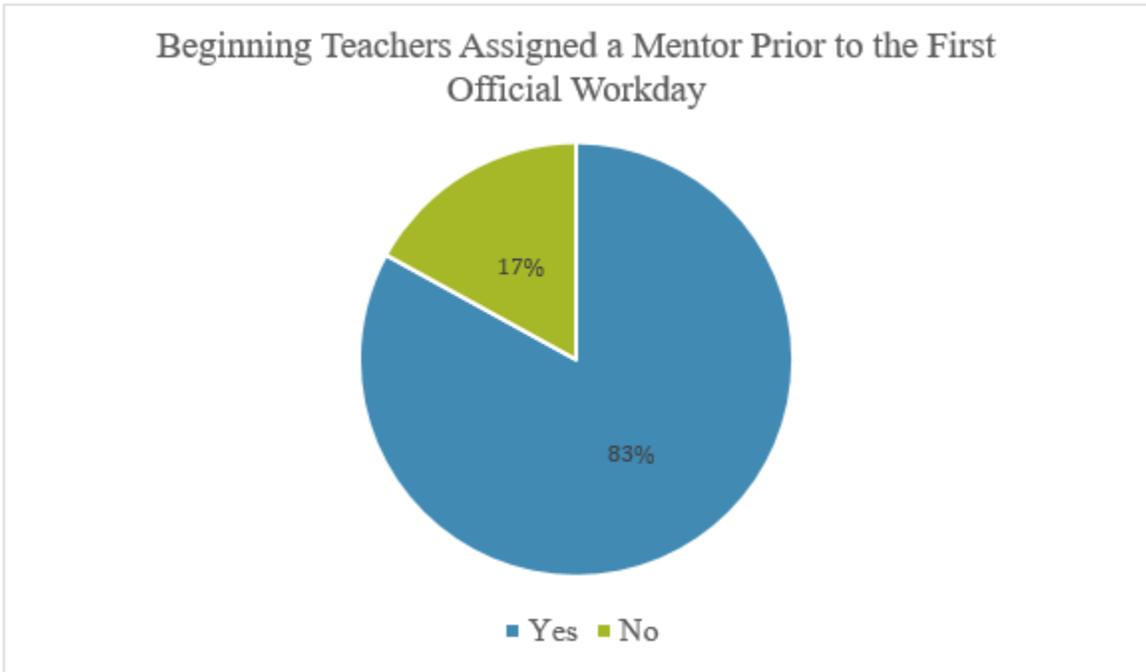


Figure 9. Beginning teachers assigned a mentor prior to the first official workday.

Because the new hires were not made aware of these assignments, all new hires responded that they did not have a mentor or buddy teacher.

Welcome and Tour of the School

All beginning teachers stated they were welcomed prior to the first official workday (see Figure 10). Four out of six beginning teachers were provided a tour of the school prior to the first workday (see Figure 11). The two teachers who did not receive a tour were hired slightly later than the others during the 2020-2021 school year and prior to the onboarding program being implemented. All new hires shared that they received a tour of the school prior to the first official workday (see Figure 12).

Preparation for Teaching

Not a single beginning teacher or new hire stated they felt extremely prepared when entering the teaching profession, although results ranged from feeling extremely unprepared to feeling prepared (see Figure 13). These results confirm the need for improvements in teacher preparation programs. Teachers need to better understand the realities of teaching to be better prepared for success in their own classrooms.

Confidence in Teaching Abilities

Again, no beginning teachers or new hires stated they felt extremely confident in their teaching abilities when they entered the teaching profession. Most beginning teachers rated that they felt neither confident or unconfident and most new hires rated that they had felt confident when they entered the teaching profession (see Figure 14). These questions were not repeated during Phases II and III of the quantitative data collection as answers would not change.

**Percentage of Beginning Teachers and New Hires
Welcomed Prior to the First Official Workday**

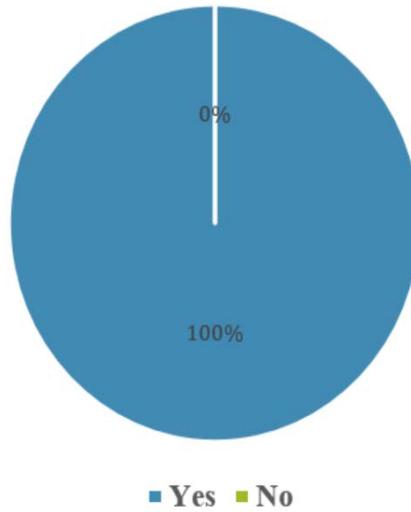


Figure 10. Percentage of beginning teachers and new hires welcomed prior to the first official workday.

Percentage of Beginning Teachers Who Were Provided a
Tour of the School Prior to the First Official Workday

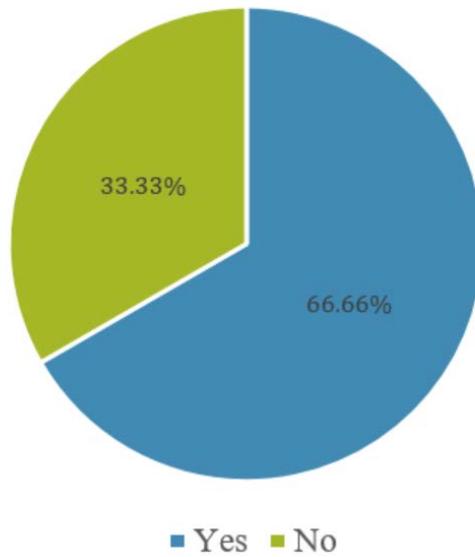


Figure 11. Percentage of beginning teachers who were provided a tour of the school prior to the first official workday.

Percentage of New Hires Provided a Tour Prior to the First Official Workday

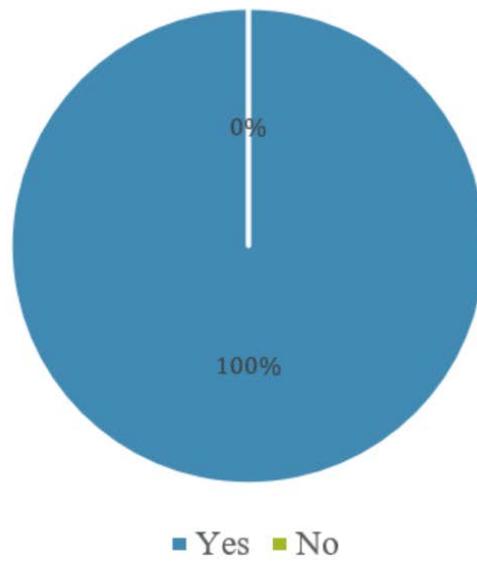


Figure 12. Percentage of new hires provided a tour prior to the first official workday.

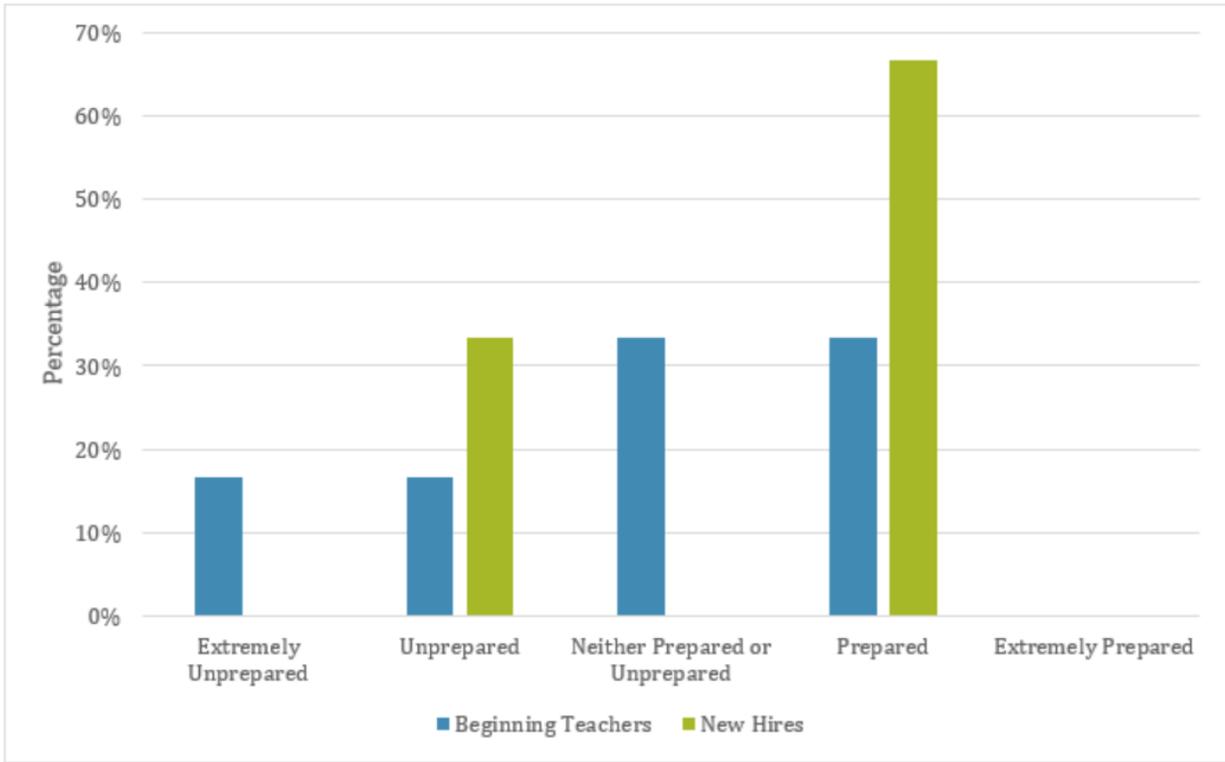


Figure 13. How prepared beginning teachers and new hires felt when they began their first year of teaching after pre-service education or alternative teacher certification.

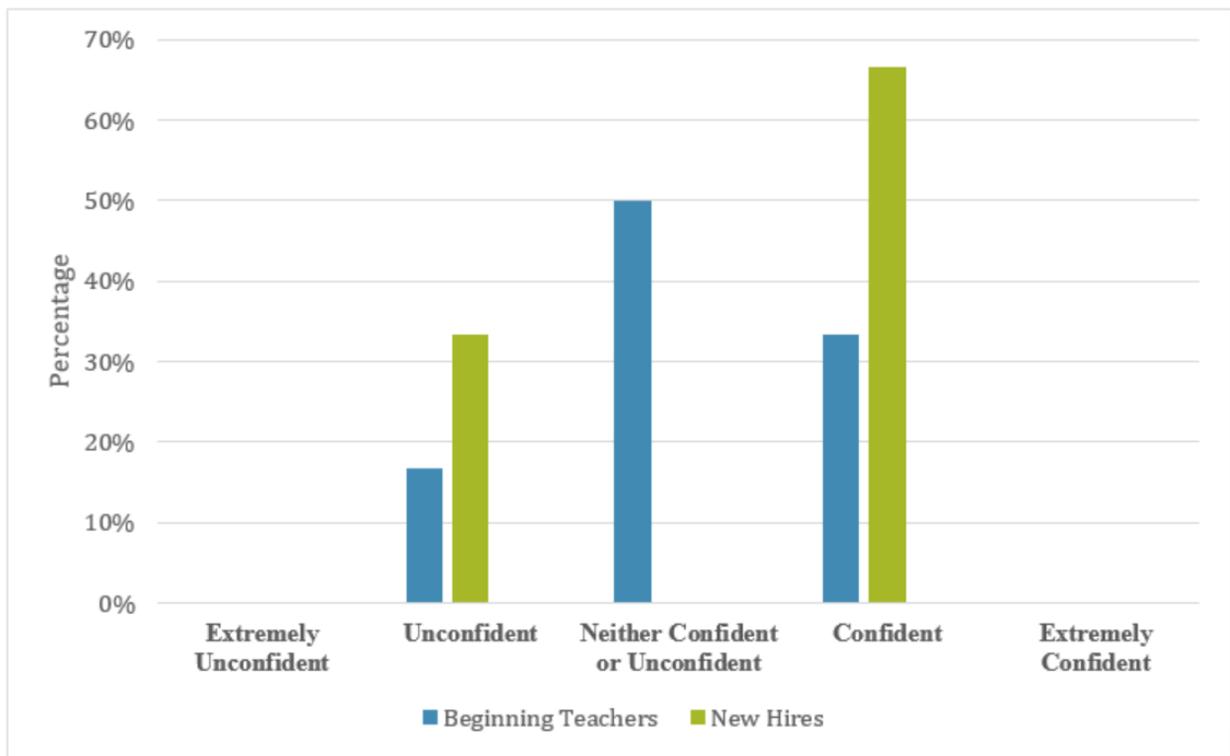


Figure 14. Confidence level of beginning teachers and new hires when entering the teaching profession.

