

Perceptions of Strategic Compensation as a Motivating Factor on Teacher Quality,
Recruitment and Retention in a Rural Southeast School District

Christopher W. Collier

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Carol S. Cash, Chair

Stephen A. Geyer

Michael Kelly

Ted S. Price

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of teachers and administrators in a rural southeast school district regarding the impact of strategic compensation as a motivating factor on teacher quality, recruitment, and retention. As a result of increased demands on K12 education and the limited pool of teaching candidates, public school districts continue to search for ways to motivate, recruit and retain teachers (Muranto & Shuls, 2012). Since many view the traditional teacher salary scale as an outdated and ineffective practice, school districts continue to search for new ways to provide additional financial bonuses. (Springer, 2009).

At the time of the study, the rural southeast school district studied was the only district within its state that used a strategic compensation model as a part of its employee benefits package. The locally funded plan awarded bonuses to teachers who qualify according to the parameters set by their school board. The initial rationale behind the implementation of the plan was to acknowledge exemplary teachers within the district. In this study, the history of the traditional salary scale, teacher quality, teacher retention, teacher recruitment, proponents and opponents of strategic compensation and recent studies on merit pay were examined.

In this mixed methods study, a survey was sent to all 237 candidates eligible for strategic compensation, and a focus group interview with 7 administrators responsible for the summative evaluations of teachers was conducted. After the data were collected, descriptive statistics were examined to determine if additional ANOVA analyses were required to determine if demographic differences could be identified.

The findings from this study may assist school districts develop and maintain a strategic compensation plan as a part of its overall teacher compensation package. After the data were disaggregated and analyzed, the findings from this study indicated mixed reviews regarding teacher perceptions of strategic compensation. Survey results indicate that the ideal bonus lies between \$1,000-\$3,000. In addition, teachers and administrators did not perceive that strategic compensation assisted with teacher recruitment or retention. Additional findings indicated

differences in perceptions of strategic compensation based on gender and level of teaching assignment.

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General Audience Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of teachers and administrators in a rural southeast school district regarding the impact of a pay for performance plan as a motivating factor on teacher quality, recruitment, and retention. As a result of the teacher shortage in America, public school districts continue to search for ways to motivate, recruit and retain teachers. Since many view the salaries of teachers low, school districts continue to search for new ways to provide additional end of year bonuses as a motivating factor to improve teacher quality, recruitment and retention.

To date, the rural southeast school district studied is the only district within its state that uses a strategic compensation model as a part of its employee benefits package. The plan awards bonuses to teachers who qualify according to their end of year rating. In this study, the history of the traditional salary scale, teacher quality, teacher retention, teacher recruitment, proponents and opponents of strategic compensation and recent studies on merit pay will be examined. A survey was sent to all 237 candidates eligible for strategic compensation, and a focus group interview with 8 administrators responsible for the summative evaluations of teachers was conducted. After the data were collected, they were sorted by demographic identifiers to determine if there were differences in responses between different groups.

The findings from this study may assist school districts develop and maintain a strategic compensation plan as a part of its overall teacher compensation plan. The findings from this study include: \$1,000-\$3,000 is the ideal amount of money that would motivate a teacher to improve, strategic compensation did not assist with teacher recruitment, and school administrators did not believe strategic compensation led to greater teacher retention within the rural southeast school district. In addition, teachers and administrators believed that participation in the strategic compensation plan should be voluntary. Findings based on demographic identifiers indicated that male teachers responded more positively than female teachers, and there were differences among elementary, middle school and high school teacher responses with regard to their perceptions of the strategic compensation plan.

Dedication

To say the completion of this doctoral program was challenging is a significant understatement. During my program I was hired as a high school principal, both of my children were under the age of 6, my wife changed jobs, we moved into a new house, and my father struggled with his health. Needless to say, I persevered. I know that this was not because of my efforts alone.

As a man of faith, all glory goes to God for His grace and strength to complete this program. I also know that I could not have done it without my family, who made significant sacrifices to get me where I am today, and I am eternally grateful. To my wife, Becky, I cannot begin to express my gratitude for the significant amount of sacrifices you made to keep our family afloat. I'm not sure I deserve the blessing of being your husband, but I know that I will strive every day to be a better man and earn that blessing. To my children, Cooper and Maggie, I'm hopeful that you won't remember the multitude of nights I spent away from you to serve as principal of a high school and complete a doctoral program. I want you to know that your mother and I sacrificed that time for hopes of a better future for you both. I love you more than you can ever imagine, and I am thankful for the blessing to be your father. To my parents, Tom and Marti, thank you for always loving me unconditionally and supporting me through all of the ups and downs in my life. Your guidance, support, and optimism have led me to be the man I am today. I'm truly blessed to never have to look outside of my household growing up to find my role models. I also want to thank my uncle, Todd, and my mother in law, Joyce, for their kindness, love, and support throughout this program. Both of you are second parents to me, and I am blessed to have you in my life.

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Chapter One

Background of the Study

Introduction

Since the passage of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act in 2002, public schools in America have made considerable progress toward equal opportunity for all students (Every Student Succeeds Act, n.d.). High schools across the nation are producing more graduates than ever before and the high school drop out rate is at an all-time low (Every Student Succeeds Act, n.d.). According to Springer and Gardner (2010), the Obama administration made its first step towards providing students with quality teaching in 2011 through a federal grant titled *Teacher and Leader Innovation Fund (TIF)*. The designated \$950 million budget item was aimed to “support the development and implementation of performance-oriented approaches to recruiting, retaining, and rewarding highly effective educators” (Springer & Gardner, 2010, p. 8).

President Obama followed the TIF grant with more education reform efforts through the Race to the Top program, which put teacher performance pay at the forefront once again (Springer & Gardner, 2010). Many state legislatures reorganized teacher evaluation and incentive programs in order to receive some of the \$4.35 billion Race to the Top funds (Springer & Gardner, 2010). Of the 500 Race to the Top points, 28% specifically address the need for great teachers and leaders, with 58 points directly associated with “improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance” (U.S. Department of Education, 2009, p. 3).

In 2015, President Obama signed into law the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in response to the call from families and educators to create a law that better serves students with respect to college and career preparation (Every Student Succeeds Act, n.d.). One of the provisions of ESSA “helps to support and grow local innovations—including evidence-based and place-based interventions developed by local leaders and educators” (Every Student Succeeds Act, n.d.).

Carter, Dunlap and Holladay (2015) argued, “A strong teaching force is necessary for the well-being of our country’s citizens and society as a whole. Not only does education allow for individual success and achievement, but it can also dictate the future stability of the country” (p. 1). Stephens (2015) suggested, “Great students are derivatives of great teachers” (p.1). School systems across the nation continually search for ways to improve teacher quality in classrooms,

and one way to do so is to analyze teacher compensation packages and incentive programs. In fact, Stephens (2015) argued, “according to the Gallup Poll, 72% of Americans believe that those teachers should be rewarded for their hard work with some sort of incentive” (p.1; as cited in Bushaw & McNee, 2009).

Although enhancing teacher quality within the current workforce is critical to student success, recruitment and retention of quality teachers is equally challenging for school districts (Albright, 2011; Will, 2016). While there are many intrinsic rewards to teaching, the single salary scale system used by school districts is a limiting factor with regard to teacher recruitment (Schlechty & Vance, 1983). The retention of quality teachers is equally alarming since approximately half a million teachers leave the teaching profession each year (Boyd, Grossman, Ing, Lankford, Loeb & Wyckoff, 2011). According to an article published by Battelle for Kids entitled *Strategic Compensation in Education: Exploring Practical Applications and Lessons Learned* (2010), “schools are struggling to determine effective ways to recruit, retain, recognize and reward the most effective educators to prepare students to gain the skills and knowledge they need to succeed” (p. 3). As a means to that end, state legislatures and school systems around the country are searching for ways to make the education profession attractive through monetary incentives beyond the single salary scale system (Battelle for Kids, 2010).

Statement of the Problem

As a result of the teacher shortage, school districts across the United States seek new ways to recruit and retain teachers. Muranto and Shuls (2012) state, “in nearly every state, some schools are hard to staff because of geographic teacher shortages” (p. 38). They argue that in order to staff schools and retain teachers, “policy-makers often turn to monetary incentives because they are controllable, and indeed explains part of the current push toward merit pay” (Muranto & Shuls, 2012, p. 38). According to Will (2016), teacher shortages continue to be a major story across the nation. In fact, several states have prompted legislative and administrative action to address recruitment strategies to increase their respective candidate pools (Will, 2016). Podgursky and Springer (2007a) have suggested that performance pay attracts those who share the idea that students’ outcomes should drive instruction and those whose strengths match the desired outcomes of a district. They suggest that districts align performance pay plans with teacher performance expectations to attract potential applicants who share the same vision (Podgursky & Springer, 2007a).

At the time of the study, the Rural Southeast School District studied was the only district within its state that used a strategic compensation model as a part of its employee benefits package. The locally funded plan awarded bonuses to teachers who qualified according to the parameters set by the school board. The initial rationale behind the implementation of the plan was to acknowledge exemplary teachers within the district. Since 2013, the plan has changed forms several times with regard to who is eligible, the requirements of participants and the monetary bonus amount. In part, the rationale of the plan shifted to one that provides incentives for teachers who participate in a litany of professional development opportunities and whose students show individual growth and achievement over the course of a school year (District Superintendent, personal communication, October 31, 2017).

While district officials solicited quantitative feedback from teachers after the first year and qualitative feedback in small focus groups several times over the duration of the strategic compensation plan, they never asked for teacher perceptions of the program regarding teacher motivation, teacher recruitment and teacher retention. Additionally, the school district did not formally solicit qualitative feedback from school administrators who were responsible for determining which teachers received strategic compensation and their perceptions of the effects the strategic compensation plan had on teacher quality, recruitment and retention. As a result, the school district lacked specific formalized data to support the effectiveness of the program to determine whether or not the school board should continue to fund strategic compensation (District Superintendent, personal communication, October 31, 2017).

Significance of the Study

In 2013, the Rural Southeast School District implemented a locally developed strategic compensation plan after receiving a \$450K grant from its state legislature (District Assistant Superintendent, personal communication, December 1, 2016). As a way to emphasize its strategic goals and core values, minimize competition among staff, and build collective commitment to the school district's mission, teachers who received exemplary ratings on their summative evaluation were eligible to receive up to \$5,000 in bonus pay. Once eligible, teachers and school administrators met to complete a strategic initiative worksheet. Teachers were rewarded for achieving individual goals, developed with the principal in specific areas (i.e. professional development, student growth, school/district improvement indicators, community engagement, etc.). They had the opportunity to earn points within each category, with points

weighted toward desired behaviors and outcomes. A dollar value was added to each point on the worksheet. Teachers were also evaluated on specific measures and earned corresponding points based on teacher performance/achievement of desired objectives (District Assistant Superintendent, personal communication, December 1, 2016). Lastly, a quantitative measure of student growth was factored into the overall point system with corresponding dollar values (see Figure 1). The estimated monetary value for each point was approximately \$30 per point. That school year, 108 teachers received bonuses.

Teacher Name	Sample Teacher					
Strategic Goal Area	Assessment	Performance	Benchmark	Goal(s) Met (Y/N)	Total Points Possible	Points Earned
Individual Teacher Growth Goal	NWEA/MAP	74	70	Y	20	20
Individual Teacher Achievement Goal	SOL	89	85	Y	2	2
Individual Teacher Annual Strategic Goals	Annual Goal Form Determination	N/A	N/A	Y	20	20
Grade Level Growth Goals Met	NWEA/MAP Reading and Math	69	70	N	5	0
Grade Level Achievement Goals Met	SOL Reading and Math	88	85	Y	1	1
School Growth Goals Met	NWEA/MAP Reading and Math	68	70	N	5	0
School Achievement Goals Met	SOL Reading and Math	91	85	Y	1	1
School Improvement Goals Met	School Improvement Data Walk	N/A	N/A	Y	5	5
Division Growth Goals Met	NWEA/MAP Reading and Math	72	70	Y	5	5
Division Achievement Goals Met	SOL Reading and Math	94	85	Y	1	1
Division Annual Goals Met	Division Data Analysis	N/A	N/A	Y	5	5
Teacher Evaluation Rating of Exemplary	Teacher Evaluation Summative Form	35	34	Y	10	10
National Board Certification	Notification from the National Board	N/A	N/A	N	5	0
Strategic Initiatives with Evidence of Implementation	Principal Determination	N/A	N/A	Y	unlimited	5
Hard-to-Staff Position	Principal Determination in Consultation with Assistant Superintendent for Operations (teacher must be notified in advance of signing the goals form)	N/A	N/A	Y	5	5
Strategic Scheduling Responsibilities	Principal Determination in Consultation with Assistant Superintendent for Instruction (teacher must be notified in advance of signing the goals form)	N/A	N/A	Y	5	5
TOTAL						85
Total Point Value for 2013-2014						\$50.00
Total Strategic Compensation Bonus						\$4,250.00

Figure 1. 2014 Strategic Initiative Worksheet. Adapted from the Rural Southeast School District.

Following the 2013-14 school year, the district administered a survey to teachers within the district asking questions about the strategic compensation plan. They found that 62% of teachers believed that exemplary and proficient teachers should receive strategic compensation bonuses. Eighty four percent of teachers believed that those who received exemplary ratings should receive a multiplier reward 5x that of proficient rated teachers. As a result, district leaders met with teachers in a strategic compensation review committee to develop plans for the 2014-15 school year. Some of the findings reported by the district were as follows:

1. Communication is critical
2. Clarity is critical
3. The more significant the bonus, the more profound the message

4. The process was time-consuming for principals
5. Teachers were truly appreciative and reported feeling valued
6. Some teachers felt disconnected from peers as a result of the award

Following the 2013-2014 school year, the district revised its strategic compensation plan for the 2014-15 school year, based on feedback from the strategic compensation review committee.

