**ABSTRACT**

Andrew Branch Keller, WHY THEY STAY: CRITICAL FACTORS FOR TEACHER RETENTION (Under the direction of Dr. Matthew Militello). Department of Educational Leadership, December 2021.

My district in North Carolina is one of many across the country impacted by a shortage of teachers caused by attrition and fewer people entering the profession. Educational leaders must increase teacher retention to sufficiently staff their schools. Data on teacher turnover is largely based on surveys completed by exiting teachers. This study gathers perspectives from the teachers who stay, to better understand what has kept them in the profession. This approach proactively identified strategies to improve teacher job satisfaction to increase the number of teachers who remain at their current school. Q Methodology was used to determine the factors that are most important for job satisfaction to teachers at a comprehensive high school in central North Carolina. Two distinct factor groups emerged from the data: Monarchy High School, named due to the significance of site-based school leadership and Federation High School where collegial relationships with peers were central to remaining in the profession. Post-sort interviews provided insight to why teachers hold their beliefs. The findings of this study can be used by school leaders to develop a better understanding of how to intentionally design supportive working environments to increase teacher retention.

# WHY THEY STAY: CRITICAL FACTORS FOR TEACHER RETENTION

A Dissertation

Presented to

The Faculty Department of Educational Leadership

East Carolina University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

by

Andrew Branch Keller

December, 2021

WHY THEY STAY: CRITICAL FACTORS FOR TEACHER RETENTION

by

Andrew Branch Keller

APPROVED BY:

DIRECTOR OF DISSERTATION:_____
Matthew Militello, PhD

COMMITTEE MEMBER:_____
Karen Jones, PhD

COMMITTEE MEMBER:_____
Larry Hodgkins EdD

COMMITTEE MEMBER:_____
Shannon Shuey EdD

CHAIR OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP:

_____
Marjorie Ringler, EdD

DEAN OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL:

_____
Paul Gemperline, PhD

## DEDICATION

This is dedicated to my family. To my parents, Tommy and Brenda Keller for all the hard work and sacrifices you have made for me. To my children, Elaina and John, for always making me smile after a long day. To my in-laws, John and Suzy Paschal and Donna and Lane Woolard, for the support and the prayers over the years. To my brother, Stephen, for instilling in me the desire to keep learning. I wish you were here. And to my amazing wife, Hannah, for your love, encouragement, patience, and selflessness. I could not have done this without you.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to all who supported me throughout this adventure. I have learned much during this time, but most importantly, I learned how blessed I am to have the help of family, friends, colleagues, mentors, and professors.

To my dissertation committee co-advisors, Dr. Matt Militello and Dr. Karen Jones, thank you for your expert guidance and help navigating this process.

Dr. Larry Hodgkins, you were always a phone call, text, or email away and got me through many tough spots.

Ms. Gwen Joyner, thank you for all you did to keep me on track.

Dr. Charles Jenkins, I will always be thankful for your kindness and caring. You will always be remembered for your kindness and your passion for education.

Dr. Jim McDowelle, you made the long drive to classes worth it.

Dr. Katherine Kandalec Holm, thank you for your editing knowledge and skills.

Ms. Joy Conner, thank you for helping me get through a long day of writing.

Teachers, administrators, and all Lee County Schools employees who made this possible by generously volunteering their time and providing honest feedback. I am humbled by their support and grateful for their understanding.

Dr. Deborah Jones, Ms. Cindy McCormick, Dr. Donna Peters, Dr. Emilie Simeon, Dr. Jim Simeon, and Dr. Wayne Trogdon opened my eyes to the responsibilities and influences educational leaders have to shape the lives of the children we serve. The lessons learned during my year with you all will stay with me forever.

Quin Henry, Mike Morgan Tony Martin, Andy Frye, & Tony Bloedorn, thanks for the laughs and encouragement along the way.

Justin Wilkinson, I would not have applied for this program if not for you.

Dr. Shannon Shuey, thanks for being a part of this journey and supporting me throughout.

Kenna Wilson, we said we would do this together from start to finish and we did.

Mother and Pop, thanks for instilling in me the importance of continued learning and for all the sacrifices you made for me.

Elaina and Johnny, when you are both old enough, I will read this to you, and regale you with stories of all the hard work I did while you were asleep. I will do this every time you do not want to finish your homework.

Hannah, my amazing wife, thank you! You selflessly supported me in this endeavor and patiently dealt with me all these years. I thank God daily I get to share my life with you.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

## LIST OF TABLES

## LIST OF FIGURES

# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

## General Introduction and Background

In the book *The Art and Science of Teaching*, Marzano wrote of a research study attempting to measure the impact school quality has on student learning; the study's researchers concluded that school quality does not significantly impact student achievement. Others in education incorrectly deduced that if the quality of the school is not significant, the quality of the teacher must also be insignificant. Marzano went on to cite later research which identified teachers as having the most influence over student success. Marzano illustrated this importance by showing findings which indicated that students taught by a teacher in the 75th percentile will score 14 percentage points higher in reading and 18 percentage points higher in math than students taught by a teacher in the 25th percentile (Marzano, 2007).

The challenge of recruiting and retaining sufficient numbers of highly-effective teachers is becoming increasingly difficult due to growing numbers of students, reducing the pupil-teacher ratio, attrition due to retirement, and pre-retirement attrition. For the 2015-2016 school year, there was a need for 260,000 additional teachers in the United States, but the pool of qualified applicants was only 196,000 (Sutcher et al., 2016). Current estimates place the projected need for additional teachers to grow to 300,000 by 2020 creating an ever-widening gap between demand and supply (Sutcher et al., 2016). An analysis of teacher-preparation program enrollments shows a decline of almost 240,000 enrollees between 2009-2014 and, of those enrollees, only about 179,000 successful program completers (Sutcher et al., 2016). A school district in an urban area with a high poverty rate and/or a high-minority population struggles more than other school districts to find highly-qualified teachers, especially in math and science. While other school districts may not face the same struggles as urban, high-poverty, and high-

minority schools, many are still seeing a decline in teacher retention. Teacher recruitment is becoming more difficult each year for all schools. Per the 2015 report from the U.S. Department of Education on Teacher Shortage Area Nationwide Listing, an overwhelming majority of states have consistent teacher shortages, and mathematics, sciences, and special education have historically experienced shortages and have consistently remained areas of shortage for most states since 2005 (Cross, 2016).

Higher salaries may help increase teacher retention. Teachers who are satisfied with their salary express a higher level of job satisfaction, are less likely to express dissatisfaction with other aspects of their job, and are more likely to stay in their current position (Spiegelman, 2018). However, teacher salaries in North Carolina are set by the state and are outside the control of the school-level administrators and district-level administrators. Districts can provide supplements, bonuses, or include extra months of employment to increase the pay of some teachers, but any significant increase would not be sustainable for more than a small number of teachers (Doran, 2018). The Central Board of Education has made a consistent effort over the past four years to increase the teacher supplement by 1% each year in an attempt to keep pace with nearby counties that offer more money for teachers through the larger supplement. According to the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction [NCDPI] report teacher supplements for 2018, Central has the 15th highest supplement in the state. Table 1 contains the average teacher supplement for the ten highest average teacher supplements in North Carolina along with the three counties which border Central.

Table 1

*Average Teacher Supplements in NC*

| LEA Name | Teacher No. of Position | Teacher Average Supplement |
|---|---|---|
| Alamance-Burlington Schools | 1,736 | 4,812 |
| Chatham County Schools | 636 | 6,481 |
| Cumberland County Schools | 3,055 | 3,523 |
| Durham County Schools | 2,437 | 7,487 |
| Franklin County Schools | 531 | 4,076 |
| Guilford County Schools | 5,455 | 4,929 |
| Harnett County Schools | 1,465 | 3,208 |
| Hoke County Schools | 580 | 2,551 |
| Johnston County Schools | 2,450 | 5,353 |
| Lee County Schools | 761 | 4,586 |
| Montgomery County Schools | 290 | 2,000 |
| Moore County Schools | 800 | 3,773 |
| Orange County Schools | 607 | 6,522 |
| Chapel-Hill/Carrboro City Schools | 1,058 | 8,466 |
| Randolph County Schools | 1,167 | 3,188 |
| Asheboro City Schools | 382 | 3,298 |
| Richmond County Schools | 490 | 1,494 |
| Robeson County Schools | 1,643 | 2,684 |
| Rockingham County Schools | 851 | 2,251 |
| Rowan-Salisbury County Schools | 1,470 | 3,258 |

Table 1 (continued)

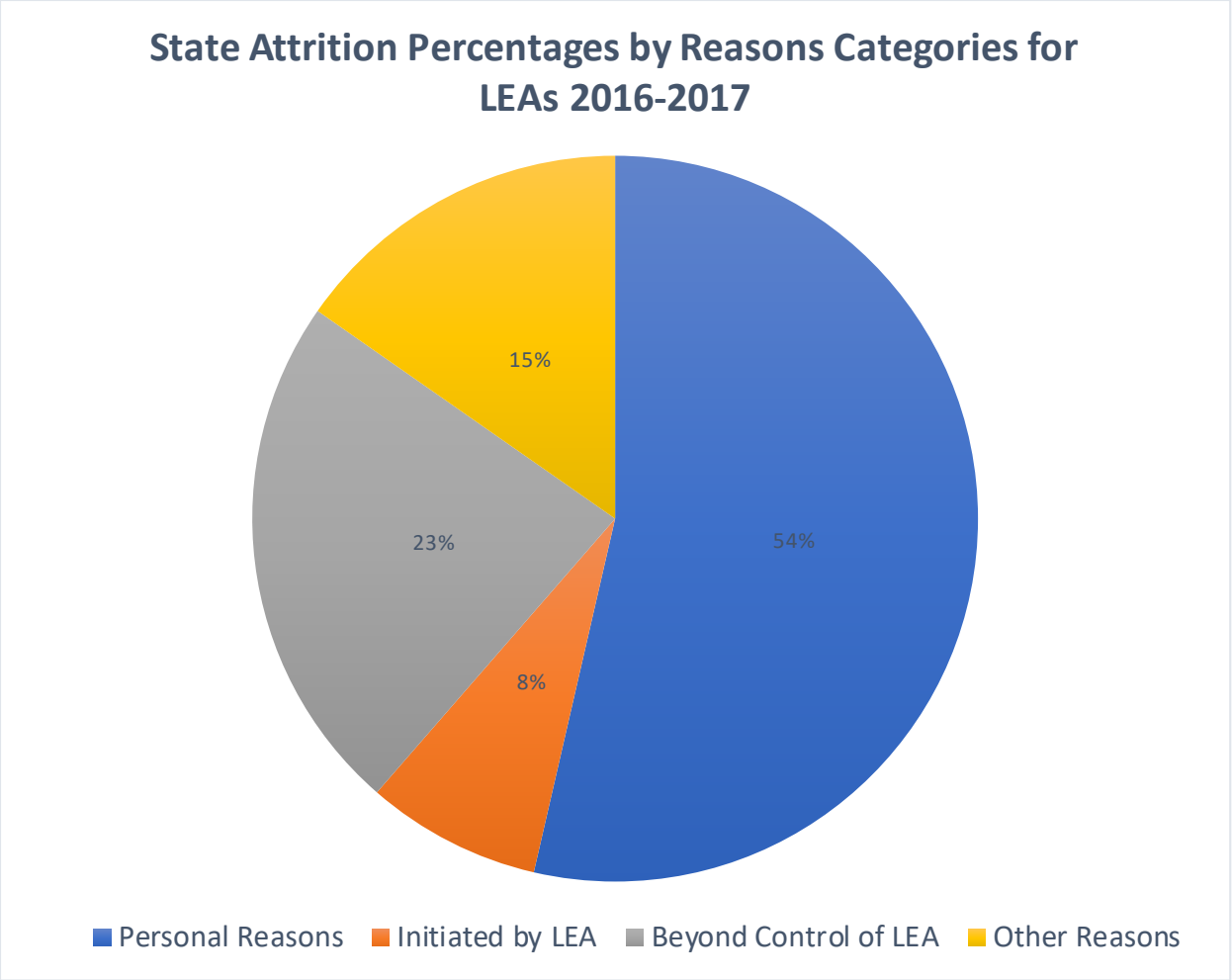
| LEA Name | Teacher No. of Position | Teacher Average Supplement |
|---|---|---|
| Sampson County Schools | 586 | 3,227 |
| Clinton City Schools | 206 | 4,215 |
| Scotland County Schools | 479 | 1,973 |
| Wake County Schools | 10,361 | 8,569 |
| TOTAL Average | 1,646 | 4,247 |

The North Carolina General Assembly has taken action to increase teacher pay. After a decline in average teacher salary beginning in 2009, the average teacher salary in North Carolina bottomed-out at $44,990 for the 2013-2014 school year which ranked 47th out of 50 states and was $12,000 below the national average (Doran, 2018; National Education Association, 2018). Beginning in 2014-2015, the average teacher pay has increased each year; it was at $51,214 for 2017-2018, which improved the state's average teacher pay ranking to 39th in the nation. The increase in pay does not however account for the cost of living increases that have occurred and leaves teachers with less buying power than they had prior to the decrease in average pay (Doran, 2018). Most of the funding is targeted at increasing salaries for teachers with 0-15 years who receive a $1,000 increase each year, but for teachers with 16-24 years' experience based on the current salary schedule, they will continue to make the same salary as a teacher with 15 years of experience. Teachers with 25 years of experience are currently slated to receive a one-time $2,000 increase and will hit the current ceiling of $52,000. These numbers are based on teachers who hold a bachelor's degree without National Board Certification and do not include district supplements (NCDPI, 2018a).

Despite the increases in pay, districts across the state are continuing to struggle to retain teachers. To better understand why teachers leave their jobs, exit surveys are completed by teachers and compiled into an annual report by the North Carolina State Board of Education. This report is required by North Carolina General Statute 115C-12(22) to contain data about why teachers are leaving the profession and data about teaching positions that remain unfilled (NC G.S. 115C-12(22)). Although changes have been made to the title of the report, its analytical approach, and some of its terminology over the years, the report is consistent in its reporting of the reasons for teachers leaving and the attrition rates for each district. The report contains 28

reasons teachers leave the profession and places those reasons into five main categories: (1) Teachers who left the LEA but remained in education; (2) Teachers who left the LEA for personal reasons; (3) Teachers who were terminated by the LEA; (4) Teachers who left the LEA for reasons beyond the LEA's control; (5) Teachers who left the LEA for other reasons not listed above. Due to a change in analytical techniques, category (1) Teachers who left the LEA but remained in education is only considered attrition for the LEA and is considered mobility within the state because these teachers are still working in North Carolina schools, but they did leave one district to move to another. However, this study is focused on LEA attrition and this category represents a significant number of teachers who leave Central Schools. Figure 1 shows the percentages for each of the categories for the 2016-2017 school year.

A review of the 2016-2017 State of the Teaching Profession in North Carolina report shows that of the 658 teachers in Central Schools, 54 of them counted toward the state attrition rate because they left for reasons in the aforementioned categories 2 through 5. Of these 54 teachers, 33 left for personal reasons, 1 left because of actions initiated by the LEA, 14 resigned due to reasons beyond the control of the LEA, and 6 resigned for other reasons. These 54 teachers represent a state attrition rate of 8.2% for Central Schools, which is half a percentage point lower than the state average of 8.7%, but as mentioned, this is not the overall attrition rate for the district because it does not include the 46 teachers who left Central Schools to teach in another district in the state. These 46 teachers are included in the mobility rate of the district and represent teachers who remained in education but chose to do so in another district or private school on their own initiative, and they represent 7% of the total LEA attrition rate of 15.2%. The report does not show the percentage of teachers who left to teach in another state, who were




*Note*. NCDPI (2018b).

*Figure 1*. State attrition percentages by reasons categories for LEAs 2016-2017.

dissatisfied with teaching, who changed careers, or who had other reasons that may be influenced by increased retention efforts (NCDPI, 2018b).

## Statement of the Problem

### National Turnover Statistics

Each year in the United States, more than 450,000 of the 3.4 million public school teachers leave their current school for another school or leave teaching completely; some of these vacancies are filled by first-time teachers. This ebb and flow of educators represents almost 1 million classrooms which will experience turnover each year (Alliance for Education, 2014). Retiring teachers only comprise 16% of total turnover; the remaining 84% are leaving to work in other schools or are quitting the profession (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2008). The beginning teachers who are filling these vacancies are frequently leaving the classroom within the first five years. According to a report from the National Center for Education Statistics, 17% of all teachers who entered the profession in 2007-2008 had left the classroom before the 2011-2012 school year (Gray & Taie, 2015).

### North Carolina Turnover Statistics

The state attrition rate in North Carolina for 2014-2105 was 14.84%, which is only a slight increase from the previous year's 14.12%. In the 2010 and 2011 school year, teacher attrition was at 11.17%; it rose almost a full percentage point for the 2011-2012 school year to 12.13%. The largest increase seen over five years was the 2.2 percentage point increase to 14.33% for the 2012-2013 school year. The rate held steady in this range for the next two school years across North Carolina (NCDPI, 2015). In the 2016-2017 State of the Teaching Profession in North Carolina report, the overall state attrition rate is 8.70% which accounts only for teachers who are not teaching in North Carolina. In order to make a comparison of a district to the state

average, the LEA-attrition rate must be used. The formula for the LEA-attrition rate is the state attrition rate added to the mobility rate. Mobility rate is a measure of the teachers who left a North Carolina school district to teach in another North Carolina school district or charter school. For 2016-2017 the 8.70% state attrition rate and 4.83% mobility rate equaled a 13.53% LEA-attrition rate (NCDPI, 2018b).

**Central Turnover Statistics**

Central Schools ranks 41st of the 115 school districts in North Carolina in teacher turnover rate; Central has a current turnover rate of 15.2% which is 1.67 percentage points higher than the state average. Of Central's 658 teachers, 100 of them left the district in 2016-17. A review of the self-reported reasons teachers gave for leaving Central Schools provides a better understanding of the problems facing the district. Of the 100 teachers who left Central Schools in the 2016- 2017 school year, 46 of them left the county, but remained in education; this represents 46% of the turnover rate in the county. This number is concerning because the district is losing individuals who wanted to remain in the profession but decided to do so outside of Central.

Despite having a higher LEA-attrition rate than the state average, 2016-2017 showed a marked improvement over the past four years of turnover data. Beginning in the 2012-2013 school year with a 15.26% turnover rate, Central Schools has been above the LEA state average, and the percentage has increased each year until this past year. The highest turnover rate was 19.34% in 2015-2016. Between 2012-2013 and 2016-2017, Central Schools has a turnover average of 16.95% compared to a LEA state average of 14% during that same time (NCDPI, 2018b).

A review of five-year turnover averages for Central School District shows that the district has been above the state-turnover average since 2001. Data collection about reasons for teachers

leaving Central School District is limited to selecting 1 of 23 reasons required to be reported to the state. Based on the three most recent turnover reports from NCDPI, Central Schools has a three-year turnover rate average of 17.69%, which is 3.77% higher than the LEA average of 13.92% during the same years (NCDPI, 2015; NCDPI, 2016; NCDPI, 2018b).

This study will be conducted in Central Schools. Central School District is located in central North Carolina. Central has a population of 59,660 with about 51% of that population living inside Central City (29,144) or the town of Central Township (1,264); the remaining residents live in the unincorporated communities and townships throughout the county (Lee County Government, 2015). The per capita personal income is $22,389 and the median household income is $46,402, both of which are below the state average of $26,779 and $48,256 respectively (U.S. Census Bureau Quick Facts: Central, North Carolina, n.d.). Central's poverty rate of 18.1% is 3.4% higher than the state average of 14.7% with 10,533 Central residents in poverty including a child poverty rate of 26.3% (N.C. Poverty Statistics, 2015). According to data from the 2010 U.S. Census on Central residents age 25 and older, 3,297 completed only elementary school, 29,494 have a high school diploma, and 6,575 have earned a bachelor's degree or higher (Log Into North Carolina, n.d.).

**Current Data Collection Method**

The current data used to develop the report on teacher turnover in North Carolina is collected by asking the teacher who is resigning to choose from the list of reasons for leaving the position. In a review of resignation forms from 12 school districts across the state, there is a is inconsistency with the forms and the number of reasons for leaving the position. All forms requested directory/contact information, responsibilities or positions held other than teaching, and a list of reason for the teacher to choose from which best fits the teacher's reason for leaving.

One major difference in the forms are the number of items on the list of reasons for resignation. The number of choices for the reason for resignation ranged from 10 to 27: one county offered only ten, three offered 27, and the remainder offered between 15-22 options. Most forms did not have a location for the teacher to write comments to further explains why they were resigning. One of the forms, had a section titled "Comments" with three blank lines for the resigning teacher offer any further information. None of the districts selected showed any evidence available on their websites that they required or requested exit interviews with persons leaving the district. While some teachers choose to write a resignation letter outlining their reasons for leaving, there is no requirement for them do so.

In addition to the inconsistencies of the data gathering and the lack of depth of the data regarding resignation, any information gained may not be reliable for a number of reasons. The resigning teacher may not want to give the actual reason for leaving, may withhold comments to avoid offending someone, or may write comments intended to attack or defame others. Depending on the reason the teacher is leaving and the relationships within the school, the information given and the true motivation for leaving may be completely different. Because the data is being collected from leavers, it focuses on issues that are likely not going to be something positive the school can build on but rather an issue beyond the control of the LEA or a negative reason that needs to be improved. The current system falls short by asking only the ones who are leaving to check a box beside the reason they feel the most comfortable admitting and by the time this form is completed there is little hope of attempting to retain that teacher.

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to collect data on teachers' attitudes and perceptions about retention and turnover to inform district leaders as they develop processes and policy to support

teachers in an effort to decrease turnover, thus resulting in a potential decrease of lost instructional time by a qualified teacher and allowing funds and time spent on hiring a replacement to be redirected to other areas of need. Instead of focusing on why teachers leave their current positions, this study is focused on the critical factors that teachers perceive as important to their job satisfaction and decisions to remain in their current positions.

## Overview of Methodology

This study proposes that current data collection methods on teacher retention is insufficient due to the aforementioned issues, and data collection that would best serve teacher retention would be a process of learning why the teachers stay and what is most important to them when making the decision to stay. This process serves three purposes: first, to give a voice to teachers to affect change through building on the positives and mitigating the negatives, second, to help teachers feel their opinions matter and feel that leadership wants to hear their ideas, and third, to provide leadership with insight to what is most important to the teacher who want to stay instead of focusing on the opinions of those who chose to leave.

Q Method was used to examine the beliefs and perceptions of teachers about the factors that are related to a teacher's decision to stay in or leave a school or school district. A review of literature and surveys or interviews was performed to understand what key factors are believed to influence a teacher's decision to stay in a school or school district. The information gathered from the literature and interviews was then used to develop statements that the participants will be asked to sort based on how strongly they agree or disagree with the statements. Once the data from the sorting had been collected, a factor analysis was completed to find relationships between the factors based on how they were sorted by the participants. The information gathered

during the study will be used to inform school leaders and district executives as they develop strategies to retain high-quality teachers in their schools.

## Research Questions

This study analyzed current Central teachers' perceptions of the factors related to teachers either remaining in or leaving Central Schools. The goal of this study was to answer the following questions:

1. What does existing research say about teacher turnover and perceptions of the reasons behind teacher turnover?
2. What do current teachers perceive as the most important factors in their decision to stay in Central?
3. Why do these teachers hold these beliefs?