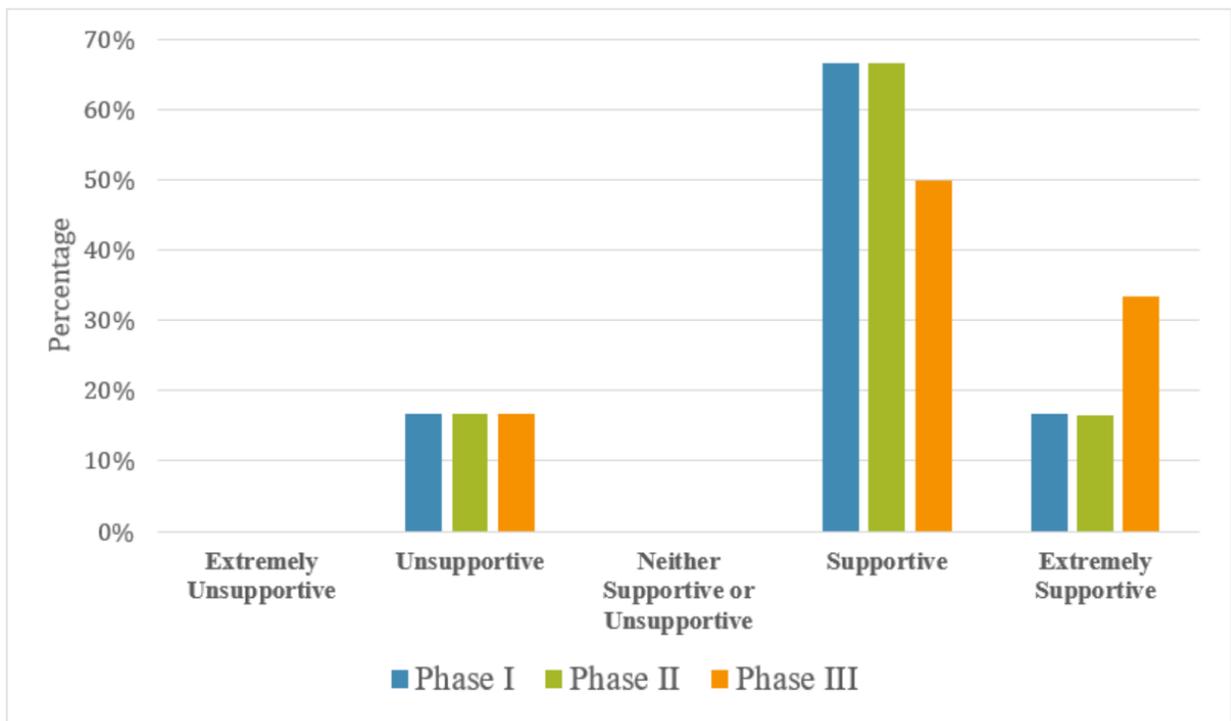


Figure 15. Beginning teacher rates of administrative support in each phase.

Administrative Support

During Phase I, the majority beginning teachers rated administration as being supportive of them as a teacher (see Figure 15). This remained the same during Phase II. Rates improved in Phase III with the majority feeling supported or extremely supported by administration. The rates of administrative support by new hires remained the same throughout each phase of research (see Figure 16).

Satisfaction as a Teacher

Beginning teacher rates of satisfaction as a teacher at Vox Populi Elementary fluctuated throughout each phase of research (see Figure 17). The majority of new hire rates of satisfaction as a teacher at Vox Populi Elementary were rated as neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (see Figure 18).

Importance of Benefits and Compensation

Throughout each phase of action research, the majority of beginning teachers rated benefits and compensation to continue in the teaching profession as either important or extremely important (see Figure 19). All new hires rated benefits and compensation to continue in the teaching profession as important or extremely important throughout each phase (see Figure 20). When asked specifically about the importance of benefits and compensation to continue teaching at Vox Populi Elementary, the majority of beginning teachers rated them as extremely important throughout each phase (see Figure 21). New hires stated that benefits and compensation were either important or extremely important to continue teaching specifically at Vox Populi Elementary (see Figure 22). It is important to note that, throughout each phase of action research, the majority of both beginning teachers and new hires rated benefits and compensation as important or extremely important to them.

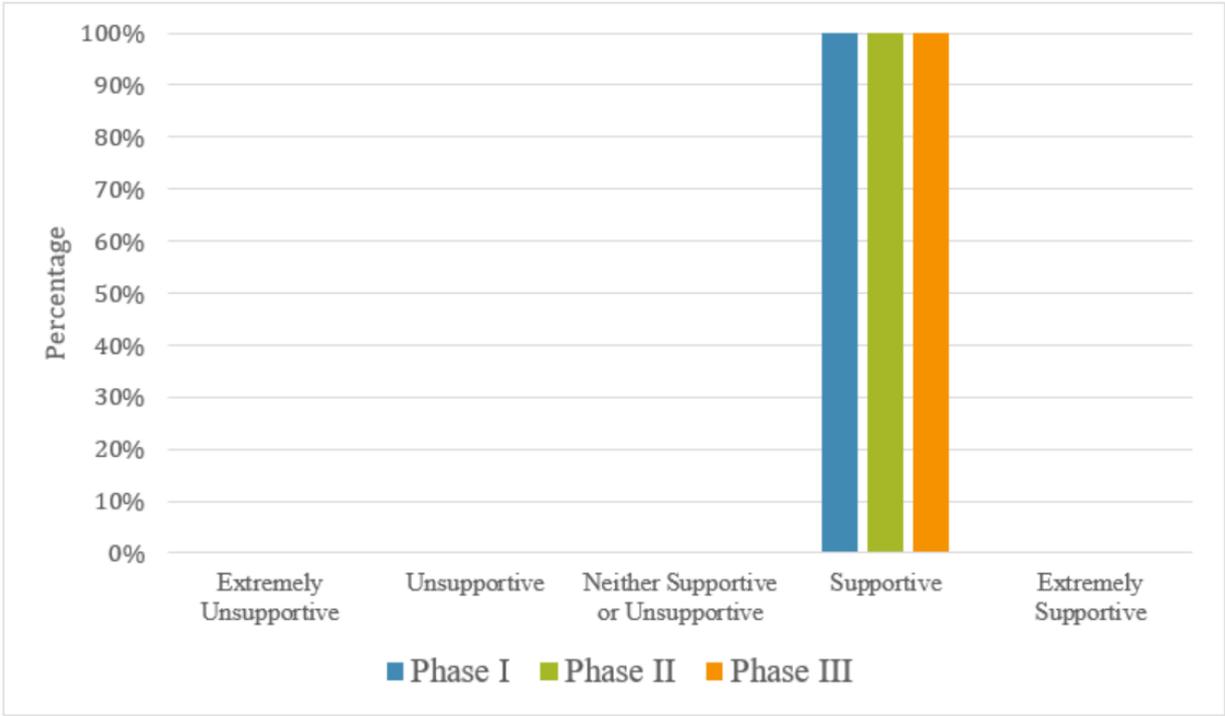


Figure 16. New hire rates of administrative support in each phase.

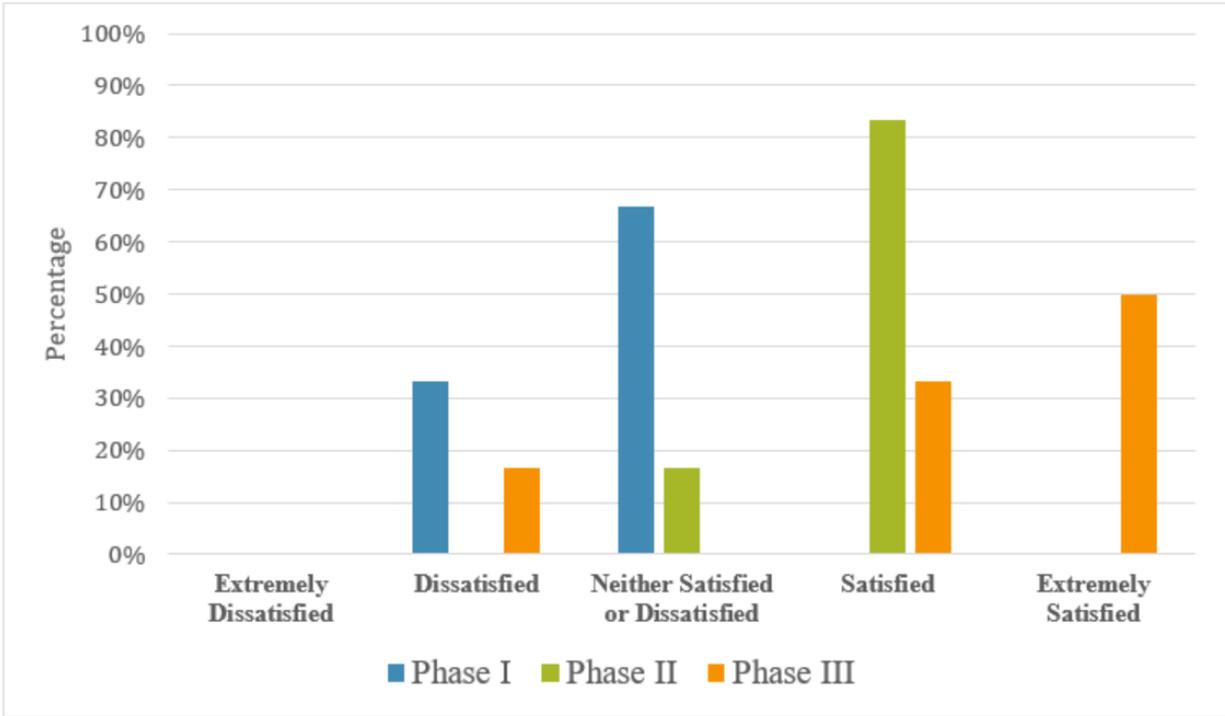


Figure 17. Beginning teacher rates of satisfaction as a teacher at Vox Populi Elementary in each phase.