Prior to the 2014-15 school year, the rural southeast school district was notified that the state department of education budget did not include funding for its strategic compensation plan. As a result, the rural southeast school district's school board decided to continue to fund the strategic compensation plan locally by allocating \$109,000 for the district's strategic compensation package. Following the 2014-15 school year, 200 teachers received strategic compensation bonuses with exemplary teachers receiving a 5x multiplier. Each point was assessed a value of \$5 (District Assistant Superintendent, personal communication, December 1, 2016).

At the conclusion of the 2014-15 school year, district leaders once again met with members of the strategic compensation review committee to discuss improvements for the 2015-16 school year. Again, the local school board decided to continue to fund locally the strategic compensation package with an allotment of \$80,000 (District Assistant Superintendent, personal communication, December 1, 2016). They continued to use the 2014-15 model for awarding bonuses and point values utilizing the strategic compensation worksheet for both the 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 school years.

Following the hiring of a new school district superintendent and executive director of operations for the 2016-17 school year, the rural southeast school district leaders met with a newly formed strategic compensation committee to determine whether the school district would continue with the strategic compensation plan for the 2017-18 school year. Based on feedback received from committee members, the school district decided to continue to fund locally the strategic compensation plan but with revisions. For the 2017-18 school year, the district decided only to provide strategic compensation bonuses for those teachers who receive an exemplary rating on his or her summative evaluation. Additionally, the school district decided to eliminate the strategic initiative worksheet that administrators and teachers previously completed at the end of the school year to determine monetary bonus allotments to teachers (District Superintendent, personal communication, October 31, 2017). The monetary strategic compensation bonus

amount is determined by dividing \$80,000 equally by the number of teachers rated as exemplary on his or her summative evaluation (see Figure 2).

IDENTIFIED NEEDS		TEACHER STRATEGIC COMPENSATION TREND						
School Year	Teacher Strategic Comp.	Exemplary EEs	Ave. Bonus	Proficient EEs	Ave. Bonus	Needs Impr EEs	Comments	
2013-2014	\$450K state grant Exemplary only	108 (51%)	\$3,587	Ineligible		?		
2014-2015	\$103K pool Exemplary & proficient	152 (70%)	\$639	54	\$89	10	Exemplary received 5 times more point value than proficient	
2015-2016	\$80K pool Exemplary & proficient	150 (69%)	\$502	60	\$79	6	Exemplary received 5 times more point value than proficient	
2016-2017	\$80K pool Exemplary & proficient	168 (73%)	\$448	60	\$78	3	Exemplary received 5 times more point value than proficient	
2017-2018	\$80K pool Exemplary only	Revising evaluation standards - anticipating fewer evaluated as exemplary; higher bonus					?	

Figure 2. 2018 Strategic Compensation Overview. Adapted from the Rural Southeast School District

This study's findings will enable district leaders to identify teacher and administrator perceptions of strategic compensation as a motivational factor on teacher quality, teacher recruitment and teacher retention. In addition, this study will add to the body of research regarding merit-based pay systems, with a focus on strategic compensation.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of teachers and administrators in a rural southeast school district regarding the impact of a strategic compensation plan as a motivating factor on teacher quality, recruitment and retention. As a result of the rural southeast school district's decision to revise its strategic compensation plan for the 2017-18 school year, the district needed to continue collecting data to inform school district leaders. Teacher and administrator feedback regarding the district's strategic compensation plan provided critical information regarding program fidelity and application. In addition, the study

sought to identify the suggestions from teachers and administrators regarding improvements to the structure of the strategic compensation plan.

Justification of the Study

At the time of the study, the rural southeast school district studied was the only school district within its state that continued to implement a strategic compensation plan for its teachers. The data collected in this study may assist the school district with improvements to the current structure of the strategic compensation plan regarding recruitment, retention and motivation of teachers. Conversely, the data collected may provide evidence to discontinue the strategic compensation plan and use its financial resources in another manner.

In addition, since the southeast school district was the only school district still locally funding a strategic compensation plan, the information from this study may be of interest to surrounding school districts. The data collected may also provide evidence to encourage other school districts within the state to implement a strategic compensation plan or to provide evidence to discourage the development of strategic compensation plans in the future.

Research Questions

1. What are the perceptions of teachers regarding strategic compensation as a motivating factor on teacher quality?
2. What are the perceptions of teachers regarding strategic compensation as a motivating factor on teacher recruitment?
3. What are the perceptions of teachers regarding strategic compensation as a motivating factor on retaining teachers?
4. What are the suggestions of teachers regarding improvements to the strategic compensation plan?
5. What are the perceptions of administrators regarding strategic compensation as a motivating factor on teacher quality?
6. What are the perceptions of administrators regarding strategic compensation as a motivating factor on teacher recruitment?
7. What are the perceptions of administrators regarding strategic compensation as a motivating factor on retaining teachers?

8. What are the suggestions of administrators regarding improvements to the strategic compensation plan?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study was based upon two motivational theories that have been models for determining perceptions of workers regarding workplace motivating factors over several decades. While neither theory particularly pertains to educational environments, Carter et al. (2015) found similarities because of their qualitative values and descriptors regarding strategic compensation in education. Carter et al. (2015) suggest, “both theories have unique paradigms that show how employees can have opposing perceptions in response to the same question even though they have similar jobs” (p. 18). In addition, both theories suggest a balance between the amount of work performed by employees and outputs received by employees in relation to employee job satisfaction.

Herzberg’s Motivational Theory. Fredrick Herzberg (1968) “suggests that the factors involved in producing job satisfaction (and motivation) are separate and distinct from the factors that lead to job dissatisfaction” (p. 56). According to his Two-Factor Theory, humans have two types of needs, one stemming from animal nature (*hygiene factors*) and the other from unique human characteristics (*motivator factors*) (Herzberg, 1968).

When employers improve hygiene factors, they decrease job dissatisfaction (see Figure 3), but it does not necessarily increase job satisfaction (Herzberg, 1968). To influence job satisfaction, employers must rely on job enrichment opportunities to increase employee motivation (Herzberg, 1968). By providing employees with proper structures for achievement, recognition, responsibility, advancement and personal growth, employers will see those with more capability demonstrate it through their work (Herzberg, 1968).

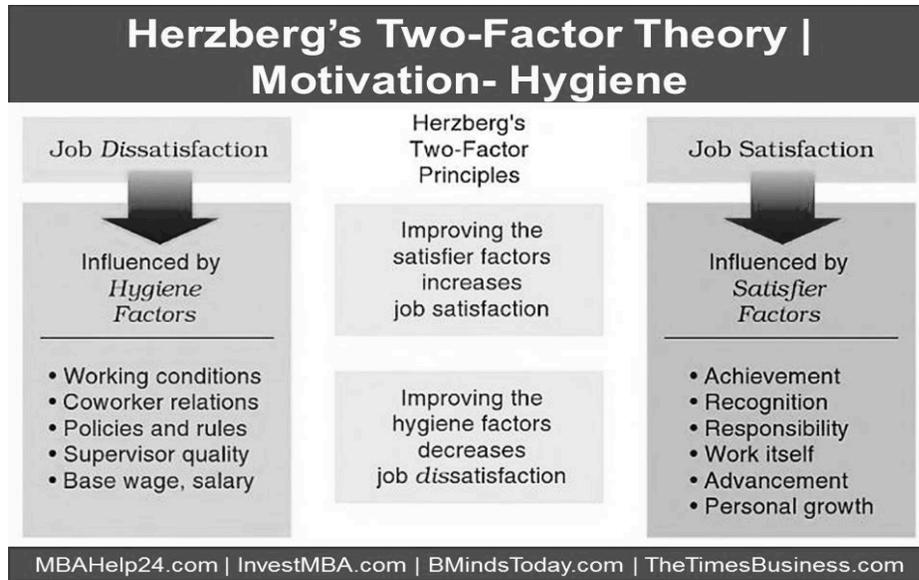


Figure 3. Herzberg's Motivational Theory. Adapted from "Herzberg's Two- Factor Theory of Motivation | Hygiene | Satisfier" by KS Rao Kunchala, 2017. Retrieved from <http://www.mbahelp24.com/herzbergs-two-factor-theory-motivation-hygiene-satisfier>

Adams Equity Theory. Equity theory (Carter et al., 2015, p. 18; Huseman, Hatfield, & Miles, 1987) suggests that individuals inequitably rewarded based on job outputs experience greater levels of job dissatisfaction. As stated by Carter et al. (2015) there is a "balance needed for employees to perceive that job satisfaction experiences are generally seen as a positive experience" (p. 18). Adams suggests that outputs such as pay, bonus, perks, benefits, security, etc. must be balanced with worker inputs such as time, effort, personal sacrifice, etc. to motivate employees (Carter et al., 2015, p. 18; Huseman et al., 1987) (see Figure 4).

Although Adams' Equity theory is not correlated directly to an educational environment, some of the concepts apply. Carter et al. (2015) suggest that

when applied to performance-based pay systems in a school setting, teachers could question the comparative fairness or procedural justice of the rewards at their campuses based on several factors including student assignment to classes, the difficulty of the content level taught, and the relative support given to teachers (p. 19).

As such, performance-based pay systems can address some of the potential equity issues in education through team rewards and other employer outputs (Carter et al., 2015).

Adams' Equity Theory diagram - job motivation

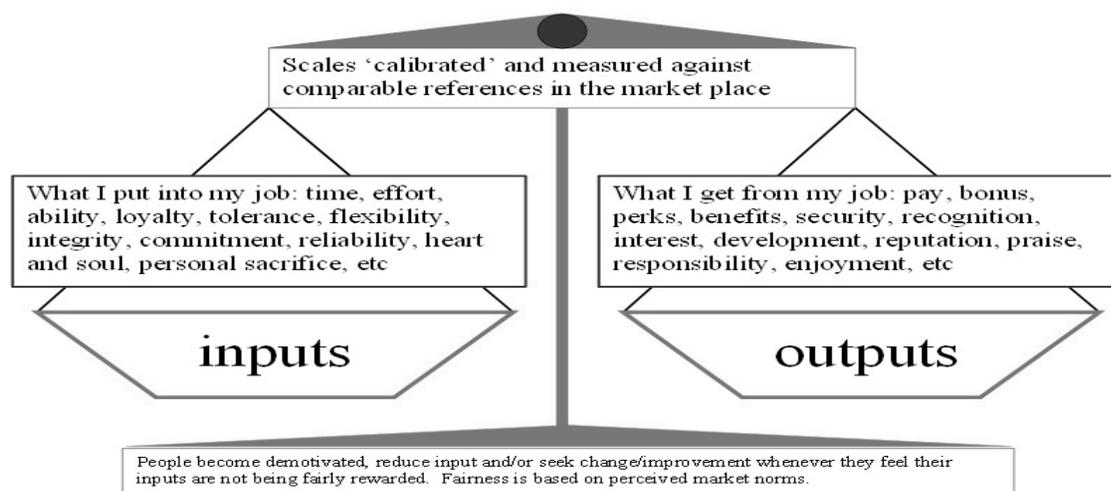


Figure 4. Adams' Equity Theory. Adapted from <https://www.businessballs.com/images/adamsequitytheory.htm>

Based on Herzberg's Motivation Theory (Herzberg, 1968) and Adam's Equity Theory (Carter et al., 2015, p. 18; Huseman, Hatfield, & Miles, 1987), the theoretical framework for this study suggests that strategic compensation impacts both job satisfiers and hygiene factors associated with teaching in a rural southeast district. It also suggests that strategic compensation plans that provide a balanced approach to inputs and outputs provide the greatest opportunity for the successful implementation of such programs in an educational context. Based upon this theoretical framework, this study sought to investigate the perceptions of teachers and administrators in a rural southeast school district regarding the impact of strategic compensation as a motivating factor on teacher quality, recruitment and retention.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are all central to the research in this dissertation. They provide a cross-section of definitions, government policies and concepts regarding teacher compensation as they relate to teacher quality, recruitment and retention.

Merit Pay - "a compensation system that rewards teachers with extra financial rewards beyond the annual salary scale raise on the salary schedule for outstanding performance in the performance evaluation" (Laing & Akiba, 2011, p. 848; Stephens, 2015).

Performance Pay - Earnings are linked to some measure of performance such as student outcomes (test scores) or employee evaluations (Adams, Heywood & Rothstein, 2009; Albright, 2011)

Single Salary Scale - consists of two components, college degree and years of teaching experience; more money is earned depending on the level of the college degree and how many years the person has been teaching (Hess, 2010; Stephens, 2015).

Strategic Compensation - “a new concept that aims to selectively work to align compensation of teachers with desired organizational outcomes” (Satterfield, 2016, p. 9).

Teacher Leader Innovation Fund - a 2011 federal government grant, “that would support the development and implementation of performance-oriented approaches to recruiting, retaining, and rewarding highly effective educators” (Springer & Gardner, 2010, p. 8; Stephens, 2015, p. 12).

Limitations/Delimitations

In this mixed methods study, the analysis was based upon the perceptions from teachers and administrators in one rural southeast school district within the southeastern state, as the school system is the only one within the southeastern state continuing to fund a strategic compensation plan locally. As a result, the data collected may lack generalizability in the context of the United States as a whole.

Additionally, this study is not a broad perception of strategic compensation but will focus on strategic compensation as it relates to teacher quality, retention and recruitment. As a result, teachers may only have a surface level understanding of the strategic compensation plan since it has been adjusted several times over the course of its implementation.

It must also be noted that it is possible some participants may have personal bias due to poor performance evaluations over the course of employment. Conversely, administrators questioned during focus group interviews may have personal bias due to the increased workload and pressure placed on evaluators within the system. In addition to participant bias, researcher bias could enter into the data analysis.

Organization of the Study

This research provides an analysis of the perceptions of teachers in a rural southeast school district regarding a strategic compensation model used within the rural southeast school

district collected through a survey. The research also provides an analysis of the perceptions of school administrators within the rural southeast school district regarding the impact of the rural southeast school district's strategic compensation plan on teacher motivation, recruitment and retention through a focus group interview.