## Definition of Terms

Some of the terms used in this study related to teacher retention were:

Attrition rate: percentage of teachers who leave a school, school district, state, or the profession.

Leavers: teachers who leave a school district, state, or the profession.

Movers: teachers who leave a school, school district, or state but remain in the profession.

Persistence, retention, or stayers: teachers remaining at the same school.

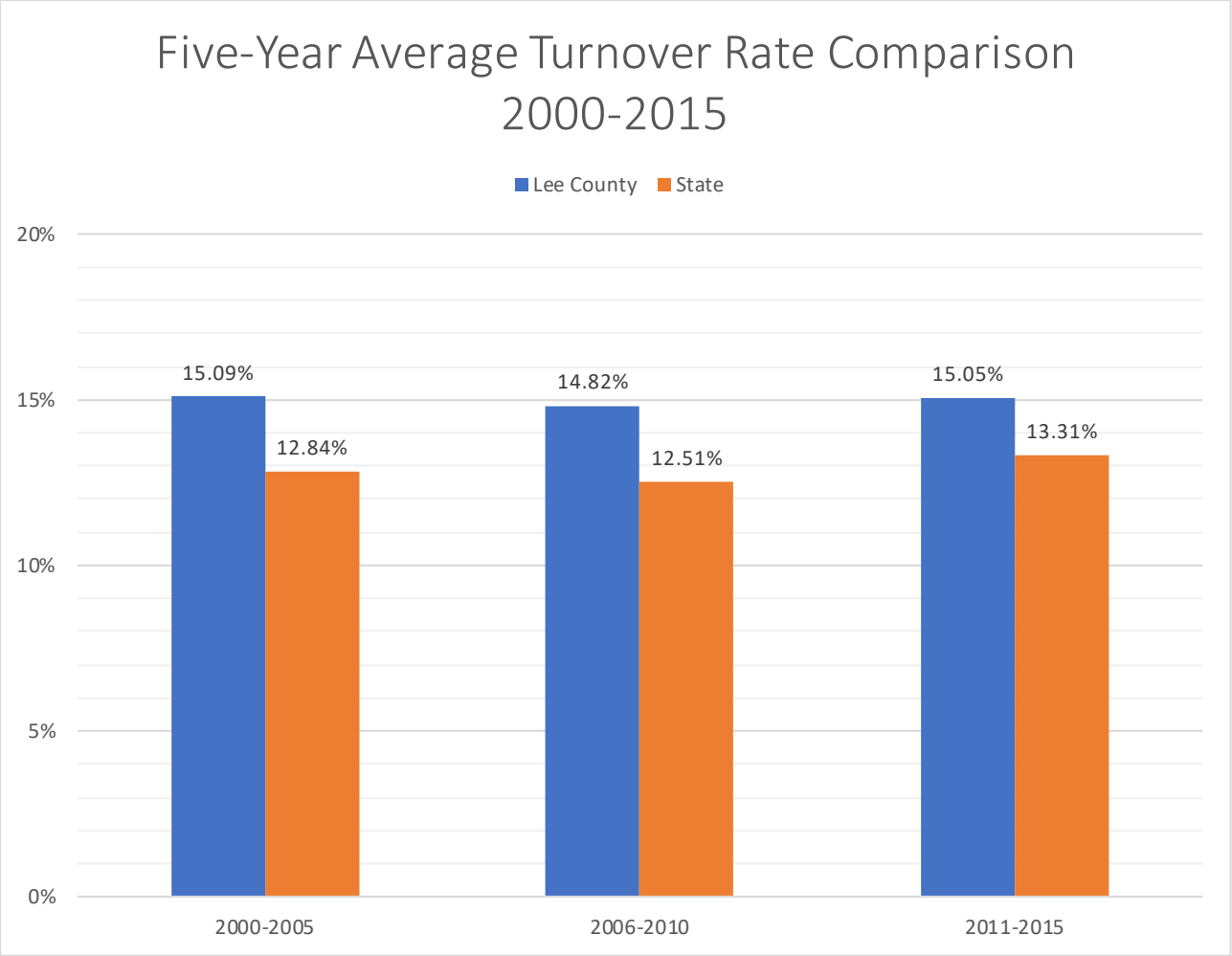
Recoupment: replacing leavers with experienced teachers from other schools, districts, or states.

Retention rate or persistence rate: the percentage of teachers who stay at the same school, school district, or state.

## Significance of the Study

The information provided by this study will give the school-level and district-level leaders insight into the reasons teachers stay at their school and in the district. Use of this information could be used to decrease the teacher turnover rate which will allow resources required to recruit, hire, and train new teachers to be redirected to other needs. Because of the negative impact of turnover on student performance, school climate, and district health, this study will benefit the students, teachers, and leaders of Central. However, the completion of this study alone is not expected to improve the turnover rate. The study will provide leadership with information that does not currently exist in the district about teacher perceptions and why these teachers choose to stay in the district. School and district leadership can use the information to develop strategies to retain teachers. This study can be replicated at schools across the district to gather more information to continue to inform the development of a long-term a recruitment and retention plan.

The five-year turnover rate average for Central Schools from 2010-2011 to 2014-2015 was 15.05%, which was the 33rd highest in the state out of 115 school districts. Figure 2 provides a comparison of the Central Schools turnover rate compared to the state LEA average since 2001 and is divided into three five-year averages. Beginning in 2011-2012, the Central turnover rate climbed from 11.02% to 18.55% in 2014-2015. The upward trend continued in 2015-2016 when the district hit its highest turnover rate of 19.34%; the following year the turnover rate dropped to 15.2%. Even with the over-two-point percentage drop in one year, it is clear that Central is consistently higher than the LEA average in teacher attrition, and since




*Note*. NCDPI (2018b).

*Figure 2*. Five-year average turnover rates.

2001, Central has an average attrition rate of 15.26% which is 2.3% higher than the LEA average during that same time (NCDPI, 2018b).

High levels of teacher turnover force districts to use resources to recruit and orient new teachers to the district which limits the resources available for professional development for current teachers, curriculum resources and materials, and technology. High levels of turnover require teachers to start each year by developing relationships and trust between teachers before doing the hard work necessary to increase student achievement (Guin, 2004). Student achievement is negatively impacted by the instability created by turnover (Ronfeldt et al., 2013).

This study focused on teachers with one to nine years of teaching experience at Central High School. The decision to concentrate on teachers in this range of experience was due to the high levels of turnover among teachers in their first ten years of teaching (NCDPI, 2015; NCDPI, 2016; NCDPI, 2018b). Teachers in their first year at the district were not included because they had less than two months of experience to draw upon at the time of data collection.

While the data gathered by the state does provide a basic understanding of the trends, the inconsistencies of district data collection forms and processes leaves room for doubt about the validity of the reasons given. The collection and analysis of data from 115 LEAs in addition to writing the report takes many months to complete. For example, the *2017-2018 State of the Teaching Profession in North Carolina* was published with a due date of February 15, 2019. By the time the report is published, districts are into the second half of the next school year. Also, the information was gathered from teachers who left their schools or districts. School and district leaders may find little actionable information in a report with data collected the previous school year about teachers who no longer are employed in the school or district. The report is useful for long-term trends and comparisons between districts, but the report is unlikely to provide

actionable information that will help decrease turnover within a school or district in that school year.

This study generates information school and district leaders can used to make informed decisions in an attempt to retain the teachers who provided the information and are still employed with them. Principals could identify what the teachers find to be most important in their decisions to stay at the school and make decisions based on this information, and the analyses and reporting could be completed within the school year. A potential benefit of this study is teachers feeling that simply by participating in the study their voices are being heard and in turn, they feel valued and would be more likely to stay at their school. In addition to feeling valued, teachers have the opportunity to express and visualize their beliefs and values as an educator and become more aware of what they hold to be the most important things in their professional life.

## Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 provides the context for the study, the need for the study, how the study was conducted, the questions the study attempted to answer, and other relevant information. Chapter 2 highlights the relevant research, statistics, and publications related to teacher turnover; this chapter addresses national teacher turnover, state-level teacher turnover, district-level teacher turnover, the impact of teacher turnover, key factors related to teacher turnover, role of school-level administration, other states' attempts to reduce turnover, and North Carolina's attempts to reduce turnover. Chapter 3 explains Q methodology, which was used to gather and analyze the perceptions of the teachers; it also provides a detailed layout of the development of the Q-sample, the development of the P-sample, the data analysis, and the follow-up interviews. Chapter 4 contains the results of the data collection and the analysis of the data. Chapter 5 is a

summary of the findings of the study and an explanation of how these finding can impact policies, procedures, and future research.

## Summary of the Chapter

Teacher turnover can have a negative impact that can affect student achievement, school climate, and the overall health of the school and school district. Central Schools has had teacher turnover rates higher than the state average each year from 2001-2017 with the exception of the 2011-2012 school year. Based on the three most recent turnover reports from NCDPI, Central Schools has a three-year turnover rate average of 17.69%, which is 3.77% higher than the LEA average of 13.92% during the same years (NCDPI, 2015; NCDPI, 2016; NCDPI, 2018b). To improve the district's ability to retain teachers, this study gathered information from the stayers about the factors that kept them at their current school and what factors are important for them to continue at their school. The insight gained through this study may help district and school leaders to be more effective at keeping quality teachers with the resources they have at their disposal.

# CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

## Key Factors for Teacher Retention

Upon review of the relevant literature, multiple key factors in teacher retention were identified and are organized into themes in this chapter. Those themes include internal factors, external factors, and leadership and working conditions.

### Internal Factors

#### *Personal Beliefs and Values*

The New Teacher Project (TNTP) studied 90,000 teachers to identify the best teachers, based on student data and evaluations, to discover what sets them apart from the average and low-performing teachers. TNTP classified these exemplar teachers "The Irreplaceables." The Irreplaceables are defined as the teachers who "help students earn two to three additional months' worth of math and reading compared to the average teacher, and five to six months more compared to low-performing teachers." The students of these teachers are "more likely to go to college and earn higher salaries as adults, and they are less likely to become teenage parents." The Irreplaceables make an impact on their students that last well beyond their school years. The Irreplaceables were compared with a group of low-performing teachers. Both groups had the same average number of students per class, the same average number of years of experience, and the same average workload per week, but there was a difference in their beliefs. The difference between responses of the two groups to two survey statements highlights the significant differences between the groups. Only 44% of low-performing teachers hold the "belief that effective teachers can lead student to success despite challenges" while 53% of the Irreplaceables held the belief. The second statement sought to find out if teachers "understand how effective they are in achieving positive student outcomes" to which 48% of low performers

stated they did while 69% of the Irreplaceables held this belief. There are many factors that make a teacher effective, but their effectiveness starts with the sincere belief that they can and will make a difference for their students (The New Teacher Project [TNTP], 2012).

### *Educational Beliefs*

The motivations for wanting to go into teaching vary, but many of the motivations are intrinsic. In one study of teachers in the United Kingdom, the most common motivations were "wanting to make a difference," "working with young people," "love of subject," "inspired by their own teachers," "to have an intellectual challenge," "to be creative," and "variety of work." Prior to beginning their teaching careers, these same teachers thought their biggest challenge would be classroom management; they were also aware teachers carry a large workload and are sometimes required to work longer days or even weekends to avoid falling behind in their work. However, classroom management and student behavior were not significant in the decision to leave for these teachers; the workload was the driving force behind the turnover. It was not the workload itself that was the problem, but the teachers were frustrated with the type of work that was taking their time both in and out of school. Teachers expected long hours helping students as they entered the profession, but the reality was they were spending long hours to meet the increased demands related to improving test scores. The increased focus on test scores was accompanied by an increased amount of pressure which led to a decrease in job satisfaction. Teachers who changed professions reported an increase in their overall quality of life and well-being. This study highlighted the differences between the expectations and beliefs held by new teachers and the reality that does not meet those expectations which therefore causes them to leave the profession (Perryman & Calvert, 2019).

Some teacher preparation programs are recognizing the differences between the expectations of the pre-service teachers, beginning teachers, and veteran teachers and have developed strategies to force their students to challenge their beliefs about the realities of being an educator in the current educational climate. The goal of these strategies is to force aspiring teachers to openly acknowledge how their beliefs about education conflict with the reality of the schools they will be entering as teachers. However, because teaching is a service-based profession, many teachers come to the profession with a desire to change students' lives for the better. This belief needs to be protected by an environment that rewards behaviors that demonstrate this desire to positively impact the lives of students (Eklund, 2009).

***Student Success***

Glazer (2018) found some teachers see leaving the profession as more than just a dissatisfaction with teaching but rather a statement of their resistance to continuing to be a part of a system that continues to create policies and force implementation that they believe are not in the best interests of teachers or students. Glazer interviewed 25 former teachers who were fully certified and had completed at least three years in the classroom. From these interviews, three prominent topics emerged as the biggest reasons for these teachers leaving. The first reason was the imposition of curricula which stripped the teachers of autonomy and left them feeling powerless. The time and effort to create lesson plans and develop a teaching style now felt wasted to them as they now had to follow a prescribed lesson that removed creativity and resulted in a less enjoyable learning experience for the teacher and the students. The second topic to emerge was the pervasive influence of standardized testing. Teachers were pressured to teach the students how to pass the test and were often spending large portions of time teaching test-taking strategies instead of their content. The fear of low tests scores impacting their pay or their

jobs increased the amount of stress they felt which resulted in them focusing less on the student as an individual and more on the student as a test score. The third major theme found in the study was job security and hiring practices. Teachers in districts both large and small would be moved from school to school within a district based on shifting enrollment numbers. This practice made them hesitant to build strong relationships within the school community. This study is demonstration of how outside influences can have a major impact on core beliefs and values about education (Glazer, 2018).

Despite the frustrations teachers face, the ones who stay in teaching frequently mention their enjoyment of working with young people as one of their primary motivators. They enjoy building relationships with students in the classroom and through extracurricular events; some feels it keeps them young. For more experienced teachers, they enjoy seeing former students going on to lead successful lives and knowing they had a part in helping those students achieve their goals (Brunetti, 2001).

If teacher job satisfaction is related to the enjoyment of watching students succeed, how does students' underachievement impact teachers? One study of first year teachers found that teacher who are less effective at helping students meet academic targets are more likely to leave the profession after their first year. The more effective beginning teachers will often leave low-performing schools after two or three years to move to higher performing schools. Ineffective teachers leaving a school can have a positive impact on student performance if that teacher is replaced by someone more effective. This is an example of why districts need to implement retention policies that do not focus on keeping all teachers but focus on keeping the ones that are effective. If low-performers are hired by a low-performing school and higher-performing

teachers are leaving low-performing schools, this creates a dangerous cycle that will further put the students in low-performing schools at risk of failure (Boyd et al., 2008).

### *Enjoyment of Subject Matter*

Helping students achieve their goals and grow as individuals is a powerful reason teachers find satisfaction in their jobs, and if they can help students succeed while sharing their passion for the subject they teach, they will enjoy their work even more. For many high school teachers, the passion for the subject matter may not be the reason for going into education, but it is the conduit through which they feel allows them to positively impact their students' lives (Brunetti, 2001).

## External Factors

### *Salary and Benefits*

Across the nation in the 2007-2008 school year, 97% of first-year teachers who made $40,000 or more stayed in the classroom compared to 87% who made less than $40,000 (Gray & Taie, 2015) North Carolina is ranked 47$^{th}$ out of 50 states in average teacher salary; this may mean high salaries are unlikely to be a positive factor for job satisfaction anytime soon (Sestric, 2018). The wage gap between teachers and their comparably-educated peers has continued to increase steadily over the past 25 years. In 1994, the wage gap for teachers was 1.8% and that gap has now grown to 18.7%; even when teacher benefits are calculated toward the teacher's total wage, teachers are still earning 11% less than their peers. With one of the highest wage gaps in the nation at 35.5%, North Carolina needs to decrease the wage gap to be competitive with other professions (Will, 2018). This becomes increasingly important as graduates leave colleges and universities with large student loan debts. Over one million North Carolinians have student loan debt and 16.6% of them are considered severely delinquent in their payment.

Approximately 60% of North Carolina's 2017 college graduates had student loans averaging $26,000 (Ervin, 2019). The combination of comparably low wages and high amounts of student loan debt makes teaching a less appealing option for college graduates. The amount of student loan debt and the ability to pay it back impacts major life decisions like getting married, having children, buying a home, and saving for retirement (Teachers Insurance Annuity Association, 2019).

### *Student Behavior*

Improper student behavior can lead to disruptions of the learning environment, safety issues, and increased frustration for the teacher and fellow students. Therefore, it is important for a school and classroom teacher to work together to set high standards for student behavior, reinforce positive behavior, and provide consistent consequences for negative behavior. While some elements of the profession are viewed as universal issues at all schools, many teachers who believe student behavior is a problem see it as a reflection of their current school and student behavior may be better at another school (García Torres , 2019).

## Working Conditions and Leadership Factors

### *Teacher Support*

When teachers leave a school due to job dissatisfaction, a perceived lack of support from the administration or the ineffectiveness of school leadership is often cited as major factor in the teacher's decision to leave (Boyd et al., 2011; Hong, 2010). The increased responsibilities placed upon teachers should be supported by structures and resources from school leaders to mitigate the negative impact on teacher job satisfaction caused by increased demands. Teachers are more likely to stay at a school with a sense of cohesion developed through shared decision making, positive teacher interactions, and increased interdependence (Price & Collett, 2012). The

principal is primarily responsible for creating the structures necessary for a positive school environment that allows teachers to develop the trusting relationships needed for increased job satisfaction that can lead to decreased turnover (Edinger & Edinger, 2018).

Even frustrations caused by issues outside the control of the school can be mitigated by administrators who encourage collaboration, provide emotional support for teachers through conversation and acts of kindness, words of affirmation, visiting the classroom and assisting when needed, offering opportunities for professional development, and recognition for their successes and efforts (Beebe, 2017; Culkin, 2016; Delano-Gemzik, 2017). For some who left the profession, they felt more supported by their current employer than they did by their former principal. Boyd et al. surveyed 4,360 teachers in New York City schools in their first years of teaching, and they gave a follow-up survey to the same individuals the following year. The follow-up survey was divided into two groups: those who stayed in teaching and those who left the profession. Among both groups, the quality of school administration was the most significant factor in a teacher's decision to either transfer schools or leave the profession. The specific problems cited by the former teachers related to school administration was lack of respect or appreciation of teachers, inability to effectively solve problems, poor instructional leadership, inability to develop a shared mission with the staff, and no encouragement of professional collaboration (Boyd et al., 2011).

Varying perceptions of the role of the principal can influence how a principal's effectiveness is perceived by teachers, parents, students, district leadership, and other stakeholders. While some broad aspects of the principal's job are universally understood like school safety, ensuring a positive environment for education, and helping teachers and students solve problems, the details of the principals' responsibilities are often misunderstood; principals

must be many things to many people. Clear and consistent communication with the stakeholders about the principals' responsibilities, beliefs, vision, and mission can help prevent unwarranted dissatisfaction with principal performance (Sergiovanni, 2015). The role of the principal has evolved from the building manager and disciplinarian. Frequently, the responsibilities of the principal are too great for any one person to do alone. Principals who are effective provide direction and unity, create a culture of high expectations, empower others to lead, and delegate responsibilities to those who have been empowered to lead. Principals who are focused on their work as school leader lack the time and desire to micromanage teachers and instead spend their time developing a culture of empowerment, trust, and professionalism (Chenowith & Theokas, 2011).

A study of 12 principals with high retention rates in a district with otherwise high turnover rates helped shed light on what principals can do at their school to keep good teachers. The primary focus of the interview process was finding a teacher who was in teaching to help students. This means strategic recruiting and interviewing. Beginning with the hiring process, the principals sought to find shared values between the applicants and their schools, and once the teacher was hired, a mentor was assigned and encouraged to, as once principal stated, "wrap their arms around these people and support them." The principals encouraged all veteran teachers to embrace the idea of mentoring which increased the chances of finding the right personality fit for both mentor and mentee. In addition to the mentor, the principals take it upon themselves to be sure the teacher feels supported directly by administration. One principal said, "Support means a lot of different things … discipline, organization, affirmation, resources, curriculum, instruction … everything you do, I think, falls under the umbrella of support." The approach for these principals is layered so the teachers feel supported in whatever they need to do their jobs.

Knowing what teachers need and carefully budgeting allows the principals to frequently give the teachers what they request for their classrooms as long it is used to support student success. The principals recognized that teachers, like students, have different perspectives, life experiences, and needs which requires the principal to be flexible and adjust leadership styles as needed. One principal likened his role to that of a parent at the school because of the wide range of needs that teachers come to them for during the year. It was important to the principals to be a good listener and not be afraid of admitting they do not have all of the answers. The final component that was common among these principals was the development of a professional learning community (PLC) within their schools. The PLC made the school improvement process a team effort and handed some of the control over to the teachers. The principals maintain the authority to make unilateral decisions but do so only when necessary and explain why they made the decision. These 12 principals were able to retain quality teachers in a district with many other schools that struggled to do so. These principals shared many of the same beliefs and strategies to make their schools places where teachers wanted to be (Brown & Wynn, 2009)

***Support and Relationships***

An increasingly large number of schools are focusing their efforts on removing teachers from isolation by promoting and building professional learning communities (PLCs) where teachers can share resources, develop lesson plans, analyze student assessment data, and build relationships with one another. Due to the number of factors that can impact student achievement it is difficult to show causality between any strategy and increased student performance, but growing body of research on PLCs has shown that schools with solid collaborative structures and teachers who regularly participate in instructional collaboration have larger student achievement gains (Ronfeldt et al., 2015).

While professional learning communities encourages teachers to spend more time working together it does not ensure a better working relationship. The process of teacher retention begins with recruitment and hiring. Inasmuch as schools are looking for good teachers, teachers are also looking for good schools whose values match their own. It is in the early stages of the hiring process when both potential employer and potential employee should evaluate whether or not they are a good fit for one another. Can the teacher help the school meet its goals and can the school help the teacher meet his/her goals? This should be addressed in the interview process (Norton, 1999).

With the exception of the occasional outlier, research continues to support the idea that teacher induction programs decrease the number of teachers leaving the profession and decrease the amount of migration of teachers between schools. Combining strategies like supportive communication from leadership, access to a mentor teacher, participation in an orientation training, and opportunities for collaboration decrease the odds of the teacher leaving a school by 20% to 24%, and the same strategies decreased the odds of a teacher leaving the profession altogether by 18% to 22% (Rondfelt & McQueen, 2017). Quality induction and mentor programs can make new teachers feel more confident about their choice of profession and improve their performance in the classroom which in turn increases their job satisfaction. Additional benefits of these programs are that they are inexpensive compared to many other strategies, they can increase collegiality within the school, and they reinvigorate veteran teachers who may be looking for opportunities for leadership (Brill & McCartney, 2008). The same benefits may be seen by developing partnerships with universities looking for internship placements for preservice teachers. Preservice teachers who excel during their internship are more likely to be hired and retained by schools. Schools that have high-performing teachers who are willing to

work with preservice teachers could help schools recruit and retain effective new teachers (Vagi et al., 2019).