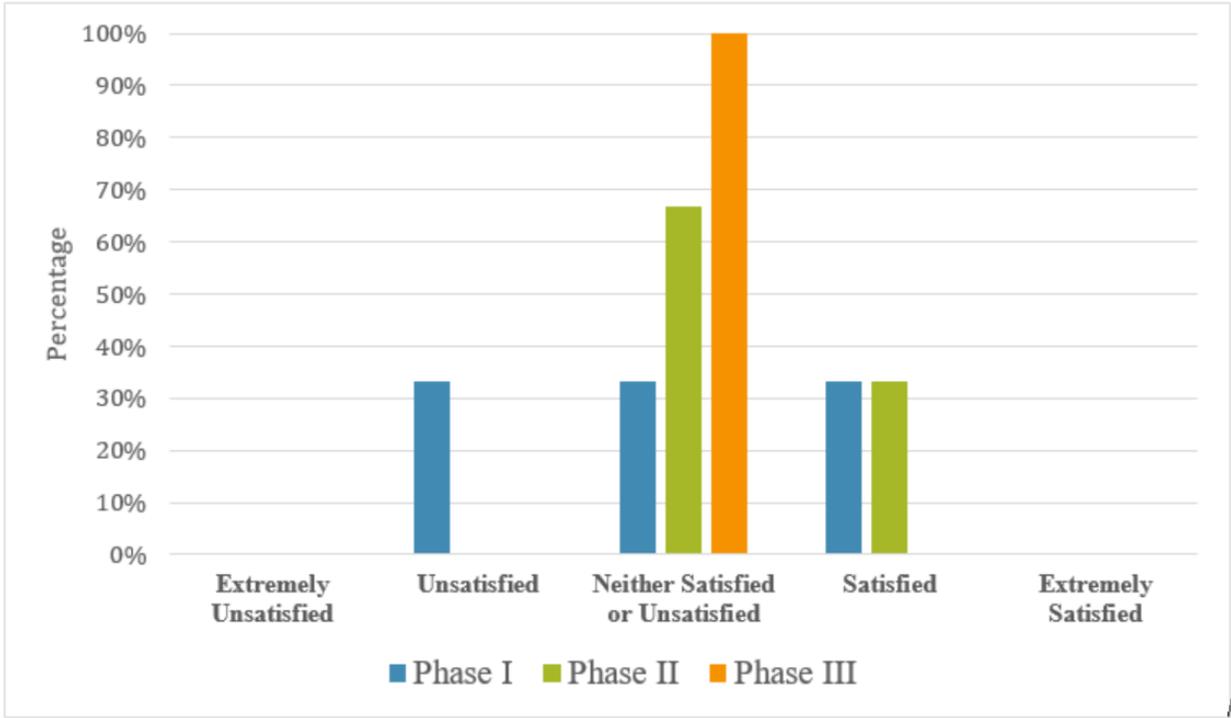


Figure 18. New hire rates of satisfaction as a teacher at Vox Populi Elementary in each phase.

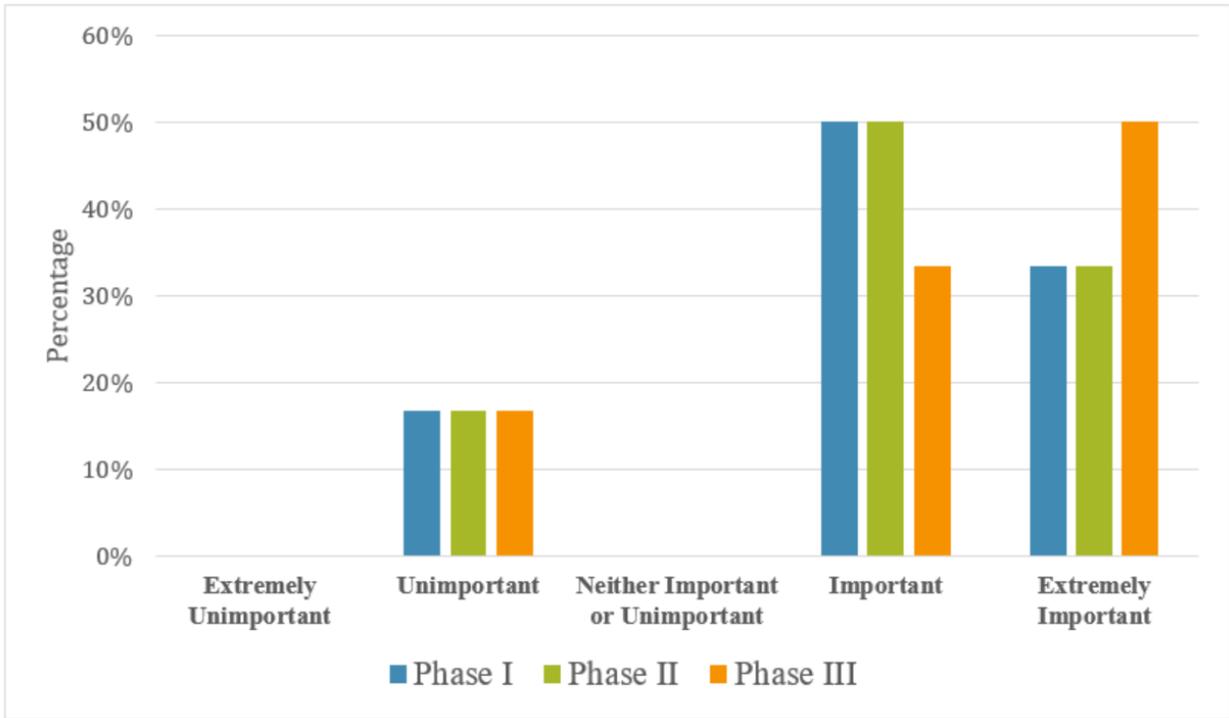


Figure 19. Importance of benefits and compensation for beginning teachers to continue in the teaching profession.

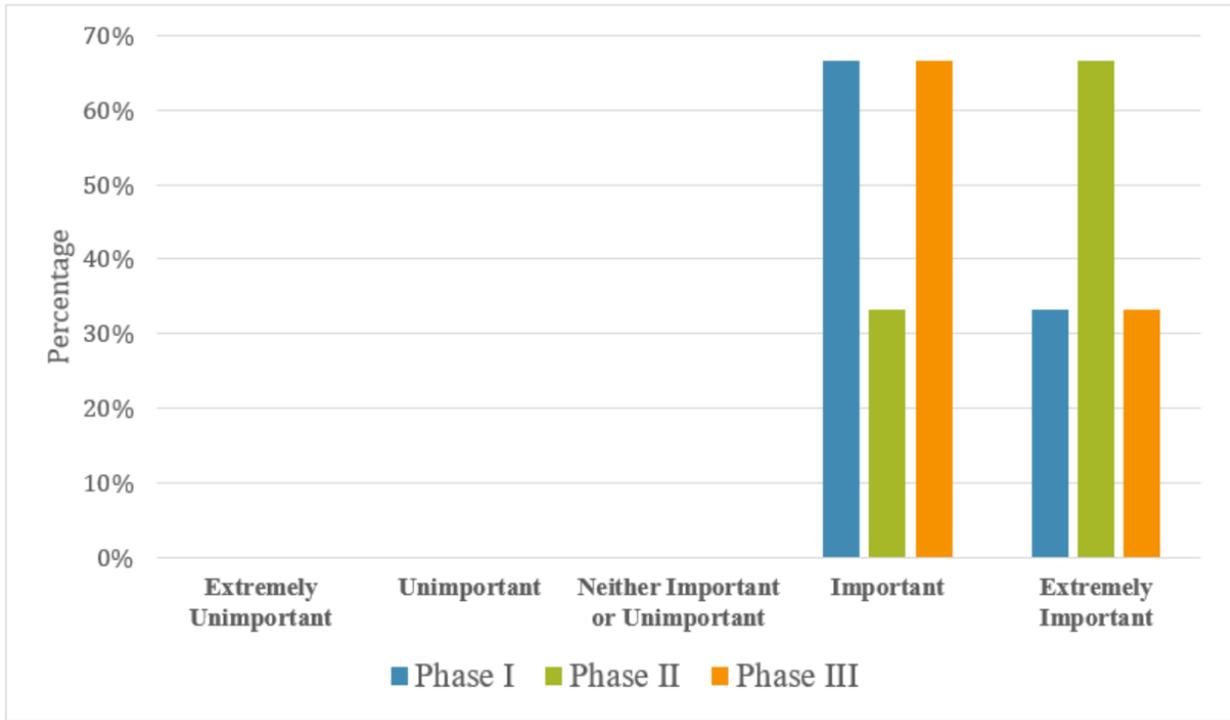


Figure 20. Importance of benefits and compensation for new hires to continue in the teaching profession.

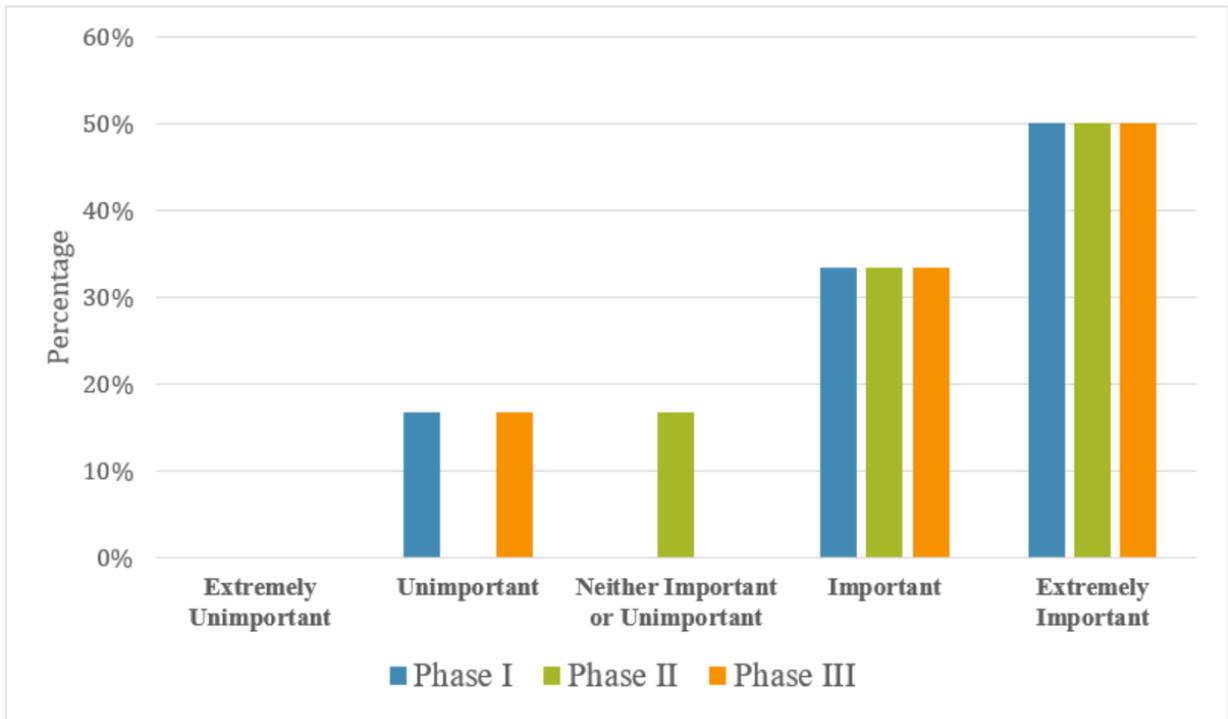


Figure 21. Importance of benefits and compensation for beginning teachers to continue teaching at Vox Populi Elementary.