The study is organized into five chapters. Chapter One contains an introduction, statement of the problem, significance of the study, purpose of the study, justification of the study, research questions, theoretical framework, conceptual framework, definitions and the limitations of the study. Chapter Two provides a historical perspective of teacher compensation, impacts of teacher quality on student achievement, teacher recruitment factors, teacher retention factors, proponents and opponents of strategic compensation, and the findings of recent studies. Additionally, the research literature on strategic compensation and teacher pay for performance is reviewed. Next, the study methodology and findings are presented and examined. The final section includes discussion and suggestions for further research and practice. Chapter Three describes the research design and methodology used for this study. Chapter Four includes the data findings, explanation of the data, identification of emergent themes in the data, and a summarized analysis of the data. Chapter Five concludes the study with a discussion of the data findings as they relate to the previous research, as well as, the implications of the findings and conclusions. This chapter also includes the possible implications of the findings as they relate to strategic compensation plans and recommendations for future research.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

The purpose of this research study was to examine the historical perspective of teacher salary scales and incentive-based pay reforms in education and to develop an understanding of the arguments made for and against strategic compensation plans as they pertain to teacher quality, teacher recruitment, and teacher retention. In addition, the researcher sought to identify previous studies regarding strategic compensation in education to identify best practice policies.

Historical Perspective of Teacher Compensation

In the late nineteenth century and early twentieth-century, American society shifted from an agricultural society to an industrial society. In conjunction with this shift, the role of education changed to one that produced effective citizens, united society, and prevented crime and poverty (Springer, 2009). As a result of this new focus and an increased level of professionalism in education, teacher compensation packages were re-conceptualized. The first reconceptualization began with grades-based compensation models (Springer, 2009).

Grades-based compensation models were designed to pay teachers based on the level of schooling taught, which was based on the annual evaluation of teacher performance by school system administrators (Springer, 2009). This model, however, violated procedural and distributive fairness as many White male teachers were more frequently awarded merit-bonuses compared to their non-White counterparts, and female teachers received a considerably lower salary than White males (Springer, 2009). Additionally, secondary teachers were paid at a higher rate than elementary school teachers (Springer, 2009).

As the women's rights movement and the push for "equal pay for equal work" began to take shape in the 1920s, school systems adjusted their teacher compensation packages to provide for more equitable distribution of salaries (Springer, 2009). In 1921, Denver and Des Moines adopted a single salary schedule to meet those needs, in direct conflict with the concept of merit pay, which was predominant during that time (Springer, 2009). The new single salary schedule based salary decisions on two criteria—years of service and degrees held (Springer, 2009). In doing so, it eliminated the possibility of procedural and distributive unfairness, as the new criteria paid all teachers the same "regardless of race, gender, or grade level taught" (Springer, 2009, p. 4). Inevitably school boards across the nation took note of the reduction in

negotiations between school systems and teachers regarding starting salary and began to adopt policies of their own, eventually eliminating merit-pay systems by 1950 (Springer, 2009). Since the 1950s, efforts to reform teacher compensation packages have emerged almost every decade (Springer, 2009).

Those efforts were strengthened when the United States National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983) released *A Nation at Risk: The Full Account*. The findings of the report focused on “four important aspects of the education process: content, expectations, time and teaching” (United States, 1984). National Commission on Excellence in Education & USA Research (Firm), 1983, p. 61). The findings for teaching, as stated in the report, include:

The Commission found that not enough of the academically able students are being attracted to teaching; that teacher preparation programs need substantial improvement; that the professional working life of teachers is on the whole unacceptable; and that a serious shortage of teachers exists in key fields. Too many teachers are being drawn from the bottom quarter of graduating high school and college students...The average salary after 12 years of teaching is only \$17,000 per year, and many teachers are required to supplement their income with part-time and summer employment. In addition, individual teachers have little influence in such critical professional decisions as, for example, textbook selection. Despite widespread publicity about overpopulation of teachers, severe shortages of certain kinds of teachers exist: in the fields of mathematics, science, and foreign languages; and among specialists in education for gifted and talented, language minority, and handicapped students. (United States. National Commission on Excellence in Education, & USA Research (Firm), 1984, p. 65)

As a result of the findings in the report, the National Commission on Excellence in Education was tasked with providing recommendations for public schools around the United States.

According to Tienken and Orlich (2013), *A Nation at Risk* included several recommendations for public education reformers, one of which included merit pay for outstanding teachers. As stated in *A Nation at Risk* (1983), “salaries for the teaching profession should be increased and should be professionally competitive, market-sensitive, and performance-based” (United States. National Commission on Excellence in Education, & USA Research (Firm), 1984, p. 30). The plan also supported the idea that superior teachers should receive additional rewards that would encourage average teachers to perform better and teachers

needing improvement to show growth or be terminated. (United States National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983).

According to Laing and Akiba (2015), “Under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, the federal government issued the \$4.35 billion Race to the Top Fund” (p. 703). Laing and Akiba (2015) argue that one of the major goals of the program was to “reform educator compensation systems by providing additional pay to highly effective teachers and principals” (as cited in US. Department of Education, 2009, p. 9). Liang and Akiba (2015) report:

By the 2011-2012 academic year, states across the nation had enacted policies of providing financial incentives to recruit teachers in math (15 states), science (15 states), and special education (15 states), and to attract teachers to schools of high poverty (eight states), low performance (ten states), or geographic isolation (three states). In addition, 24 states had policies of rewarding teachers for obtaining National Board certification, 15 states for taking on differentiated roles, and 11 states for raising student achievement. (as cited in Education Counts Research Center, n.d., p. 703).

As school systems continue to invest time and resources into professional development, recruitment and retention of teachers, merit-pay systems continue to be a topic of conversation (Springer, 2009). Some of the most notable reforms include: “pay for performance, knowledge- and skills-based pay, career ladder programs, and market-based pay (for example, hard-to-staff subjects or schools or recruitment or retention stipends” (Springer, 2009, p. 4). The following passages explore the effects of teacher quality on student performance and issues regarding teacher recruitment and retention.

Teacher Quality

While there are several factors that ultimately lead to student success, much of the research points to teacher quality as a determinant (Hanushek, Kain & Rivkin, 1999). According to Hanushek, Kain and Rivkin (1999), “The evidence is quite strong on one point: teacher quality is an important determinant of achievement” (p. 3). Further supporting the argument that teacher quality affects student outcomes, Goldhaber (2009) stated:

Education research convincingly shows that teacher quality is the most important schooling factor influencing student achievement. A very good teacher as opposed to a

very bad one can make as much as a full year's difference in learning growth for students (p. 1).

As argued by Mahoney (2010), school administrators must be thoughtful when attempting to distinguish talented teachers. However, this should not deter administrators from attempting to measure the impact good teaching has on student achievement (Mahoney, 2010).

Acknowledging this concept, the Obama administration focused a portion of the Race to the Top funds on improving teacher quality as a means to increase student achievement (Crowe, 2011). According to Crowe (2011), "Effective teachers are defined for the Race to the Top as those 'whose students achieve acceptable rates (at least one grade level in an academic year) of student growth'" (p. 2). As a result, states adjusted teacher evaluation tools to reflect the impact of teacher quality on student growth and achievement (Crowe, 2011).

Furthering the research regarding teacher quality, recent studies have been conducted to measure its impact on students unrelated to achievement on standardized tests. In their study, Blazar and Kraft (2017) identified "teacher effects on measures of students' Self-Efficacy in Math and Happiness in Class, as well as on a self-reported measure of students' Behavior in Class" (p. 161). They found "that teachers can and do help develop attitudes and behaviors among their students that are important for success in life" (Blazar & Kraft, 2017, p.161). Results from another study by Jennings and DiPreter (2010) identified the impact of kindergarten teacher effects on the social and behavioral skills of their students. They found that their "estimates of teacher effects on social and behavioral skill development in kindergarten are substantial and are somewhat larger than kindergarten teacher effects on academic development" (Jennings & DiPreter, 2010, p. 155).

While the research on the effect of teacher quality on student achievement, behavior and social skills requires continued analysis, recent evidence suggests a positive correlation (Goldhaber, 2010). As stated by Goldhaber (2010), "the effect of increases in teacher quality swamps the impact of any other educational investment" (p. 1).

Teacher Recruitment

Although there are several factors that make teaching less attractive to college graduates, the single salary scale system contributes to the lack of highly qualified teachers. According to Schlechty and Vance (1983),

Teaching is not organized to promote lifetime career commitment among teachers. Salary schedules are truncated, and little opportunity for advancement exists within the ranks of teaching, since the teaching role is largely undifferentiated. Unlike business organizations, where low-level managers can aspire to positions in middle-level or top management, and unlike medicine, where one can anticipate staged increases in income, teaching has a flat and un-staged career structure. The longer one teaches, the less rewarding teaching is, at least in relative terms (p. 478).

While there are many intrinsic rewards to teaching, the single salary scale system used by school systems is a limiting factor with regard to teacher recruitment (Schlechty & Vance, 1983).

Muranto and Shuls (2012) state, “in nearly every state, some schools are hard to staff because of geographic teacher shortages” (p. 38). They argue that in order to staff schools, “policy-makers often turn to monetary incentives because they are controllable, and indeed explains part of the current push toward merit pay” (Muranto & Shuls, 2012, p. 38). According to Will (2016), teacher shortages continue to be a major story across the nation. In fact, several states have prompted legislative and administrative action to address recruitment strategies to increase their respective candidate pools (Will, 2016). All five of the states referenced in her article, *Help Wanted: Teacher-Shortage Hot Spots*, identified strategies to increase teacher pay as a recruitment strategy (Will, 2016).

Podgursky and Springer (2007a) have suggested that performance pay attracts those who share the idea that students’ outcomes should drive instruction and those whose strengths match the desired outcomes of a district. They suggest that districts align performance pay plans with teacher performance expectations to attract potential applicants who share the same vision (Podgursky & Springer, 2007a).

Teacher Retention

At the end of every school year, approximately half a million teachers leave their current teaching position (Boyd et al., 2011). Unfortunately for schools and school systems, only 16% of that movement is attributed to retirement (Boyd et al., 2011). This means that the remaining 84% is composed of those who leave their current school to work at another school or who leave the education profession (Boyd et al, 2011). This statistic is particularly alarming to school systems when the cost of teacher turnover is examined in greater detail. According to Brill and McCartney (2008) “nationally, the cost of teachers leaving the profession ranges from 20 to 150

percent of that teacher's salary" (as cited in Guin, 2004, p. 752). Institutional costs increase as well, and future planning is delayed when the continuity of staff is affected by turnover (Brill & McCartney, 2008). This leads to a reduction in the effective implementation of comprehensive curricula developed through teams of content teachers (Brill & McCartney, 2008). The largest cost is associated with the loss of effective classroom instruction associated with experienced teachers (Brill & McCartney, 2008). This, in turn, affects student retention of content and ultimately affects test scores (Brill & McCartney, 2008). As a result, school systems across the country invest time and resources into efforts to reverse that number (Brill & McCartney, 2008).

According to Boyd, Grossman, Ing, Lankford, Loeb and Wyckoff (2011), there are three factors that play a role in teacher retention: the characteristics of the teacher, characteristics of the students in the school where a teacher works and the characteristics of the school (Boyd et al., 2011). With regard to teacher characteristics, younger and older teachers are more likely to leave the profession than middle age teachers. Additionally, teachers with stronger qualifications (i.e. high scores on competency tests, graduates from competitive universities, etc.) are more likely to leave than their counterparts (Boyd et al., 2011). On the contrary, teachers that receive high student test scores are less likely to leave the classroom (Boyd et al., 2011). Schools that are comprised of high concentrations of students who are from low-income homes, non-white, and low achieving are more likely to see high teacher turnover (Boyd et al., 2011). Finally, school contextual factors such as teacher influence, administrative support, staff relations, student behavior, facilities and overall safety of the school play contributing roles in a teacher's decision to stay or leave a school (Boyd et al., 2011).

According to Brill and McCartney (2008), there are several other factors that play a role in teacher retention. They argue that, although class size is not directly related to teacher turnover, the effects of the increase in workload placed on a teacher may contribute to his or her decision to leave (Brill & McCartney, 2008). They state, "one factor that influences a teacher's decision to leave the profession more than class size is an overwhelming workload" (Brill & McCartney, 2008, p. 755). Brill and McCartney (2008) note, however, that "it is difficult to say whether a guaranteed increase in salary to accompany an increase in workload could have an effect in increasing teacher satisfaction" (p. 756).

Another factor contributing to teacher turnover is the social perception that teaching is a temporary position (Brill & McCartney, 2008). Although maternity factors still play a role in a

woman's decision to leave the profession, gone are the days where teaching is considered a suitable temporary place of employment for women prior to raising children (Brill & McCartney, 2008). Men and women alike chose the profession for a number of factors; the problem lies in retaining teachers who see the profession as a chance to make money while exploring higher educational opportunities that result in higher paying careers (Brill & McCartney, 2008). In fact, Brill and McCartney (2008) stated, "one study observes higher levels of education among male teachers and posits they 'pursue graduate degrees in order to qualify for higher paying administrative positions.' Male teachers with these degrees are 50 percent more likely to leave the classroom for administrative jobs than other male teachers without comparable degrees" (as cited in Theobald, 1990, p. 759).

Finally, low teacher salaries play a contributing role in teacher retention (Wynn, Carboni & Pattall, 2007). One study stated that salary was the single most often cited factor leading to teachers leaving the profession (Wynn et al., 2007). Wynn et al. (2007) found that "salary still emerges as an overwhelming reason that beginning teachers consider leaving the profession. Our findings indicate that 78 percent of the participants had considered leaving teaching with a significant number (82 percent) identifying salary as a reason" (p. 17). As stated by Gius (2013),

It is believed that a single salary schedule protects ineffective, older teachers who, by virtue of their seniority, are among the highest paid teachers. Furthermore, under a single salary schedule, many effective and dynamic teachers are paid less than poorly performing teachers, thus demoralizing the better teachers and possibly driving them from the profession (p. 111).