Teachers develop positive relationships that extend beyond discussions about teaching and learning and can extend to personal friendships outside of school. A 2018 study of Teach for America (TFA) teachers working at rural schools found that these teachers developed a wide range of relationships, both with other TFA teachers and with local residents, while they were assigned to their school. These relationships were social outlets for teachers adjusting to living in a new place which served as a crucial support for them (Rooks, 2018). However, teachers tend to rely more on collegiality and socialization early in their careers, and it becomes less important to job satisfaction as they gain experience professionally and as their personal lives change as well (Brunetti, 2001).

***School Climate and Culture***

In their book, *School Culture Recharged* (2017), Gruenert and Whitaker explain the difference between school climate and culture. School climate is an attitude within the school that changes frequently throughout the year; it is affected by events such as a big football game, a snow day, or upcoming standardized tests. Culture, however, is a more pervasive and more permanent, yet evolving, set of unwritten rules that shapes how professionals function within the school. While climate and culture are related, they are not the same. Climate is how a school would react to a given situation, and the school culture would influence that reaction.

Effective principals work together with the faculty and staff to develop the culture that drives the school toward achieving its goals, but principals may have to develop a new, more positive culture while dealing with elements of the old culture that remain with teachers who are resistant to change (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2017). Teachers who do not want to be a part of a

cultural change of a school can severely undermine the efforts of the principal and school leadership if allowed to do so. For example, a principal trying to establish a professional learning community may encounter resistance from teachers who only go to meetings because they are told to go. This forced compliance may lead to negativity which can spread to the group and sabotage the whole effort. New principals must not underestimate the power of the school culture they inherited as they work to develop a new culture (Ross & Gray, 2006).

***Protected Instructional Time***

In the Central School District Summary Report from the 2016 North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey, 72.8% of teachers responded favorably to questions regarding time demands of their jobs while 88.9% agreed they had the necessary resources and facilities to do their jobs. Of the eight categories from the survey, Time was the lowest rated for teacher satisfaction and Facilities and Resources was rated the highest (North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey, 2016).

***Leadership Opportunities***

Students achieve at a higher level in schools with strong instructional leaders and quality teacher leaders than students in schools that lack this leadership (Ingersoll et al., 2017). However, higher student achievement scores are not the only benefit of developing teacher-leaders. There is a connection between involving teachers in the leadership of the school and those teacher's commitment to staying at that school. The distribution of leadership to teachers and involving them in the school's decision-making processes provides a shared sense of purpose and helps to bridge some gaps between the working relationship of teachers and administrators. Teachers who are engaged in the development of school policies and procedures have a greater interest in ensuring the success of their decisions (García Torres , 2019).

### *Facilities and Resources*

While working conditions is far more than the resources available to teachers and the facilities in which they teach, they should be considered when looking at job satisfaction. The quality of the physical school environment can impact job satisfaction. School renovation or new construction requires careful planning and is a time-consuming process for school districts. The cost of facility improvements is often one of the biggest reasons why these improvements do not happen, but there is research to show that the investment in facilities may have benefits in overall school performance. A study of teachers in Washington DC showed that an upgrade in the physical environment of the school would make the teachers more likely to return to their school. The teachers in the study felt a facility upgrade would impact their decision to return as much as a raise in pay. The authors of the study make the point that construction is a one-time cost that can be offset by external funding sources with benefits that last for many years, teacher raises however are a recurring expense with limited funding sources options (Buckley et al., 2004). Uline and Tschannen-Moran (2008) found teachers' attitudes can be negatively affected by school buildings they perceive as substandard, and this attitude affects their desire to go beyond their basic teaching requirements. In a comparison of working behaviors of teachers in their old school building and their new school building, the same teachers when working in the new school building with a new design showed no significant difference than their working behavior in their old school building. The researchers stated that the positive elements of the new design may have been negated by design flaws that could have been avoided if the teachers were asked for input, therefore, in situations where renovations or new construction is taking place, understanding the needs of the user can result in increased satisfaction for the user (Leung et al., 2006). New construction and major renovation are not always possible, but collaborative effort

between facilities management and teachers may improve the physical working space and positively impact teacher morale.

## Impact of Turnover

Teacher turnover forces districts to redirect resources toward maintaining a basic level of teacher competency as new teachers are hired and trained to understand the expectations of teachers in the district. The actual cost of turnover varies based on the size and location of the community. In a report on the estimated financial cost of teacher turnover, Ingersoll projected that North Carolina spent between approximately $28,000,000 and $64,000,000 to replace the 6,634 teachers who left the public schools in 2007-2008 (Ingersoll, 2009). A 2007 study led by the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future analyzed teacher turnover data from five school districts across the country in an attempt to quantify the cost of replacing a teacher in each of the districts. They selected Chicago Public Schools (Illinois), Milwaukee Public Schools (Wisconsin), Granville County Schools (North Carolina), Jemez Valley Public Schools (New Mexico), and Santa Rosa Public Schools (New Mexico). This effort to quantify the real cost of turnover led to the creation of eight categories: (1) Recruitment and Advertising; (2) Special Incentives; (3) Administrative Processing; (4) Training for New Hires; (5) Training for First-Time Teachers; (6) Training for All Teachers; (7) Learning Curve; and (8) Transfer. The researchers wanted to accurately measure the expenditure of all resources used in the process of replacing a teacher, not just the direct expenses as they sought to understand the cost in personnel hours and the effects of turnover on the quality of learning in the schools. The study reported the cost of turnover per teacher in a small rural district like Jemez Valley was $4,366; in Granville County, a county-wide suburban district, the cost per teacher was $10,000; in Milwaukee, an urban district, the cost was $15,325; and in Chicago, an urban district, the cost

was $17,872. For a large urban district like Chicago, it is estimated the district will lose $86 million per year if teachers continue to leave at the same rate (Carroll, 2007).

The impact of turnover reaches beyond the walls of each of those classrooms. Teachers who remain at high-turnover schools feel the turnover prevents their schools from operating as a highly-effective organization due to the disruptions of having to start each year with developing relationships and trust between teachers before doing the hard work necessary to increase student achievement (Guin, 2004). This feeling of disruption is supported by a study in which the researchers completed approximately 670,000 student observations on fourth and fifth grade students over the course of eight years. The data collected showed that the students who had a teacher who was new to the school suffered a significant negative impact in both math and English Language Arts (ELA) scores. However, the students of the teachers who remained at the school were also negatively affected by the turnover (Ronfeldt & McQueen, 2017). The cause of this is not known, but researchers think the decrease in performance throughout the school is related to the decrease in collegiality and morale which occurs when teachers leave. This effect on the teachers, in turn, affects the performance of the students. The decreased student performance occurs even when the quality of the teacher is taken into consideration (Ronfeldt et al., 2013). Students in high-poverty, high-minority, urban, and rural public schools are impacted even more than schools in suburban or wealthier public-school districts. Some schools, especially those in the poorest sections of large cities, may face an annual turnover rate of 40-50% (Alliance for Education, 2014).

## Organizational Responses to Turnover

Researchers and practitioners are looking for ways to reduce teacher turnover and to do so they must understand the reasons why teachers are leaving. Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2017)

analyzed how four selected stressors experienced by the teacher are related to elements of burnout. They define burnout as "an erosion of engagement" as a result of "long-term occupational stress." The stressors selected were discipline problems, time pressure, low student motivation and value dissonance, and the three elements of burnout were emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. The key finding of this study was the four stressors are not strongly related to each of the three elements of burnout. For example, time pressure was not related to depersonalization and personal accomplishment, but it was strongly correlated to emotional exhaustion. A deeper understanding of burnout could help school executives and teachers develop customized strategies to limit specific stressors based on the needs of the individual teacher.

The Job Demands-Resources Model (JD-R) seeks to understand how an imbalance between the demands of a job and the resources available to do a job effect the job strain experienced by employees. The JD-R Model provides a wide-ranging definition of demands and resources which highlights issues that are prevalent in schools but not considered as important in other models. In addition, the JD-R Model is a better fit for schools due its belief that increased demands can be mitigated by availability of resources (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). This is an important distinction given the trend of increased responsibilities placed upon educators, and if the demands cannot be decreased by the school district, its only recourse is to make changes to its support structures and resource-availability.

According to Shuck and Wollard, the key to developing and retaining top employees is to create an environment where the human need for commitment, satisfaction, and enthusiasm can be fulfilled. This is done at three levels: level one requires that the employee has a clear understanding of expectations; level two occurs when the employee can contribute and feel like a

meaningful part of a community; and level three is fostering the belief that the work the employee is engaged in can change the world (Shuck & Wollard, 2008). One study identified four crucial factors for a person to feel satisfied with his/her job: (1) meaningful work, (2) good relationships with colleagues, (3) high salaries, and (4) independent work (Schad, 2017). An understanding of job satisfaction in the district may decrease the number of teachers leaving due to job strain leading to burnout. A 2005 study of 1,000 employees at a large university demonstrated that many of the factors associated with burnout (work overload, emotional demands, physical demands, and work-home interference) were negated by autonomy, effective feedback, social support, and a high-quality relationship with supervisors (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). These results are promising for educators because autonomy, effective feedback, social support, and high-quality relationships with supervisors are within the control of the school and district leadership.

The current body of research shows there are multiple factors impacting a teacher's decision to leave their current position or leave teaching completely. Because of the variety of reasons and the differences in schools at the state, district, and school level, strategies developed and implemented on a statewide or even district scale may fail to improve the retention rates for specific schools. Targeted strategies to address the needs of specific schools are more likely to be effective if they are based on the needs of the school (DeAngelis & Presley, 2011).

This leaves district and school leaders in North Carolina, who are trying to increase job satisfaction, to focus on creating an environment where teachers feel their work is meaningful, they can develop positive relationships with colleagues, and they are afforded a reasonable amount of autonomy. Focusing on rewards that empower teachers such as recognition of quality work, autonomy in the classroom, opportunities for leadership, and self-directed professional

development may prove more effective long-term than financial rewards (Spitzer, 1996). In a 2009 Phi Delta Kappan article, Eklund, an educational consultant and author, wrote about three questions he asks teachers he has worked with across the country: (1) "What makes a good day at work?" (2) "What makes a bad day at work?" (3) "What can save a bad day?" The frequent answers to question one are about positive professional interactions, recognition, autonomy, appreciation, and focusing on teaching, and the answers to question 2 tend to be about conflict, disorganization, lack of support, and things that take away the focus from teaching. The answers to question 3 are similar to the answers for question 1 but include activities outside of the school day like time with family and exercise. School-based efforts to retain quality teachers can make efforts to build collegial professional relationships, include teachers in the hiring process, develop a system for conflict resolution, openly acknowledge teacher success, limit distractions, and ensure teachers develop a balance between professional and personal time.

Over the past 20 years, North Carolina has lagged behind the national average in teacher pay. While the average teacher salary in North Carolina increased each year from 1999 to 2008, the average salary declined by more than $1,700 from 2008 to 2009, but during that same year, the national average salary increased by over $800. In 2008, the average North Carolina teacher salary was $5,671 lower than the national average and in 2009 the gap widened to $8,352. This margin between widened each year from 2009 to 2014 when it grew to $11,620, leaving North Carolina 47th in the nation in teacher pay. In 2015, North Carolina raised teacher pay for beginning teacher, teachers with 0 to 4 years of experience, from $33,000 to $35,000 while all other teacher salaries remained the same. This raise increased the state teacher salary average to $47,783 which helped shrink the gap with the national salary average to $9,596 (Hinchcliffe & Johnson, 2016). Between 2015 and 2018, teacher pay increased in stages for teachers based on

number of years of experience. While teachers with 0 to 14 years of experience will get a $1,000 pay raise each year, the pay raises stop at year 15 and all teachers with 15 to 24 years of experience will be paid the same, $50,000 per year. The maximum earning potential for a teacher with 25 or more years of experience with a bachelor's degree is $52,000 based on the 2019-2020 salary schedule (Financial & Business Services, 2019). During this period of pay increases from 2015 to 2018, the state teacher attrition rate declined from 9.08% to 8.1%. However, this attrition rate only reflects the teachers who are no longer working in North Carolina Public Schools, and they do not reflect any mobility between school districts (NCDPI, 2016; NCDPI, 2017; NCDPI, 2018b).

# CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to analyze current Central teachers' perceptions of the factors related to teachers either remaining in or leaving Central Schools. The goal of this study is to answer the following questions:

1. What does existing research say about teacher persistence and perceptions of the reasons why teachers stay at their schools?
2. What do current teachers perceive as the most important factors in their decision to stay in their current position?
3. Why do these teachers hold these beliefs?

## Overview of Q Methodology

In traditional quantitative research methods, the goal is to design a study capable of being repeated that will produce similar results. In a traditional design, unique occurrences are problematic, and individual perspectives are of little importance when trying to measure how a sample of a population is alike or different when introduced to a variable. The number of participants also plays a key role in the construct of the study and the significance of the findings (Stephenson, 1935). Researchers using quantitative methods must design the study carefully to ensure they do not influence the results or impart their biases into the results. Researchers that gather information for a quantitative study through an interview must be careful to maintain neutrality. These methods place limits that prevent the answering of important questions in social sciences by forcing the questions into a mold that fits traditional quantitative methodologies (Neumann, 1987).

The success of this study hinges on the ability of the researcher to get teachers to share their beliefs about the factors that have caused them to stay in Central School. The subjective

nature of this topic lends itself to using qualitative research methods because perceptions and beliefs are developed over time by variables which cannot be measured or observed directly (Stenner, 2011). Another advantage of qualitative design is that it embraces the inclusion of information gained during the research process to provide a substantive explanation of the experiences that shaped the participants' views (Neumann, 1987). While qualitative measures would provide answers to many of the questions posed in this study, a purely qualitative approach would lack the features necessary to generalize the results for application beyond these participants (Militello & Benham, 2010). The need to understand how the participants developed their beliefs and to gather data that is viewed as valid by district leaders for the purposes of increasing the retention of teachers led to the selection of Q methodology for this study.

Q methodology provides a quantitative way to study beliefs and perceptions; through Q methodology, researchers can look objectively at inherently subjective concepts (Brown, 1996). Q methodology was introduced by William Stephenson, a British physicist-psychologist, in 1935 while he was at University College, London (Stephenson, 1935; Brown, 1996). Stephenson wanted to create the consistency of the laboratory setting to study human behavior. He understood that to do this through traditional quantitative research methods would be virtually impossible due to issues like sample size and isolation of variables. However, even if these issues were resolved, he noted the social sciences required humans to interact in complex environments outside of the confines of traditional quantitative methods (Stephenson, 1935). To scientifically study something as complex as behaviors, perceptions, biases, or experiences, Q methodology requires the idea of people as subjects and answers as variables to be flipped (Webler et al., 2009). As Stephenson (1935) wrote in his original paper, "The solution is to correlate *persons* instead of *tests*" (p. 18, italics in original).

## Development of the Q Statements

The Q Statements were developed through a review of literature on teacher retention and turnover and a survey of local educators in the community about the reasons why teachers stay at a school. An electronic survey was sent out to teachers, school administrators, district administrators, and school support staff.; the survey asked the respondents to answer the questions "(A) What do you believe is the primary reason a teacher will continue to work at a school?" and "(B) Why do you believe this?" Respondents were able to provide up to three additional reasons and supporting belief statements if they chose to do so. Each of the respondents was assigned a number to protect confidentiality and only the researcher had access to the list of names and matching numbers.

Of the 25 invitations sent, 14 people completed the form and submitted it back to the researcher; seven of the 14 respondents were current classroom teachers, three were central office administrators, two were guidance counselors, and two were school-level administrators. The statements made by the survey respondents were added to the Q-sample and the source was indicated by a number given to each survey respondent. Once the survey respondent questions were added to the list with the statements gathered from the literature, a panel of teachers were gathered to have them review the questions for clarity, conciseness, proper phrasing, and repetition. The panel was asked to review the 65 statements and consider the following questions: (1) Are the statements written in a clear and concise manner?, (2) Are any of the statements redundant that could be removed or combined with another?, (3) Are there any statements that need to be removed?, and (4) Are there statements that should be added to the list? Upon the completion of the review of the initial 65 Q-statements, the panel offered 17 additional reasons for teacher retention that were not included in the original list; those 17

statements were added to the draft list of Q-statements for a total of 82. Redundant statements and statements that were not specific to why a teacher would remain at a school were removed. An adequate Q set contains between 40 and 80 statements which allows the researcher to sufficiently cover the topic without overwhelming the participants (Watts & Stenner, 2005).

From the feedback provided by the panel of teachers, changes were made to statements to provide clarity. The changes made to the statements were:

- The statement stem "The decision to remain a teacher is most impacted by . . ." was changed to "The decision to remain a teacher at my current school is most impacted by . . ." The addition of the phrase "at my current school" reinforces that the research is geared at teachers who not only stay in the profession but choose to stay in the same school.
- The original statements were written avoiding the use of first-person pronouns, but some members of the panel felt the statements would be easier to understand if the first-person pronouns were used. It also reinforces that the goal is for the participant to connect their responses with their own experiences. The statements were revised to ensure subject-verb agreement and correct grammar.
- Statement 8 originally read: "My decision to remain a teacher at my school is most impacted by the strong connections to the area in which I teach." The panel thought the word area was vague and should be replaced by "community." The statement now reads, ""My decision to remain a teacher at my school is most impacted by the strong connections to the community in which I teach."
- Statement 12 originally read: "My decision to remain a teacher at my school is most impacted by my salary." Because teachers may have opportunities to work on

contract to earn additional pay, the statement was written to include all money earned through employment at the school in addition to salary. The statement now reads, "My decision to remain a teacher at my school is most impacted by the amount of money I make as a teacher at this school."

- Statement 19 originally read: "The decision to remain a teacher is most impacted by feeling they have a voice in the decision-making of the school." Participants stated there is a difference between having input in decision making and having input in the decision-process. They also felt that the statement would be better if it were focused on the decisions that directly impact the teacher. The statement now reads as: "My decision to remain a teacher is most impacted by feeling I have a voice in the decision-making processes that affect me."
- Statement 22 originally read: "My decision to remain a teacher at my school is most impacted by the amount of support provided by a mentor teacher." The word "quality" was added to describe the mentor to differentiate between those whose mentor was helpful to them in their development as a teacher. "My decision to remain a teacher at my school is most impacted by the amount of support provided by a quality mentor teacher."
- Statement 37 originally read: "My decision to remain a teacher at my school is most impacted by my commute to work." The length of the commute to a school was considered by a member of the panel to be an important factor. The statement now reads, "My decision to remain a teacher at my school is most impacted by the length of my commute to work."

- Statement 43 originally read: "My decision to remain a teacher at my school is most impacted by having a minimal number of different courses each semester to limit the time spent preparing for the different classes I will teach." The language of this statement was considered negative and unclear. The statement now reads, "My decision to remain a teacher at my school is most impacted by the number of different courses I am required to teach each semester."

In a 2017 dissertation, Delano-Gemzik developed a list of Q-Statements for a similar study. The following concourse structure was modeled after the layout she used for her study, and the three factors, external, internal, and leadership and working conditions were also adopted from her study.

## P Sample

The participants completing the Q-sort in an Q methodology study are called the P-Sample. Q method does not require a large sample set for the study to be effective. A number of participants between 40 and 60 is effective at extracting different viewpoints without including so many participants that the details of the data are obscured by the volume (Watts & Stenner, 2005). The P-Sample for this study consisted of 48 teachers at a high school in Central North Carolina. The teachers ranged in experience from one to over 30 years as a teacher in North Carolina Public Schools. The sample is also a heterogenous group across gender, race, levels of education, and content areas. While selecting teachers from the same school may at first appear to be opportunity sampling, the purpose of this study is to identify the beliefs of teachers within a specific school and school district, and the teachers asked to participate have definitive views based on experiences in their professional practice.

## Data Collection

This study required the collection of data in two different phases. The first data collection was through a Q sort where the participants were given a set of 44 statements and asked to sort them into three piles, "disagree," "neutral," or "agree." Then they are asked to place the statements on a forced choice distribution grid which ranged from -4 (strongly disagree) to +4 (strongly agree). Once all 44 cards were placed on the grid, the participants were prompted to answer demographic questions, explain the rationale for the placement the -4 and +4 cards, and provide contact information if they were willing to participate in post-sort interviews. The full list and categorization of the statements is provided in Appendix B.

The second phase of data collection was the post-sort interviews. The post-sort interview contained participants with the strongest correlation to the one of the two factors that emerged during the data analysis. The participants were grouped by the factor they correlated with and were interviewed in groups of two or three. Each group was shown a composite sort for their factor group. The researcher then asked the groups to answer the following questions during the interview: (1) Who is in your group? Describe any similarities and/or differences (e.g., demographics, job, etc.); (2) Which statements best represent your shared perspective? (3) What has had the greatest impact on how you sorted your cards the way you did? (Examples- past experience, courses, current knowledge, etc.). Please explain your answers; and (4) What name would you assign that represents the perspective illustrated by this model sort? Explain why and the meaning associated with that name—use card statements to provide justification for your name. A detail of the interview protocol is provided in Appendix C. The researcher took notes during the interview and engaged in the discussion to help gain insight to the teachers' rationales for their sorts. The interviews provided further understanding of the way the

participants developed their beliefs and allowed the group members to compare and contrast their own journeys in light of their shared beliefs.

This study was originally designed to take place in a face-to-face setting at the school where the teachers worked. However, the COVID-19 pandemic put the data collection process on an indefinite hold. During this time, the researcher was directed to resources allowing for Q sorts to be completed by participants securely online. The Q sort was built using the Easy HTMLQ program downloaded from the Ken-Q Analysis webpage. The researcher was able to convert the Q sort into an online format by changing the html templates provided by the Easy HTLMQ program to meet the needs of the study.

The researcher compiled a list of 75 classroom teachers who met the criteria for the study. A recruitment email, a copy of which is provided in Appendix D, was sent from the researcher to the 75 eligible participants providing them with more information about the study and the link to the consent form. The staff of the school was emailed two days prior to the sort link being sent out to explain the purpose of the study and that another link would be sent to them from the researcher's university email address with the actual link to the consent information and link to the study if they chose to consent. The consent form was placed within a Google Form. Upon completion of reading the consent form, the individual was asked if they consented to participate in the sort. They were given the option of yes or no and then asked to submit the form. Their response was recorded, and they were then presented with the following statement "Thank you for your response! If you consented to participate in the study by clicking "Yes", please follow this link to the Q Sort" and the link to the sort. There were no respondents who selected "no" after reading the consent form.

In addition to the researcher's email providing instructions for the sort, the Q sort program included detailed instructions for each step. Prior to the Q sort being sent to the participant the researcher enlisted the help of professors, colleagues, friends, and family with varying degrees on knowledge about Q sorts and technology skills to test the program for glitches. All problems found during the testing of the program were fixed and additional instructions were added to the sort program for clarity. The program broke the sort into steps that required the participant to actively select to move on to the next part of the sort. After all 44 cards were placed and inspected for correct positioning, the participants were directed to the demographic and follow-up questions before submitting the completed sort. The results of each sort was coded and sent to an online database. The researcher provided the participants with contact information in the event they encountered difficulties during the sort. The link to the sort was disabled after two weeks of data collection which resulted in 48 completed sorts.