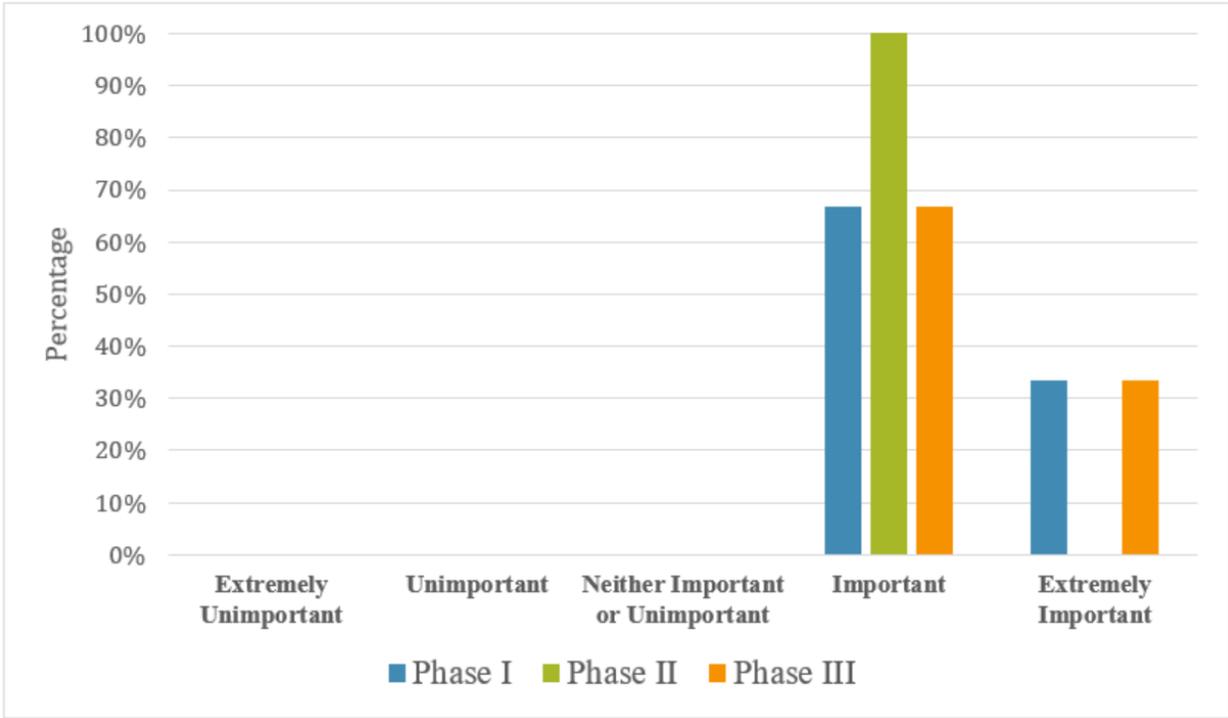


Figure 22. Importance of benefits and compensation for new hires to continue teaching at Vox Populi Elementary.

Teacher Retention

The time of year the surveys were conducted, the reset of school-wide behaviors and expectations, and other external variables may have been a factor in the variance of quantitative results regarding teachers willing to remain at Vox Populi Elementary for the 2022-2023 school year. Throughout Phase I, the percentage of beginning teachers willing to continue teaching at Vox Populi Elementary was less than that of new hires (see Figure 23). The percentage for beginning teachers improved in Phase II and remained the same in Phase III. The percentage of new hires willing to continue teaching at Vox Populi Elementary remained the same and then improved during Phase III. In Phase I, the percentage of new hires willing to remain at Vox Populi Elementary was higher than that of beginning teachers but declined during Phase II. It improved again during Phase III. The overall percentages of teachers willing to remain did not change throughout Phases I and II but then improved in Phase III. Qualitative data results provided a narrative to better understand the fluctuation in percentages of teachers willing to remain at Vox Populi Elementary for the 2022-2023 school year within the quantitative data results (see Figure 24).

Qualitative Results

Interviews were conducted with beginning teachers and new hires during each phase of action research. Phase I took place in November 2021. Phase II occurred in December 2021 shortly before winter break. In January 2022, interviews concluded with Phase III after winter break and prior to the return of students.

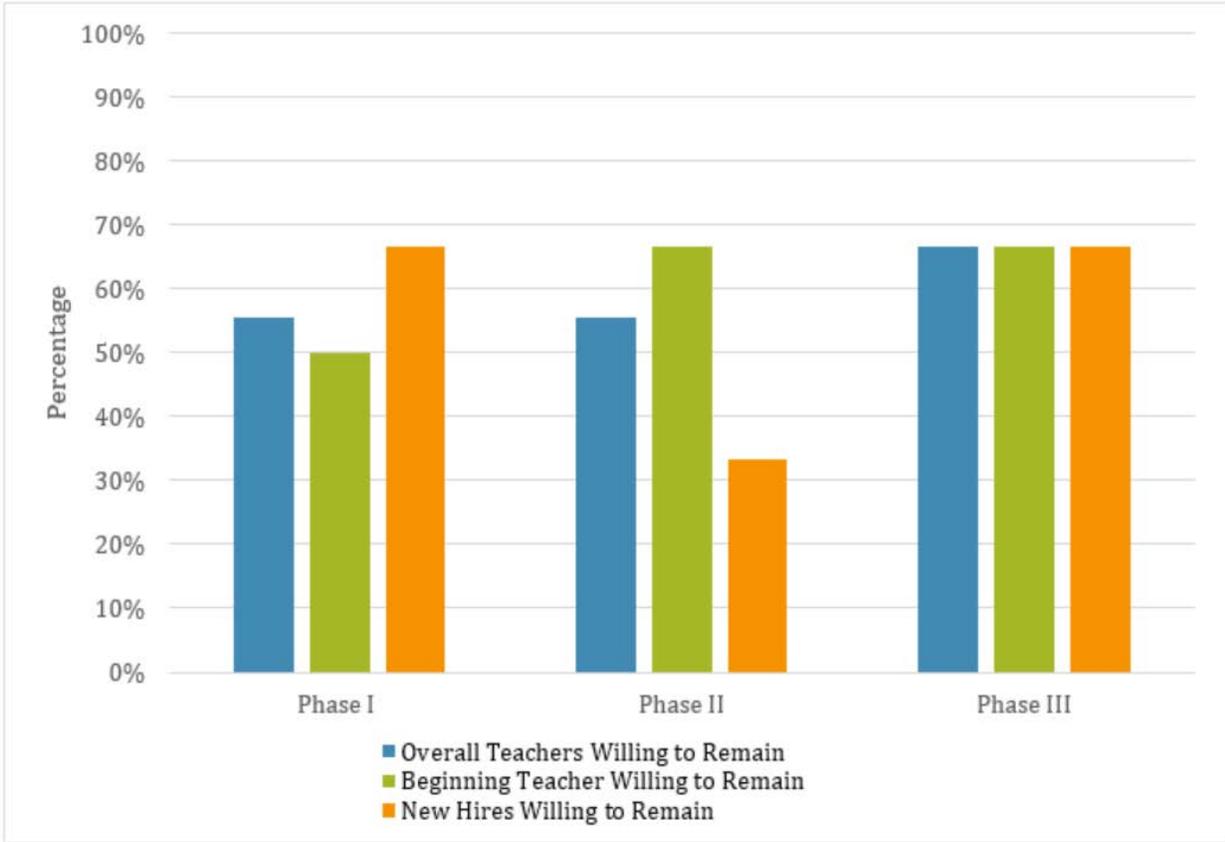


Figure 23. Quantitative percentages of teachers willing to remain at Vox Populi Elementary for the 2022-2023 school year.

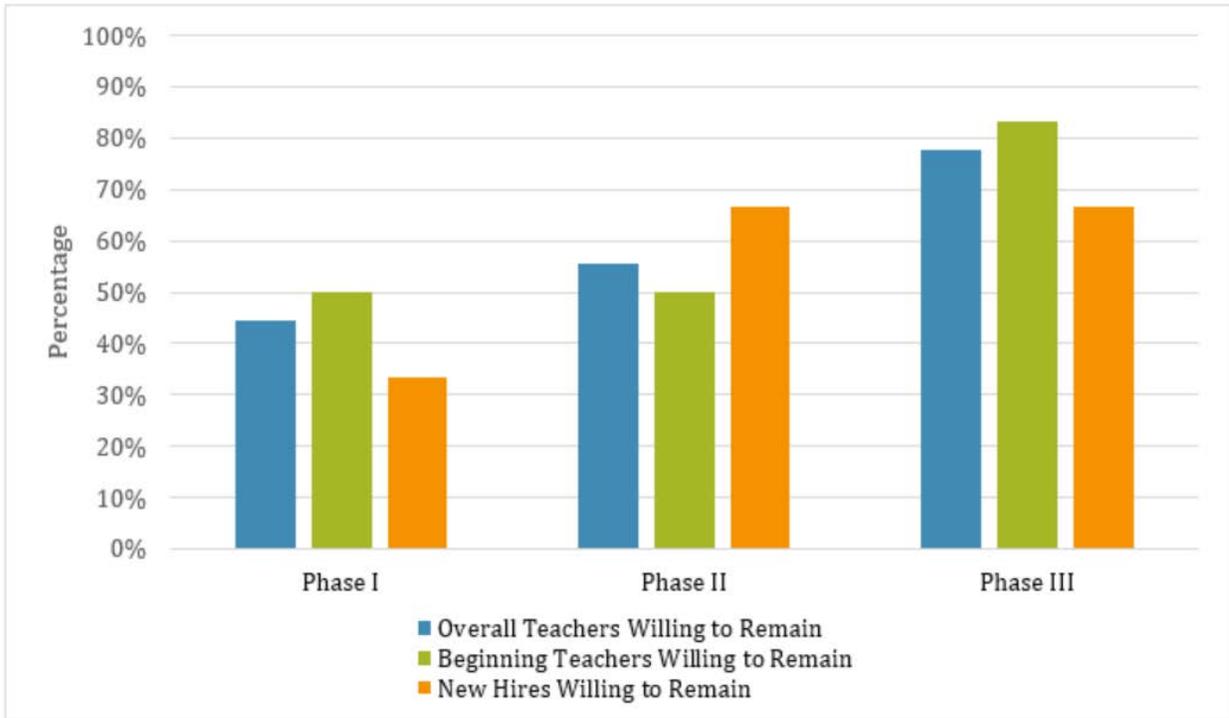


Figure 24. Qualitative percentages of teachers willing to remain at Vox Populi Elementary for the 2022-2023 school year.

Emergent themes that resulted from the qualitative data analysis included equitable administrative support, challenges with student behavior and reset of expectations, factors that most significantly influenced participants' decisions to stay or leave, how onboarding and mentor support created a sense of community, and the importance of relationships and staff support. Beginning teacher and new hire percentages regarding remaining at Vox Populi Elementary fluctuated between phases. Qualitative results of the interviews were consistently more positive during Phase III than the overall results of Phase I or Phase II of the action research study.