As referenced by Brenneman (2014) in his Education Week blog entitled *Teacher pay starts low, grows slowly, is generally awful, report says*, the Center for American Progress conducted a study to determine the average teacher salary of American teachers after ten years in the profession. The data showed that not only are teachers paid a lower starting salary when compared to other countries, but the teaching profession also provides fewer opportunities for salary growth throughout a teaching career (Brenneman, 2014). In comparison to other countries, the United States ranked 19th in the world with regard to salary growth over a 15-year period (Brenneman, 2014). In their mixed methods study of teacher perceptions of strategic compensation in a rural southeast school district, Carter, Dunlap and Holladay (2015) found that teachers perceived low retention rates were somewhat attributed to baseline salaries that were

lower than surrounding counties. As a result, school districts across the United States of America consistently evaluate their salary scale and incentives programs to retain effective teachers (Brenneman, 2014). Albright (2011) states, “by paying highly-qualified classroom teachers more, through a merit pay system, they might remain in the classroom instead of leaving the profession or moving into administration” (p. 139).

The following sections of this chapter will review the opposing sides of strategic compensation, one way in which school districts have attempted to combat the salary shortfalls of teaching in public schools.

Proponents of Strategic Compensation

Typically, traditional teacher salary scales are based on years of service. In addition, traditional teacher salary scales provide financial incentives for employees who gain professional knowledge through advanced certifications and degrees. In a study conducted by Aaronson, Barrow and Sander (2007), they found that 90% of teacher effects on student outcomes were not statistically significant, related to a teacher’s certificate held, level of education, licensing exam score or years of service beyond two years. As a result, proponents of strategic compensation argue that the traditional model of teacher compensation is an inefficient and ineffective use of public funding.

Recently, school districts have turned to alternative incentive-based pay systems linked to student performance as a way to address the inefficiencies of traditional salary scales (Hanushek & Rivkin, 2004). As stated by Hanushek and Rivkin (2004), “policy advice that the evidence strongly suggests is that principals and superintendents must make decisions about teachers based on the evaluation of potential and actual effectiveness in raising student performance rather than a set of prior attributes” (p. 24). The concept of linking teacher evaluations to student performance, previously challenged by opponents of performance pay systems, contends that data collection and analysis of teacher impact on student outcomes have become more reliable in recent years (Springer, Pane, Le, McCaffrey, Burns, Hamilton & Stecher, 2012). Springer et al. (2012) stated, “with the expansion of standardized testing in systems of school accountability, the notion that teachers should be compensated (in part) on the basis of students’ test score gains or more sophisticated measures of teacher value added has gained currency” (p. 1). While the measurement of teacher performance is a complicated and nebulous process, and standardized

testing is an imperfect process, school systems should continue to focus on which teaching characteristics lead to better student performance (Hanushek & Rivkin, 2004).

In his article *Discerning, Developing and Rewarding Effective Teachers*, Mahoney (2010) urges school systems to use a reliable growth metric stating that, it measures the rate of academic progress that districts, schools and teachers are helping students make from year to year. We need to review progress and achievement measures together to gain the most comprehensive picture of student learning. The purpose of progress is to get somewhere, and knowing location relative to the final destination (achievement), is essential” (p. 2).

In an effort to use multiple measures beyond student achievement tests, school systems have begun to use instruments that measure student perceptions of teachers, administrative performance reviews, student effort, teacher knowledge and peer reviews (Mahoney, 2010). While these performance indicators lack longitudinal data to determine effectiveness, Mahoney (2010) argues

when it comes to improving teaching and learning, having an imperfect measure of the right thing is far more important than having a perfect measure of something that tells you little. We need to think creatively and capture the essential elements that showcase effective teaching practices (p. 2).

Carter et al. (2015) found that teachers were supportive of the concept of rewarding exemplary teaching. As stated in *Strategic Compensation in Education (2010)*, at the heart of this discussion is the goal of identifying, recognizing and rewarding instructional excellence in ways that increase academic gains for all students. We need to draw excellent talent into the field of education who quickly become highly effective in accelerating student progress. We need to retain them, and we need to help current educators learn and implement best practices. We need to place teachers where they can and need to be the most productive. And, we need to harness the power of data to inform the many decisions administrators and teachers make every day that impact their students’ lives (p. 10).

Carter et al. (2015) note, “most teachers were willing to take on the additional workload in return for additional pay” (p. 106). In addition, Albright (2011) found that “merit pay would impact the recruitment of future educators” (p. 137).

Opponents of Strategic Compensation

Opponents of strategic compensation packages argue that the individualized competitive nature associated with these plans limits collaboration and creativity among teachers (Froese-Germain, 2016). Guis (2013) stated, “instead of working with another in order to improve academic performance, teachers would compete against one another in order to obtain merit pay” (p. 119). Carter et al. (2015) found that teachers “reported that the strategic compensation plan created a competitive environment, which worked against the collaboration found essential to teaching” (p. 105).

Another argument against performance pay is that student academic achievement and growth only measure one facet of a teacher’s job responsibilities (Gratz, 2005). Gratz (2005) states,

Teachers are responsible for student achievement and are expected to address various curricular goals as children move through the system, but their jobs extend far beyond that. Tests of reading and mathematics, however well designed, do not capture the entire curriculum, let alone the totality of educating children. Good schools also address social and emotional growth, help to mitigate learning disabilities, and pay attention to the child's overall development in countless other ways. Parents want their children to learn, but they also want them to come home happy, to be well-adjusted, and to grow into productive and responsible citizens (p. 576).

While merit pay systems offer measurable goals regarding professionalism and judgment, they have failed to measure the previously mentioned aspects of quality teachers (Gratz, 2005). Since merit pay systems are unable to address the impact teachers have on student social-emotional support, family engagement and community outreach, they lack the ability to truly capture all teacher effects (Gratz, 2005). This finding was supported by Carter et al. (2015), as “94% of teacher participants felt that although student achievement measures are important, these measures are not necessarily synonymous with teacher performance” (p. 104).

As noted by Froese-Germain (2016), merit pay systems that use student achievement as a measure of teacher effectiveness may result in further inequitable distribution of teachers. As stated by Froese-Germain (2016),

Tests that assess what students have learned are not intended to be, nor are they, measures of teacher quality. It is easier for teachers to get higher test scores if they teach

advantaged students. If they teach children who are poor or children who are English language learners, or homeless children, or children with disabilities, they will not get big score gains. So, the result of this approach—judging teachers by the score gains of their students—will incentivize teachers to avoid students with the greatest needs (as cited in Ravitch, 2014, *Bad Incentives*, para. 1).

Those who argue this point denounce policies to implement merit-based pay systems as another market-based reform lacking the data to support the risk of unequal distribution of quality teachers (Froese-Germain, 2016).

Murane and Cohen (1986) express concerns regarding the ability of school administrators to answer questions regarding why some teachers receive strategic compensation and why others do not. Since there is an impreciseness of the teaching profession, administrators struggle to provide a convincing argument to teachers (Murane & Cohen, 1986). Springer (2009) references the critics of performance pay concerns by stating, “pay-for-performance plans are destined for failure because teacher performance is more difficult to monitor than performance in other professions” (p. 6). Furthermore, supervisors have difficulty expressing how teachers who did not receive incentive pay can improve their practice to be eligible for incentive pay in the future (Murane & Cohen, 1986). As a result of the lack of clear guidelines and expectations, teachers have little incentive to improve their practice (Murane & Cohen, 1986).

Others argue that by incentivizing student achievement, teachers will inevitably manipulate the system to increase student outcomes (Gratz, 2005). Gratz (2005) states, Cheating, drilling, and finding ways to exclude some children from testing have been discovered in school districts across the country, perhaps most notably in Texas, where the results upon which our new federal law was based have been questioned as substantially inaccurate, if not fraudulent (p. 580).

Although not specifically referencing strategic compensation plans, in an interview hosted by Anderson Cooper on CNN entitled “Teacher cheating on school tests; how being in baggage part of flying plane was possible; Clinton's start of presidential campaign” (2015) questions regarding the Atlanta Public Schools cheating scandal referenced one of the driving factors of the scandal was bonuses received by administrators for student performance on test scores.

In a report published online by the National Education Association entitled “Alternative Compensation Models and Our Members: Voices from the Field: Stories from Seven Districts”,

Davin, Ferguson, Schlein, Magid, Eubanks, and Raabe (2010) reported that in some instances the plans were difficult for teachers to understand. They stated, “some teachers expressed frustration that complex systems are hard to understand” (p. 31). As a result, it was difficult to evaluate the impact of the plans (Davin et al., 2010). Continued research and analysis of the impact of merit pay plans need to be conducted to truly determine their effects on teacher effectiveness (Davin et al., 2010).

Recent Studies

Carter, Dunlap & Holladay (2015). In their study *Perceptions of Strategic Compensation*, Carter et al. (2015) explored perceptions of teachers in a rural southeast school district regarding a newly adopted strategic compensation plan. Prior to their study, the district implemented a strategic compensation model in the fall of 2011 for all newly hired teachers and allowed their current teachers the opportunity to opt in or out. Carter et al. (2015) used the data collected from their study to inform the superintendent and school board of teachers’ perceptions of the newly adopted strategic compensation model, with a specific focus on how the plan affected teacher behaviors.

Carter et al. (2015) invited ninety-two teachers to participate in the study, of which fifty-nine agreed. In their mixed methods study, Carter et al. (2015) sought to answer three research questions:

- 1) What are the teachers’ perceptions on strategic compensation in the Rural Southeast School District?
- 2) What teacher behaviors have been affected as a result of the strategic compensation plan in the Rural Southeast School District according to teachers’ perceptions?
- 3) How has strategic compensation affected teacher recruitment and/or retention in the Rural Southeast School District according to teachers’ perceptions (p. 63)?

The answers to these questions were derived from a questionnaire, focus group discussions, individual teacher interviews and quantitative data related to teachers’ TEAM scores obtained from the district (p. 64).

Upon analysis of their findings, Carter et al. (2015) concluded that teachers had mixed feelings about the newly adopted strategic compensation plan. In their “Discussion and Conclusions (pp. 116-119)” section, Carter et al. (2015) presented their findings for each of the

three research questions. According to their analysis of the data, 11 themes emerged of which five were positive and six were negative.

In reference to research question 1, they concluded that some of the positive perceptions of the strategic compensation plan were reflective of the positive teaching and learning beliefs demonstrated by the teachers. In looking at the participation levels and perceptions, most of those involved in the plan had positive perceptions, whether they opted in or were mandatorily placed on the plan at employment (p. 116). Carter et al. (2015) concluded that the negative perceptions of the plan might be a result of extrinsic factors that have nothing to do with the effectiveness of the strategic compensation plan. They cited teacher perceptions of low starting salaries and the high cost of health insurance in the district as contributing factors to the negative perceptions of the plan (Carter et al., 2015).

Carter et al. (2015) also concluded that greater transparency for teachers regarding the planning and implementation of the strategic compensation plan would provide a clearer picture of the effectiveness of the strategic compensation plan. They cited that participating teachers believed there was a greater emphasis on student achievement outcomes in determining their value as a teacher, but were unclear as to how student achievement criteria were used to determine performance-based pay (Carter et al., 2015).

With regard to research question 2, Carter et al. (2015) concluded that the behaviors of participating teachers changed as a result of the strategic compensation plan and motivated them to work harder for their students. They stated that:

teacher respondents recognize that the standards for effectiveness are set high and that they must meet criteria in a range of performance areas to earn the plan bonus, which requires that they change how they teach in some cases, work with students to make gains instead of maintaining the status quo, and examine their practice to become more productive with a broad range of student outcomes” (Carter et al., 2015, p. 117).

Further quantitative analysis of question 2 concluded that the strategic compensation model had no statistically significant impact on TEAM level effectiveness scores (Carter et al., 2015). As explained by Carter et al. (2015), some of the possible factors that contributed to the lack of significance include: not enough time between the implementation of the compensation plan and the measures of TEAM performance, the lack of alignment between the objectives of the TEAM level effectiveness score and the objectives for strategic compensation student performance

outcomes, and the blanket approach to teacher development with regard to building teacher capacity to attain student achievement goals (p. 118).

Lastly, Carter et al. (2015) concluded that the results for research question 3 were unclear. Although many of the participating teachers did not cite the strategic compensation plan as a contributing factor of recruitment and retention, many stated that they were unaware of the plan until after they were already employed by the district (Carter et al., 2015). Teacher perceptions of their salary compared to the salaries of teachers in surrounding counties may have contributed to the lack of clarity (Carter et al., 2015). They perceived that teachers in surrounding counties are rewarded for less effort and results, even though those participating in the strategic compensation plan have the opportunity to earn bonuses (Carter et al., 2015). Additionally, tenured teachers in the district cited intrinsic motivation and job satisfaction as contributing factors to their continued employment with the district (Carter et al., 2015).

Satterfield (2016). In his study entitled *The Effects of Strategic Compensation on Teacher Quality Through the Race to the Top Innovation Acceleration Fund*, Satterfield (2016) examines “the quantitative effects that strategic compensation had on teacher quality as determined by individual teacher effect results” (Satterfield, 2016, p.48) motivated through Tennessee’s Race to the Top grant. After analysis of the data collected, he found that teachers who “participated in the strategic compensation plan reported significantly higher TVASS [Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System] single year individual teacher index results than teachers who did not participate in the strategic compensation plan” (Satterfield, 2016, p.72). Therefore, he concluded that the strategic compensation plan met its original goal to increase value-added gains in mathematics and reading at a rate higher than the growth standard set by the mean of TVASS index scores (Satterfield, 2016). Satterfield (2016) suggests that these findings are important to school districts which desire closing achievement gaps of disadvantaged students by optimizing individual growth throughout the duration of a school year (p.78). While the results lacked a positive statistical significance regarding the retention of highly effective teachers, it did not have an inverse effect on the retention of highly effective teachers (Satterfield, 2016). In addition, it was concluded that the participation in the strategic compensation plan did not place additional burdens on participating teachers, causing greater attrition of effective teachers (Satterfield, 2016).