Once the factor groups were identified through data analysis, participants were grouped based on correlations to each factor and were able to select from a list of times and dates when they would be available to be interviewed. The participants completed the interview consent form prior to the interviews. The interviews were conducted through Google Meet in groups of two to four depending on participant availability.

## Data Analysis

The selection of Q methodology for this study was based the ability to gather quantitative and qualitative data that combined gives the researcher the ability to not only identify what teachers believe but also how they developed those beliefs. In a traditional survey format, the answers given by the participants are the data to be analyzed, but in Q methodology it is the participants who are the subject of analysis based on their responses. As factor groups are formed

and responses analyzed between groups, patterns emerge, and the patterns from quantitative data along with the insight gained during the interviews that provides the information to help solve complicated issues like teacher retention (Janson et al., 2016).

Once the Q sorts were completed, the coded data was sent by the online Q sort program to secure online database, Firebase. The data was exported from Firebase into a JSON file. The JSON file containing the coded sort information and the 44 statements were uploaded into the Easy HTMLQ data analysis program located on the Ken-Q Analysis webpage. This produced a correlation matrix for all 44 statements sorted by all 48 participants. The factor extraction resulted in eight factors. A Varimax rotation was then applied for a two-factor, three-factor, four-factor, and five-factor solution. Eigenvalues were used to determine the number of distinct factors that emerged from the data set.

The interviews were focused only on understanding why the participants in each factor group sorted the statements the way they did and to identify patterns, behaviors, and themes. Each group was presented a copy of their factor composite sort and asked to review it. The researcher asked each group the same questions and allowed time for discussion while taking notes. During the interviews, the participants asked clarifying questions of the researcher, and the researcher asked follow-up questions. There were no time restrictions placed on the interviews by the researcher. The interviews allow the Q sorts to be framed by the experiences that shaped the beliefs of the participants.

## Subjectivity Statement

Every researcher has experiences that influence their approach to research, choice of methodology, and extrapolating meaning from the data. The researcher provides a subjectivity

statement to help the reader understand how the experiences of the researcher may shape the research.

As the son of a teacher, I have been surrounded by educators most of my life. I spent many hours after school and during the summer at the school where my mother worked. Her work inspired me to go into education. I graduated with a degree in Physical Education in May of 2005 and began my first teaching job that August as a middle school Physical Education teacher in my hometown. I worked at that school for three years before being transferred to the new middle school where I taught for four years. I also served as a coach, athletic director, and department chair during my seven years as a teacher. As I took on more responsibility, I began to hear more of the complaints from other teachers that they wanted me to voice to the principal. This was my introduction to educational leadership. It was also the time I realized that not everyone grew up in a school and not everyone felt teaching is a calling.

After seven years of being a middle school Physical Education teacher, I was accepted into the leadership academy in my regional school consortium. It was in this program I spent a year doing an intensive paid internship as an administrator at a high school. My job was to shadow the principal to learn everything I could about being a school leader in one year. It was not long before I realized how content many of my former colleagues at the middle school were compared to some of the teachers at my new school. It was also here where I learned how difficult it is to keep teachers happy with their jobs while trying to make instructional improvements.

At the end of that year, I was hired as an assistant principal in the district and have been in that job for eight years. One of my primary responsibilities was working to recruit and retain new teachers. I quickly learned that recruiting, while sometimes challenging, is the easy part of

the job. Retaining quality teachers in a small district surrounded by larger districts with more to offer is always going to be the challenge, but it is far from impossible. I have seen the difference highly-effective collaborative teachers can make on students and other teachers, and I have also seen what impact it has on students and other teachers when they leave. The time and money spent on teacher turnover is significant, but when the good teachers leave because they are dissatisfied with the school, it can have an impact that does far more damage than many realize. I want to use this study to improve teacher retention in order to provide consistency for students and teachers and to allow schools to focus less on filling vacancies and more on improving teaching and learning.

## Summary

This chapter is an overview of the way the research was planned and carried out. Q methodology was used to gather the data on teachers' beliefs about job satisfaction. Q methodology is comprised of a Q sort and post-sort interviews. The rationale for the use of Q along with an explanation of the Q sort and post-sort interview processes and data analysis was explained. This chapter also contained an explanation of the change in data collection method from in-person to online because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The following chapter will discuss the findings of the research.

# CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to identify the beliefs teachers hold that caused them to stay at their current school and to understand how they came to hold these beliefs. Based on a review of literature, a survey of teachers within the districts, and a panel of teachers from another school district, 44 statements were developed for this study.

The original plan for this study was to have participants meet face-to-face to perform the Q Sort. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic this plan had to be amended for this sort to take place online. The researcher used online resources to edit a software program allowing the participants to complete the sorts and answer the demographic questions virtually. The online software program was developed by Banasick and placed online for public use on the Ken-Q Analysis webpage on GitHub. The Q statements, directions for this sort, and demographic questions were written into the software using an HTML code template created by Banasick. Once the coding was complete, the program was hosted by the website Netlify which allowed participants to access the program online. The data collected from the participants was stored in the online backend server Firebase. An email was sent to the 75 teachers who qualified to participate in the study notifying them the researcher would be sending out a link to the consent form and the online qsort. The consent form was attached to a Google Form that was linked in the follow-up email from the researcher. The participants were asked to read the consent form and if they consented, they were to select “yes” at the bottom of the form and press “submit.” After submitting the form, the participant was presented with a link to the online qsort. By clicking on the qsort link, the participant was redirected to the welcome screen of the online sort which provided them with an overview of the purpose of the study. The sort was divided into the following steps:

1. Sort the cards into three piles: disagree, neutral, and agree,
2. Reread the cards from each pile then place them on the score sheet in the location that most closely matches your belief,
3. Review the score sheet and make any changes the participant would like to make,
4. Write a brief statement about why the statements in the -4 column and +4 column were placed there, and
5. Answer the demographic questions.

Upon completion of the five steps, the participants submitted their sorts which were sent to the Firebase server for storage. There were some technical glitches identified during the test sort process, so further instructions were then added to help the participants and the researcher provided support through email, text message, and phone calls during the time the sort was open. Participants were given 14 days to complete the sort. Updates on the progress of the sort collection were sent to the participants on three occasions. By the final day of the sort, 48 sorts were completed and loaded into Firebase. To analyze the sort data, JSON files had to be exported from firebase and loaded into the Easy HTMLQ software program. This program was also developed by Banasick and posted on the GitHub page called Ken-Q Analysis. The statements were uploaded in a text file and the JSON file was also uploaded to the site.

## Correlation Matrix

With all the information loaded into the Easy HTMLQ software program, the researcher was able to begin the data analysis. A correlation matrix was created to show the relationship between each of the participants. The correlation is a range from -1.0 to +1.0. Sorts that are similar will have a correlation to each other that approaches +1.0 while sorts that are opposites will have a correlation to each other that approaches -1.0. For example, participant 15 and

participant 9 have a correlation of -0.35 meaning their sorts were not similar. However, participants 15 and participant 29 have a correlation of +0.75 as their sorts were similar. Participants 15 and 29 both fall into factor 2 and participant 9 is one of the higher correlates and factor 1. The correlation matrix of this study was 48 x 48 based on the number of participants in the study. A truncated version of this correlation matrix can be found in Table 2. The eight principal components were extracted which provided eigenvalues and explained variance for the eight extracted factors. A review of the scree plot of the eigenvalues shows a significant drop in the eigenvalue of factor 1 and 2, and another significant drop between factors 2 and 3. There is a slight drop between factors 3 and 4, almost no difference between 4 and 5, a slight drop between factors 5 and 6, and only a slight decrease between factors 6, 7 and 8. When looking at a scree plot, it is important to identify where the largest differences occur and the location in the plot where the factors begin to level out. This leveling out is known as the elbow. For this data set, the elbow occurs at factor 3. The scree plot is shown in Figure 3.

**Consensus Statements**

After the data is analyzed from the sort and factor groups are established, the sorted statements fall into two categories, consensus statements and distinguishing statements. Consensus statements were ranked similarly by the factor groups, and distinguishing statements were ranked differently by the groups. While distinguishing statements determine in which factor group a participant is placed, identifying consensus statements and discussing them in the post-sort interviews allows for a better understanding of the beliefs of the participants.

In this study, there were four statements that were given the same rank by both factor groups, Statement 11 (my enjoyment of watching students succeed), Statement 17 (the feeling that I have a positive impact on students' lives), Statement 33 (my interest in the subject that I

Table 2

*Correlation Matrix Between Sorts (Truncated)*

| Sorts | 1 | 2 | 3 | … | 46 | 47 | 48 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 1.0 | .3 | .28 | … | .2 | .24 | .28 |
| 2 | .3 | 1.0 | .14 | … | .31 | .45 | .22 |
| 3 | .28 | .14 | 1.0 | … | .5 | .17 | .23 |
| … | … | … | … | … | … | … | … |
| 46 | .2 | .31 | .5 | … | 1.0 | .15 | .25 |
| 47 | .24 | .45 | .17 | … | .15 | 1.0 | .16 |
| 48 | .28 | .22 | .23 | … | .25 | .16 | 1.0 |

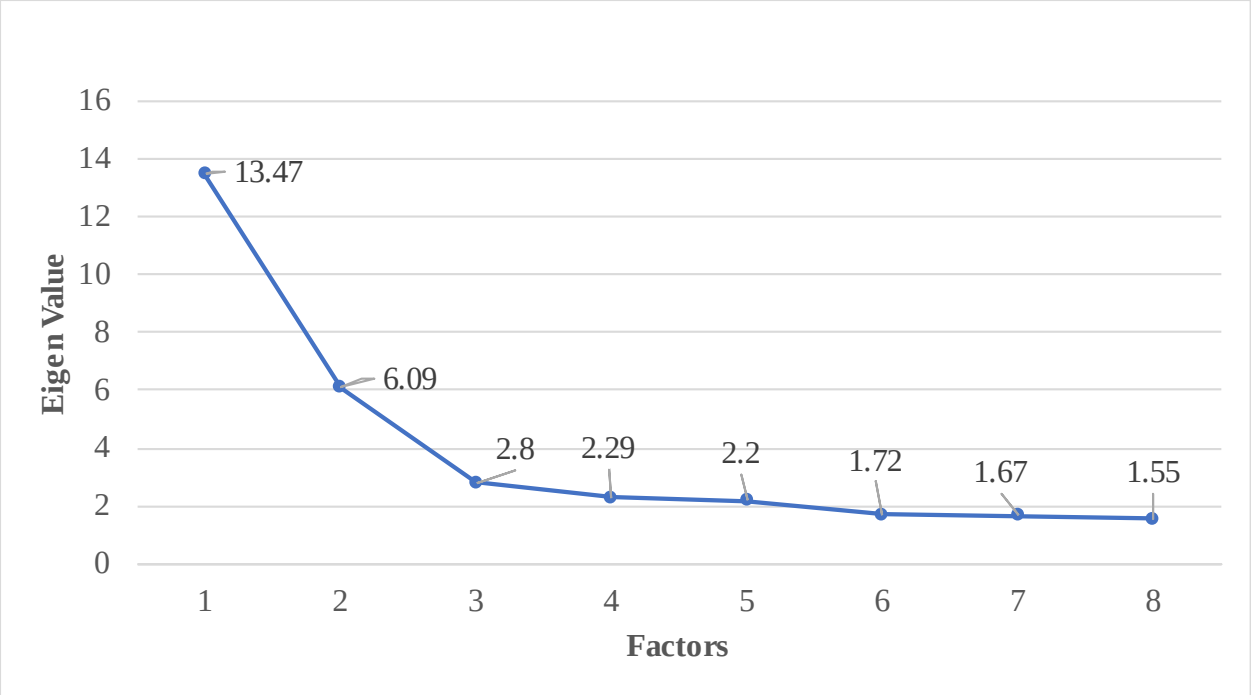



*Figure 3*. Scree Plot of Eigen Values.

teach), and Statement 40 (the extra-duties required of me for which I receive no compensation). Seven other statements, while not ranked identically by the groups, were similar enough to be consensus statements, Statement 8 (The strong connections to the community in which I teach), Statement 9 (Working in a collaborative environment), Statement 23 (Access to curriculum resources and supplies), Statement 24 (The instructional feedback provided by administrators), Statement 27 (The physical condition of their classroom), Statement 32 (My feelings about district policies and procedures), and Statement 35 (The level of parent involvement at the school).

## Factor Analysis

Q methodology seeks to identify similarities in groups of participants; these similarities are called factors. The purpose of the qsort is to identify multiple factors within the group of participants that would explain the phenomenon being investigated. It is the role of the researcher to determine how many factors should be used to best explain the results of the sort. An analysis of eigenvalues, explained variance, correlations between factors, and number of participants included help the researcher determine the number of factors used. For this study, 2-factor, 3-factor, 4-factor, and 5-factor solutions were run using Easy HTMLQ. Varimax rotation was applied to each solution and participants were auto-flagged at the 0.05 confidence level. A two-factor solution with eigenvalues of 13.47 for factor one and 6.09 for factor two provided a 40% explained variance, included 48 out of 48 participants, and had a correlation among factors of .2558. A three-factor solution increase the explained variance to 47%, decrease the number of participants to 42 out of 48, and had a correlation among factors of .2290, .5741, and .1093. The four-factor solution increase the explained variance to 51%, decrease the number of participants to 39 out of 48, and had a correlation among factors of .1856, .5737, .4873, .0755, .0757, and

.526. The addition of a fifth factor increased the explained variance to 57%, decrease the number of participants to 37 out of 48, and had a correlation among factors of .188, .4142, .4956, .5713, -.0412, .1044, .233, .3702, .3917, and .4993. A summary of the results of each solution can be found in Table 3.

The two-factor solution has the lowest explained variance of each of the factors but includes 100% of the participants and has a low correlation among factors. A three-factor solution does increase the explained variance excludes six participants, and the correlation between factor one and factor three is higher than desired. The four-factor solution provides a 4% increase in explained variance however that is negated by the additional exclusion of three participants and three of the correlations among factors are too high to be distinctive. The five-factor solution raises the explained variance to 57% but it also decreases the number of participants to 37 out of 48 and provides too many indistinct factors in the correlation among factors. The two-factor solution was selected because it provided the best balance of explained variance, the most participants, and a low correlation between factors. While a two-factor solution is not ideal because the purpose of Q methodology is to extract multiple factors, these two factors have distinctly higher eigenvalues, include 100% of the participants, and have a low correlation among factors at .2558 and still provides 40% of the explained variance with factor one accounting for 24% and factor two accounted for 16% of the total 40% explained variance. The correlation matrix for the factors is presented in Table 4.

A factor matrix provides an overview of how the individual participants correlated to the model factor array for each of the factors. For example, participant 11 was highly correlated with the model factor array for factor 2 with a .805 and was negatively correlated with the model factor array for factor 1 with a -.0568. Other participants were more evenly correlated between

Table 3

*Information Used to Determine the Factor Rotation*

| Factor Rotation Solution | Eigen Values | Explained Variance | Number of Participants | Correlation Among Factors |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2 Factor | 13.27<br>6.09 | 40% | 48 out of 48 | .2558 |
| 3 Factors | 13.47<br>6.09<br>2.8 | 47% | 42 out of 48 | .2209<br>.5741<br>.1093 |
| 4 Factors | 13.47<br>6.09<br>2.8<br>2.29 | 51% | 39 out of 48 | .1856 .0755<br>.5737 .0757<br>.4873 .526 |
| 5 Factors | 13.47<br>6.09<br>2.8<br>2.29<br>2.2 | 57% | 37 out of 48 | .188 .1044<br>.4142 .233<br>.4956 .3702<br>.5713 .3917<br>-.0412 .4993 |

Table 4

*Correlations among Factor Scores*

| | Factor 1 | Factor 2 |
|---|---|---|
| Factor 1 | 1.000 | 0.2558 |
| Factor 2 | 0.2558 | 1.000 |

the two factors. Participant two for example had a .473 for factor 1 and a .5412 for factor 2; while this difference does not seem great, participant 2 still load significantly at .05 on factor 2. The factor matrix for all 48 participants can be found in Table 5.

The Humphrey's Rule was applied to ensure that data from the two-factor sort met the necessary criteria for validity. This rule is a test to determine if the two highest loading correlates from each factor are greater than twice the standard error. The two highest correlates from each factor were multiplied together to get cross product of the two highest loadings which were factor one was .665 and for factor two was .6573. The standard error was derived by dividing the square root of the number of statements by one. This sort contained 44 statements which has a square root of 6.63 and 6.63 divided by one results in a standard error of .1507. This standard error is then multiplied by two and the product is .3015. The final step is to subtract .3015 from the two cross product factor loadings, .665 and .6573, to see if the difference is a positive number. For factor I the difference was .3635 and for factor 2 the difference was .3558; both of these are positive values therefore they are greater than twice the standard error which is the threshold for validity in the Humphrey's Rule. Table 6 provides an overview of the Humphrey's Rule.

**Factor 1: Monarchy High School**

Factor 1 accounted for 34 out of the 48 participants and 24% of the explained variance. Demographically the factor one participants were 17 female and 17 male, 25 white, four Hispanic, three other, and two African-American, seven had between one and five years teaching experience eight had six to ten, six had 11 to 15, two had 16 to 20, eight had 20 to 25, and two had 26 or more years, three participants did not report age, six are 20 to 30 years old, nine are 31 to 40 years old, six are 41 to 50 years old, and nine are 51 years old or older, 19 earned their

Table 5

*Factor Matrix Using Participants' Q-Sorts (Loadings)*

| Participant | Factor One | Factor Two |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | 0.1219 | 0.5632 |
| 2 | 0.473 | 0.5412 |
| 3 | 0.4104 | 0.0559 |
| 4 | 0.6317 | -0.2117 |
| 5 | 0.5652 | 0.0704 |
| 6 | -0.015 | 0.7593 |
| 7 | 0.7661 | 0.2959 |
| 8 | -0.0103 | 0.4555 |
| 9 | 0.5893 | -0.2607 |
| 10 | 0.6687 | 0.116 |
| 11 | -0.0568 | 0.805 |
| 12 | 0.2388 | 0.792 |
| 13 | 0.5961 | 0.2033 |
| 14 | 0.5839 | 0.0546 |
| 15 | -0.2887 | 0.8108 |
| 16 | 0.3928 | 0.2224 |
| 17 | -0.2717 | 0.7596 |
| 18 | 0.6091 | 0.0069 |
| 19 | 0.4041 | 0.2015 |
| 20 | 0.8446 | 0.0346 |

Table 5 (continued)

| Participant | Factor One | Factor Two |
|---|---|---|
| 21 | 0.4495 | 0.2414 |
| 22 | 0.3863 | 0.2177 |
| 23 | 0.4352 | 0.3631 |
| 24 | 0.2084 | 0.8107 |
| 25 | 0.5432 | 0.5048 |
| 26 | 0.6319 | -0.072 |
| 27 | 0.5183 | 0.2556 |
| 28 | 0.411 | -0.1438 |
| 29 | -0.1323 | 0.73 |
| 30 | 0.7856 | 0.1731 |
| 31 | 0.518 | 0.439 |
| 32 | 0.5487 | 0.0363 |
| 33 | 0.3059 | -0.1042 |
| 34 | 0.618 | 0.4788 |
| 35 | 0.4547 | 0.3362 |
| 36 | 0.3146 | 0.0568 |
| 37 | 0.5266 | 0.1506 |
| 38 | 0.2846 | 0.444 |
| 39 | 0.4462 | -0.0836 |
| 40 | 0.677 | 0.1607 |
| 41 | 0.1736 | 0.6047 |

Table 5 (continued)

| Participant | Factor One | Factor Two |
|---|---|---|
| 42 | 0.6411 | 0.227 |
| 43 | 0.5776 | 0.3153 |
| 44 | 0.3029 | 0.5279 |
| 45 | 0.6297 | 0.2025 |
| 46 | 0.6175 | -0.047 |
| 47 | 0.6925 | 0.2345 |
| 48 | 0.1183 | 0.3515 |

*Note*. * p<.01; ** p<.05.

Table 6

*Humphrey's Rule*

| | Factor 1 | Factor 2 |
|---|---|---|
| Cross Product of Two Highest Loadings | 0.665 | 0.6573 |
| Standard Error | 0.1507 | 0.1507 |
| Standard Error x 2 | 0.3015 | .3015 |
| Difference | 0.3635 | 0.3558 |

teaching licenses through a traditional college program, 12 through a lateral entry program, two reported other programs, and one was a North Carolina Teaching Fellow. Table 7 provides an overview of the demographics for participants significantly loading in Factor 1.

For each statement a Z-score was calculated for each factor group. A Z-score shows the relationship of each statement to the mean distribution and how many standard deviations it falls from the mean. Statement 17, "The feeling I have a positive impact on students' lives," had the highest Z-score, 1.967, in factor 1, Statement 11, "My enjoyment of watching students succeed," had a Z-score of, 1.945, and Statement 7, "feeling that school administration values me for my abilities as a teacher," had a Z-score of 1.585; each of these statements was ranked a +4 in the model factor array. The model sort for factor one by statement number can be found in Figure 4.

Statement 12, "the amount of money I make as a teacher at this school," had the lowest Z-score, -1.799, in factor 1, Statement 15, "my children are attending school in the same district where I am a teacher," had a Z-score of -1.544, and Statement 37, "the length of my commute to work," had a Z score of -1.351; each of these statements were ranked a -4 in the model factor array for factor I. All statements ranked by Z score in descending order for factor 1 can be found in Table 8.