The Need for Equitable Administrative Support

Throughout the interviews, thoughts on administrative support varied. Participant #4 stated, "availability of admin had been very helpful, just letting us know that we're not just on our own...especially because it is a more challenging school." In reference to administration, Participant #2 said administration is "very friendly, I am not nervous to go to them." Another participant mentioned that administration tries the best they can, but they thought the fact that we struggle is due to limited people and resources at the school. Participants often mentioned being grateful administration has an open door policy, they are friendly, and approachable.

In contrast, Participant #5 shared, "I just feel like I don't have a ton of admin support and even just like other little things like my mentor is not usually in my room or things like that. So, I feel the only support I get [is] people from my team." Another participant indicated a desire for administrators to come into her classroom more often to provide feedback.

Communication was mentioned when speaking of administrative support. A participant stated "I think this year my biggest frustration comes from a lack of communication [from administration]. I feel like a lot of things are kind of sprung on us sometimes and I know that's

because sometimes things are sprung on admin.” The same participant shared that “we have to have structure and routine for our kids and there has to be some form of structure and routine in our personal and professional lives and sometimes it feels like we don’t even have that.”

Within the interviews, participants frequently mentioned that they understood the challenges administration faced under a typical school year but particularly understood during the continued challenges of the COVID-19 global pandemic. With that understanding, it was also mentioned they wanted the same understanding with expectations for teachers, improved communication, and a sense of separation between work and personal responsibilities.

Challenges with Student Behavior and a Reset of Expectations

Throughout the interviews, challenging student behavior was directly addressed or alluded to by six out of the nine participants. Anecdotally, two out of the three other participants had spoken with me regarding their concerns with student behavior. Participant #6 stated,

I think it’s been difficult with the behaviors that have been in my particular classroom where I felt like a student kept being pulled out and I had to keep calling for assistance and all that was really done was that he was spoken to and brought right back to my classroom, and nothing was really changing. It just kind of made everything kind of chaotic.

During the first few months of the school year, there were many episodes of student assault on other students and staff members. The behavior challenges regularly led to teachers needing to evacuate their classrooms to maintain the safety of other students. Calls for assistance to help teachers with challenging student behavior became a frequent occurrence each school day. Student elopements from classrooms was also a regular occurrence.

One participant cited that disruptions due to student misbehavior severely impacted her ability to teach and maintain routine in her classroom. Participant #3 stated that “I don’t know what’s wrong [with the students] but they have no respect for anybody, and they don’t care.” Participant #7 said, “I think the biggest factor is probably the high number of behaviors we have at this school and the factor that I really feel like I’m not teaching as much as I possibly could.”

In mid-November 2021, the entire staff was asked to forgo curriculum as much as necessary over the next two weeks and to revisit all classroom expectations and procedures regarding student behavior. Simultaneously, an in-school suspension program was initiated at Vox Populi Elementary as a result, in part, to the high number of major and minor office referrals that included challenging student behaviors ranging from fighting and elopement to assault of a staff member. In October 2021, there were approximately 450 students enrolled in Vox Populi Elementary. Throughout October, there were 199 major office referrals due to challenging student behavior and 206 minor referrals. In November 2021, with the in school suspension program, major office referrals decreased to 64 and minor referrals decreased to 91. A factor that influenced the changes was that the majority of staff at Vox Populi Elementary began working with a state-wide advocacy group in response to the many challenges of student behavior issues, staffing shortages, overcrowding due to redistricting, and being expected to do more than ever before with no change in pay. Staff members regularly spoke at Board of Education meetings to express frustration over the persistent challenges at Vox Populi Elementary. In December, Participant #9 stated “My days are getting better and I’m starting to like the profession a little more. But then the thought of starting over with a new class kind of scares me.”

Throughout all interviews during each phase of the action research study, there were participants who were unwavering in their decisions to remain at Vox Populi Elementary given the support from administration and the strong sense of community within the school. Equally as unwavering, there were participants who were adamant in their decisions to transfer to another school or leave the classroom setting. After the reset of student expectations, there were more favorable comments made during interviews regarding remaining at Vox Populi Elementary, particularly during Phase III.

Factors That Most Significantly Impacted Participants' Decisions to Stay or Leave

Participant #1 shared that a reason to stay at Vox Populi Elementary was “The community that our school has had through the hard times and then also just the support I’ve received as a BT.” Participant #2 stated “The kids would be my reason to stay. Other than that, probably nothing.” Participants cited they would stay at Vox Populi Elementary because of administrative support and the sense of community throughout the school. Others cited the challenge of having basic opportunities to use the restroom and to eat their lunch during the school day as significant frustrations. At Vox Populi Elementary, teachers typically ate lunch daily with their students and also supervised students during recess, in addition to all regular classroom duties. Beginning in January 2022, a schedule was created to allow teachers to have lunch coverage two days a week. Participant #8 stated “I just feel like there’s not enough time in the day to get some of the things done and then I’m feeling I’m taking a lot of work home and still trying to play catch up.”

One particular participant mentioned that her thoughts on remaining at Vox Populi Elementary had changed since the beginning of the school year. She said she was excited to be at a new school but the stress and anxiety from the challenges of the school year had made her feel

burned out. The participant shared that her own mental health due to the stress was a concern. She added that she did not want to leave the profession but that she was very serious and on the path of wanting to be out of the classroom.

Onboarding and Mentor Support Created a Sense of Community

All nine of the participants answered the interview question regarding onboarding with answers that were positive. Participant #1 stated “This past year when we started doing the luncheons, I really love that because it’s all the BTs and then with our administration.” She added that the sense of community with the other beginning teachers was of particular value to her. Anecdotally and throughout interviews, beginning teachers commented very favorably on the beginning teacher luncheons with administration (see Appendix F). Frequently during the interviews, participants said they felt welcomed to the school by the welcome packets, emails, notes, tour of the school, and frequent communication at the outset of the school year. Participant #5 said that she received a letter in the mail from me over the summer and “This year, knowing a lot of our staff was new and so knowing that our staff could have a very different dynamic going into the school year. Hearing from a familiar person was very welcoming.” Participant #6 stated that “I’ve never had a school send me welcome packets before and it just got me excited.” She also commented on her mentor support by sharing that she had never previously had a mentor as a beginning teacher and having someone she could rely on was very helpful support that she appreciated. For beginning teachers, mentor support was regularly cited throughout the interviews as being of significant value to them. Participants appreciated hearing from administration, instructional coaches, their mentors, and grade level team members prior to the beginning of school. They shared that the communication decreased their anxieties about the school year and helped them feel a sense of belonging.

The Importance of Relationships and Staff Support

Throughout the interviews in each phase of the action research study, participants commented positively on having opportunities to meet each other before the school year began, having opportunities to meet teammates, and having staff support during very challenging times. Participant #7 said, “My team and I had a brunch together and kind of talked about what we would kind of be doing this year and just kind of getting to know each other.” She also added that there were some support staff members in the building that she felt feel like had really helped as a beginning teacher to keep her organized. She concluded her interview with saying, “As a BT, you need that because you have so much going on as it is so to always feel that support or like somebody kind of holding your hand a little bit through it definitely helps.” Throughout each phase of the action research study, participants frequently mentioned the value of having a sense of community within the school and, at times, mentioned that it was one of the most important factors in their decision to remain at Vox Populi Elementary even throughout the many challenges of the 2021-2022 school year.

Summary of Results

Quantitative and qualitative results fluctuated for each survey and interview question that were repeated throughout Phases II and III. Overall, results showed that the majority of beginning teachers and new hires felt welcomed to the school and were provided a tour of the school when they were hired. All hired during the 2021-2022 school year stated they were welcomed and were provided a tour. The two participants not provided a tour were hired during teacher workdays in August 2020 and after all previously hired new teachers had been given tours of the school. Results varied widely on how prepared participants felt when they entered the teaching profession with no one citing they felt extremely prepared. Confidence levels of

participants also varied widely and ranged from unconfident to confident. No participants cited feeling extremely unconfident or extremely confident when they entered the teaching profession.

The majority of beginning teachers and new hires cited feeling that administration was supportive of them as teachers. Rates of satisfaction as teachers at Vox Populi Elementary varied with beginning teacher results ranging from dissatisfied to extremely satisfied. The majority of new hires cited feeling neither satisfied or dissatisfied. Benefits and compensation were consistently important or extremely important to the majority of all participants both to remain in the teaching profession, as well as to continue teaching at Vox Populi Elementary.

Quantitative results for beginning teachers willing to remain at Vox Populi Elementary increased with Phase II and then remained the same with Phase III. Results for new hires decreased in Phase II and then increased in Phase III. Qualitative results for beginning teachers remained the same in Phases I and II but then increased in Phase III. Results for new hires increased in Phase II and remained the same in Phase III. Participant answers in surveys and interviews within each phase of research were not always the same even though they were given at the same time of the school year.

The quantitative results for all participants when asked about their decisions to remain at Vox Populi Elementary remained the same in Phases I and II but then increased in Phase III. Results increased an overall 11% from Phase I to Phase III. The overall qualitative results for all participants increased with each phase. Phase I results for participants willing to remain at Vox Populi Elementary were 44%. Phase II increased to 55% and Phase III concluded with 77% of participants anticipating that they would be willing to remain at Vox Populi Elementary for the 2022-2023 school year. Qualitative results in Phase III indicated 11% more of the participants would be willing to remain than the quantitative results indicated.

Summary

The continuous, year-long onboarding program was well received by both beginning teachers and new hires. Repeatedly throughout each phase of the action research study, participants cited appreciation for the welcome packets and welcome efforts made at the outset of the school year. All beginning teachers cited they thoroughly enjoyed the beginning teacher luncheons with administration in interviews, anecdotally, or both. While the continuous, year-long onboarding program had positive effects on our beginning teachers and new hires, the effectiveness in improving teacher turnover is inconclusive due to extensive variables outside of my control as the scholarly practitioner. Staff turnover occurred during each phase of the action research study and staff morale was affected. Teachers resigned, teacher assistants resigned, and other staff members transferred or took a leave of absence. One teacher assistant retired mid-year anecdotally citing the challenging circumstances as the reason for her early retirement. Additional state mandated professional development contributed to the overwhelming feelings of teachers. Student behavior challenges, district implemented tutoring expectations, staff shortages and the challenges of the COVID-19 global pandemic affected the results of the continuous, year-long onboarding program. Chapter 5 will share a summary and interpretation of the findings, limitations of the study, implications of the findings for practice and for equity, and recommendations for practice and future study. Chapter 5 will conclude with reflections on leadership throughout the action research study.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, & RECOMMENDATIONS

The focus of this inquiry was to address the high teacher turnover rate in a public, Title I elementary school by establishing an effective and continuous year-long onboarding program for beginning teachers and new hires. This study was guided by the following primary question: What effect does continuous, year-long onboarding have on teacher retention in a Title I elementary school? In order to help answer this question, the following subquestions were explored:

1. What effect does continuous, year-long onboarding have on retention of beginning teachers?
2. What effect does continuous, year-long onboarding have on retention of new hires?