Satterfield (2016) also investigated the role a small district's strategic compensation package played with regard to the retention of Level 4 and Level 5 teachers within the district. His results suggested:

there was no difference in the retention rate of highly effective teachers who participated in the small, rural school district's strategic compensation plan compared to the retention rate of highly effective teachers who did not participate in the small rural school district's strategic compensation plan (Satterfield, 2016, p.74).

In addition, further analysis was performed on the effect the strategic compensation plan had on the retention of hard to staff positions as determined by participation in the plan (Satterfield, 2016). After analysis of the data, Satterfield (2016) concluded that the "results suggested that there is no difference in the voluntary participation rate of hard-to-staff teachers compared to non-hard-to-staff teachers that participated in the small rural school district's strategic compensation plan" (p. 75). He qualifies these results by referencing the percentage of participants in hard-to-staff positions were higher than those of non-hard-to-staff teachers (Satterfield, 2016). Therefore, Satterfield (2016) concluded that, although the results lacked statistical significance, the difference in participation percentage between hard-to-staff and non-hard-to-staff teachers indicated that "some favorability existed with teachers in the hard-to-staff positions of special education, high school math, high school science, and high school language" (p. 81).

Satterfield (2016) highlighted that, during the course of the study, the participating school district was awarded several academic accolades including being named an Exemplary School District by the Tennessee State Department of Education; twice awarded School District of the Year by the state's leading philanthropic organization; named a Reward School three times, which represents achievement and/or growth that places schools in the top 5% in the state; and being named a National Blue Ribbon high school for closing achievement gaps for economically disadvantaged, racial minorities, and special education students (p.84).

Satterfield (2016) recognized that while the results of this study lack generalizability due to the size of the district examined, it adds to the body of research associated with the use of strategic compensation plans and teacher quality in education.

Effective Plans

According to the research, the effectiveness of strategic compensation plans can be funneled into two categories: climate and essential programmatic policies (Goldhaber, DeArmond, Player, & Choi, 2010). The following sections identify climate conditions that foster effective strategic compensation plans and identify the program policies essential to the success of strategic compensation plans.

Climate. Early in the research of effective merit pay systems, Murnane and Cohen (1986) investigated six school districts that implemented merit pay plans and identified two questions that school districts must answer prior to implementation. Essentially, administrators must be able to answer questions regarding why some teachers receive merit pay and some do not, and they must answer questions regarding how teachers can receive merit pay (Murnane & Cohen, 1986). This conclusion was supported by the research of Goldhaber, DeArmond, Player, and Choi (2008), but they concluded that the climate of school districts wanting to implement merit pay systems play a role in the success of such programs. Districts in states where teacher unions are not present have successful implementations of merit pay systems (Goldhaber et al., 2008). Furthermore, states without strong teacher unions have “state policies that increase accountability and sharpen performance measures” (Goldhaber et al., 2008, p. 285). In turn, those states “appear to make merit pay more likely, in effect changing the nature of teaching” (Goldhaber et al., 2008, p. 285).

Another contributing factor to the success of merit-based pay plans is the legitimization of the plan through teacher participation in its development and inception (Murnane & Cohen, 1986). Albright (2011) states that “if one of the barriers to merit pay is the lack of collaboration, then stakeholders must collaborate on the creation of a merit pay plan” (p. 143). Plans developed through teacher design and redesign contributes to their longevity because they provide administrators with feedback regarding teacher preferences (Murnane & Cohen, 1986). This allows administrators to predict responses to incentives and develop practices, which lead to desired teacher performance outcomes (Murnane & Cohen, 1986). Furthermore, by including teachers in the development process, they are less likely to believe the program has been heaped upon them by school system administrators (Murnane & Cohen, 1986).

Prior to developing merit-based pay plans, it is essential to the success of the program that a school system is a place where people like to work (Murnane & Cohen, 1986). In the six

cross country districts examined in their study, Murnane and Cohen (1986) indicated that each school district's salary scale was above the median of pay of surrounding districts in their geographical area. In fact, "none of these districts adopted merit pay as a response to the idea that there was not enough money to pay all teachers well, so they could at least pay a few good teachers well" (Murnane & Cohen, 1986, p. 23). In effect, school systems that have the ability to pay for merit-based pay plans are best suited for success (Murnane & Cohen, 1986).

Essential policies. According to *Strategic Compensation in Education: Exploring Practical Applications and Lessons Learned* (2010) school districts must design strategic compensation plans that align with their district's programs, mission, values and goals. This concept was supported by Stephens (2015) when she stated that "making the criteria match the mission of the local school district are a few changes that could be made" (p. 92) to improve existing strategic compensation plans. School districts that have pioneered strategic compensation models have established programs with the intent to improve teacher collaboration, focus instruction, leverage best practices, increase student achievement, improve teacher retention rates and empower teachers (Strategic compensation in education: Exploring, 2010). Callier (2010) adds that effective plans must have a component of self-reflection so the true measure of teacher effectiveness and growth can be assessed. Podgursky and Springer (2007b) argue the most effective strategic compensation programs are "introduced in a manner amenable to effective evaluation" (p. 943). Additionally, Podgursky and Springer (2007b) stated that an "overarching lesson seems to be that trial and error is likely required to formulate the right set of performance incentives" (as cited in Courty & Marsh, 2003, p. 943). As suggested throughout the research, malleable strategic compensation plans show the most promise with regard to teacher effectiveness (Podgursky & Springer, 2007b).

Effective strategic compensation packages combat concerns regarding negative team production effects by incorporating elements that reward teachers through team incentives (Podgursky & Springer, 2007a). As stated by Podgursky and Springer (2007a),

A performance bonus given to an entire team of teachers would not undermine team morale. This is especially germane considering most teachers work in relatively small teams, and economic literature suggests team incentives work well in small teams because these is mutual monitoring coupled with an easy information flow among team

members and options for subjects to reciprocate among each other within the team (p. 556).

As argued by Belfield and Heywood (2008), the first step to developing an effective performance pay plan is to begin by establishing teams or components of teamwork within the established pay scheme.

Goldhaber et al. (2008) argue when data are more readily available to teachers, performance improves. As educators become more business-minded with regard to data collection and analysis, they must use the data to increase flexibility and drive continuous improvement (Piety, 2013). Mahoney (2010) urges school districts to use data as an element of strategic compensation plans. He states,

Using a reliable growth metric, or value-added measure, is critical because it measures the rate of academic progress that districts, schools and teachers are helping students make from year to year. We need to review progress and achievement measures together to gain the most comprehensive picture of student learning. The purpose of progress is to get somewhere, and knowing location relative to the final destination (achievement), is essential (p. 2).

By using multiple indicators to measure student growth, individual teacher performance and team performance, concerns regarding gaming the system can be nullified (Podgursky & Springer, 2007a). School systems must also ensure that they are responsible when planning out strategic compensation models to ensure the program can be sustained. One problem cited by Marcotte (2015) was “the inability to sustain performance pay programs in the past was due to unreliable funding and the amount of bonus pay teachers received” (p. 99). According to Kelley and Odden (1996),

Adequate funding which is integrated within the school finance structure is less likely to be vulnerable to cuts than a separate funding pool. Lack of funding and a lack of a long-term funding commitment have been key aspects of the downfall of many efforts to reform compensation in education. Transition funds often are needed to move from the old to the new structure, and performance bonuses need a stable funding pool (p. 8).

According to “Strategic Compensation in Education: Exploring practical applications and lessons learned” (2010) school districts which have implemented strategic compensation programs have utilized several funding options such as federal grants, state grants, private foundation funds, and

local tax revenue. Another strategy used by school districts requires school leaders to analyze ineffective programs, reconsider funding options of those programs, and redistribute those funds into a strategic compensation localized fund (Strategic Compensation in Education: Exploring practical applications and lessons learned, 2010).

Summary

Hanushek, Rivkin and Kain (1999) question whether school systems can “buy better teachers” (p. 43). They recognize that the answer is complicated and difficult to determine (Hanushek et al., 1999). Referencing available school district funds, resources and other school community factors, Hanushek et al. (1999) notes all play a contributing role in the growth, recruitment and retention of quality teachers. However, they note that “the overall analysis suggests that as currently employed, salary policies do not appear to offer much promise for improvement in student performance” (Hanushek et al., 1999, p.45).

In the article *Promising Practices for Strategic Compensation Design in Education*, Douglas-McNab (2014) stated,

When implemented thoughtfully, inclusively, and as part of a larger human capital management system that is aligned to a district’s educational improvement goals, there is evidence that strategic compensation programs have the potential to not only aid in rewarding and retaining excellent educators, but also promote collaboration and create opportunities for teachers to help students make gains in the classroom (p. 5).

The challenge is to determine policies that effectively measure the impact of strategic compensation models on teacher quality, recruitment and retention.

Padgursky and Springer (2007a) acknowledge that the depth of research in strategic compensation requires more data points. They state:

The evaluation literature is not sufficiently robust to prescribe how systems should be designed (e.g., optimal size of bonuses, mix of individual vs. group incentives). However, it is sufficiently positive to support much more extensive field trials, pilot programs, and policy experiments, combined with careful follow-up (p. 551).

Satterfield (2016) suggests future qualitative research regarding strategic compensation focus on “retention rates of highly effective teachers, particularly those in hard-to-staff areas such as mathematics, foreign language, science, and special education” (p. 85). He also suggests exploring whether “teacher growth results are due to motivational effects” (Satterfield, 2016, p.

86) of strategic compensation packages. Marcote (2015) agrees that further analysis should be conducted to determine the “amount of performance pay as a demonstrative motivating factor for all teachers” (p. 102). In addition, Stephens (2015) argues that schools districts must ensure that “when implementing merit pay the monetary reward must be high enough for teachers to find it motivating” (p.93). Although the effectiveness of strategic compensation packages requires further analysis, previous studies have presented positive correlations and garner the need for additional research (Podgursky & Springer, 2007a). Therefore, this study provides additional insight into teacher and administrator perceptions of a strategic compensation plan as a motivating factor on teacher quality, recruitment and retention.

Chapter Three

Methodology

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to identify the perceptions of teachers and school administrators regarding a strategic compensation plan in a rural southeast school district. More specifically, the study aimed to investigate the strategic compensation plan's motivational impact on the following: 1) teacher quality within a rural southeast school district, 2) teacher retention within a rural southeast school district, and 3) teacher recruitment within a rural southeast school district. In addition, the study seeks suggestions from teachers and school administrators regarding improvements to the strategic compensation plan in a rural southeast school district.

Research Design

A mixed methods methodology was selected for this study, as it provided multiple levels of analysis for the purpose of determining the perceptions of teachers and administrators regarding the motivational impact of the rural southeast school district's strategic compensation plan on teacher quality, retention and recruitment (Clark, 2019). After the data were collected from the survey and focus group interview, they were examined for descriptive statistics. Based on the data found, further comparisons were examined by applying a t-test.

Quantitative data were collected through a Qualtrics survey (see Appendix A) administered to teachers employed by the rural southeast school district during the 2017-2018 school year. Qualitative data were collected through a small focus group interview (see Appendix B) conducted with principals and assistant principals employed by the rural southeast school district during the 2017-2018 school year.

Research Design Justification

This research study utilized a mixed-methods design to collect multiple levels of data to inform educational practices as they relate to strategic compensation. While the quantitative data collected through a teacher survey provides one level of understanding of teacher perceptions regarding the impact of strategic compensation as a motivating factor on teacher quality, recruitment, and retention, a qualitative analysis provides an additional level of understanding. By utilizing a focus group setting with administrators within the school district, the data

collected through the teacher survey will either be supported, or it will identify differing perceptions, indicating a need for further research (Satterfield, 2016).

Research Questions

1. What are the perceptions of teachers regarding strategic compensation as a motivating factor on teacher quality?
2. What are the perceptions of teachers regarding strategic compensation as a motivating factor on teacher recruitment?
3. What are the perceptions of teachers regarding strategic compensation as a motivating factor on retaining teachers?
4. What are the suggestions of teachers regarding improvements to the strategic compensation plan?
5. What are the perceptions of administrators regarding strategic compensation as a motivating factor on teacher quality?
6. What are the perceptions of administrators regarding strategic compensation as a motivating factor on teacher recruitment?
7. What are the perceptions of administrators regarding strategic compensation as a motivating factor on retaining teachers?
8. What are the suggestions of administrators regarding improvements to the strategic compensation plan?

Population

A survey was sent to all 237 candidates eligible for a strategic compensation bonus throughout the rural southeastern school district. Within the district, 116 candidates were PK-5 teachers, 51 were middle school teachers (grades 6-8) and 70 were high school teachers. All participants were assured of confidentiality as individual participants, as the names of the participants were not collected through the survey questionnaire.

A small focus group was assembled of four principals and four assistant principals employed by the rural southeastern school district during the 2017-2018 school year. Each administrator interviewed was responsible for completing summative evaluations of individuals eligible for strategic compensation at the conclusion of the 2017-2018 school year. The demographics of the interview participants varied in years of service to education, years served

within the district, and years served in an administrative capacity and school level. Prior to the focus group interview, participants were sent the list of questions to provide them with time to prepare. At the beginning of the interview, each participant was notified of his or her right to withdraw from the focus group interview at any time. In addition, all participants were assured confidentiality as an individual participant and as a part of the individual school they serve, in order to avoid identification.