A summation of group values for factor 1 can be extracted by looking at the two extremes of the model sort to see which statements were placed in the +4, +3, -3, and -4 columns. Table 9 provides an overview of the highest and lowest statements. As mentioned above, Statements 17 and 11 were placed in the +4 column indicating their enjoyment of working with students. Statement 7, also in the +4 column, is supported by Statements 4, "school administration treating me as professional," and 16, "feeling administration cares about me as a person," showing the importance of administrative support for the teachers in Factor 1 as both 4 and 16 were placed in

Table 7

*Participants Loading Significantly on Factor One*

| Participant | Loading | Years of Experience | Ethnicity | Gender | Age Range | Teacher Preparation Program |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3 | 0.4104 | 20 – 25 | White | Female | - | Traditional |
| 4 | 0.6317 | 11 -15 | White | Male | 41 -50 | Traditional |
| 5 | 0.5652 | 1 - 5 | White | Female | 20 - 30 | Traditional |
| 7 | 0.7661 | 20 - 25 | White | Male | - | Traditional |
| 9 | 0.5893 | 6 - 10 | Other | Female | 20 -30 | Traditional |
| 10 | 0.6687 | 6 - 10 | White | Female | 31 - 40 | Traditional |
| 13 | 0.5961 | 6 - 10 | White | Female | 31 - 40 | Other |
| 14 | 0.5839 | 1 - 5 | Hispanic | Female | 31 - 40 | Lateral Entry |
| 16 | 0.3928 | 20 - 25 | Af.-Am. | Female | 51+ | Lateral Entry |
| 18 | 0.6091 | 20 - 25 | White | Male | 51 + | Traditional |
| 19 | 0.4041 | 16 - 20 | White | Female | 41 - 50 | Lateral Entry |
| 20 | 0.8446 | 16 -20 | White | Female | 51+ | Lateral Entry |
| 21 | 0.4495 | 11 - 15 | White | Male | 51+ | Lateral Entry |
| 22 | 0.3863 | 6 - 10 | Af.-Am. | Male | 20 - 30 | Lateral Entry |
| 23 | 0.4352 | 20 - 25 | White | Male | - | Traditional |
| 25 | 0.5432 | 20 - 25 | White | Male | 51+ | Traditional |
| 26 | 0.6319 | 26+ | White | Female | 51+ | Traditional |
| 27 | 0.5183 | 6 - 10 | White | Female | 31 - 40 | Lateral Entry |
| 28 | 0.411 | 11 - 15 | White | Male | 31 - 40 | Traditional |
| 30 | 0.7856 | 6 - 10 | White | Male | 20 - 30 | Other |

Table 7 (continued)

| Participant | Loading | Years of Experience | Ethnicity | Gender | Age Range | Teacher Preparation Program |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 31 | 0.518 | 1 - 5 | White | Female | 20 - 30 | Traditional |
| 32 | 0.5487 | 20 - 25 | White | Male | 41 - 50 | NCTF |
| 33 | 0.3059 | 6 - 10 | Hispanic | Female | 41 - 50 | Lateral Entry |
| 34 | 0.618 | 6 - 10 | Hispanic | Female | 31 - 40 | Traditional |
| 35 | 0.4547 | 1 - 5 | White | Male | 41 - 51 | Lateral Entry |
| 36 | 0.3146 | 20 - 25 | Hispanic | Female | 51+ | Traditional |
| 37 | 0.5266 | 1 - 5 | White | Female | 51+ | Traditional |
| 39 | 0.4462 | 11 - 15 | White | Male | 31 - 40 | Traditional |
| 40 | 0.677 | 11 - 15 | White | Male | 31 - 40 | Lateral Entry |
| 42 | 0.6411 | 1 - 5 | White | Male | 51+ | Traditional |
| 43 | 0.5776 | 1 - 5 | Other | Female | 20 - 30 | Lateral Entry |
| 45 | 0.6297 | 26+ | White | Male | 51+ | Traditional |
| 46 | 0.6175 | 1 - 5 | White | Male | 31 - 40 | Lateral Entry |
| 47 | 0.6925 | 11 - 15 | Other | Male | 41 - 50 | Traditional |

| - 4 | - 3 | - 2 | - 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

| 37 | 40 | 32 | 18 | 8 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 17 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 15 | 22 | 35 | 38 | 30 | 2 | 31 | 33 | 11 |
| 12 | 43 | 21 | 28 | 26 | 13 | 25 | 16 | 7 |
| | 29 | 36 | 24 | 6 | 10 | 14 | 5 | |
| | | 19 | 44 | 34 | 9 | 42 | | |
| | | | 27 | 20 | 41 | | | |
| | | | | 23 | | | | |
| | | | | 39 | | | | |

*Figure 4*. Factor One Model Sort.

Table 8

*Factor One Normalized Factor Scores*

| Card | Statement | Z-score | Sort Values |
|---|---|---|---|
| 17 | The feeling that I have a positive impact on students' lives. | 1.967 | 4 |
| 11 | My enjoyment of watching students succeed. | 1.945 | 4 |
| 7 | Feeling that school administration values me for my abilities as a teacher. | 1.585 | 4 |
| 4 | School administration treating me as a professional. | 1.507 | 3 |
| 33 | My interest in the subject that I teach. | 1.28 | 3 |
| 16 | Feeling administration cares about me as a person. | 1.252 | 3 |
| 5 | Being given autonomy in the design and execution of my lessons. | 1.233 | 3 |
| 3 | School administrators consistently enforcing school rules. | 0.869 | 2 |
| 31 | Having an atmosphere of trust in the school. | 0.81 | 2 |
| 25 | Me feeling safe at work. | 0.807 | 2 |
| 14 | Feeling comfortable voicing my concerns to administration. | 0.744 | 2 |
| 42 | The feeling I am supported by administrators when dealing with difficult parents. | 0.696 | 2 |
| 1 | The belief that I am called to be a teacher. | 0.665 | 1 |
| 2 | Positive relationships developed with my fellow teachers. | 0.653 | 1 |
| 13 | Feeling they have a voice in the decision-making processes that affect me. | 0.628 | 1 |
| 10 | Feeling school administration holds the entire staff to consistent standards of professionalism. | 0.581 | 1 |
| 9 | Working in a collaborative environment. | 0.559 | 1 |

Table 8 (continued)

| Card | Statement | Z-score | Sort Values |
|---|---|---|---|
| 41 | Clear and timely communication about matters that impact me. | 0.385 | 1 |
| 8 | The strong connections to the community in which I teach. | 0.291 | 0 |
| 30 | Being recognized by administration for my professional accomplishments. | 0.17 | 0 |
| 26 | Student behavior. | 0.116 | 0 |
| 6 | Feeling school administration protects my instructional time by limiting interruptions. | 0.108 | 0 |
| 34 | The ability to find and maintain a balance between my work and personal life. | -0.036 | 0 |
| 20 | The opportunities for advancement in the profession. | -0.247 | 0 |
| 23 | Access to curriculum resources and supplies. | -0.301 | 0 |
| 39 | Having protected planning without having meetings or covering classes for absent teachers. | -0.313 | 0 |
| 18 | The time it allows to spend with my family. | -0.314 | -1 |
| 38 | Social and team building activities held at the school to build a positive culture. | -0.615 | -1 |
| 28 | The amount of time spent on developing lesson plans. | -0.681 | -1 |
| 24 | The instructional feedback provided by administrators. | -0.689 | -1 |
| 44 | The availability of technology resources in my classroom. | -0.72 | -1 |
| 27 | The physical condition of their classroom. | -0.722 | -1 |
| 32 | My feelings about district policies and procedures. | -0.789 | -2 |
| 35 | The level of parent involvement at the school. | -0.888 | -2 |
| 21 | Having retirement benefits. | -0.889 | -2 |

Table 8 (continued)

| Card | Statement | Z-score | Sort Values |
|---|---|---|---|
| 36 | The knowledge that colleagues know me personally. | -0.913 | -2 |
| 19 | The number of students in each of my classes. | -1.013 | -2 |
| 40 | The extra-duties required of me for which I receive no compensation. | -1.177 | -3 |
| 22 | The amount of support provided by a quality mentor teacher. | -1.275 | -3 |
| 43 | The number of different courses I am required to teach each semester. | -1.285 | -3 |
| 29 | Having common planning time with teachers in my content area. | -1.288 | -3 |
| 37 | The length of my commute to work. | -1.351 | -4 |
| 15 | My children attending school in the same district where I am a teacher. | -1.544 | -4 |
| 12 | The amount of money I make as a teacher at this school. | -1.799 | -4 |

Table 9

*Factor One: High-Positive and High-Negative Statements*

| Score | Card | Statement |
|---|---|---|
| 4 | 17 | The feeling that I have a positive impact on students' lives. |
| 4 | 11 | My enjoyment of watching students succeed. |
| 4 | 7 | Feeling that school administration values me for my abilities as a teacher. |
| 3 | 4 | School administration treating me as a professional. |
| 3 | 33 | My interest in the subject that I teach. |
| 3 | 16 | Feeling administration cares about me as a person. |
| 3 | 5 | Being given autonomy in the design and execution of my lessons. |
| -3 | 40 | The extra-duties required of me for which I receive no compensation. |
| -3 | 22 | The amount of support provided by a quality mentor teacher. |
| -3 | 43 | The number of different courses I am required to teach each semester. |
| -3 | 29 | Having common planning time with teachers in my content area. |
| -4 | 37 | The length of my commute to work. |
| -4 | 15 | My children attending school in the same district where I am a teacher. |
| -4 | 12 | The amount of money I make as a teacher at this school. |

the +3 column. Also placed in the +3 column were Statement 33, "my interest in the subject that I teach," and Statement 5, "being given autonomy in the design and execution of my lessons."

In the post-sort interviews, the importance of these statements was reinforced, and the sort choices were explained by the interviewees. In response to Statement 4, a 20-year teaching veteran said, "Administrators should require everyone to treat others like they are professionals. I worked outside of education for 20 years before becoming a teacher, and it blew my mind at how often I am treated like a kindergartener. Being treated that way could make me walk out the door real quick." Another teacher with over 20 years of classroom experience who entered the profession through North Carolina Teaching Fellows stated, "Once you have been treated with respect and come to expect that kind of treatment and feel valued as a professional, you want to see the administration support and expect the mindset of being a professional."

Statement 16 "feeling administration cares about me as a person," was another distinguishing factor related to support from administration. A teacher of over 15 years explained, "I feel that people let me make decisions, but I don't feel that the support is there by the actions of leadership. If I am doing something and invite people who never come to the events, I don't believe they are supporting me. I don't feel particularly valued at the school, but I don't leave because the relationships with the students still outweighs the other factors." This quote summarized the feelings of other interviewees who want the support from administrators, but if they have strong relationships with a cohort of students, they are willing to tolerate the lack of admin support.

On the negative side of the sort chart, in addition to the aforementioned Statements 12, 15, and 37, participants also negatively ranked Statement 29, "having common planning time with teachers and my content area," Statement 43, "the number of different courses I am required

to teach each semester," Statement 22, "the amount of support provided by quality mentor teacher," and Statement 40, "the extra duties required of me for which I receive no compensation." Based on the highest ranked and lowest ranked statements, teachers in factor one most value working with students and a supportive leadership, and they least value the financial gain and the time demands of being a teacher.

**Factor 2: Federation High School**

Factor 2 accounted for 14 out of the 48 total participants. The demographics of factor 2 are as follows: eight female and six male; 11 white, one African-American, one Hispanic, one other; four had between one and five years teaching experience, three had six to ten years, one had 11 to 15 years, four had 16 to 20 years, and two had 20 to 25 years; two participants did not report their age, four are 20 to 30 years old, one is 41 to 50 years old, and five are 51 years old or older; five received their license to teach through a traditional program, eight participated in a lateral entry program, and one reported other as their program of certification. Table 10 provides an overview of the demographics for participants significantly loading in Factor 2.

The two highest ranked statements for factor two are the same as the highest rank statements for factor one with the only difference being the Z score for each. Statement 17 had a slightly higher Z score, 1.998, in factor two than in factor one, and Statement 11 had a slightly lower Z score, 1.896, in factor two than in factor one. The third highest rank statement in factor two is Statement 2, "positive relationships developed with my fellow teachers," with a Z score of 1.882. Each of these factors was ranked +4 in the model factor for group two. The model for the factor to sort is located in Figure 5.

Table 10

*Participants Loading on Factor Two*

| Participant | Loading | Years of Experience | Ethnicity | Gender | Age Range | Teacher Preparation Program |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 0.5632 | 11 - 15 | White | Male | | Lateral Entry |
| 2 | 0.5412 | 16 - 20 | White | Male | | Lateral Entry |
| 6 | 0.7593 | 16 - 20 | White | Male | 51+ | Lateral Entry |
| 8 | 0.4555 | 20 - 25 | White | Female | 51+ | Traditional |
| 11 | 0.805 | 6 - 10 | White | Male | 20 - 30 | Traditional |
| 12 | 0.792 | 6 - 10 | White | Male | 51+ | Other |
| 15 | 0.8108 | 1 - 5 | Other | Female | 20 - 30 | Traditional |
| 17 | 0.7596 | 6 - 10 | White | Male | 20 - 30 | Traditional |
| 24 | 0.8107 | 1 - 5 | White | Female | 20 - 30 | Lateral Entry |
| 29 | 0.73 | 1 - 5 | White | Female | 51+ | Lateral Entry |
| 38 | 0.444 | 20 - 25 | White | Female | 51+ | Traditional |
| 41 | 0.6047 | 16 - 20 | Hispanic | Female | 41 - 50 | Lateral Entry |
| 44 | 0.5279 | 16 - 20 | Af.-Am. | Female | 31 - 40 | Lateral Entry |
| 48 | 0.3515 | 1 - 5 | White | Female | 31 - 40 | Lateral Entry |

| - 4 | - 3 | - 2 | - 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

| 6 | 13 | 27 | 22 | 38 | 44 | 18 | 5 | 17 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 39 | 12 | 4 | 42 | 15 | 37 | 34 | 33 | 11 |
| 10 | 40 | 30 | 41 | 23 | 43 | 9 | 1 | 2 |
| | 3 | 14 | 35 | 31 | 28 | 8 | 36 | |
| | | 20 | 32 | 21 | 25 | 19 | | |
| | | | 26 | 24 | 29 | | | |
| | | | | 7 | | | | |
| | | | | 16 | | | | |

*Figure 4*. Factor Two Model Sort.

Unlike the highest-ranked statements, the same statements do not appear in the three lowest-ranked statements for both factor I and factor 2 as can be seen in Table 11. Statement 10, "feeling school administration holds the entire staff to consistent standards of professionalism," was ranked the lowest in factor 2 with a Z score of -1.804. Statement 39, "having protected planning without having meetings or covering classes for absent teachers," had a Z score of -1.669, and Statement 6, "feeling school administration protects my instructional time by limiting interruptions," had a Z score of -1.6. These were the three lowest ranked statements in factor two. Each was ranked at -4.

When looking at the highest and lowest ranked statements, factor two does have some of the same statements placed similarly to factor one. As previously mentioned, Statement 17 and 11 were both ranked at +4 for both groups, and there are two other highly ranked statements between groups, Statements 5 and 33 which were ranked at a +3 for both groups. The other two statements ranked at a +3 by the factor two group which were different from the factor one group, were statement one, "the belief that I'm called to be a teacher," and Statement 36, "the knowledge that colleagues know me personally." There were also two statements shared by both factor groups in the -3 column, Statement 12 and Statement 40. The two other statements ranked at -3 in factor 2 or Statement 13, "feeling they have a voice in the decision-making processes that affect me," and Statement 3, "school administrators consistently enforcing the school rules." The statements and their ranking by Z score in descending order can be found in Table 12.

Despite similar beliefs with the factor one group in some areas, factor two group does hold a distinctly different view of what is important to them and what is not. These beliefs do emerge even in looking only at the +4, +3, -3, and -4 columns. Factor two group values good

Table 11

*Factor Two High-Positive and High-Negative Statements*

| Score | Card | Statement |
|---|---|---|
| 4 | 17 | The feeling that I have a positive impact on students' lives. |
| 4 | 11 | My enjoyment of watching students succeed. |
| 4 | 2 | Positive relationships developed with my fellow teachers. |
| 3 | 5 | Being given autonomy in the design and execution of my lessons. |
| 3 | 33 | My interest in the subject that I teach. |
| 3 | 1 | The belief that I am called to be a teacher. |
| 3 | 36 | The knowledge that colleagues know me personally. |
| -3 | 13 | Feeling they have a voice in the decision-making processes that affect me. |
| -3 | 12 | The amount of money I make as a teacher at this school. |
| -3 | 40 | The extra-duties required of me for which I receive no compensation. |
| -3 | 3 | School administrators consistently enforcing school rules. |
| -4 | 6 | Feeling school administration protects my instructional time by limiting interruptions. |
| -4 | 39 | Having protected planning without having meetings or covering classes for absent teachers. |
| -4 | 10 | Feeling school administration holds the entire staff to consistent standards of professionalism. |

Table 12

*Factor Two Normalized Z-Scores*

| Card | Statement | Z-score | Sort Values |
|---|---|---|---|
| 17 | The feeling that I have a positive impact on students' lives. | 1.998 | 4 |
| 11 | My enjoyment of watching students succeed. | 1.896 | 4 |
| 2 | Positive relationships developed with my fellow teachers. | 1.882 | 4 |
| 5 | Being given autonomy in the design and execution of my lessons. | 1.708 | 3 |
| 33 | My interest in the subject that I teach. | 1.515 | 3 |
| 1 | The belief that I am called to be a teacher. | 1.474 | 3 |
| 36 | The knowledge that colleagues know me personally. | 1.393 | 3 |
| 18 | The time it allows to spend with my family. | 1.161 | 2 |
| 34 | The ability to find and maintain a balance between my work and personal life. | 1.105 | 2 |
| 9 | Working in a collaborative environment. | 0.86 | 2 |
| 8 | The strong connections to the community in which I teach. | 0.661 | 2 |
| 19 | The number of students in each of my classes. | 0.59 | 2 |
| 44 | The availability of technology resources in my classroom. | 0.57 | 1 |
| 37 | The length of my commute to work. | 0.235 | 1 |
| 43 | The number of different courses I am required to teach each semester. | 0.178 | 1 |
| 28 | The amount of time spent on developing lesson plans. | 0.176 | 1 |
| 25 | Me feeling safe at work. | 0.146 | 1 |
| 29 | Having common planning time with teachers in my content area. | -0.016 | 1 |

Table 12 (continued)

| Card | Statement | Z-score | Sort Values |
|---|---|---|---|
| 38 | Social and team building activities held at the school to build a positive culture. | -0.019 | 0 |
| 15 | My children attending school in the same district where I am a teacher. | -0.078 | 0 |
| 23 | Access to curriculum resources and supplies. | -0.091 | 0 |
| 31 | Having an atmosphere of trust in the school. | -0.169 | 0 |
| 21 | Having retirement benefits. | -0.183 | 0 |
| 24 | The instructional feedback provided by administrators. | -0.326 | 0 |
| 7 | Feeling that school administration values me for my abilities as a teacher. | -0.335 | 0 |
| 16 | Feeling administration cares about me as a person. | -0.349 | 0 |
| 22 | The amount of support provided by a quality mentor teacher. | -0.436 | -1 |
| 42 | The feeling I am supported by administrators when dealing with difficult parents. | -0.446 | -1 |
| 41 | Clear and timely communication about matters that impact me. | -0.465 | -1 |
| 35 | The level of parent involvement at the school. | -0.519 | -1 |
| 32 | My feelings about district policies and procedures. | -0.542 | -1 |
| 26 | Student behavior. | -0.572 | -1 |
| 27 | The physical condition of their classroom. | -0.666 | -2 |
| 4 | School administration treating me as a professional. | -0.686 | -2 |
| 30 | Being recognized by administration for my professional accomplishments. | -0.7 | -2 |
| 14 | Feeling comfortable voicing my concerns to administration. | -0.757 | -2 |
| 20 | The opportunities for advancement in the profession. | -0.854 | -2 |

Table 12 (continued)

| Card | Statement | Z-score | Sort Values |
|---|---|---|---|
| 13 | Feeling they have a voice in the decision-making processes that affect me. | -0.86 | -3 |
| 12 | The amount of money I make as a teacher at this school. | -0.886 | -3 |
| 40 | The extra-duties required of me for which I receive no compensation. | -1.071 | -3 |
| 3 | School administrators consistently enforcing school rules. | -1.447 | -3 |
| 6 | Feeling school administration protects my instructional time by limiting interruptions. | -1.6 | -4 |
| 39 | Having protected planning without having meetings or covering classes for absent teachers. | -1.669 | -4 |
| 10 | Feeling school administration holds the entire staff to consistent standards of professionalism. | -1.804 | -4 |

working relationships with fellow teachers and even personal relationships with colleagues. They also strive to find a balance between work and their personal lives. They place very little value on the behaviors and actions of school administrators.

## Chapter Summary

Chapter 4 gave a summary of the information collected during this study. The participants were high school teachers located in a school district in central North Carolina. The teachers were asked to rank statements about beliefs that were most important to their decision to stay at their school. The 44 statements were developed prior to the Q-sort through a review of existing research and a survey of local educators who were not going to participate in the study. The qsort was done electronically through a website due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants placed the statement cards on a grid which ranged from -4 (least important) to +4 (most important) and answered some basic demographic and follow-up questions before closing out the sort. The data from the sort was sent from the sort website and directly to a database, and the data was analyzed. After a review of the data, a two-factor solution was decided upon and teachers who loaded significantly on each factor was invited to participate in a post-sort follow-up interview. Those who were able to participate met with the researcher in small groups through Google Meet. The follow interview provided further insight as to the rationale behind the beliefs the teachers hold.

Chapter 5 will discuss the findings of this study as they compare to the existing body of research. The goal of the chapter is to extract implications for further research and provide insight in decision making with regard to retaining teachers in this school district.

# CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to understand teachers' attitudes and perceptions about teacher retention and turnover in one high school in rural North Carolina. The result can inform district leadership practice as well as policies to support teachers in an effort to decrease turnover. Ameliorating teacher turnover has a number of benefits including a decrease in lost instructional time, a decrease in resources used to recruit new teachers, an increase in stability within the school, and the opportunity to create a strong school culture.

Instead of focusing on why teachers leave their current positions, this study is focused on the critical factors that teachers perceive as important to their job satisfaction and decisions to remain in their current positions.

This study was partially conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic. On March 15, 2020, Governor Roy Cooper ordered that all public schools cease providing in-person instruction and all non-essential employees would work from home. At the time of the data collection for this study, participants had not been on the school campus for approximately three months. The Q-sort was conducted through an online program and interviews were conducted via Google Meet.

The Q methodology was used to examine the beliefs and perceptions of teachers about the factors that are related to a teacher's decision to stay in or leave a school or school district. A review of literature, surveys, and interviews were performed to understand what key factors are believed to influence a teacher's decision to stay in a school or school district. The information gathered from the existing literature, surveys, and interviews were used to develop statements, the q-set. Forty-eight teachers at a high school in Central North Carolina sorted the statements. These data were factor analyzed to extract two viewpoints. Follow up interviews with members

of each of the factor groups were conducted to gain insight into the reasons for the decisions made during the q-sort.

The information provided by this study will give the school-level and district-level leaders insight into the reasons teachers stay at their school and in the district. Use of this information could be used to decrease the teacher turnover rate which will allow resources required to recruit, hire, and train new teachers to be redirected to other needs. Because of the negative impact of turnover on student performance, school climate, and district health, this study will benefit the students, teachers, and leaders of Central. However, the completion of this study alone is not expected to improve the turnover rate. The study provides leadership with information that does not currently exist in the district about teacher perceptions and why these teachers choose to stay in the district. School and district leadership can use the information to develop strategies to retain teachers. This study can be replicated at schools across the district to gather more information to continue to inform the development of a long-term a recruitment and retention plan.

I begin this chapter with a brief summary of findings. Next, I compare these findings with the existing research on teacher retention and job satisfaction as well as a review of the research questions considering the findings. I then make final claims about the study and provide a set of implications including for practice, policy, and research.

## Summary of Findings

After the completion of the factor analysis, two distinct factor groups emerged. Factor Group One consisted of 34 participants and Factor Group Two had 14 participants. Both groups agreed that "feeling they had a positive impact on students' lives" and "enjoyment of watching students succeed" were the two most important factors for their job satisfaction. Beyond those

two statements however there was a divergence in what each factor group found to be most important to their job satisfaction. Factor Group One placed an emphasis on the behavior of the school administration as a determinant of job satisfaction. Factor Group Two felt positive relationships with fellow teachers was crucial to their job satisfaction.

**Factor One: Monarchy High School**

Teachers loading in Factor One feel strongly that the behavior of the school administration affects their job satisfaction. Of the 18 statements on the positive side of the sort chart, Factor One teachers placed 7 statements that contained the word "administration." These teachers want to feel valued by administration for their teaching abilities, be treated as a professional by administration, and to feel cared about personally by administration. In addition, the teachers place a high priority on administrative consistency when dealing with the behaviors of both students and staff, as well as feeling comfortable bringing concerns directly to administrators. Like the nobles within a monarchy, these teachers seek approval from the leader, and their satisfaction is based partly on feeling they are in favor with leadership. They desire to be provided with safety and security, treated fairly, valued for their skills, and involved in decision making. They also desire autonomy as they pursue their calling.