Summary of the Findings

The Effect of Continuous, Year-long Onboarding on Retention of Beginning Teachers

While the continuous, year-long onboarding program had positive effects on beginning teachers, the effectiveness on improving teacher turnover is inconclusive due to confounding variables outside of my control as the scholarly practitioner. Staff turnover began in Phase I of the research action study and continued throughout each phase. Challenges with student behavior and a reset of expectations also took place during the data collection. State mandated professional development that was introduced added many additional required hours of work to the schedules of all participants, as well as other staff members, that had not previously been expected by participants. Challenges of the COVID-19 global pandemic impacted the data collection. Despite the confounding variables, repeatedly throughout data collection, participants mentioned the benefits of the efforts to welcome them at the outset of the school year with

welcome packets, emails, a tour of the school, a welcome brunch, and quarterly beginning teacher luncheons with administration.

The Effect of Continuous, Year-long Onboarding on Retention of New Hires

While the continuous, year-long onboarding program had positive effects on new hires, its effectiveness on improving teacher turnover is inconclusive due to confounding variables outside of my control as the scholarly practitioner. Staff turnover began in Phase I of the research action study and continued throughout each phase. Challenges with student behavior and a reset of expectations also took place during the data collection. State mandated professional development that was introduced added many additional required hours of work to the schedules of all participants, as well as other staff members, that had not previously been expected by participants. Challenges of the COVID-19 global pandemic impacted the data collection. Despite the confounding variables, repeatedly throughout data collection, participants mentioned the benefits of the efforts to welcome them at the outset of the school year with welcome packets, emails, a tour of the school, and a welcome brunch.

The Effect of Continuous, Year-long Onboarding on Teacher Retention in a Title I Elementary School

The continuous, year-long onboarding was well received by all participants in the action research study. Repeatedly throughout data collection, participants cited how welcomed they felt at the beginning of the school year and the value of relationships and staff support on their sense of belonging within the school. Beginning teachers referenced the luncheons with administration favorably and frequently cited mentor support as being an important factor in the support they received throughout the school year. The overall effect of continuous, year-long onboarding on teacher retention at Vox Populi Elementary was inconclusive due to confounding variables

outside of my control as the scholarly practitioner. Staff turnover began in Phase I of the research action study and continued throughout each phase. Challenges with student behavior and a reset of expectations also took place during the data collection. State mandated professional development that was introduced added many additional required hours of work to the schedules of all participants, as well as other staff members, that had not previously been expected by participants. Challenges of the COVID-19 global pandemic impacted the data collection.

Interpretation of the Findings

Many factors needed to be considered when analyzing the summary of findings within the action research study focused on continuous, year-long onboarding on teacher retention at Vox Populi Elementary. In consideration of the literature review, the findings overwhelmingly supported the need for the study and the impact of quality onboarding on teacher turnover in Title I elementary schools. Vox Populi Elementary was a school with a high level of poverty. It was a low-performing school as determined by the state's academic guidelines. It was a school that served predominately minority students and employed a high number of beginning teachers. All of these factors contributed to high levels of teacher turnover.

Given that this study focused on the past three years, administrative turnover must not be ignored. It can be challenging to retain teachers when administrative turnover is high. This action research study occurred during the COVID-19 global pandemic when the entire world experienced staffing challenges. In my opinion, it would not be an adequate description of the challenges of Vox Populi Elementary to cite the pandemic as the reason for high teacher turnover. The teacher turnover rates, inability to secure substitute teachers, and student behavior challenges occurred prior to the pandemic and were only exacerbated by it. It is not possible to know what teacher turnover rates at Vox Populi Elementary would actually be each school year

as New Saxony County Schools required teachers to remain at each school for the duration of three years prior to being permitted to request a transfer to a different school within the district.

While this action research study focused on certified teachers, I would be remiss to ignore impacts of the high staff turnover at Vox Populi Elementary within my interpretation of the findings of the action research study. As of the winter of 2021, four teachers resigned or took a leave of absence, a teacher assistant resigned and another retired mid-year, another teacher assistant changed positions within the school, and other staff members transferred to different schools within the district as their particular positions were allowed to do so. Some positions were filled, and some remained vacant for an extended period of time. Due to challenges securing substitute teachers, classroom teacher assistants were often required to substitute. When teacher assistants substituted in other classrooms, they were not available to support their assigned teachers in kindergarten or first grade classrooms.

Redistricting during the 2019-2020 school year increased enrollment by approximately 100 students and there was not physical space to accommodate such an increase. As of the 2021-2022 school year, a classroom was housed in the media center for the second year in a row. This required the media coordinator to have media classes on a cart. The former art classroom served as a regular classroom for the second year in a row also leaving the art teacher to teach from a cart. Intervention groups took place in the media center while the classroom was also housed in the media center. An intervention group took place in the vestibule area as well. Because of COVID-19 restrictions and increased exposure, students were not allowed to have lunch in the cafeteria throughout the first semester. Lunches were delivered by staff members to each classroom. This was a tremendous challenge with the staffing shortages and frequent teacher absences. Administration and instructional coaches often delivered lunches and tried to provide

teachers a restroom break at some point during the school day. This meant that other aspects of the role of administrators and instructional coaches did not occur nearly as frequently as needed to include walkthroughs, model lessons, and observations. Because of the challenges, a large percentage of the staff worked with a state-wide advocacy group to protest the most challenging working conditions. With such a high number of beginning teachers at Vox Populi Elementary, the learning environment for a new teacher was much less than ideal.

Quantitative and qualitative data results varied throughout each phase of the action research study and were affected by the time of year during which the interviews occurred. Phase III of the action research study was particularly affected by the time of year as this phase occurred immediately following winter break and prior to the return of students. Participants had opportunities to rest and spend time away from school immediately before Phase III data collection began. My preference would have been to allow more time in between each phase of the action research study but parameters outside of my control as the scholarly practitioner did not allow for a more extended time frame with data collection.

One participant said she would choose to leave Vox Populi Elementary during Phases I and II. She changed her response to choosing to remain in Phase III. She stated she knew her response was emotional because she had a break and an opportunity to rest. Several participants cited their opinions possibly changing after the reset of expectations with student behavior. Survey and interview results given to each participant in the same phase of data collection did not yield the same results in every circumstance. At times, a participant stated in the survey that their choice would not be to return to Vox Populi Elementary if given the choice but, during the same phase, their answer may be that they would choose to return during the interview. My interpretation is that participants felt more comfortable being honest in their survey responses

than during interviews. The qualitative data results demonstrated that participants explained their thought processes behind their decisions to remain at Vox Populi Elementary or to leave.

Limitations of the Study

This inquiry engaged only the voluntary participants who provided their informed consent prior to the phases of research. Ideally, the study would be spread out throughout the entire school year but due to district requirements for conducting research, the timeframe needed to be condensed. While the continuous, year-long onboarding program may be able to be replicated in other schools, the research is specific to the selected school based on the high teacher turnover, the demographics of students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds, the fact that the school is deemed low-performing and is located in an urban fringe area.

A limitation of the onboarding program was that I was dependent upon administration to confirm official hires and share their contact information with me in order to begin the welcoming process of the program. The communication went smoothly throughout the summer as new teachers were hired but after the beginning of school, the onboarding process was not nearly as effective with the busy nature of the school year and hindered communication.

A factor that negatively contributed toward onboarding efforts was that New Saxony County Schools often takes an extended period of time to establish email addresses for new hires. This creates anxiety for the new hires as the majority of needed information, registrations for professional development, and other aspects of the beginning of employment process require an email address. In some cases, new hires did not receive an email address for 3-4 weeks. While the onboarding program was meant, in part, to reduce anxieties at the beginning of the school year, the lack of a timely process for obtaining email addresses was a contributory factor with increasing anxieties. In order to implement the onboarding program, significant effort is

required, particularly before the beginning of the school year. This implementation may require a staff member who is employed over the summer, if based in the United States, to lead the onboarding efforts or, as with me, it would require someone willing to dedicate their time to the onboarding program. An additional limitation was the significant amount of staff turnover occurring throughout the school year that challenged my efforts with onboarding implementation and data collection.

All data collection obtained throughout each phase of implementation occurred during the COVID-19 global pandemic. During the 2020-2021 school year, Vox Populi Elementary conducted instruction remotely, through hybrid instruction, and through a complete face-to-face option. Throughout 2021-2022, high levels of frustration among staff members continued, staffing shortages were consistent, and there was a pervasive sense of uncertainty. Mask requirements were in place until the middle of December 2021. In early January 2022, masks were required again for all students and staff members.

Implications of the Findings for Practice

National data demonstrates that teacher turnover not only significantly undermines student achievement but also consumes valuable time and resources. On average, an urban district can spend approximately \$20,000 on a new hire (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). This cost includes expenses related to recruitment, hiring, and training. The investments do not pay their full dividend if teachers leave a district within only a few short years. Through my action research study, my findings confirm that teacher turnover undermines student achievement and consumes time and resources. It also causes frustration, particularly at a school with significantly high teacher turnover. In considering Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs as it pertains to educators, teaching is often isolating (Wish, 2020). With experience, teachers learn

ways to communicate with their students and meet the needs of their students. Additionally, most beginning and experienced teachers alike want to do a good job. There is a sense of partnership in that teachers and students are “in this”, the learning process, together. Repeatedly, teachers mentioned their teammates, mentors, and support of the staff. Teaching is a challenging job and when there is a sense of community and relationships are fostered, teacher turnover can improve.

It is no secret that teachers face many challenges, particularly beginning teachers (Voss & Kunter, 2019). They often feel disillusioned and stressed. Beginning teachers can experience emotional exhaustion. The findings of this action research study have reiterated just how challenging teaching can be not only for beginning teachers but for all teachers. Because each of the beginning teachers in this study were affected by the COVID-19 global pandemic in their first years of teaching experience, they faced challenges no other teachers had ever faced. They had to teach face-to-face, in a hybrid setting, and remotely. They balanced their own health with ever increasing demands of the profession. Anecdotally, I have heard more teachers discuss concerns about mental health, as well as physical health, than ever before. Beginning teachers and experienced teachers alike have endured high levels of stress, anxiety, and frustration.

Much can be said about teacher pay in the United States today (Garcia & Weiss, 2020). The financial hardships often shared as concerns by teachers are real. Many teachers at Vox Populi Elementary work second jobs, tutor after school, seek additional employment during summer months, and worry about the financial burden of student loans so they could become a teacher. Even after graduating from college, many teachers needed to have a roommate to afford the cost of rent or a mortgage. The findings of the action research study emphasize the importance of benefits and compensation to beginning teachers, new hires, and all teachers.

An effective mentor can be key to helping a beginning teacher remain in the teaching profession (Hudson et al., 2019). Repeatedly, beginning teachers mentioned the value of their mentor throughout the action research study. A beginning teacher from another state shared that she had never previously had a mentor and how helpful her mentor had been. Another beginning teacher shared that her mentor was the most valuable support she had. Beginning teachers also frequently mentioned the value of a supportive administration, particularly when administration is approachable, friendly, and provides regular feedback in positive, constructive ways.

Onboarding is not an orientation (Daniel, 2016). Orientation is short in nature, but effective onboarding practices are ongoing. My findings confirmed that onboarding needs to be continuous and year-long to be effective. It needs to be strategic, consistent, and meaningful. The welcoming components of the onboarding program were very valuable at the outset of the school year but were not enough to significantly improve teacher turnover. The quarterly luncheons were extremely appreciated but were not enough either. Monthly meetings with beginning teachers and mentor support alone could not retain teachers. The collective aspects of the continuous, year-long onboarding can improve teacher turnover and, based on the data collection from this action research study, they were effective in improving anticipated teacher turnover even though there were many variables that would ultimately affect teacher turnover that were outside of my control as the scholarly practitioner.