Data Collection Procedures

Prior to contacting study participants, the researcher completed IRB Training (see Appendix C) and received IRB approval from the Virginia Polytechnic and State Institute (see Appendix D). Following IRB approval, an email was sent to the district superintendent (see Appendix E) requesting permission to perform the study. The district superintendent requested that the researcher present the proposed study at a School Board meeting in March 2018 for their approval. Following the March 2018 School Board meeting, formal approval of the study was granted by the district's superintendent.

After permission to perform the study was granted by all parties, an email was sent to each principal within the district requesting permission to attend an April 2018 faculty meeting. Each principal was also asked to forward an email to the survey participants within their schools (see Appendix H) just before each faculty meeting. Throughout the month of April 2018, the researcher attended a faculty meeting at each school to answer questions from the survey participants and assist with technical complications with the Qualtrics Survey.

In addition, each focus group participant was sent an email (see Appendix F) requesting his or her participation in the study. The email included a doodle poll to select a date to convene, a copy of the focus group questions, and the Focus Group Consent Form (see Appendix G). After responses were received from the participants, the focus group met on April 23, 2018, to record the interview. Before the interview began, the researcher distributed and reviewed the Focus Group Consent Form (see Appendix G) and removed himself from the room to allow participants time to review and sign the document. Upon returning to the room, the researcher collected consent forms from each participant and began the focus group interview. Following the completion of the focus group interview, the data collected were transcribed into a word document for review.

A mixed-methods design was utilized to gather data regarding teacher and administrator perceptions of the strategic compensation plan in a rural southeast school district and its impact as a motivating factor on teacher quality, recruitment, and retention. As stated by Durksen and Klassen (2012), “with the deliberate integration of quantitative and qualitative approaches, we provide general insight into the patterns and inter-relationships within our data” (as cited in Bryman, 2007; Creswell, 2009; Onwuegbuzie & Johnson, 2006). Quantitative data were collected through a survey administered to teachers within the district, and qualitative data were collected through a focus group interview of administrators serving in the district.

Teacher survey. As a part of a mixed-methods study, quantitative data were collected utilizing Qualtrics Survey Software consisting of 28 questions. An email was sent to principals asking them to forward the email to all faculty and staff members eligible for strategic compensation. The email contained a brief description of the purpose of the study, a link to the Qualtrics survey, IRB protocol and a request for their participation in the study. In addition, the researcher visited each school during a spring semester faculty meeting to provide an overview of the study, answer any questions related to the study, and request their participation in the study. Subjects were notified of their anonymity throughout the process and were given the opportunity to accept or decline participation in the study. (see Appendix H).

Demographic information was collected in questions 1-8 regarding each participant’s years in education, years employed within the district, gender, highest degree completed, birth year, teaching assignment and 2016-2017 school year summative evaluation rating. In addition, participants were asked to identify whether or not they serve in a hard-to-staff position, as identified by the state legislature.

A Likert-type scale survey was the primary source used to retrieve data from participants of the study regarding their perceptions of the strategic compensation plan as a motivating factor on teacher quality, recruitment, and retention. Seventeen of the 20 survey questions pertaining to teacher perceptions asked participants to rate their perception of the question or statement on a scale of *strongly disagree (1)*, *disagree (2)*, *agree (3)*, and *strongly agree (4)*.

Questions on the survey were associated with research questions as follows: questions 4-12 relate to research question 1 (see Table 1), questions 15-18 relate to research question 2 (see Table 2), questions 13 and 14 relate to research question 3 (see Table 3), and questions 1-3 and 6 relate to research question 4 (see Table 4). Questions 19 and 20 allowed participants an

opportunity to provide additional comments as they pertain to the strategic compensation plan, which also relates to research question 4 (see Table 4).

Table 1

Survey Questions Categorized by Research Question 1: What are the Perceptions of Teachers Regarding Strategic Compensation as a Motivating Factor on Teacher Quality?

Question Number	Survey Question
Q4	In your opinion, what is the ideal amount of money that would motivate a teacher to perform at an exemplary level?
Q5	The Strategic Compensation plan is helping to improve teaching practices at my school.
Q7	The Strategic Compensation plan motivates teachers to learn and implement new instructional strategies in the classroom.
Q8	The Strategic Compensation plan motivates teachers to analyze student achievement data and student growth data to implement effective remediation plans.
Q9	The Strategic Compensation plan in my school district is contributing to improvements in the quality of professional development pursued by teachers.
Q10	The Strategic Compensation plan affects how I complete my goal setting planning form at the beginning of the school year.
Q11	The Strategic Compensation plan has a negative impact on the school culture and professional collegiality in my school.
Q12	The Strategic Compensation plan motivates me to improve the growth of each of my individual students through classroom instruction.

Table 2

Survey Questions Categorized by Research Question 2: What are the Perceptions of Teachers Regarding Strategic Compensation as a Motivating Factor on Teacher Recruitment?

Question Number	Survey Question
Q15	Did you know about the Strategic Compensation plan prior to applying for a job within the school district?
Q16	The Strategic Compensation plan in my district should be utilized to recruit teaching candidates.
Q17	The Strategic Compensation plan will impact the recruiting of future educators for the school district.
Q18	Strategic Compensation was a determining factor to your acceptance of employment.

Table 3

Survey Questions Categorized by Research Question 3: What are the Perceptions of Teachers Regarding Strategic Compensation as a Motivating Factor on Teacher Retention?

Question Number	Survey Questions
Q13	The opportunity to earn a financial bonus incentivizes me to remain in the district.
Q14	The Strategic Compensation plan will positively impact the retention of educators within the school district.

Table 4

Survey Questions Categorized by Research Question 4: What are the Suggestions of Teachers Regarding Improvements to Strategic Compensation Plan?

Question Number	Survey Question
Q1	I fully understand the structure of the strategic compensation plan currently utilized in the school district.
Q2	My supervising administrator explained how I can achieve an exemplary summative evaluation during the planning and post-observation processes throughout the year.
Q3	Teachers were a part of the development process for the Strategic Compensation plan.
Q6	Participation in the Strategic Compensation plan should be voluntary for those who want to receive an end of year bonus by meeting additional prescribed requirements.
Q19	In your opinion, what should be the primary purpose of Strategic Compensation?
Q20	Please share any additional insights you have regarding the Strategic Compensation plan and its impact on your decisions.

Administrator focus group. The researcher introduced the information to school district administrators in several different ways. First, an email was sent to all school-level administrators within the district requesting their participation in the study and a date that was mutually agreeable. Prior to the focus group interview, participating school administrators were provided with the questions for review and reflection. In addition, participants were notified of their right to withdraw at any point of the study and received a consent form to review and sign prior to the focus group interview.

The focus group questionnaire consisted of six questions. Questions from the focus group interview questionnaire are associated with research questions as follows: question 1 associates with research question 5 (see Table 5), question 2 associates with research question 6 (see Table 6), question 3 is associated with research question 7 (see Table 7), and questions 4-6 associate with research question 8 (see Table 8). As a part of a mixed-methods study, qualitative data were collected utilizing voice recording software.

Table 5

Interview Question Categorized by Research Question 5: What are the Perceptions of Administrators Regarding the Impact of Strategic Compensation on Teacher Motivation?

Question Number	Interview Question
Q1	How does the Strategic Compensation plan motivate teachers, to perform at an exemplary level? Share evidence of your response.

Table 6

Interview Question Categorized by Research Question 6: What are the Perceptions of Administrators Regarding the Impact of Strategic Compensation on Recruiting Teachers?

Question Number	Interview Question
Q3	How does the Strategic Compensation plan contribute to teacher recruitment to the district?

Table 7

Interview Question Categorized by Research Question 7: What are the Perceptions of Administrators Regarding the Impact of Strategic Compensation on Retaining Teachers?

Question Number	Interview Question
Q2	How does the Strategic Compensation plan contribute to teacher retention in the district?

Table 8

Interview Question Categorized by Research Question 8: What are the Suggestions of Administrators Regarding Improvements to the Strategic Compensation Plan?

Question Number	Interview Question
Q4	What end of year bonus amount of money would incentivize teachers to be exemplary? What compels you to this conclusion?
Q5	What are the most challenging aspects of the Strategic Compensation plan for administrators?
Q6	What improvements, if any, would you make to the current structure of the Strategic Compensation plan?

Instrument Design and Validation

A review of the literature from Albright (2011), Carter et al. (2015) and Satterfield (2016) on performance pay, merit pay and strategic compensation contributed to the development of the instruments that were utilized in the study. Prior to the administration of the survey, a panel of educators reviewed the survey questions to address the validity of the instrument. Panel participants were not a part of the actual study but were asked to provide feedback regarding the clarity, validity, and alignment of the questions as they pertain to the research questions (Leavy, 2017). Once feedback was received, adjustments were made to survey questions based on panel suggestions.

After the survey was administered, a priority was placed on the reliability of the survey. According to Santos (1999), “one of the most popular reliability statistics in use today is Cronbach's alpha (Cronbach, 1951). Cronbach's alpha determines the internal consistency or average correlation of items in a survey instrument to gauge its reliability” (p. 1). As such, a Cronbach’s alpha was calculated using the Likert-type questions from the teacher survey and resulted in a score of 0.82. An acceptable score to assume internal reliability must be .7 or higher (Cronbach, 1951).

In addition, the panel of educators was asked to provide feedback regarding focus group interview questions. Once again, panel members were asked to analyze the clarity, validity, and

alignment of the questions as they pertain to the research questions. After responses were received, adjustments were made to the interview questions based on feedback from the panel (Hays & Singh, 2011).

Data Treatment

Teacher survey. Data were collected through Qualtrics Survey Software and uploaded to an excel spreadsheet for analysis. Utilizing Qualtrics Survey Data Reports software, the researchers reviewed the descriptive statistics obtained through the survey responses and determined if there was a need for further analysis (i.e.- ANOVA). Survey responses to questions with p values less than 0.05 were analyzed further utilizing SPSS system for disaggregated data analysis. Following the review, the researcher identified common themes as they pertain to research questions 1-4.

Administrator focus group. The interview was recorded through a digital recording device and transcribed into a word document for analysis. Participants were assigned an alternative identification number to protect their anonymity. After the focus group interview was transcribed, the researchers reviewed the document for reliability using triangulation. According to Gay and Airasian (2000), “triangulation, a form of cross-validation, seeks regularities in the data by comparing different participants, settings, and methods to identify reoccurring results” (p.252). Each researcher reviewed the document and identified common words and phrases used by the participants. Following the review, the researcher identified common themes as they pertain to research questions 5-8.

Data Management

The researcher stored the data by utilizing CloudLock Selective Encryption. Data will be destroyed after a period of five years following the conclusion of the research study and successful defense.

Time Line

The interview and focus group question protocol was developed in October 2017 with assistance from the committee chair, the district superintendent, district assistant superintendent, and district data analyst. Interview protocol was established and tested through practice interviews during January 2018. Once practice interviews were completed, revisions were made

based on the feedback from practice interview participants. After prospectus, the researcher submitted the study proposal to Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University's Institutional Review Board (see Appendix D) in March 2018. Once approval from IRB was obtained, surveys were administered and focus group interviews were conducted in April 2018. At the conclusion of the administration of the survey and focus group interviews, the data were analyzed and stored as previously indicated.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of teachers and administrators in a rural southeast school district regarding the impact of a strategic compensation plan as a motivating factor on teacher quality, recruitment, and retention. Teacher perceptions about the strategic compensation plan used in a rural southeast school district were collected through a survey distributed to all teachers within the school district eligible for a strategic compensation bonus. Additionally, the perceptions of school administrators who are responsible for teacher evaluations within the rural southeast school district were collected utilizing a focus group interview. Through a combination of survey results and focus group participant responses, perceptions of the southeast school district's strategic compensation plan were examined as they pertain to the plan's motivating factors on teacher quality, teacher recruitment and teacher retention. Additional feedback was gathered regarding perceived improvements to the rural southeast school district's strategic compensation through the teacher survey and administrator focus group interview.

In Chapter Four, the analysis of the data collected through the mixed methods study will be shared.

Chapter Four

Presentation and Analysis of Data

Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the data collected throughout the duration of the study. The data collection process included a 28 question survey administered to faculty and staff members eligible to receive strategic compensation in the rural southeast school district during the 2017-2018 school year and a focus group interview with seven administrators responsible for the summative evaluations of teachers during the 2017-2018 school year. The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of teachers and administrators in a rural southeast school district regarding the impact of a strategic compensation plan as a motivating factor on teacher quality, recruitment, and retention.

Population

Descriptive analysis: Demographics. Of the 237 eligible candidates requested to participate in the survey, 184 responded to the survey, thus providing a 77.6% response rate. At the beginning of the survey, each participant was prompted to identify his or her years in education, years in the school district, gender, highest degree completed, hard to staff position, birth year range, level of teaching assignment, and their 2016-17 summative evaluation rating. The response rates to each demographic question vary, as participants were not required to respond.

Demographic question 1: Years in education. Of the 184 responses, 26.09% of participants had 6-10 years of educational experience, while the smallest group representing 2.72% of the total number of respondents had 30 or more years of experience. The participants represented a fairly balanced group of educators based on their years of experience (see Table 9).

Demographic question 2: Years in the school district. Of the 183 responses, the majority of participants had 3 to 5 years of experience within the school district (27.32%), while the smallest group represented (0.55%) served 30 or more years within the school district (see Table 10).

Table 9

Demographic Question 1: Years in Education

Years in education	Percentages	Count
0-2	8.70%	16
3-5	15.76%	29
6-10	26.09%	48
11-15	16.85%	31
16-20	13.04%	24
21-30	16.85%	31
30+	2.72%	5
Total	100%	184

Table 10

Demographic Question 2: Years in the School District

Years in the school district	Percentages	Count
0-2	26.23%	48
3-5	27.32%	50
6-10	19.67%	36
11-15	12.02%	22
16-20	9.29%	17
21-30	4.92%	9
30+	0.55%	1
Total	100%	183

Demographic question 3: Gender. Of the 183 responses, 144 of the participants were female representing 78.69% of the participants in the study. There were 39 male survey participants, representing 21.31% of the total number of participants in the study (see Table 11).