**Factor Two: Federation High School**

The participants in Factor Two gain satisfaction in their work through positive relationships with coworkers, connections to the community, a collaborative work environment, and balancing work and personal life. They focus on controlling their environment and finding satisfaction from their work. These teachers are comparable to a federation of states which are self-governing but are united under a central government. In this situation, the administration would be the central government that unifies these independent federated states.

Monarchy High School has a hierarchical structure with the administrators being viewed as the source for many of the factors that lead to the teachers' job satisfaction. This group is highly affected by the successes or failures of the leadership. Federation High School is a collective of interdependent teachers who form alliances with each other to bolster their efficacy and satisfaction in their work. They recognize the administration as the central authority but do not rely on them for resources and support. If the administration provides additional support or recognition, it is viewed as a bonus, but it is not essential to their functioning.

## Findings in the Context of the Literature

The results of some of the participant sorts accepted statements from existing literature while other participant sorts rejected statements from existing literature on teacher retention and job satisfaction. During the development of the Q-sample, educators from three local school districts were surveyed about their beliefs on teacher retention and job satisfaction. Some statements that were important to the educators involved in the development of the Q-sample were also accepted by the participants in their sorts. The following sections explores the acceptance or rejection of the findings with the literature by the participants along with any new findings.

### Similarities with Literature

Table 13 summarizes the statements from the literature that were accepted by the participants during their sort. Teachers in both groups agreed on the importance of (1) positive relationships with both students and colleagues, (2) autonomy in development and execution of lessons, (3) working in a collaborative environment, (4) feeling of positively impacting the lives of students, and (5) feeling safe at work.

Table 13

*Statements from Literature Accepted by Participants*

| Statement | Literature Source(s) | Placements | Participant Comments |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 – My decision to remain a teacher at my school is most impacted by the belief that I am called to be a teacher. | Willemse M. & Deacon E (2015) Steger et al (2010) Duffy et all (2011) | +1 +3 | P5 "When I began teaching, I taught at the same school for 3 years. I felt overwhelmed and chose to leave. I could not find another profession that I enjoyed that gave me the same satisfaction as teaching. After 3 years, I returned to the same school with a renewed sense of purpose!" |
| 2 – My decision to remain a teacher at my school is most impacted by positive relationships developed with my fellow teachers. | Boyd et al., (2011) Goodpaster, K., Adedokun, O., & Weaver, C. (2012) | +1 +4 | P48 "My PLT, PLC, and my department are wonderful, spirited educators. The majority came to my wedding, and several who left are still extremely close friends and come on vacation with my family." |
| 5 – My decision to remain a teacher at my school is most impacted by autonomy in the design and execution of my lesson plans. | Boyd et al. (2011) | +3 +3 | P3 "I like to think that I am a professional and know what works and doesn't work for my students. . . and have spent 20 years figuring out what motivates students and what doesn't. Unless I am slacking, I do not want someone to tell me how to do something I was professionally trained to do. To demand I follow a certain format leaves me feeling cornered and defeated and as if I am incompetent. Help is always appreciated, but I want to be trusted to make the best decisions for my students." |
| 9 – My decision to remain a teacher at my school is most impacted by working in a collaborative environment. | Boyd et al. (2011) | +1 +2 | P25 "having fellow teachers work together means i have a lot more time at home not having to stay up all night working on lesson plans. |

Table 13 (continued)

| Statement | Literature Source(s) | Placements | Participant Comments |
|---|---|---|---|
| 11 - My decision to remain a teacher at my school is most impacted by my enjoyment of watching students succeed. | Goldhaber, D., Gross, B., & Player, D. (2011) Boyd et al. (2009) | +4 +4 | P15 "I teach because I love building relationships with the kids and watching what they learn from me take them into the next phase of their lives." |
| 17 - My decision to remain a teacher at my school is most impacted by the feeling that I have a positive impact on students' lives. | Delano-Gezmik, J. (2017) | +4 +4 | P7 "This is the main reason I teach basically." P40 "Helping children learn and grow is what teaching is all about." |
| 25 – My decision to remain a teacher at my school is most impacted by me feeling safe at work. | Boyd et al. (2011) | +2 +1 | P31 "My personal safety is a big deal. I will not knowingly enter a situation that puts my safety at risk without very good cause. I cannot do my job if I do not feel comfortable and safe in my environment." |

Statement 17 "feeling I have a positive impact on students' lives," was ranked at +4 for both factor groups showing both groups share a significant fundamental factor in their satisfaction. A teacher with almost 20 years at the school stated, "This is the main reason I teach basically" (personal communication with Participant 7, June 2020). A veteran teacher and coach said, "Helping children learn and grow is what teaching is all about" (personal communication with Participant 40, June 2020). Statement 5, "being given autonomy in the design and execution of my lessons," was placed at +3 by both factor groups. A 25-year veteran emphasized this by saying, "I like to think that I am a professional and know what works and doesn't work for my students. I went to school and have spent 20 years figuring out what motivates students and what doesn't. Unless I am slacking, I do not want someone to tell me how to do something I was professionally trained to do. To demand I follow a certain format leaves me felling cornered and defeated and as if I am incompetent. Help is always appreciated, but I want to be trusted to make the best decisions for my students" (personal communication with Participant 3, June 2020). The teachers' desires to be trusted to do what they believe is the right thing to do for their students based on their education, training, and experience aligns with the findings of Boyd et al. (2011). Ideally, these teachers would like to work in an environment where the administration focuses on developing systems for school safety, recognition of student and teacher success, and teacher collaboration while avoiding micromanagement of the preparation and delivery of instruction. The statements the participants agreed upon that also coincide with the literature are part of the fundamental reasons for teaching and fundamental needs of people—to see student success and perceive personal success along with having a sense of belonging, a sense of purpose, a sense of freedom, and a sense of safety.

While the motivations of these statements may differ between factor groups, the fact that these participants agree with each other and with current literature reinforces that these fundamental needs are crucial to teacher job satisfaction.

**Differences with Literature**

Participants in both groups rejected statements from existing literature, and a summary of these statements can be found in Table 14. They rejected the following statements: 1. the amount of money I make, 2. the amount of mentor support I received, 3. the physical condition of the classroom, 4. feelings about district policies and procedures, 5. the level of parent involvement, and 6. the extra duties required of me for which I receive no compensation. Statement 12 "the amount of money I make as a teacher at this school" was ranked at -4 for factor group 1 and -3 for factor group 2. One teacher stated, "I work for purpose. As a military retiree, I don't need additional income at this point in my life. I consider that fact that I am compensated for my purpose a fringe benefit" (personal communication with Participant 12, June 2020). Statement 22 "the amount of support provided by a quality mentor teacher" (personal communication June 2020) was placed at -3 by factor group 1 and at -1 by factor group 2. A teacher with 4 years of experience added, "My mentor spent very little time helping me . . . Were it not for a couple of other teachers and a great assistant principal I am almost certain I would not have made it through the 3-year BT program" (personal communication with Participant 35, June 2020).

Statement 40, "the extra duties required of me for which I receive no compensation" was placed at -3 for both factor groups. A dedicated veteran teacher remarked, "Being a teacher is more than reporting from 7:45 AM - 3:15 PM each day. Those who have chosen teaching as a career recognize some things are done for the greater good. Extra duties without compensation fall into this way of thinking - they are simply 'the right thing to do' as the teacher is part of the

Table 14

*Statements from Literature Rejected by Participants*

| Statement | Literature Source(s) | Placement | Participants Comments |
|---|---|---|---|
| 12 – My decision to remain a teacher at my school is most impacted by the amount of money I make as a teacher at this school. | Allen, M.B. (2005)<br>Goodpaster, K., Adedokun, O., & Weaver, C, (2012) | -4 -3 | P12 "I work for purpose. As a military retiree, I don't need additional income at this point in my life. I consider the fact that I am compensated for my purpose a fringe benefit." |
| 22 – My decision to remain a teacher at my school is most impacted by the amount of support provided by a quality mentor teacher. | Allen, M.B. (2005)<br>Darling-Hammond, (2003)<br>Ingersoll, R. & Krailik, J. (2004)<br>Ronfeldt, M. & McQueen, K. (2017)<br>Wong, S. & Luft, J. (2015) | -3 -1 | P35 "My mentor spent very little time helping me when I first started and as my program grew the mentor became even less helpful. . . . Were it not for a couple of other teachers and a great assistant principal I am almost certain I would not have made it through the 3 year BT program." |
| 27 - My decision to remain a teacher at my school is most impacted by the physical condition of their classroom. | Buckley, J., Schneider, M., & Shang, Y., (2004) | -1 -2 | P3 "I can teach a lesson anywhere/ It is nice to have clean rooms, but it's what I do and say in those rooms that really matter." |
| 32 - My decision to remain a teacher at my school is most impacted by my feelings about district policies and procedures. | Delano-Gemzik, J. (2017) | -2 -1 | P39 "I have to agree with the school's policies and procedures. If I totally disagree, it's not right for me to not be on the same page. I think agreement and everyone staying on the same consistent page is important." |

Table 14 (continued)

| Statement | Literature Source(s) | Placement | Participants Comments |
|---|---|---|---|
| 35 - My decision to remain a teacher at my school is most impacted by the level of parent involvement at the school. | Delano-Gemzik, J. (2017) | -2 -1 | P 38 “Parental involvement at our school is extremely low. Parent night is not promoted enough. . . We need to develop a better system to get emails/cell phone numbers from all parents - not just some. It is often very difficult to get up parents by phone. Email is a great way to get parents. Teachers can explain the situation extensively, and parents have a chance to think about the teacher's statements and talk to their child before responding.” |

school community and is helping support that community. Money is not the motivation for every action - not only in education but in life" (personal communication with Participant 18, June 2020).

Both factor groups rejected the idea that money was a factor for job satisfaction despite research that asserts otherwise (Allen, 2005; Goodpaster et al., 2012). However, this difference may be attributed to the pay structure for teachers in North Carolina. Teachers' pay at the state level is determined by level of education and certification attained and years of teaching experience. School districts have the option to supplement the state pay with local funds, and while the amount of supplement varies from district to district the supplement is the same across grade levels and subjects throughout this district. Participants in this study did not value quality mentors as supported by the literature (Allen, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2003; Ingersoll & Krailik, 2004; Ronfeldt & McQueen, 2017; Wong & Luft, 2015). Given the weight of the current literature, this rejection may be due to several factors, such as a poor experience with a mentor program, not utilizing their mentor, veteran teachers no longer needing a mentor teacher, or finding support in fellow teachers who were not their official mentor.

The statements the participants rejected represent external factors that don't provide validation or a sense of success for teachers. Items such as compensation, physical conditions, mentor teachers, and parent involvement are not included in expectations of teachers. The first factor group cared little for all of these statements while the second group cared little for all except for the physical conditions of their space, which aligns with the group's tendency to desire autonomy and control of their environments. It is not surprising that teachers who are motivated by student and personal success and attention from administration would not connect

with factors outside of their control that add little to what they consider to be valuable about their profession.

## Study Themes

Both factor groups had similarities and differences that emerged during the analysis of the sorts. All participants shared the belief that watching students succeed, impacting students' lives, teacher autonomy, collaboration, feeling safe at work, feeling called to be a teacher, and positive relationships with teachers were important to their job satisfaction and decision to remain at their school. They also agreed that salary, having a mentor teacher, physical condition of their classroom, district policies and procedures, parental involvement, and extra duties without compensation were not important factors for their satisfaction and decision to remain at their school.

The differences between factor groups become apparent when looking at statements related to the behavior of school leadership, impact of work on personal time, the number of students in each class, common planning time, personal relationships with colleagues, length of commute, quality organizational communication, number of different courses taught each semester, and availability of technology.

Factor One, Monarchy High School, placed statements related to behavior of administration high on the sort chart. Statement 7, "feeling that school administration values me for my abilities as a teacher," Statement 4, "school administration treating me as a professional," Statement 16, "feeling administration cares about me as a person," Statement 3, "school administrators consistently enforcing school rules," Statement 14, "feeling comfortable voicing my concerns to administration," Statement 42, "feeling I am supported by administrators when dealing with difficult parents," and Statement 10, "feeling school administration holds the entire

staff to consistent standards of professionalism" were all ranked at +1 or above by Monarchy High School. Factor Two, Federation High School, ranked all the above statements at 0 or below. The most significant difference between the two groups was Monarchy High School's dependence on administration's behavior for job satisfaction while Federation High School placed no importance on administration's behavior.

Federation High School placed Statement 36, "the knowledge that colleagues know me personally," Statement 18, "the time it allows to spend with my family," Statement 34, "find and maintain a balance between my work and personal life," Statement 8, "the strong connections to the community in which I teach," Statement 19, "number of students in each of my classes," Statement 44, "availability of technology resources in my classroom," Statement 37, "length of my commute to work," Statement 43, "number of different courses I am required to teach each semester," Statement 28, "amount of time spent on developing lesson plans," and Statement 29, "having common planning time with teachers in my content area" at +1 or higher. Monarchy High School placed the above statements at 0 or below. Federation High School is focused on relationships with fellow teachers, balancing work and personal life, and controlling their classroom environment.

In looking at the two groups, Monarchy High School, or group one, doesn't rate the effort or time spent in the job as important to them. They are willing to work extra hours or drive long distances to work as long as the administrators are giving them the attention they seek. Their identity is wrapped up in being a teacher; they identify as a teacher almost before anything else, and they have a very strong connection to school. It's what they do and where their energy comes from. Their self-esteem is very much tied to the opinion of others, specifically their

supervisors (principals). They are far more concerned about the perceived fairness and equitable treatment of students and teachers by administration than group two.

For Federation High School, or group two, teaching is a part of their life that provides satisfaction. Their sense of value as people does not seem to be impacted by the opinions of administrators or their performance as a teacher, and because teaching is just a part of them and not their entire identity, they are more aware of the workload and the time and energy spent while at work. The teachers in this group create boundaries between work and personal life, and they draw their energy and fulfillment from the positive relationships with students and coworkers and the belief they are called to do this work.

It's important for both groups to have positive relationships at work, but group one is more concerned about the relationship with the people that are above them in the organization, while group two is more concerned about peer relationships.

After reviewing the analysis of the Q sorts, reading participant statements, and completing the post-sort interviews, I came to understand that the ways teachers view and interact with leadership is analogous to the ways citizens view decision making and power within different forms of government. In more authoritarian forms of government, citizens seek favor with the one in the highest position of authority because that person makes decisions that impact their lives and future. However, in more democratic forms of government, the emphasis is less on appealing to one person but in making connections and supporting decisions that benefit everyone. In this study, I found that teachers' perception of leadership and the decision-making process greatly influences how they interact with each other and with the administration of their schools.

I view Factor group 1 as analogous to the aristocracy within a monarchy. Teachers are in tune with what is happening around them in the school and constantly want to know how these events will impact their ability to do their jobs. It is important for them to have a close relationship with the principal (who in this scenario is the monarch), and they see this relationship as integral to their success. For some teachers, simply having the reassurance of the principal that they are doing a good job is enough for them to be satisfied. Other teachers need more than approval; they want to know the principal trusts them and will support them as they work to achieve their professional goals. It is therefore important for the principal to have frequent and regular discussions with teachers about their professional goals and desired types of support. In this model of centralized power, teachers often feel they must wait to get explicit permission from the principal before trying something new or making a tough decision. This dependance on the principal can cause delays that result in missed opportunities or a decrease in effectiveness.

Factor group 2 functions much like a federation of states. The teacher is the governor of their own classroom and prefers to personally handle any classroom issues. Because the teacher has control of their environment, they are not as concerned with the whims of school leadership. While these teachers are quite independent, they still recognize they are required to follow school rules and work with school leadership to achieve school-wide goals. There is a mutually beneficial flow of information that occurs between these teachers to help them be more effective teachers and be up to date on issues within the school. A part of this communication includes interactions with school administration. While these teachers are not dependent upon the behavior of administration for their job satisfaction, they are able to infer from other teachers how administration might respond to situations which helps the teachers make decisions without

having to directly consult with the principal. These collegial relationships go beyond mere workplace friendships. They are opportunities for professional growth, moral support, connections to resources, and in some cases, opportunities for cooperative learning experiences between the students in these teachers' classrooms. This group derives job satisfaction from relationships, but a byproduct of their relationships is the teachers are willing and able to help each other and decrease their reliance on administration. This in turn can provide administration with more freedom to meet the needs of the those who need more time with them.

## Implications

This research has implications for policy, research, and educational practice. I begin with recommendations for policy changes related to teacher retention. Next, I provide implications for future research on teacher retention. Finally, I investigate actions district and school leaders can take to improve practices related to teacher retention.

### Policy

Because of the focus on the behaviors of the principal in determining teacher retention, a district-wide policy for principal hiring practices involving teachers and parents in addition to the central office personnel may provide the school with a better fit for the principal, the teachers, students, parents, and school community. As the school grows and changes, the expectations of the principal by stakeholders may also change, and this must be taken into consideration to find the right leader. Based on the results of this study, the teachers at the participant school want a principal that is a strong communicator who can build positive relationships with teachers and foster trust between teachers.

Additionally, a policy requiring the district to periodically review its hiring practices for all personnel and specifically for teachers and school administrators, could improve the hiring

practices and ensuring the best fit for all parties involved. This policy requiring an evaluation of the relevance and effectiveness of current hiring practices offers the district an opportunity for improvement that may not been identified otherwise. Practices developed to recruit and retain teachers a generation ago may fail to be effective in this and future generations.

**Research**

Results of this study have identified further areas for research related to teacher retention. This study had a limited scope due to it being isolated to one high school. To gain a better understanding of teacher retention using Q methodology, researchers may consider studying a larger sample of high schools across regions, and the state. Greater numbers of participants across districts may reveal more diverse perspective or may align with the findings from this study, but the discovering if the perspectives were similar may offer greater understanding about teacher retention. A larger sample of schools across the state could involve urban schools in densely populated areas and rural schools that serve a large geographic area with low population density.

Future researchers could expand this study to middle and elementary schools to determine if the unique challenges of each level would show different perceptions than high schools even within the same district. Insights may emerge if the perspectives of teachers at various grade levels are studied. The discussion of differences presented by school structures across elementary, middle, and high schools could pose valuable findings for both school-based leaders and district leaders serving entire districts. Researchers could use different methodologies to examine these same research questions. A large sample may be best served using a survey while in-depth interviews may be best for a smaller sample.

Exploring the how a teacher earned their teaching license and their background prior to entering education is another area for research. The pathway to licensure presents inherent differences for teachers in preparation in education and work experience. These may expose the variations in perceptions of what is important to the two groups' retention at a school as well. Also, further study into how each of the groups' unique pathways impact their ideas may allow for improved practices in schools and districts regarding recruitment and hiring.

Questions for further research may include:

1. What would be different about the perspectives of teachers across a larger sampling of high schools?
2. How would the perspective of the elementary school teacher be similar or different from that of a high school teacher?
3. How does the pathway to licensure impact teachers perspectives on job satisfaction and teacher retention?
4. How do the views of teachers in urban schools compare to teachers in rural schools?

**Practice**

Across both factor groups, student success was the primary factor of job satisfaction. For the majority of teachers who listed student success at +4 teach in content areas that increase the chances or guarantee they will teach the same students more than one semester. These teachers cite that they enjoy watching the students accomplish things they could not prior to having their classes. One teacher with almost a decade of experience said, "At the heart of many teachers is a sense of pride that comes from watching your students grow and become successful! It is this joy of watching students succeed that drives me to be a better teacher to my students. I feel accomplished when my students tackle and overcome challenges that they face both in and out of

the classroom" (personal communication with Participant 5, June 2020). Another teacher commented, "It is such a great feeling to watch students grow and achieve their goals. I enjoy watching my students become confident and secure. It is great to watch them work as a team, become leaders, and set goals for their future" (personal communication with Participant 37, June 2020). Increasing the amount of time teachers and students have together provides them more time to build a relationship, set goals together, and achieve those goals. This could be accomplished through a cohort of teachers and students that complement one another or by fostering longterm projects and relationships between students and teachers.

Teacher autonomy also scored very high for both groups. A 7th year teacher stated, "The freedom to allow me to choose what is best for each class on each day is vital. A very important part of being a teacher is being able to properly access and know what your students need and when they need it. Sometimes they need pushed and sometimes they need a break. Sometimes that break is not a rest at all, but a brand-new adventure. Having the creative freedom and flexibility to do that is what builds rapport with and captures engagement with students. It is the same as wanting my voice heard, it is allowing and responding to the voice of the students, as well" (personal communication with Participant 27, June 2020). A fifth-year teacher said, " . . .when you feel that you own your class and that you can have freedom to design your lesson and execute them makes you enjoy teaching. When you are the captain of your ship you feel secure and empowered to teach even when the topics are difficult. Having autonomy in my lesson plans makes me feel that I have the skills and knowledge that enables me to do my job well" (personal communication with Participant 14, June 2020). Developing a uniform definition of autonomy within the school and set of standards for teachers to meet to earn this autonomy would be key to giving teachers autonomy while ensuring they are meeting the expectations of the job. This

would also be a way to acknowledge the ability of the teachers in Factor One which is important for their job satisfaction.

When considering all the factors that influence teacher retention, based on the results of this study, retaining teachers is a complex task and requires the building of strong relationships between teachers and students, teachers and teachers, and teachers and administrators. A 5th year teacher added, "I feel that when the administrators treat teachers as professionals it creates an environment of respect and makes you feel appreciated. Being treated as a professional creates an atmosphere that will only open doors for a more effective work environment that promotes loyalty" (personal communication Participant 14, June 2020). Developing these relationships takes time, and for a school to establish a strong sense of identity also takes time. Recruiting and retaining a quality principal, would give the principal the ability to learn the needs of the teachers and develop strategies to meet those needs. Principals need to be given the time and support to get to know the teachers, set expectations, and develop meaningful professional relationships with teachers. It is important to note that before any systems are put in place, incentives are developed, or strategies are implemented to retain high-quality teachers the district and school leadership need to first learn what is important to the teachers. Every school is different, and every teacher is different. While generalizations and approximations can be made about what teachers want and need, there is no substitute for meeting the needs of the individual based on a strong professional relationship.

## My Leadership Development

As an assistant principal, I have spent the past eight years working at this high school. The retention of teachers is important to me not only because of the relationships I have developed with teachers only to have them leave to move onto other districts or leave the

profession because of factors that were within our control as a school and/or school district. Their departures had a negative impact on their fellow teachers, but more importantly, it negatively impacted the students they had relationships with or would have been teaching. The attrition of these teachers forces the school and district to redirect resources from developing current teachers which improves teaching and learning to finding new teachers who have to spend a year acclimating to the school and developing relationships with colleagues.

This damage that a high-turnover rate does to a school and school district is difficult to quantify; however, there is no doubt based on research that high-turnover schools struggle to meet the needs of their students. Therefore, working at a school with a high-turnover rate within a district with a high-turnover rate has sparked a sense of urgency in me to find a way to make strides to help the school and the district to find ways to decrease turnover within our district and school. A decrease in turnover would create opportunities to move teachers beyond the initial stages of relationship building and learning the administrative procedures of the school and allow them to plan and provide professional development to get teachers the resources they need to grow as professionals.