Challenging teacher retention rates are harmful for teacher recruitment and this, in turn, negatively affects students (Zakariya, 2020). These factors affect school climate and job satisfaction rates. Teachers who tend to be more satisfied with their jobs also often have higher self-efficacy. Improved job satisfaction and self-efficacy can positively affect teacher recruitment and retention. Throughout my action research study, I was surprised at how often

teachers mentioned wanting walkthroughs and wanting more feedback about their performance. Many times, beginning teachers are nervous to have administration in their classrooms but, while they may still get nervous, they valued feedback and to know if they were doing well. Repeatedly, beginning teachers and new hires mentioned thoughtful notes and emails that encouraged them. They valued informal time with administration because it made them feel more approachable. It is time consuming to frequently acknowledge the hard work of teachers. If administration can be proactive and find staff members that are diligent about encouragement, it can be a team effort to build relationships within the school.

Improving teacher and principal preparation programs can be key in improving teacher retention. Increasing opportunities for field experiences, including a strong focus on classroom management, and including strategies to help with managing paperwork and organizational skills can be practical ways to better prepare those in teacher and principal preparation programs for the reality of work in the education field.

Implications of the Findings for Equity

It is important to note that all voluntary participants in this research study were females. Voluntary participants were all either Caucasian, Caucasian and Latina, or Latina. Increasing teacher diversity can decrease the isolation teachers of color may feel when they do not have other colleagues of color (Carver-Thomas, 2018). When teachers do not feel isolated, they may be more likely to remain at their school of employment. Students of color may have positive perceptions of teachers of color. Barriers to retaining teachers include poor working conditions and low salaries. To recruit and retain teachers of colors, hiring practices need to be intentional and there needs to be ongoing support. Comprehensive support to retain teachers of color

includes providing mentor support, opportunities to collaborate with other teachers, and supportive work environments.

Schools in high-poverty areas tend to employ a greater number of beginning teachers than those schools in lower areas of poverty (Gagnon & Mattingly, 2012). It is not an equitable educational practice to have the highest percentages of beginning teachers who are learning the art of teaching to instruct the students who need the benefit of experienced educators with a repertoire of techniques to support their learning. Trust is desperately needed in schools with students from the lowest socio-economic backgrounds. Improving teacher turnover can improve the trust students and families need from public schools.

Recommendations for Practice

Onboarding that occurs throughout the first year of employment is extremely valuable for any educational setting. If a goal of administration is for students to feel welcomed, and it most always is a goal, the same goal should apply for staff members. To make certain staff members feel welcomed, efforts to make that happen must be strategic and consistent. Onboarding also needs to be implemented by staff members who value the process and will follow through with all aspects of the onboarding practices agreed upon. Most often, staff members are hired, and administration feels relieved to have filled a vacant position. Welcome efforts may typically include a welcome email or letter and an administrative meeting with staff introductions. This is simply not enough. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs applies to adults just as it does with children. People need to feel accepted and have a sense of belonging. To do this effectively, continuous onboarding needs to occur. Welcoming new staff members prior to the first official day of school begins to build a positive relationship before the new employees ever walk in the door of the school.

Sharing expectations for the beginning of the school year, communicating required schedules, and providing a tour of the school can help alleviate fears new staff members may have. Making certain that new hires have an email address as soon as possible is imperative to effective communication. Quick email setup and improved communication from the school district is important to provide new hires with the needed information to begin their new jobs effectively and with decreased anxiety. Establishing a plan to implement onboarding with employees hired after the traditional timeframes is equally important.

A finding that is unfortunate is the knowledge that teachers who moved to Vox Populi Elementary often stated they had never had a tour of their previous schools, never received a welcome packet, or never felt so welcomed to a school as they were to Vox Populi Elementary. Such a practice should be more commonplace in the education field at large. For future practice, it is likely that any school could benefit from minimally implementing consistent and effective welcoming practices for any beginning teacher and new hire prior to the first official school day. Classroom teachers are expected to work to build relationships with their students and families at the beginning of each school year. The expectation should be that the leadership of any school does the same for its staff members. Repeatedly, beginning teachers and new hires discussed the importance of feeling welcomed, meeting their teammates and other staff members at the beginning of the school year, and having opportunities to communicate with administration both at the beginning of the school year and continuously.

It was a positive result that beginning teachers were enthusiastic to attend the quarterly luncheons with administration. The luncheons were mentioned with high frequency throughout the interviews in each phase of research. In the future, new hires should be included in the luncheons to increase their sense of belonging as well.

A recommendation for New Saxony County Schools is to discontinue the practice of requiring teachers to remain in a school for three years prior to having the opportunity to transfer. If a teacher is unhappy in a school, they may feel that leaving the district or the profession are their only options. Providing more autonomy for teachers may increase their likelihood of remaining in the district. For teachers that do choose to leave a school district, exit surveys are valuable but exit interviews may provide more insight into the specific reasons teachers chose to leave.

Relationships matter. Spending significant time at the outset of employment can create a sense of belonging that can potentially improve teacher turnover and, at the very least, improve job satisfaction. Time spent throughout the year continuing to build relationships is extremely valuable. The cost of welcome packets, a few luncheons a year, and some treats here and there is far less than the cost of teacher turnover.

Recommendations for Future Study

During each interview phase, it was reported with frequency that voluntary participants wanted to feel welcomed at the outset of their employment and have some sense of belonging either with their teammates, school-wide staff members, or both. A recommendation for future study would be to analyze exit interviews by including a Likert Scale focused on how welcomed teachers felt at the outset of employment and if that was a factor in how they felt during their employment, as well as if it affected their decision to leave a school or district. When at all possible, it may be beneficial to study teacher turnover in a school with more male representation and a more diverse staff of beginning teachers and new hires. It may additionally be beneficial to include lateral entry teachers in studies focused specifically on teacher turnover. Mentor support

was repeatedly cited as valuable for beginning teachers. A study focused on the effectiveness of mentor support in improving teacher turnover may be beneficial.

In hindsight, it may be beneficial to have been able to conduct each phase of the research study longitudinally over multiple years and outside of a pandemic to mitigate for this as a confounding variable. Ideally, the timeframe may begin within four to six weeks of the school year, again in the middle of the school year, near the conclusion of the school year, and occur over multiple years.

Conclusions

Teacher turnover is costly and can negatively affect student achievement. High teacher turnover in schools with students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds can be even more detrimental to student achievement. The time from the initial hiring process throughout the first several weeks of school is particularly crucial for beginning teachers and new hires.

Time spent creating a welcoming environment, giving a tour of the school, and hosting at least one event that allows staff members to be introduced and socialize informally can have a positive impact on teacher turnover. Certainly, it will not solve all aspects of teacher turnover but can improve it. While this time is imperative, it is equally imperative to make sure there is a continuous, year-long onboarding program for all beginning teachers and new hires.

Throughout each phase of my action research study, not a single participant stated they felt extremely prepared when they entered the teaching profession. Beginning teachers have doubts and their confidence can wane during the first few months of teaching. New hires that are not beginning teachers have doubts and uncertainties when beginning their work at a new school.

Strategic supports for beginning teachers that include effective communication, mentor assignments, monthly school-wide meetings for all beginning teachers, quarterly luncheons with

administration, positive notes and feedback throughout the school year, and celebrations can improve teacher turnover. New hires may not always be beginning teachers but need to feel welcomed and have supports in place to learn how the school functions, who to ask when questions arise, and what to expect throughout the school year in general.

A most important confirmation throughout my research study was that relationships matter. Participants in my research study frequently stated the importance of the staff support at Vox Populi Elementary and that, without the support of their teammates and mentors, they would consider leaving the school. Several stated they did not know if they would have made it to winter break without that support. Even during the most challenging times of the 2021-2022 school year, participants cited leaning on their teammates for support and that they may not have that support at another school.

Due to the fact that no participants in the action research study stated they felt extremely prepared when they entered the teaching profession, teacher preparation programs could certainly improve. Including practical aspects of teaching such as classroom management, time management, and organization could significantly improve teacher preparation. If teachers feel prepared and experience success as a teacher, their self-efficacy can improve. Continuous, year-long onboarding that includes mentor support can improve teacher retention. If teacher benefits and compensation were improved, teachers may be less likely to work second jobs. They may be less frustrated and fatigued. Being compensated for the excessive amount of work required of teachers outside of regular school hours could improve teacher retention and improve teacher morale. By providing beginning teachers and new hires with effective, continuous year-long onboarding, the ultimate goal was to improve student achievement through improving teacher

turnover. To this end, components of the onboarding program included improving classroom management and creating a more positive, inclusive educational environment for all children.

Scholarly Practitioner's Reflections on Leadership

Educationally, I have learned much more than I previously knew about academic research and, in particular, action research. Learning how to write a dissertation step by step with the support and guidance of my dissertation chair has been extremely helpful and allowed for much reflection. As a leader, I have needed to work with various personnel at the school and district level in order to complete this dissertation. Personally, the process of completing this dissertation has required much perseverance. Due to a professional opportunity that I could not forgo, I took a hiatus from my dissertation work. Upon return from my hiatus, I changed school districts. These changes significantly impacted my timeframe for completion. Much time spent advocating for the support I needed to complete this dissertation after these changes also impacted my timeframe for completion. It is completely true that leadership can change everything and the needed leadership for me to complete this dissertation took time but, ultimately, was worth the wait and the time spent advocating for myself.

As a teacher leader, throughout most of my career, I have advocated for beginning teachers by serving as a mentor, lead mentor, unofficial mentor, and friend to beginning teachers who struggle with the challenges of entering the teaching profession. The research conducted through this dissertation has only strengthened my belief in the difference effective support can make for beginning teachers personally and the education profession overall. Even though new hires are not always beginning teachers, support is needed for them as well.

Continuous and strategic onboarding can be effective and, while influenced by many different factors, can contribute to the improvement of teacher retention. The focus of practice

for this study stemmed, in large part, from my own experiences as a new hire at Vox Populi Elementary. While I was welcomed via email prior to my arrival, not a single person talked to me on my first day working at Vox Populi Elementary. Throughout the first week, it improved only slightly. This made me question my decision to remain employed at Vox Populi Elementary repeatedly throughout the first several months of my employment. While my time at Vox Populi Elementary has been challenging, I believe part of my purpose in serving there has been to do my best to make sure no other new hire ever feels the way I felt at the outset. It is disconcerting to feel so untethered and without a support system. Even the most successful, secure people tend to need a sense of belonging. Transitioning to new employment is often not easy and, in many cases, new hires also are new to the area. During a time of significant transition, it can be most beneficial for new hires to have some of their anxieties alleviated and feel they can begin to build a support system in their new place of employment.

The teaching profession is one of the most important professions throughout the world, yet it is one of the most undervalued. Teachers are not compensated for the excessive amount of time spent completing required work outside of school that is not possible to be completed during school hours. Teachers working in right to work states do not have the support of unions to advocate for them. Elementary teachers, as in Vox Populi Elementary, typically eat lunch with their students, take their students to recess, and even have little time to use the restroom.