Table 11

Demographic Question 3: Gender

Gender	Percentages	Count
Male	21.31%	39
Female	78.69%	144
Total	100%	183

Demographic question 4: Highest degree completed. Of the 181 responses, 80 participants' highest degree completed was a bachelor's degree (44.20%), 99 participants' highest degree completed was a master's degree (54.70%), and 2 participants received a doctoral degree (1.10%) (see Table 12).

Table 12

Demographic Question 4: Highest Degree Completed

Highest degree completed	Percentage	Count
Bachelor's Degree	44.20%	80
Master's Degree	54.70%	99
Doctoral Degree	1.10%	2
Total	100%	181

Demographic question 5: Currently teaching in a "hard to staff" position. Of the 183 responses, 158 participants (86.34%) were identified as teaching in a "hard to staff" position according to their state's descriptors, while 25 (13.66%) were not teaching in a "hard to staff" position (see Table 13).

Table 13

Demographic Question 5: Currently Teaching in a “Hard to Staff” Position

Hard to staff position	Percentage	Count
Yes	86.34%	158
No	13.66%	25
Total	100%	183

Demographic question 6: Birth year. Participants were asked to indicate their birth year within a date range. Of the 182 responses, 58.79% of participants were born between the years of 1977 and 1995, which meant their age range was between 23 and 41 years old at the time of the survey. Furthermore, 29.12% of participants were born between 1965 and 1976, falling between 42 and 53 years old at the time of the survey. Moreover, 12.09% were born prior to 1964, meaning they were 54 years old or more. Lastly, 0% of the survey participants were born during the year of 1996 or later, which meant no one was younger than 23 years old at the time of the survey (see Figure 5).

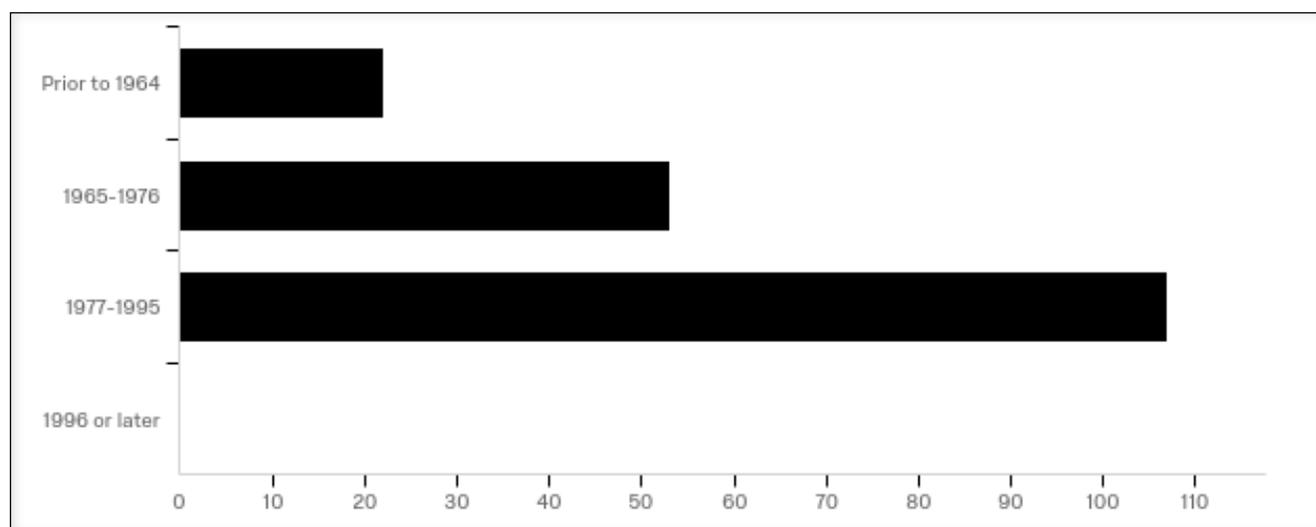


Figure 5. Demographic question 6: Birth year.

Demographic question 7: Indicate your current teaching assignment. Participants were asked to indicate their current teaching assignment. Of the 183 responses, 43.17% of participants were PK-5 teachers, 25.14% were middle school teachers (6-8), and 31.69% were high school teachers (9-12) (see Figure 6).

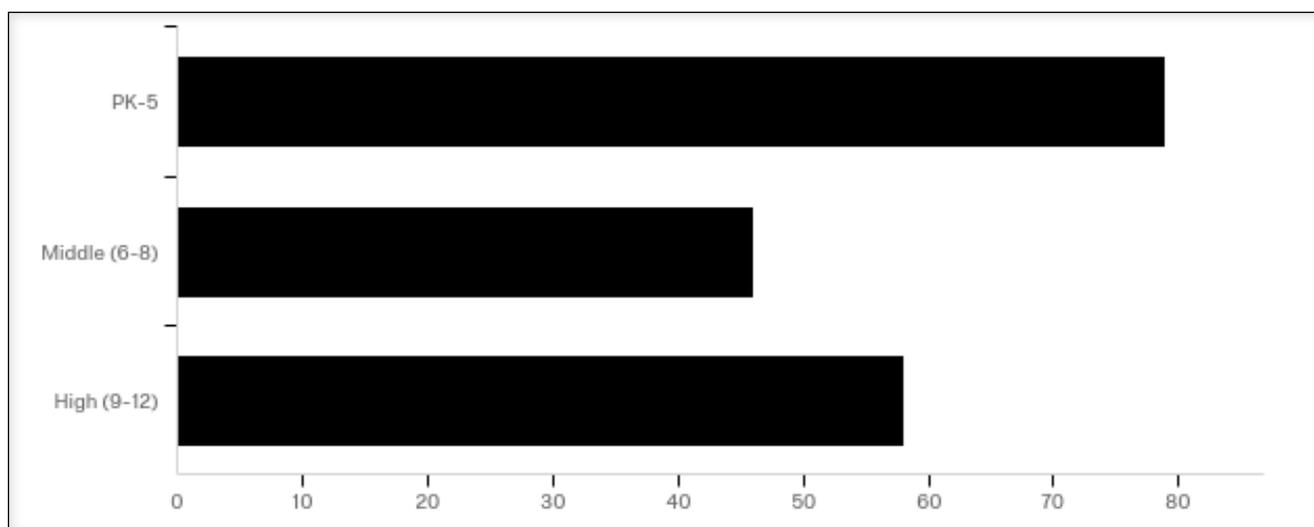


Figure 6. Demographic question 7: Current teaching assignment.

Demographic question 8: What was your 2016-17 summative evaluation rating.

Participants were asked to indicate their 2016-17 summative evaluation performance rating. Of the 181 responses, the highest majority of participants (59.67%) were rated as exemplary, while the fewest number of participants (1.10%) were rated as developing/needs improvement (see Table 14).

Table 14

Demographic Question 8: 2016-17 Summative Evaluation Rating

2016-17 summative evaluation rating	Percentage	Count
Exemplary	59.67%	108
Proficient	25.97%	47
Developing/Needs Improvement	1.10%	2
Other	1.10%	2
New Employee	12.15%	22
Total	100%	181

Data Collection

Teacher survey. The following research data were collected through the administration of a Qualtrics survey of teachers within the rural southeast school district who were eligible to

receive strategic compensation. A survey protocol was created to ensure that responses were recorded for research questions 1-4. The questions created for the survey were developed based on the common themes presented during the researcher's review of the literature. In addition, the survey questions were reviewed by a group of experts outside of the school district and central office administrators within the rural school district to collect feedback regarding their alignment with the research questions. The survey was then revised to reflect the suggestions from the experts and central office administrators.

Research question 1. What are the perceptions of teachers regarding strategic compensation as a motivating factor on teacher quality?

Survey question 4: In your opinion, what is the ideal amount of money that would motivate a teacher to perform at an exemplary level? Participants were asked a free response question regarding the ideal amount of money required to motivate a teacher to perform at an exemplary level as defined by the states' summative evaluation standards. While some chose to provide specific dollar amounts, others provided a narrative. As such, the data were collected and placed into ranges of monetary value. Of the 177 responses, 156 responded in a way that allowed for a filter into a numerical value. Of the 156 responses, 4.49% stated that they do not want any compensation, 12.81% ranged from \$100 to \$999, 60.90% ranged from \$1,000 to \$3,000, 19.87% ranged from \$3,001 to \$5,000 and 2.56% were above \$5,000 (see Table 15).

Survey question 5: The Strategic Compensation plan is helping to improve teaching practices at my school. Survey participants were asked if the district's strategic compensation plan was helping to improve teaching practices at their school. Of the 178 responses, 62.92% disagreed or strongly disagreed that the strategic compensation plan helped to improve teaching practices at their school. Of the survey respondents, 37.08% agreed or strongly agreed that the strategic compensation plan improved teaching practices at their school (see Table 16).

Table 15

Survey Question 4 Responses. The Ideal Amount of Money that Would Motivate a Teacher to Perform at an Exemplary Level

Monetary Range	Percentage	Count
\$0	4.49%	7
\$100 - \$999	12.18%	19
\$1000 - \$3000	60.90%	95
\$3001 - \$5000	19.87%	31
\$5001 +	2.56%	4
Total	100%	156

Table 16

Survey Question 5 Responses. The Strategic Compensation Plan Improves Teaching Practices

Likert-type scale response	Percentage	Count
Strongly Agree	3.93%	7
Agree	33.15%	59
Disagree	52.81%	94
Strongly Disagree	10.11%	18
Total	100%	178

In determining if there was a difference in the mean responses based on demographic factors, the overall analysis of variance (ANOVA) showed that the groups, based on instructional level, exhibited significant differences in their response to survey question 5: The strategic compensation plan is helping to improve teaching practices at my school ($F(2, 176) = 6.619, p = 0.002$). Individual group comparisons using the Tukey-Kramer test showed significant differences between PK-5 teachers and both middle and high school teacher groups. On a scale of 1 to 4 with 1 meaning strongly disagree and 4 meaning strongly agree, the results showed that PK-5 teachers scored 2.1, Middle school teachers scored 2.4 ($p = 0.022$), and high school teachers scored 2.5 ($p = 0.003$). The results demonstrated that high school teachers and middle

school teachers disagreed less strongly than PK-5 teachers in perceiving that the strategic compensation plan is helping to improve teaching practices at his/her school.

Survey question 7: The Strategic Compensation plan motivates teachers to learn and implement new instructional strategies in the classroom. Survey participants were asked if the district's strategic compensation plan motivates them to learn and implement new instructional strategies in the classroom. Of the 180 participants, 53.89% disagreed or strongly disagreed, while 46.11% agreed or strongly agreed (see Table 17).

Table 17

Survey Question 7 Responses. The Strategic Compensation Plan Motivates Teachers to Learn and Implement New Instructional Strategies in the Classroom

Likert-type scale response	Percentage	Count
Strongly Agree	8.89%	16
Agree	37.22%	67
Disagree	42.78%	77
Strongly Disagree	11.11%	20
Total	100%	180

In determining if there was a difference in the mean responses based on demographic factors, the overall analysis of variance (ANOVA) showed that the groups, based on years in the district, exhibited significant differences in their response to survey question 7: The Strategic Compensation plan motivates teachers to learn and implement new instructional strategies in the classroom ($F(5, 174) = 3.212, p = 0.008$). Individual group comparisons using the Tukey-Kramer test showed there were significant differences between teachers with 0-2 years of experience and teachers with 6-10 years of experience. On a scale of 1 to 4 with 1 meaning strongly disagree and 4 meaning strongly agree, the results showed that teachers with 0-2 years of experience scored 2.79 and teachers with 21-30 years of experience scored 2.14 ($p = 0.04$). The results demonstrated that teachers with 0-2 years of educational experience had a rating close to agree (2.79) while the teachers with 6-10 years of experience had a rating closer to disagree (2.14) in perceiving that the Strategic Compensation plan motivates teachers to learn and implement new instructional strategies in the classroom.

In determining if there was a difference in the mean responses based on demographic factors, the overall analysis of variance showed that the groups, based on teaching level, also exhibited significant differences in their response to survey question 7: The Strategic Compensation plan motivates teachers to learn and implement new instructional strategies in the classroom ($F(2, 178) = 5.717, p = 0.004$). Individual group comparisons using the Tukey-Kramer test showed that PK teachers scored significantly lower than high school teachers in perceiving that the Strategic Compensation plan motivates teachers to learn and implement new instructional strategies in the classroom. On a scale of 1 to 4 with 1 meaning strongly disagree and 4 meaning strongly agree, the results showed that PK-5 teachers scored 2.23, high school teachers scored 2.65 ($p = 0.004$). However, the results also showed that there was no statistically significant difference between PK-5 teachers (2.23) and middle school teachers (2.55, $p=0.086$) in perceiving that the Strategic Compensation plan motivates teachers to learn and implement new instructional strategies in the classroom.

Lastly, in determining if there was a difference in the mean responses based on demographic factors, the overall analysis of variance showed that the groups, based on their 2016-17 summative evaluation rating, also exhibited significant differences in their response to survey question 7: The Strategic Compensation plan motivates teachers to learn and implement new instructional strategies in the class ($F(4, 176) = 3.262, p = 0.013$). Individual group comparisons using the Tukey-Kramer test showed there were significant differences between teachers with a 2016-17 summative evaluation of new teachers and teachers rated as proficient for the 2016-17 school year. On a scale of 1 to 4 with 1 meaning strongly disagree and 4 meaning strongly agree, the results showed that new teachers scored 2.91, and proficient teachers scored 2.30 ($p = 0.026$). The results demonstrated that new teachers scored significantly higher than proficient teachers in perceiving that the Strategic Compensation plan motivates teachers to learn and implement new instructional strategies in the classroom. There were no other significant differences between the other groups recorded under the demographic for 2016-17 summative evaluation rating as they relate to question 7.