I portend that the school district's hiring and supporting strong principals will promote longevity, which in turn will provide consistency of leadership, vision, and time for principals to accomplish goals that improve the school. The district should also increase staffing in Human Resources to better support all school employees; one important aspect of this support should be a focus on helping principals recruit teachers in high-needs areas. Giving principals more autonomy will make them better able to make changes that best meet the needs of their school. I would also like to see the district implement a new principal mentor program in the same way we have a beginning teacher mentor for all first-year teachers; this would help new principals

navigate the nuances of the school and district and help them feel confident and supported as they begin a role that has the potential to help support so many others. Lastly, the school district should lead and assist principals in developing processes by which they can gather feedback from teachers about working conditions and job satisfaction throughout the school year. The purpose of all of these solutions would be to support principals so we are better able to focus on teachers as individuals and give them the support they need.

At the school level, my team and I first need to develop a shared mission and vision that drives all school decisions. When hiring teachers, we need to share the school vision with applicants, include current teachers on interview teams, and carefully structure questions to help identify applicants' beliefs. In addition, the administrative team should identify what factors are most important to teachers in their school; then we need to do what we can within reason and policy to accommodate those needs. For example, when I understand a teacher's need for autonomy, I can provide more freedom in classroom and instructional decision making once a teacher has proven themselves to be effective. We should also discuss career goals with teachers and have a succession plan in place to develop and prepare teacher leaders to step into roles when they become available. Lastly, the single most important thing a principal could do for everyone in the school is establish trust with teachers through transparency, intentionality, consistency, and understanding the needs of individual employees.

## Conclusion

This study was designed to identify aspects of what high school teachers believe to be the most important reasons they remain at their schools. The study also looked for a deeper understanding of why the teachers held these perceptions. In Chapter 5, a summary of the study findings was presented as well as discussion of how the findings related to the literature. The

chapter shared implications for policy, research and practices that could be used to increase retention of teachers at high schools. Teachers' perspectives were ascertained using Q Method. Qualitative and quantitative data were used to capture the subjective perceptions of the teachers in the study. Two factors were determined after a data analysis. To add clarity to the understanding of each factor, names were given to each factor to illustrate the meaning of each participant groups' perspectives. All participants agreed they had a "calling" to be a teacher. Additionally, positive relationships with other teachers, autonomy in the classroom and working in a collaborative environment were valued. All participants also agreed seeing students succeed and having a positive impact on their students' lives brought them the most satisfaction. Finally, safety was viewed as a priority to remaining at their school.

Participants in both factors rejected the importance of compensation as a determining reason for continuing in their current school. Neither salary nor pay for extra duties were seen as paramount by the teachers. Parent involvement, mentor teacher support, environmental conditions nor district policies were perceived as important in staying at their high school.

Teachers today carry more burden and responsibility than ever before while at the same time undergoing more scrutiny and remaining underpaid compared to their similarly educated peers. State and local policies and the increase of technology have stripped teachers of some autonomy and creativity and prevented them from doing what they felt was best for their students. To ask a teacher to persevere in the profession at a particular school is a very significant, difficult request. In the timeframe of this study during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, teachers have seen more pressure, fear, and challenges take a toll never seen on their profession. Given these factors, it is imperative that when a school district and school leaders find people who want to be part of the profession that they make every effort to listen to and

understand them. Many teachers have left the profession not because they wanted to quit teaching, but because the support systems they needed were just not there. There is no sustained increase in funding, so schools must find creative ways to give teachers the things that don't cost any money--to show them that they are valued, and to support them in their professional and career development. To not trust teachers to do the job they are paid to do, to heap more responsibilities on them, and to remove autonomy and creativity from their daily tasks is a recipe for attrition. A failure to retain teachers

It's the school and school district's job to counter the negative narrative of public-school education and public-school teachers. Since teachers who thrive on support frequently do not get the appreciation and gratitude they need from outside the school, it must come from within the school. It's up to the schools to highlight teachers' accomplishments, publicly promote the good things schools are doing, and push against the ever-increasing insularity of schools. The second group, who thrive from positive peer relationships and have been isolated and lacking peer and student interaction due to COVID-19, need support in different ways; school leaders need to create ways for teachers to interact and be more flexible and accommodating to meet the various needs of teachers that span generational gaps and interpersonal needs.

When there is a pattern of good teachers leaving—veteran teachers or young teachers with a lot of promise living in our town driving to another district to work—there are factors that are within our control. By the time we know the reasons for their leaving, it is often too late to correct the feeling of being ignored or misunderstood. If the leaving was preventable, and we continue to ignore these needs, we will be stuck in a cycle of mediocrity, and it will take significant systemic changes to break that cycle. Districts need teachers far more than teachers

need districts; if we don't start treating them that way, understanding them and meeting their needs, the cycle of attrition will never end.

The purpose of this study was not to find out why teachers were leaving, but to find out why teachers were staying. I wanted to let those teachers explain why they wanted to stay, what we could do to keep them, and tell their stories. It is my great hope that a proactive approach to gauging teachers' job satisfaction can play a significant role in reducing teacher attrition and give schools a chance to go beyond merely surviving to thriving.

## REFERENCES


Allen, M. B. (2005). *Eight questions on teacher recruitment and retention: What does the research say?* Education Commission of the States. http://www.ecs.org/html/educationissues/teachingquality/trrreport/home/TeacherRecruitmentRetention.pdf

Alliance for Excellent Education. (2008). *What keeps good teachers in the classroom? Understanding and reducing teacher turnover.* Washington, DC: Author.

Alliance for Education. (2014). *On the path to equity: Improving the effectiveness of beginning teachers*. Washington, DC: Alliance for Education. http://all4ed.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/PathToEquity.pdf.

Bakker, A., & Demerouti, E. (2007). The job demands resource model: State of the art. *Journal of Managerial Psychology, 22*(3), 309-328.

Beebe, J. (2017). *Special education teacher perception of administrative supports that encourage, decrease burnout, and reduce attrition* (Order No. 10634513). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (1965534318). http://search.proquest.com.jproxy.lib.ecu.edu/docview/1965534318?accountid=1063

Boyd, D., Grossman, P., Ing, M., Lankford, H., Loeb, S., & Wyckoff, J. (2011). The influence of school administrators on teacher retention decisions. *American Educational Research Journal, 48*(2), 303-333.

Boyd, D., Lankford, H., Loeb, S., Rockoff, J., & Wyckoff, J. (2008). The narrowing gap in New York City teacher qualifications and its implications for student achievement in high-poverty schools. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management, 27*(4), 793-818. https://doi.org/10.1002/pam.20377

Brill, S., & McCartney, A. (2008). Stopping the revolving door: Increasing teacher retention. *Politics & Policy (Statesboro, Ga.), 36*(5), 750-774. doi:10.1111/j.1747-1346.2008.00133.x

Brown, K. M., & Wynn, S. R. (2009). Finding, supporting, and keeping: The role of the principal in teacher retention issues. *Leadership and Policy in Schools, 8*(1), 37-63. doi:10.1080/15700760701817371

Brown, S. R. (1996). Q methodology and qualitative research. *Qualitative Health Research, 6*(4), 561-567.

Brunetti, G. (2001). Why do they teach? A study of job satisfaction among long-term high school teachers. *Teacher Education Quarterly, 28*(3), 49-74.

Buckley, J., Schneider, M., & Shang, Y. (2004). *The effects of school facility quality on teacher retention in urban school districts*. National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities, Washington, DC. Available at www.edfacilities.org/pubs/teacherretention.htm

Carroll, T. (2007). The high cost of teacher turnover. [Policy brief] *National Commission on Teaching and America's Future*. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED498001

Chenoweth, K., & Theokas, C. (2011). *Getting it done: Leading academic success in unexpected schools*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

Cross, F. (Ed.). (2016). *Teacher shortage areas nationwide listing 1990–1991 through 2016–2017* (United States, U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education). Washington DC: US Department of Education.

Culkin, M. A. (2016). *Identifying factors that are most influential in veteran teachers seriouslyconsidering leaving the profession* (Order No. 10189667). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (1885053156). http://search.proquest.com.jproxy.lib.ecu.edu/docview/1885053156?accountid=10639.

Darling-Hammond, L. (2003). *Keeping good teachers: Why it matters, what leaders can do*. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

DeAngelis, K. J., & Presley, J. B. (2011). Toward a more nuanced understanding of new teacher attrition. *Education and Urban Society, 43*(5), 598-626.

Delano-Gemzik, J. (2017, April). *Teachers' perceptions on the elements that most impact teacher retention* (Doctoral Dissertation, East Carolina University). Retrieved from the Scholarship http://hdl.handle.net/10342/6203

Doran, W. (2018, May 17). Here are the facts about teacher pay in North Carolina. *News and Observer*. https://www.newsobserver.com/article211179294.html

Edinger, S. K., & Edinger. M. J. (2018) Improving teacher job satisfaction: The roles of social capital, teacher efficacy, and support, *The Journal of Psychology, 152*(8), 573-593, doi:10.1080/00223980.2018.1489364

Eklund, N. (2009). Sustainable workplaces, retainable teachers. *Phi Delta Kappan, 91*(2), 25-27. https://doi.org/10.1177/003172170909100206

Ervin, D. (2019, September 17). A college ranking NC doesn't want. *Charlotte Observer*. https://www.charlotteobserver.com/opinion/opn-columns-blogs/article235136862.html

Financial & Business Services. (2019, November 12). *Fiscal Year 2019 - 2020 North Carolina Public School Salary Schedules [PDF]*. Raleigh, NC: NC Department of Public Instruction.

García Torres, D. (2019). Distributed leadership, professional collaboration, and teachers' job satisfaction in U.S. schools. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 79*, 111-123. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2018.12.001

Glazer, J. (2018). Backtalk: The silent strike: Teacher attrition as a resistance. *Phi Delta Kappan, 100*(3), 72–72. https://doi.org/10.1177/0031721718808273

Gruenert, S., & Whitaker, T. (2017). *School culture recharged: Strategies to energize your staff and culture*. ASCD.

Goodpaster, K. P., Adedokun, O. A., & Weaver, G. C. (2012). Teachers' perceptions of rural STEM teaching: Implications for rural teacher retention. *The Rural Educator, 33*(3).

Gray, L., & Taie, S. (2015). *Public school teacher attrition and mobility in the first five years: Results from the first through fifth waves of the 2007–08 beginning teacher longitudinal study (NCES 2015-337)*. U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch

Guin, K. (2004). Chronic teacher turnover in urban elementary schools. *Education Policy Analysis Archives, 12*(42). http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v12n42/

Hinchcliffe, K., & Johnson, C. (2016, April 26). *After inflation, NC teacher pay has dropped 13% in past 15 years*. https://www.wral.com/after-inflation-nc-teacher-pay-has-dropped-13-in-past-15-years/15624302/

Hong, J. Y. (2010). Pre-service and beginning teachers' professional identity and its relation to dropping out of the profession. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 26*(8), 1530–1543. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2010.06.003

Ingersoll, R. (2009). The aging teaching workforce: A snapshot. Age distribution of public school teachers, by state, 2003-2004. *National Commission on Teaching and America's Future*.

Ingersoll, R., & Kralik, J. M. (2004). Teaching quality. [Executive summary]. *Education Commission of the States*.

Ingersoll, R., Sinides, P., & Dougherty, P. (2017). *School leadership, teachers' roles in school decision making, and student achievement.* CPRE Working Papers. https://repository.upenn.edu/cpre_workingpapers/15

Janson, C., Militello, M., & Tonissen, D. (2016). InQuiry: A participatory approach for understanding stakeholder perceptions. *The Foundation Review, 8*(1), 88. https://doi.org/10.9707/1944-5660.1286

Kersaint, G., Lewis, J., Potter, R., & Meisels, G. (2007). Why teachers leave: Factors that influence retention and resignation. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 23*(6), 775-794. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2005.12.004

Log Into North Carolina. (n.d.). *Explore NC demographics.* https://linc.osbm.nc.gov/explore/?sort=modified

Lee County Government. (2015). *Demographics*. https://leecountync.gov/welcometoleecounty/demographics

Leung, M., Chan, J., & Wang, Z. (2006). Impact of school facilities on working behavior of teachers. *International Journal of Strategic Property Management, 10*(2), 79-91. https://doi.org/10.1080/1648715X.2006.9637546

Marzano, R. J. (2007). *The art and science of teaching*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Militello, M., & Benham, M. K. P. (2010). "Sorting out" collective leadership: How Q-methodology can be used to evaluate leadership development. *The Leadership Quarterly 21*(4), 620–632.

National Education Association. (2018). *Rankings of the states 2017 and estimates of school statistics 2018*. https://s3.documentcloud.org/documents/4443932/NEA-teacher-pay-rankings-2018.pdf

Neumann, K. (1987) Quantitative and qualitative approaches in educational research: Problems and examples of controlled understanding through interpretive methods. *International Review of Education*, *33*(2), 159-170.

N.C. Poverty Statistics. (2015). http://www.law.unc.edu/centers/poverty/numbers/northcarolina/

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. (2015). *Report to the North Carolina General Assembly: 2014-2015 state of the teaching profession in North Carolina*. (No. 70). Raleigh, NC: North Carolina State Board of Education.

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. (2016). *Report to the North Carolina General Assembly: 2015-2016 state of the teaching profession in North Carolina*. (No. 70). Raleigh, NC: North Carolina State Board of Education.

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. (2018a). *Fiscal Year 2017-2018 North Carolina public school salary schedules*. https://www.dpi.nc.gov/media/10228/download?attachment

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. (2018b). *Report to the North Carolina General Assembly: 2016-2017 State of the Teaching Profession in North Carolina.* (No. 70). Raleigh, NC: North Carolina State Board of Education.

North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey. (2016). https://ncteachingconditions.org/results/report/425/134308

Norton, M. S. (1999). Teacher retention: Reducing costly teacher turnover. *Contemporary education, 70*(3), 52.

Perryman, J., & Calvert, G. (2019). What motivates people to teach, and why do they leave? Accountability, performativity and teacher retention. *British Journal of Educational Studies, 68*(1), 3-23. doi:10.1080/00071005.2019.1589417

Price, H., & Collett, J. L. (2012). The role of exchange and emotion on commitment: A study of teachers. *Social science research. 41*. 1469-79. 10.1016/j.ssresearch.2012.05.016.

Ronfeldt, M., Loeb, S., & Wyckoff, J. (2013). How teacher turnover harms student achievement. *American Educational Research Journal, 50*(1), 4-36. doi:http://www.nber.org/papers/w17176/0002831212463813

Ronfeldt, M., & McQueen, K. (2017). Does new teacher induction really improve retention? *Journal of Teacher Education, 68*(4), 394-410. doi:10.1177/0022487117702583

Ronfeldt, M., Farmer, S. O., Mcqueen, K., & Grissom, J. A. (2015). Teacher collaboration in instructional teams and student achievement. *American Educational Research Journal, 52*(3), 475-514. doi:10.3102/0002831215585562

Rooks, D. (2018). The unintended consequences of cohorts: How social relationships can influence the retention of rural teachers recruited by cohort-based alternative pathway programs. *Journal of Research in Rural Education, 33*(9), 1-22. https://doi.org/10.18113/P8JRRE3309

Ross, J. A., & Gray, P. (2006). School leadership and student achievement: The mediating effects of teacher beliefs. *Canadian Journal of Education, 29*(3), 798-822. doi:10.2307/20054196

Schad, E. (2017). No time to talk! teachers' perceptions of organizational communication: Context and climate. *Educational Management, Administration, & Leadership, 45*(7), 1-22.

Sergiovanni, T. J. (2015). *The principalship: A reflective practice perspective* (5th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson Education.

Sestric, L. (2018, August 3). *Here's how much teachers make in every state.* https://www.gobankingrates.com/making-money/jobs/average-teacher-salary-by-state/#34

Shuck, M. B., & Wollard, K. K. (2008). Employee engagement: Motivating and retaining tomorrow's workforce. *New Horizons in Adult Education and Human Resource Development, 22*(221), 48-53.

Skaalvik, E. M., & Skaalvik, S. (2017). Dimensions of teacher burnout: Relations with potential stressors at school. *Social Psychology of Education, 20*(4).

Spiegelman, M. (2018). Teacher satisfaction with salary and current job. Data Point. NCES 2018-116. *National Center for Education Statistics*.

Spitzer, D. R. (1996). Motivation: The neglected factor in instructional design. *Educational technology, 36*(3), 45-49.

Stenner, P. (2011). Q Methodology as qualiquantology: Comment on ''Q methodology and its position in the mixed methods continuum.'' *Operant Subjectivity, 34*, 192-208.

Stephenson, W. (1935). Correlating persons instead of tests. *Character and Personality, 4*(1), 17-24.

Sutcher, L., Darling-Hammond, L., & Carver-Thomas, D. (2016). *A coming crisis in teaching? Teacher supply, demand, and shortages in the US*. Learning Policy Institute. https://learningpolicyinstitute. org/product/coming-crisis-teaching

Teachers Insurance Annuity Association. (2019). *Student loan debt: The multigenerational effects on relationship and retirement* [Executive summary]. https://www.tiaa.org/public/pdf/MIT_AgeLab_Student_Debt_Executive_Summary.pdf

The New Teacher Project. (2012). *The irreplaceables: Understanding the real retention crisis in America's urban schools*. (No. 78). Alexandria, VA: The New Teacher Project. https://tntp.org/assets/documents/TNTP_Irreplaceables_2012.pdf

Uline, C., & Tschannen-Moran, M. (2008). The walls speak: The interplay of quality facilities, school climate, and student achievement. *Journal of Educational Administration, 46*, 55-73. doi:10.1108/09578230810849817

U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Central, North Carolina. (n.d.). https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/dashboard/leecountynorthcarolina,nc/PST045217

Vagi, R., Pivovarova, M., & Miedel Barnard, W. (2019). Keeping our best? A survival analysis examining a measure of preservice teacher quality and teacher attrition. *Journal of Teacher Education, 70*(2), 115-127. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487117725025

Watts, S., & Stenner, P. (2005). Doing Q methodology: Theory, method and interpretation. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 2*(1), 67-91. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088705qp022oa

Webler, T., Danielson, S., & Tuler, S. (2009). *Using Q method to reveal social perspectives in environmental research*. Greenfield MA: Social and Environmental Research Institute. www.seri- us.org/pubs/Qprimer.pdf

Will, M. (2018). Teachers paid significantly less than comparable professionals, study finds. *Education Week*, *38*(4), 4–4.

Wong, S. S., & Luft, J. A. (2015). Secondary science teachers' beliefs and persistence: A longitudinal mixed-methods study. *Journal of Science Teacher Education, 26*(7), 619-645. doi:10.1007/s10972-015-9441-4

# 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 Moye Boulevard · Greenville, NC 27834
Office **252-744-2914** · Fax **252-744-2284** · rede.ecu.edu/umcirb/

## Notification of Initial Approval: Expedited

From: Social/Behavioral IRB
To: Andrew Keller
CC: Matthew Militello
Matthew Militello
Date: 12/4/2019
Re: UMCIRB 18-002342
Factors for Teacher Retention

I am pleased to inform you that your Expedited Application was approved. Approval of the study and any consent form(s) occurred on 12/4/2019. The research study is eligible for review under expedited category # 6, 7. The Chairperson (or designee) deemed this study no more than minimal risk.

Changes to this approved research may not be initiated without UMCIRB review except when necessary to eliminate an apparent immediate hazard to the participant. All unanticipated problems involving risks to participants and others must be promptly reported to the UMCIRB. The investigator must submit a Final Report application to the UMCIRB prior to the Expected End Date provided in the IRB application. If the study is not completed by this date, an Amendment will need to be submitted to extend the Expected End Date. The Investigator must adhere to all reporting requirements for this study.

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

The approval includes the following items:

| Name | Description |
|---|---|
| Appendices | Data Collection Sheet |
| CRITICAL FACTORS FOR JOB SATISFACTION FOR TEACHERS AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHER RETENTION | Study Protocol or Grant Application |
| Focus Group Protocol | Interview/Focus Group Scripts/Questions |
| No More Than Minimal Risk: Card Sort Protocol | Consent Forms |
| No More Than Minimal Risk: Focus Group Protocol | Consent Forms |
| QSort Protocol & Questionnaire | Surveys and Questionnaires |