Staffing shortages have significantly increased the challenges teachers face, requiring many to do more jobs than their own. My reflections have repeatedly reminded me that leaders need to make decisions with educators and not for educators. At the federal, state, and local levels, many who make powerful educational decisions have little to no experience in the classroom. It is my hope that teacher working conditions will improve and that legislators and

the general public will value the teaching profession, respect teachers, and compensate educators accordingly. In every job, there are employees who do not do their jobs well and that is no different in education. However, most teachers entered the teaching profession because they love children and want to help them. Most teachers love their jobs but want to feel valued, appreciated, respected, and compensated for their education and experience. If these improvements could be made, it is my belief that more people will want to enter the teaching profession again and that teacher turnover will decrease, ultimately improving student achievement.

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APPENDIX A: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL



EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY
University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board
4N-64 Brody Medical Sciences Building - Mail Stop 682
600 Moore Boulevard - Greenville, NC 27834
Office 252-744-2914 • Fax 252-744-2284 • rede.ecu.edu/umcirb/

Notification of Exempt Certification

From: Social/Behavioral IRB
To: [Rolie Webb](#)
CC: [Travis Lewis](#)
Date: 1/5/2022
Re: [UMCIRB 21-002584](#)
Examining Onboarding on Beginning Teacher and New Hire Teacher Turnover

I am pleased to inform you that your research submission has been certified as exempt on 1/5/2022. This study is eligible for Exempt Certification under category # 1 & 2ab.

It is your responsibility to ensure that this research is conducted in the manner reported in your application and/or protocol, as well as being consistent with the ethical principles of the Belmont Report and your profession.

This research study does not require any additional interaction with the UMCIRB unless there are proposed changes to this study. Any change, prior to implementing that change, must be submitted to the UMCIRB for review and approval. The UMCIRB will determine if the change impacts the eligibility of the research for exempt status. If more substantive review is required, you will be notified within five business days.

Document	Description
Andi Webb Proposal 10 18 21 - Final for Proposal (1).docx(0.01)	Study Protocol or Grant Application
Dissertation Interview Protocol Submitted by Rolie A Webb(0.01)	Interview/Focus Group Scripts/Questions
ECU Dissertation Survey Questions Submitted by Rolie A Webb(0.01)	Surveys and Questionnaires
ECU Electronic Script (0.02)	Recruitment Documents/Scripts
Informed Consent(0.01)	Consent Forms

For research studies where a waiver or alteration of HIPAA Authorization has been approved, the IRB states that each of the waiver criteria in 45 CFR 164.512(i)(1)(i)(A) and (2)(i) through (v) have been met. Additionally, the elements of PHI to be collected as described in items 1 and 2 of the Application for Waiver of Authorization have been determined to be the minimal necessary for the specified research.

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

APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT

INFORMED CONSENT

EXAMINING THE IMPACT OF IMPLEMENTING EFFECTIVE ONBOARDING ON
BEGINNING TEACHER AND NEW HIRE TURNOVER IN A TITLE I ELEMENTARY
SCHOOL

UMCIRB#: 21-002584

Principal Investigator: Rolie Adrienne Webb “Andi”

You are being invited to participate in a **research study** titled “EXAMINING THE IMPACT OF IMPLEMENTING EFFECTIVE ONBOARDING ON BEGINNING TEACHER AND NEW HIRE TURNOVER IN A TITLE I ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ” being conducted by Rolie Adrienne Webb “Andi,” a doctoral student at East Carolina University in the College of Education LEED department. The goal is to survey and interview nine individuals at Forest Hills Global Elementary. The survey will take approximately 5-10 minutes to complete. Interviews will take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. Interviews will be audio recorded and kept confidential. Names will not be utilized. It is hoped that this information will assist us to better understand reasons for high teacher turnover at the elementary school and if onboarding has been effective in improving teacher turnover. Your responses will be kept confidential and no data will be released or used with your identification attached. Your participation in the research is **voluntary**. You may choose not to answer any or all questions, and you may stop at any time. We **will not** be able to pay you for the time you volunteer while being in this study. [If the participant is going to be compensated, payment must be based on the time volunteered – not on specific procedures. There is **no penalty for not taking** part in this research study. Please call Dr. Travis Lewis at (252) 916-1129 for any research related questions or the University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board (UMCIRB) at 252-744-2914 for questions about your rights as a research participant.

Name of Participant_____

Signature of Participant_____ Date_____

Signature of Principal Investigator:

**APPENDIX C: SURVEY OF BEGINNING TEACHERS AT VOX POPULI
ELEMENTARY**

Name:

Demographic Information of the Interviewee to Include Gender and Race/Ethnicity:

Beginning Teacher: BT1, BT2, BT3, [circle one]

Teaching Assignment: [grade level, subject area]:_____

1. Were you assigned a mentor prior to the first official work day?
Yes or No

2. When you were hired at Vox Populi Elementary, did anyone welcome you to the school prior to the first official work day?
Yes or No

3. When you were hired at Vox Populi Elementary, did anyone provide you with a tour of the school prior to the first official work day?
Yes or No

4. When you began your first year of teaching, how prepared did you feel after your pre-service education or alternative teacher certification on a scale of one to five, with one being the lowest and five being the highest?
1 2 3 4 5

5. When you entered the teaching profession, how confident did you feel in your teaching abilities on a scale of one to five, with one being the lowest and five being the highest?
1 2 3 4 5

6. How supportive do you feel your administration is of you as a teacher on a scale of one to five with one being the lowest and five being the highest?
1 2 3 4 5

7. How satisfied do you feel as a teacher at Vox Populi Elementary on a scale of one to five with one being the lowest and five being the highest?
1 2 3 4 5

8. How important are benefits and compensation for you to continue in the teaching profession, on a scale of one to five with one being the lowest and five being the highest, how?
- 12 3 4 5
9. How important are benefits and compensation for you to continue teaching at this school, on a scale of one to five with one being the lowest and five being the highest, how?
- 12 3 4 5
10. If you were asked to make a choice at this time regarding returning to Vox Populi Elementary for the 2022-2023 school year and there was not a requirement of three years of employment at the same school before requesting a transfer, would you choose to remain at Vox Populi Elementary?
- Yes or No

APPENDIX D: SURVEY OF NEW HIRES TO VOX POPULI ELEMENTARY

Name:

Demographic information of the interviewee to include gender and race/ethnicity:

Years of Experience in Teaching: _____

Teaching Assignment: [grade level, subject area]:_____

1. As a new hire, did anyone offer you support such as a mentor or buddy teacher? Yes or No
2. When you were hired at Vox Populi Elementary, did anyone welcome you to the school prior to the first official work day? Yes or No
3. When you were hired at Vox Populi Elementary, did anyone provide you with a tour of the school prior to the first official work day?
Yes or No
4. When you began your first year of teaching, how prepared did you feel after your pre-service education or alternative teacher certification on a scale of one to five, with one being the lowest and five being the highest?
1 2 3 4 5
5. When you entered the teaching profession, how confident did you feel in your teaching abilities on a scale of one to five, with one being the lowest and five being the highest?
1 2 3 4 5
6. How supportive do you feel your administration is of you as a teacher on a scale of one to five with one being the lowest and five being the highest?
1 2 3 4 5
7. How satisfied do you feel as a teacher at Vox Populi Elementary on a scale of one to five with one being the lowest and five being the highest?
1 2 3 4 5

8. How important are benefits and compensation for you to continue in the teaching profession, on a scale of one to five with one being the lowest and five being the highest?

1 2 3 4 5

9. How important are benefits and compensation for you to continue teaching at this school, on a scale of one to five with one being the lowest and five being the highest?

1 2 3 4 5

10. If you were asked to make a choice regarding returning to Vox Populi Elementary for the 2022-2023 school year and there was not a requirement of three years of employment at the same school before requesting a transfer, would you choose to remain at Vox Populi Elementary at this time

Yes or No

APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Date and Time of Interview:

Location:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Position/Title of Interviewee:

Briefly describe the project to the interviewee.

Demographic information of the interviewee to include gender and race/ethnicity:

Beginning Teacher: BT1, BT2, BT3 [circle one] : _____

New Teacher to Vox Populi Elementary [circle one]: Yes or No

Years of Experience as a Teacher: _____

Teaching Assignment: [grade level, subject area]: _____

Questions to be asked fully and in order:

1. What was done, if anything, prior to the first day of school this school year that made you feel welcome?
2. During your first year at Vox Populi Elementary, what could have been done to help you feel more welcome?
3. What types of supports have administration provided to you that have been most helpful?
4. What could administration do to be more supportive of you as a teacher?
5. Onboarding is ongoing support throughout the school year to provide needed support for beginning teachers and new hires. What types of onboarding supports have been most helpful to you?
6. If you had the choice to transfer schools at the end of the 2021-2022 school year, would you choose to remain at Vox Populi Elementary, transfer to a different school/district, or leave the teaching profession?

7. What factors most significantly impact(ed) your answer regarding either remaining at Vox Populi Elementary, transferring to a different school/district, or leaving the teaching profession?
8. Is there anything about the level of support you have or have not received or regarding your future career plans that you would like to add?

APPENDIX F: ANECDOTAL NOTES FROM PARTICIPANT INTERVIEWS

<p align="center">Onboarding Strategies Teachers Shared Most Frequently Citing Effectiveness</p>	<p align="center">Onboarding Strategies that Could Be Improved Upon</p>	<p align="center">Administrative Supports Teachers Shared Most Frequently Citing Effectiveness</p>	<p align="center">Desired Administrative Supports Shared by Teachers</p>	<p align="center">Factors Most Significantly Impacting Teacher Decisions to Remain at Vox Populi Elementary, transfer to a different school/district/or leave the teaching profession</p>
<p>All aspects of being made to feel welcome prior to the first official school day to include welcome packets, welcome brunch, postcards, welcome emails, information about the school/calendar/expectations</p>	<p>Late hires did not always receive the same welcome procedures as others to include a welcome packet, tour of the school, opportunities to meet teammates</p>	<p>Open door policy</p>	<p>Improved communication and flexibility by staff members other than classroom teachers</p> <p>Less last minute notifications</p>	<p>The community within our school, staff is very supportive, and administration is supportive</p> <p>Staff really works together</p>
<p>Tour of the school prior to the first official school day</p>	<p>Staff and teammate introductions at the beginning of school, teachers citing never getting to meet other staff members outside of their teams, no staff introductions at the outset</p>	<p>Friendliness, easily approachable</p>	<p>More walkthroughs and helpful feedback were frequently requested, teachers cited feedback as needed</p> <p>Less focus on certain classrooms/grade levels</p>	<p>Student behaviors negatively impact decisions to remain</p>

<p>Beginning Teacher Luncheon garnered repeated positive comments throughout each interview phase</p>		<p>Beginning teacher luncheons with administration were praised repeatedly and more consistently than another other onboarding strategy</p>	<p>Opportunities to have a few minutes in the day to take a brain break, use the restroom, retrieve/heat lunch</p> <p>Possible lunch and recess coverage occasionally</p>	<p>Too much is expected outside of teaching duties</p> <p>Too many meetings and time beyond the school day negatively impacts mental health and personal lives/schedules</p>
<p>Opportunities to get to know teammates prior to the first official school day</p>		<p>Instructional coaches offering support (several participants included instructional coaches with administration)</p> <p>Administration leading by example</p>	<p>More time to plan with grade level</p>	
<p>Communication</p>		<p>Administration cited as not get upset when teachers make a mistake and administration admits to their mistakes</p>	<p>More notification with meetings/after school activities, cumbersome on personal life and schedules</p>	
<p>Mentors, lead mentor, beginning teacher coordinators in the district were cited as being very helpful</p> <p>Monthly meetings for beginning teachers cited as very helpful</p>				