For research studies where a waiver of HIPAA Authorization has been approved, each of the waiver criteria in 45 CFR 164.512(i)(2)(ii) has 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: Q-SET STATEMENTS

| No. | Statement | Source | Factor |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | My decision to remain a teacher at my school is most impacted by the belief that I am called to be a teacher. | Survey Respondent 1 | Internal |
| 2 | My decision to remain a teacher at my school is most impacted by positive relationships developed with my fellow teachers. | Survey Respondents 1, 5, 6, 7, 10, 12, 14<br>Boyd et al., (2011)<br>Goodpaster, K., Adedokun, O., & Weaver, C. (2012) | Working Conditions |
| 3 | My decision to remain a teacher at my school is most impacted by school administrators consistently enforcing school rules. | Survey Respondents 2, 6 | Leadership |
| 4 | My decision to remain a teacher at my school is most impacted by school administration treating me as a professional. | Survey Respondents 3, 7 | Leadership |
| 5 | My decision to remain a teacher at my school is most impacted by being given autonomy in the design and execution of my lessons. | Survey Respondent 3<br>Boyd et al. (2011) | Working Conditions |
| 6 | My decision to remain a teacher at my school is most impacted by feeling school administration protects my instructional time by limiting interruptions. | Survey Respondent 3<br>Boyd et al. (2011) | Leadership |
| 7 | My decision to remain a teacher at my school is most impacted by feeling that school administration values me for my abilities as a teacher. | Survey Respondents 3, 4, 7, 9, 13, 14 | Leadership |
| 8 | My decision to remain a teacher at my school is most impacted by the strong connections to the community in which I teach. | Survey Respondent 5<br>Goodpaster, K., Adedokun, O., & Weaver, C. (2012) | External |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 9 | My decision to remain a teacher at my school is most impacted by working in a collaborative environment. | Survey Respondent 6<br>Boyd et al. (2011) | Working Conditions |
| 10 | My decision to remain a teacher at my school is most impacted by feeling school administration holds the entire staff to consistent standards of professionalism. | Survey Respondent 6 | Leadership |
| 11 | My decision to remain a teacher at my school is most impacted by my enjoyment of watching students succeed. | Survey Respondents 7, 8 | Internal |
| 12 | My decision to remain a teacher at my school is most impacted by the amount of money I make as a teacher at this school. | Survey Respondent 7<br>Allen, M.B. (2005)<br>Goodpaster, K., Adedokun, O., & Weaver, C. (2012) | External |
| 13 | My decision to remain a teacher at my school is most impacted by feeling they have a voice in the decision-making processes that affect me. | Survey Respondents 3, 8, 14<br>Boyd et al. (2011) | Working Conditions |
| 14 | My decision to remain a teacher at my school is most impacted by feeling comfortable voicing my concerns to administration. | Survey Respondents 8, 11 | Working Conditions |
| 15 | My decision to remain a teacher at my school is most impacted by my children attending school in the same district where I am a teacher. | Survey Respondent 10 | External |
| 16 | My decision to remain a teacher at my school is most impacted by feeling administration cares about me as a person. | Survey Respondent 13<br>Goodpaster, K., Adedokun, O., & Weaver, C. (2012) | Leadership |
| 17 | My decision to remain a teacher at my school is most impacted by the feeling that I have a positive impact on students' lives. | Survey Respondent 14<br>Delano-Gemzik, J. (2017) | Internal |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 18 | My decision to remain a teacher at my school is most impacted by the time it allows to spend with my family. | Allen, M.B. (2005) | External |
| 19 | My decision to remain a teacher at my school is most impacted by the number of students in each of my classes. | Allen, M.B. (2005) | External |
| 20 | My decision to remain a teacher at my school is most impacted by the opportunities for advancement in the profession. | Allen, M.B. (2005)<br>Goodpaster, K., Adedokun, O., & Weaver, C. (2012) | External |
| 21 | My decision to remain a teacher at my school is most impacted by having retirement benefits. | Allen, M.B. (2005) | External |
| 22 | My decision to remain a teacher at my school is most impacted by the amount of support provided by a quality mentor teacher. | Allen, M.B. (2005)<br>Darling-Hammond, (2003)<br>Ingersoll, R. & Krailik, J. (2004)<br>Ronfeldt, M. & McQueen, K. (2017)<br>Wong, S. & Luft, J. (2015) | Working Conditions |
| 23 | My decision to remain a teacher at my school is most impacted by access to curriculum resources and supplies. | Darling-Hammond, L. (2003) | Working Conditions |
| 24 | My decision to remain a teacher at my school is most impacted by the instructional feedback provided by administrators. | Darling-Hammond, L. (2003) | Leadership |
| 25 | My decision to remain a teacher at my school is most impacted by me feeling safe at work. | Boyd et al. (2011) | Working Conditions |
| 26 | My decision to remain a teacher at my school is most impacted by student behavior. | Boyd et al. (2011) | External |
| 27 | My decision to remain a teacher at my school is most impacted by the physical condition of their classroom. | Buckley, J., Schneider, M., & Shang, Y., (2004) | Working Conditions |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 28 | My decision to remain a teacher at my school is most impacted by the amount of time spent on developing lesson plans. | Kersaint, G., Lewis, J., Potter, R., & Meisels, G. (2007) | Working Conditions |
| 29 | My decision to remain a teacher at my school is most impacted by having common planning time with teachers in my content area. | Ingersoll, R. & Krailik, J. (2004) | Working Conditions |
| 30 | My decision to remain a teacher at my school is most impacted by being recognized by administration for my professional accomplishments. | Delano-Gemzik, J. (2017) | Leadership |
| 31 | My decision to remain a teacher at my school is most impacted by having an atmosphere of trust in the school. | Delano-Gemzik, J. (2017) | Working Conditions |
| 32 | My decision to remain a teacher at my school is most impacted by my feelings about district policies and procedures. | Delano-Gemzik, J. (2017) | External |
| 33 | My decision to remain a teacher at my school is most impacted by my interest in the subject that I teach. | Delano-Gemzik, J. (2017) | Internal |
| 34 | My decision to remain a teacher at my school is most impacted by the ability to find and maintain a balance between my work and personal life. | Delano-Gemzik, J. (2017) | Internal |
| 35 | My decision to remain a teacher at my school is most impacted by the level of parent involvement at the school. | Delano-Gemzik, J. (2017) | External |
| 36 | My decision to remain a teacher at my school is most impacted by the knowledge that colleagues know me personally. | Delano-Gemzik, J. (2017) | Working Conditions |
| 37 | My decision to remain a teacher at my school is most impacted by the length of my commute to work. | Pilot Group Feedback | External |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 38 | My decision to remain a teacher at my school is most impacted by social and team building activities held at the school to build a positive culture. | Pilot Group Feedback | Working Conditions |
| 39 | My decision to remain a teacher at my school is most impacted by having protected planning without having meetings or covering classes for absent teachers. | Pilot Group Feedback | Working Conditions |
| 40 | My decision to remain a teacher at my school is most impacted by the extra-duties required of me for which I receive no compensation. | Pilot Group Feedback | Working Conditions |
| 41 | My decision to remain a teacher at my school is most impacted by clear and timely communication about matters that impact me. | Pilot Group Feedback | Working Conditions |
| 42 | My decision to remain a teacher at my school is most impacted by the feeling I am supported by administrators when dealing with difficult parents. | Pilot Group Feedback | Leadership |
| 43 | My decision to remain a teacher at my school is most impacted by the number of different courses I am required to teach each semester. | Pilot Group Feedback | Working Conditions |
| 44 | My decision to remain a teacher at my school is most impacted by the availability of technology resources in my classroom. | Pilot Group Feedback | Working Conditions |

## APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

*East Carolina University*

**Title of Research Study: Critical Factors for Job Satisfaction for Teachers and the Implications for Teacher Retention**

**Principal Investigator:** Andrew Keller, under the guidance of Dr. Matthew Militello and Dr. Karen Jones

---

Please provide a unique identifier that you will remember: _____

Condition for Sorting the Statements—keep this statement in mind as you sort the statements:

*What elements of the teaching profession are most influential on your decision to remain at your current school?*

**Q Sort Instructions:**

1. Lay out the number cards from left to right with the negative (-) numbers on your left (see picture below):

2. Read through all **44** cards to become familiar with the statements.

3. As you read through the statements for a second time, organize them into three piles:

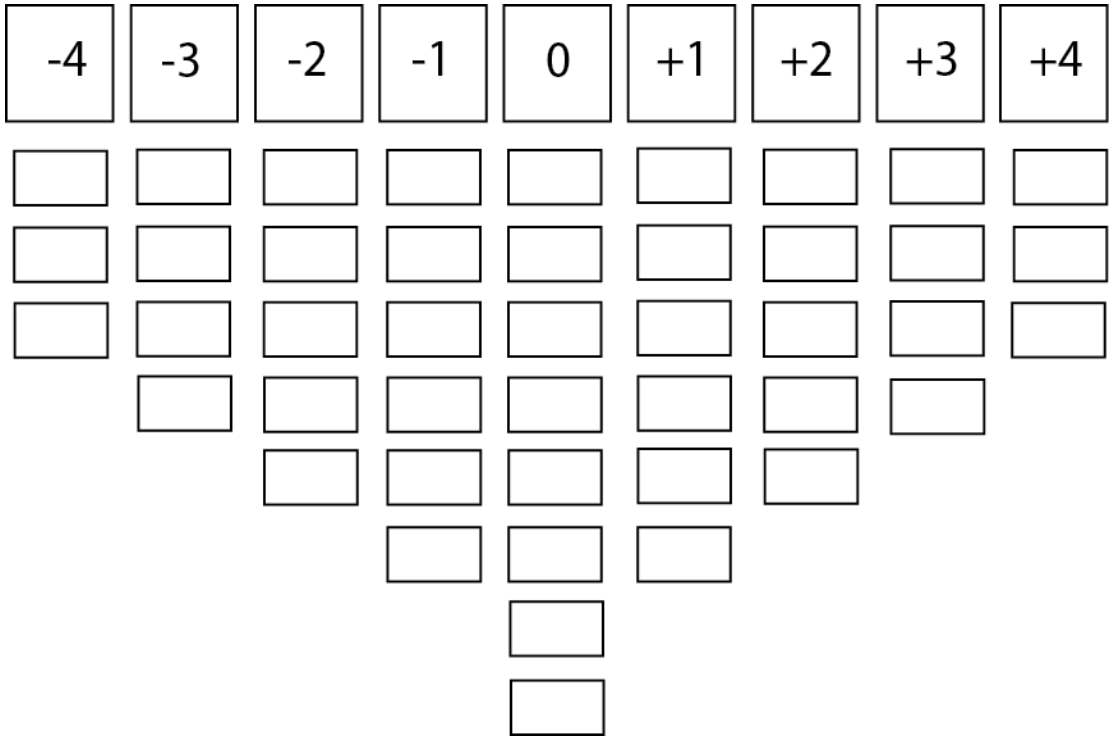
   - On the right, place the cards that you feel are **most representative of what you believe are the elements of the teaching profession that are the most influential on your decision to remain in education.**
   - On the left, place the cards that are least representative.
   - In the middle, place the cards that you feel less certain about.

4. Beginning with the pile on the right, place the **three** cards that you **agree** with the most under the **+4** marker.
5. Now, turning to your left side, place the **three** cards that you **disagree** with the most under the **-4** marker.

6. Continue this process until all the cards are placed. You are free to change your mind during the sorting process and switch items around.
7. When completed, you should have the following number of cards under each row:

   - You should have **3** cards under markers **+4** (most **agree**) and -4 (least **agree**).
   - You should have **4** cards under markers **+3** (**agree**) and -3 (**disagree**).
   - You should have **5** cards under markers **+2** (slightly **agree**) and -2 (slightly **disagree**).
   - You should have **6** cards under markers **+1** (slightly **agree**) and -1 (slightly **disagree**).
   - You should have **8** cards under marker **0** (**neutral**).

8. Your sorted cards should match the diagram below. After sorting the cards, please record the number on the cards onto the diagram below in the order in which you placed them. KEEP YOUR CARDS OUT—you will need them to answer the follow-up questions.



**Post Q Sort Interview Questions:**

1) Please list a few of the cards in the +4 column and your reasons for placing them there.

Card #: _____

Card #: _____

2) Please list a few of the cards in the -4 column and your reasons for placing them there.

Card #: _____

Card #: _____

3) Were there specific statements that you had difficulty placing? *Choose one and please list the number of the statement and describe your dilemma.*

Card #: _____

5) Is there a statement that you would have like to see in the sort? If so, what would the card have said and where would you have placed it?

6) In order, what are the three most important elements of the teaching profession that school and district administrators could provide to increase your willingness to remain in the teaching profession? Why are they important, and how could school and district administrators ensure these elements are in place?

7) Would you be willing to participate in a post-sort focus group interview?

8) Have you ever considered leaving teaching? If so, why?

**Background Questions**

1) **Gender:** ____M (1) ____F (2)

2) **Ethnicity (Check One):**

_____ African American (1)

_____ Caucasian (2)
_____ Hispanic/Latino (3)

_____ Middle Eastern (4)

_____ Native American (5)

_____ Asian (6)

_____ Other: _____ (7)

3) **Age**

_____ 20-30

_____ 31-40

_____ 41-50

_____ 51+

4) **Years of Teaching Experience**

_____ 0-5
_____ 6-10
_____ 11-15

_____ 16-20

_____ 21-25

_____ 26+

5) What teacher preparation program did you participate in?

_____ Traditional University
_____ Lateral Entry
_____ Teach for America

_____ Other: _____

6) What is your area(s) of licensure?

7) What grade/subject are you currently teaching?

## POST-SORT FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

*East Carolina University*

**Title of Research Study: Critical Factors for Job Satisfaction for Teachers and the Implications for Teacher Retention**

---

**Principal Investigator:** Andrew Keller, under the guidance of Dr. Matthew Militello and Dr. Karen Jones

Please provide a unique identifier that you will remember: _____

Participants with significant loading on a particular factor will sit with other participants who loaded on the same factor. Loading on a common factor represents a statistically significant shared perspective. The purpose of this focus group interview is to gain additional insights about why participants have their perspectives.

After performing factor analysis on all of the responses, your responses are statistically similar to those shown in the model sort.

Condition for Sorting the Statements—as a reminder, keep this statement in mind as you participate in the focus group interview process: *What elements of the teaching profession are most influential on your decision to remain in education*?

1. Who is in your group? Describe any similarities and/or differences (e.g., demographics, job, etc.).

2. Which statements best represent your shared perspective?

3. What has had the greatest impact on how you sorted your cards the way you did? (Examples- past experience, courses, current knowledge, etc.). Please explain your answers.

4. What name would you assign that represents the perspective illustrated by this model sort? Explain why and the meaning associated with that name—use card statements to provide justification for your name.

## CARD SORT CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS

*East Carolina University*

## Consent to Take Part in Research that has Potentially Greater than Minimal Risk

### Information You Should Think About Before Agreeing to Take Part in This Research

**Title of Research Study: Critical Factors for Job Satisfaction for Teachers and the Implications for Teacher Retention**

---

**Principal Investigator:** Andrew B. Keller, under the guidance of Dr. Matthew Militello and Dr. Karen Jones

Researchers at East Carolina University (ECU) study issues related to society, health problems, environmental problems, behavior problems and the human condition. To do this, we need the help of volunteers who are willing to take part in research.

**Why am I being invited to take part in this research?**

The purpose of this study is to seek to understand what elements of the teaching profession to have the most impact on teachers' decisions to remain in their current school. As a current teacher, you are being invited to take part in this research to seek your perceptions, viewpoints, and insights about what had the most impact on your decision to remain teaching at your school. You are being asked to take part in the study by participating in a Card Sort Exercise. Your participation in this study is voluntary. The decision to take part in the research is yours to make. You have the right to participate, to choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time without penalty. By conducting this research, we hope to obtain findings to the following research questions:

1. What does existing research say about teacher turnover and perceptions of the reasons behind teacher turnover?
2. What do current teachers perceive as the most important factors in their decisions to stay at their current school?
3. Why do these teachers hold these beliefs?

If you volunteer to participate in this research, you will be one of about 40 people to do so.

**Are there reasons I should not take part in this research?**

There are no known reasons for why you should not participate in this research study. In addition, there are no known risks to participating in the card sorting exercise.

**What other choices do I have if I do not take part in this research?**

You can choose not to participate.

**Where is the research going to take place and how long will it last?**

The research will be conducted at Lee County High School at 1708 Nash St., Sanford, NC 27330. The total amount of time you will be asked to volunteer for this study is approximately one hour.

**What will I be asked to do?**

You will be asked to sort 44 cards. These cards have statements about elements of the teaching profession printed on them and your task will be to sort them according to your own beliefs and viewpoints. This process should take approximately one hour. After sorting the cards, you will be asked to complete a brief questionnaire about the statements and why you placed specific statements in certain areas on the distribution grid. In addition, you will be asked some general demographic data. Your card sort and your responses to the questionnaire will remain confidential.

**What might I experience if I take part in the research?**

We do not know of any risks (the chance of harm) associated with this research. Any risks that may occur with this research are no more than what you would experience in everyday life. We do not know if you will benefit from taking part in this study. There may not be any personal benefit to you but the information gained by doing this research may help others in the future.

**Will I be paid for taking part in this research?**

We will not be able to pay you for the time you volunteer while being in this study.

**Will it cost me to take part in this research?**

It will not cost you any money to be part of the research.

**Who will know that I took part in this research and learn personal information about me?**

ECU and the people and organizations listed below may know that you took part in this research and may see information about you that is normally kept private. With your permission, these people may use your private information to do this research:

- Any agency of the federal, state, or local government that regulates human research. This includes the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), the North Carolina Department of Health, and the Office for Human Research Protections.

- The University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board (UNCIRB) and its staff have responsibility for overseeing your welfare during this research and may need to see research records that identify you.

**How will you keep the information you collect about me secure? How long will you keep it?**

The information in the study will be kept confidential to the full extent allowed by law. Data will be stored securely on a computer and in a location of which only the researcher has access. No reference will be made in oral or written reports that could link you to the study.

**What if I decide I do not want to continue in this research?**

You can stop at any time after it has already started. There will be no consequences if you stop and you will not be criticized. You will not lose any benefits that you normally receive.

**Who should I contact if I have questions?**

The people conducting this study will be able to answer any questions concerning this research, now or in the future. You may contact the Principal Investigator at phone number 919-353-2740 (weekdays, 8:00 am – 4:00 pm) or email kellera16@students.ecu.edu

If you have questions about your rights as someone taking part in research, you may call the Office of Research Integrity & Compliance (ORIC) at phone number 252-744-2941 (weekdays, 8:00 am – 5:00 pm). If you would like to report a complaint or concern about this research study, you may call the Director of the ORIC at 252-744-1971.

**I have decided I want to take part in this research. What should I do now?**

The person obtaining informed consent will ask you to read the following and if you agree, you should sign this form:

- I have read (or had read to me) all of the above information.

- I have had an opportunity to ask questions about things in this research I did not understand and

have received satisfactory answers.

- I know that I can stop taking part in this study at any time.
- By signing this informed consent form, I am not giving up any of my rights.
- I have been given a copy of this consent document, and it is mine to keep.

| **Participant's Name (PRINT)** | **Signature** | **Date** |
|---|---|---|

**Person Obtaining Informed Consent:** I have conducted the initial informed consent process. I have orally reviewed the contents of the consent document with the person who has signed above and answered all of the person's questions about the research.

| **Person Obtaining Consent (PRINT)** | **Signature** | **Date** |
|---|---|---|

**CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS**

# Informed Consent to Participate in Research

## Information to Consider Before Taking Part in Research

## That Has No More Than Minimal Risk

*East Carolina University*

**Title of Research Study**: **Teachers' Perceptions on the Elements That Most Impact Teacher Retention**

**Principal Investigator:** Andrew B. Keller, under the guidance of Dr. Matthew Militello and Dr. Karen Jones

---

Researchers at East Carolina University (ECU) study issues related to society, health problems, environmental problems, behavior problems and the human condition. To do this, we need the help of volunteers who are willing to take part in research.

**Why am I being invited to take part in this research?**

The purpose of this study is to seek to understand what elements of the teaching profession teachers perceive to have the most impact on their decision. As a current teacher, you are being invited to take part in this research to seek your perceptions, viewpoints, and insights about how you decide to remain in your current school. You are being asked to take part in the study by participating in a Card Sort Exercise. Your participation in this study is voluntary. The decision to take part in the research is yours to make. You have the right to participate, to choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time without penalty. By conducting this research, we hope to obtain findings to the following research questions:

1. What does existing research say about teacher turnover and perceptions of the reasons behind teacher turnover?
2. What do current teachers perceive as the most important factors in their decisions to stay at their current school?
3. Why do these teachers hold these beliefs?

If you volunteer to participate in this research, you will be one of about 40 people to do so.

**Are there reasons I should not take part in this research?**

There are no known reasons for why you should not participate in this research study. In addition, there are no known risks to participating in the post-sort interview.

**What other choices do I have if I do not take part in this research?**

You can choose not to participate.

**Where is the research going to take place and how long will it last?**

The research will be conducted at Lee County High School at 1708 Nash St., Sanford, NC 27330. The total amount of time you will be asked to volunteer for this study is approximately one hour.

**What will I be asked to do?**

After performing factor analysis on all of the responses, your responses are statistically similar to those shown in the model sort and to those participating in this focus group interview with you. You will be asked to answer and discuss with others your answers to the following questions based on how you sorted the statements for the Q sort: (1) Who is in your group? Describe any similarities and/or differences (e.g., demographics, job, etc.), (2) Which statements best represent your shared perspective?, (3) What has had the greatest impact on how you sorted your cards the way you did? (Examples- past experience, courses, current knowledge, etc.). Please explain your answers. (4) What name would you assign that represents the perspective illustrated by this model sort? Explain why and the meaning associated with that name—use card statements to provide justification for your name.

**What might I experience if I take part in the research?**

We do not know of any risks (the chance of harm) associated with this research. Any risks that may occur with this research are no more than what you would experience in everyday life. We do not know if you will benefit from taking part in this study. There may not be any personal benefit to you but the information gained by doing this research may help others in the future.

**Will I be paid for taking part in this research?**

We will not be able to pay you for the time you volunteer while being in this study.

**Will it cost me to take part in this research?**

It will not cost you any money to be part of the research.

**Who will know that I took part in this research and learn personal information about me?**

ECU and the people and organizations listed below may know that you took part in this research and may see information about you that is normally kept private. With your permission, these people may use your private information to do this research:

- Any agency of the federal, state, or local government that regulates human research. This includes the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), the North Carolina Department of Health, and the Office for Human Research Protections.

- The University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board (UNCIRB) and its staff have responsibility for overseeing your welfare during this research and may need to see research records that identify you.

**How will you keep the information you collect about me secure? How long will you keep it?**

The information in the study will be kept confidential to the full extent allowed by law. Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the data collection and data analysis process. Information gathered from the interview will be maintained in a secure, locked location and will be destroyed upon successful completion of the study. No reference will be made in oral or written reports that could link you to the study.

**What if I decide I do not want to continue in this research?**

You can stop at any time after it has already started. There will be no consequences if you stop and you will not be criticized. You will not lose any benefits that you normally receive.

**Who should I contact if I have questions?**

The people conducting this study will be able to answer any questions concerning this research, now or in the future. You may contact the Principal Investigator at phone number 919-353-2740 (weekdays, 8:00 am – 4:00 pm) or email kellera16@students.ecu.edu

If you have questions about your rights as someone taking part in research, you may call the Office of Research Integrity & Compliance (ORIC) at phone number 252-744-2941 (days, 8:00 am – 5:00 pm). If you would like to report a complaint or concern about this research study, you may call the Director of the ORIC at 252-744-1971.

**I have decided I want to take part in this research. What should I do now?**

The person obtaining informed consent will ask you to read the following and if you agree, you should sign this form:

- I have read (or had read to me) all of the above information.

- I have had an opportunity to ask questions about things in this research I did not understand and

have received satisfactory answers.

- I know that I can stop taking part in this study at any time.

- By signing this informed consent form, I am not giving up any of my rights.

- I have been given a copy of this consent document, and it is mine to keep.

---

**Participant's Name (PRINT)** **Signature** **Date**

**Person Obtaining Informed Consent:** I have conducted the initial informed consent process. I have orally reviewed the contents of the consent document with the person who has signed above and answered all of the person's questions about the research.

---

**Person Obtaining Consent (PRINT)** **Signature** **Date**

## APPENDIX D: RECRUITMENT EMAIL

Keller, Andrew Branch
Sat 05/16/2020 03:34 PM

Dear teachers,

As some of you may know, I am in the process of completing my Doctor of Education at East Carolina University. I have completed my course work, and I have been working on my dissertation for the last year. My original plan was to collect data for my research face-to-face in April; however, due to isolation, I had to find and get approval for an alternative method. I just received the official approval to move forward from my dissertation chair, and I hope to begin data collection this Monday, May 18th, using an online program.

My study is focused on why teachers have chosen to stay at their current school. I chose this topic because I want to get at the heart of what helps teachers feel supported and motivated, and I hope to learn much from this study. The actual research process is composed of a Q Sort. If you choose to participate in the sort, you will read a series of statements and rank them among three categories: Agree, Disagree, and Neutral. You will then get a chance to explain your reasoning for choosing the ranks you did and provide some general demographic information. The statements and ranks you choose will in no way be taken as judgment on the school itself but instead as a reflection of personal feelings and convictions you hold as a teacher. All information gathered will be completely confidential and coded.

It is my great hope that many of you will participate in this study to help me complete this process and learn more about teacher retention and support. I would love to have as many participants as possible; the only requirement to participate is that you have completed one full year and are at least in your second year of teaching at Lee County High School as a classroom teacher. I know you are all working incredibly hard to support your students and finish out the school year, and I greatly appreciate any time you can set aside to help me complete this part of my research study. I will be sending the link to the study and more information from my ECU student email address, which is kellera16@students.ecu.edu. If you are interested in participating and do not receive that email, please check your spam folder or contact me at 919-353-2740. Please feel free contact me via email or at that number if you have any further questions before deciding whether or not to participate.

Again, thank you all so much for everything!

Andrew