Survey question 8: The Strategic Compensation plan motivates teachers to analyze student achievement data and student growth data to implement effective remediation plans. Survey participants were asked if the school district's strategic compensation plan motivates teachers to analyze student achievement data and student growth data to implement effective

remediation plans. Of the 180 responses, 51.11% disagreed or strongly disagreed, while 48.89% agreed or strongly agreed (see Table 18).

Table 18

Survey Question 8 Responses. The Strategic Compensation Plan Motivates Teachers to Analyze Student Achievement Data and Student Growth Data to Implement Effective Remediation Plans

Likert-type scale response	Percentage	Count
Strongly Agree	9.44%	17
Agree	39.44%	71
Disagree	41.11%	74
Strongly Disagree	10.00%	18
Total	100%	180

In determining if there was a difference in the mean responses based on demographic factors, the overall analysis of variance showed that the groups, based on teaching level, exhibited significant differences in their response to survey question 8: The Strategic Compensation plan motivates teachers to analyze student achievement data and student growth data to implement effective remediation plans ($F(2, 178) = 4.919, p = 0.008$). Individual group comparisons using the Tukey-Kramer test showed there were no significant differences between PK-5 teachers and middle school teachers in perceiving that the Strategic Compensation plan motivates teachers to analyze student achievement data and student growth data to implement effective remediation plans. However, the Tukey-Kramer test showed there were significant differences between PK-5 teachers and high school teacher responses to the same survey question. On a scale of 1 to 4 with 1 meaning strongly disagree and 4 meaning strongly agree, the results showed that PK-5 teachers scored 2.28, high school teachers scored 2.73 ($p = 0.007$), and middle school teachers scored 2.53 ($p = 0.198$).

Survey question 9: The Strategic Compensation plan in my school district is contributing to improvements in the quality of professional development pursued by teachers. Survey participants were asked to respond to the statement, the strategic compensation plan in my school district is contributing to improvements in the quality of professional development pursued by teachers. Precisely 63.27% disagreed or strongly disagreed, while 36.72% agreed or

strongly agreed that the strategic compensation plan contributes to improvement in the quality of professional development pursued by teachers (see Table 19).

Table 19

Survey Question 9 Responses. The Strategic Compensation Plan in my School District is Contributing to Improvements in the Quality of Professional Development Pursued by Teachers

Likert-type scale response	Percentage	Count
Strongly Agree	4.52%	8
Agree	32.20%	57
Disagree	51.41%	91
Strongly Disagree	11.86%	21
Total	100%	177

In determining if there was a difference in the mean responses based on demographic factors, the overall analysis of variance showed that the groups, based on gender, exhibited significant differences in their response to survey question 9: The Strategic Compensation plan in my school district is contributing to improvements in the quality of professional development pursued by teachers ($F(1, 176) = 6.802, p = 0.01$). On a scale of 1 to 4 with 1 meaning strongly disagree and 4 meaning strongly agree, the results showed that male teachers scored 2.56, and female teachers scored 2.22. The results demonstrated that male teachers scored significantly higher (closer to agree) than female teachers (closer to disagree) in perceiving that the Strategic Compensation plan in the school district contributed to improvements in the quality of professional development pursued by teachers.

In determining if there was a difference in the mean responses based on demographic factors, the overall analysis of variance showed that the groups, based on teaching level, also exhibited significant differences in their response to survey question 9: The Strategic Compensation plan in my school district is contributing to improvements in the quality of professional development pursued by teachers ($F(2, 175) = 7.900, p = 0.001$). Individual group comparisons using the Tukey-Kramer test showed there were no significant differences between PK-5 teachers and both middle school and high school teacher groups. On a scale of 1 to 4 with 1 meaning strongly disagree and 4 meaning strongly agree, the results showed that PK-5 teachers

scored 2.06, high school teachers scored 2.50 ($p = 0.001$), and middle school teachers scored 2.45 ($p = 0.012$). The results demonstrated that PK-5 teachers scored significantly lower than both middle and high school teachers in perceiving that the Strategic Compensation plan in the school district contributed to improvements in the quality of professional development pursued by teachers.

Survey question 10: The Strategic Compensation plan affects how I complete my goal setting planning form at the beginning of the school year. Survey participants were asked to respond to the following statement: the strategic compensation plan affects how I complete my goal setting planning form at the beginning of the school year. Of the survey respondents, 53.04% agreed or strongly agreed, while 46.96% disagreed or strongly disagreed that the strategic compensation plan affects how he or she completes his or her goal setting planning form at the beginning of the school year (see Table 20).

Table 20

Survey Question 10 Responses. The Strategic Compensation Plan Affects how I Complete my Goal Setting Planning Form at the beginning of the School Year

Likert-type scale response	Percentage	Count
Strongly Agree	13.81%	25
Agree	39.23%	71
Disagree	34.25%	62
Strongly Disagree	12.71%	23
Total	100%	181

In determining if there was a difference in the mean responses based on demographic factors, the overall analysis of variance showed that the groups, based on gender, exhibited significant differences in their response to survey question 10: The Strategic Compensation plan affects how I complete my goal setting planning form at the beginning of the school year ($F(1, 180) = 4.075, p = 0.045$). On a scale of 1 to 4 with 1 meaning strongly disagree and 4 meaning strongly agree, the results showed that male teachers scored 2.78, and female teachers scored 2.48. The results demonstrated that male teachers scored significantly higher than female

teachers in perceiving that the Strategic Compensation plan affects how they complete their goal setting planning form at the beginning of the school year.

In determining if there was a difference in the mean responses based on demographic factors, the overall analysis of variance showed that the groups, based on teaching level, exhibited significant differences in their response to survey question 10: The Strategic Compensation plan affects how I complete my goal setting planning form at the beginning of the school year ($F(2, 179) = 8.356, p = 0.000$). Individual group comparisons using the Tukey-Kramer test showed there were no significant differences between PK-5 teachers and both middle school and high school teacher groups. On a scale of 1 to 4 with 1 meaning strongly disagree and 4 meaning strongly agree, the results showed that PK-5 teachers scored 2.25, high school teachers scored 2.81 ($p = 0.001$), and middle school teachers scored 2.71 ($p = 0.012$). The results demonstrated that PK-5 teachers scored significantly lower than both middle and high school teachers in perceiving that the Strategic Compensation plan affects how they complete their goal setting planning form at the beginning of the school year.

Survey question 11: The Strategic Compensation plan has a negative impact on the school culture and professional collegiality in my school. Survey participants were asked if the school district's strategic compensation plan has a negative impact on the school culture and professional collegiality in his or her school. Of the 178 responses, 59.55% disagreed or strongly disagreed, while 40.45% agreed or strongly agreed that the strategic compensation plan has a negative impact on school culture and professional collegiality (see Table 21).

In determining if there was a difference in the mean responses based on demographic factors, the overall analysis of variance showed that the groups, based on gender, exhibited significant differences in their response to survey question 11: The Strategic Compensation plan has a negative impact on the school culture and professional collegiality in my school ($F(2, 179) = 18.387, p = 0.000$). On a scale of 1 to 4 with 1 meaning strongly disagree and 4 meaning strongly agree, the results showed that male teachers scored 1.87, and female teachers scored 2.61. The results demonstrated that male teachers scored significantly lower than female teachers in perceiving that the Strategic Compensation plan has a negative impact on the school culture and professional collegiality in their school.

Table 21

Survey Question 11 Responses. The Strategic Compensation Plan has a Negative Impact on the School Culture and Professional Collegiality in my School

Likert-type scale response	Percentage	Count
Strongly Agree	14.61%	26
Agree	25.84%	46
Disagree	49.44%	88
Strongly Disagree	10.11%	18
Total	100%	178

In determining if there was a difference in the mean responses based on demographic factors, the overall analysis of variance showed that the groups, based on teaching level, also exhibited significant differences in their response to survey question 11: The Strategic Compensation plan has a negative impact on the school culture and professional collegiality in my school ($F(2, 179) = 18.387, p = 0.000$). Individual group comparisons using the Tukey-Kramer test showed there were no significant differences between PK-5 teachers and both middle school and high school teacher groups. On a scale of 1 to 4 with 1 meaning strongly disagree and 4 meaning strongly agree, the results showed that PK-5 teachers scored 2.85, high school teachers scored 2.11 ($p = 0.000$), and middle school teachers scored 2.17 ($p = 0.000$). The results demonstrated that PK-5 teachers scored significantly higher than both middle and high school teachers in perceiving that the Strategic Compensation plan has a negative impact on the school culture and professional collegiality in their school.

Survey question 12: The Strategic Compensation plan motivates me to improve the growth of each of my individual students through classroom instruction. Survey participants were asked if the school district's strategic compensation plan motivates him or her to improve the growth of each of his or her individual students through classroom instruction. Of the 177 responses, 61.58% disagreed or strongly disagreed, while 38.41% agreed or strongly agreed that the plan motivates him or her to improve the growth of each student through classroom instruction (see Table 22).

Table 22

Survey Question 12 Responses. The Strategic Compensation Plan Motivates me to Improve the Growth of Each of my Individual Students Through Classroom Instruction

Likert-type scale response	Percentage	Count
Strongly Agree	6.21%	11
Agree	32.20%	57
Disagree	44.07%	78
Strongly Disagree	17.51%	31
Total	100%	177

In determining if there was a difference in the mean responses based on demographic factors, the overall analysis of variance showed that the groups, based on teaching level, exhibited significant differences in their response to survey question 12: The Strategic Compensation plan motivates me to improve the growth of each of my individual students through classroom instruction ($F(2, 175) = 10.543, p = 0.000$). Individual group comparisons using the Tukey-Kramer test showed there were significant differences between PK-5 teachers and both middle school and high school teacher groups. On a scale of 1 to 4 with 1 meaning strongly disagree and 4 meaning strongly agree, the results showed that PK-5 teachers scored 1.97, high school teachers scored 2.45 ($p = 0.002$), and middle school teachers scored 2.58 ($p = 0.000$). The results demonstrated that PK-5 teachers scored significantly lower than both middle and high school teachers in perceiving that the Strategic Compensation plan motivates them to improve the growth of each of their individual students through classroom instruction.

Research question 2. What are the perceptions of teachers regarding strategic compensation as a motivating factor on teacher recruitment?

Survey question 15: Did you know about the Strategic Compensation plan prior to applying for a job within the school district? Survey participants were asked if they knew about the school district's strategic compensation plan prior to applying for a job within the school district. 49.72% responded no, 45.86% responded that his or her employment predates the implementation of the strategic compensation plan, and 4.42% responded yes (see Figure 7).

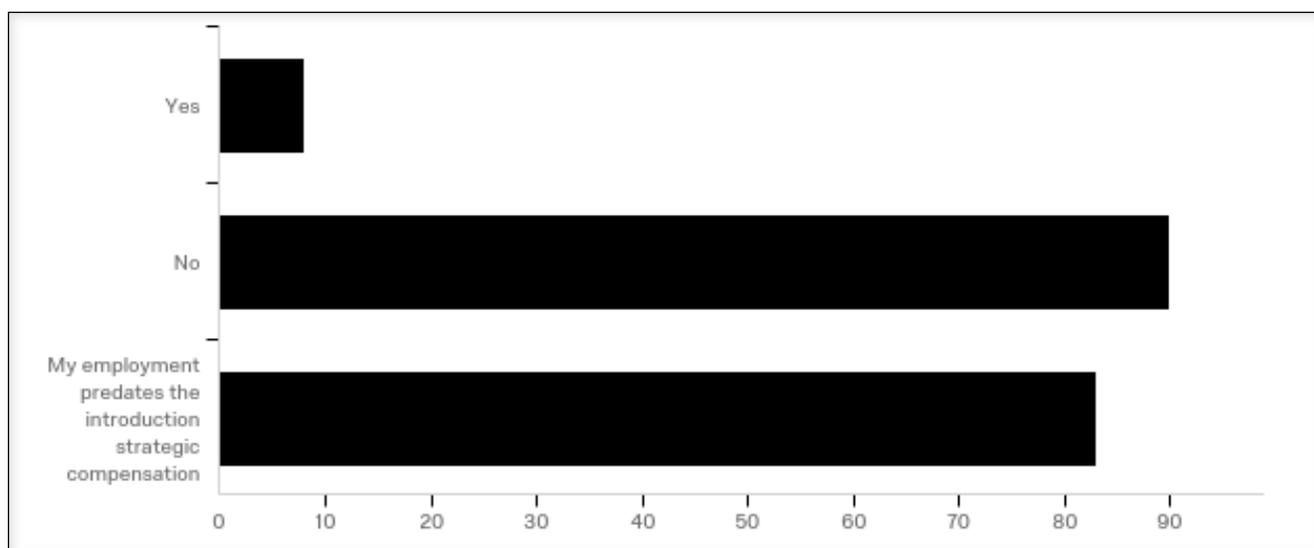


Figure 7. Survey question 15 responses. Did you know about the Strategic Compensation plan prior to applying for a job within the school district?

Survey question 16: The Strategic Compensation plan in my district should be utilized to recruit teaching candidates. Survey participants were asked to respond to the statement that the strategic compensation plan in my district should be utilized to recruit teaching candidates. 50.28% agreed or strongly agreed, while 49.73% disagreed or strongly disagreed that the strategic compensation plan should be utilized to recruit teaching candidates (see Table 23).

Table 23

Survey Question 16 Responses. The Strategic Compensation Plan in my District Should be Utilized to Recruit Teaching Candidates

Likert-type scale response	Percentage	Count
Strongly Agree	6.08%	11
Agree	44.20%	80
Disagree	39.23%	71
Strongly Disagree	10.50%	19
Total	100%	181

In determining if there was a difference in the mean responses based on demographic factors, the overall analysis of variance showed that the groups, based on gender, exhibited significant differences in their response to survey question 16: The Strategic Compensation plan

in my district should be utilized to recruit teaching candidates ($F(1, 180) = 9.956, p = 0.002$). On a scale of 1 to 4 with 1 meaning strongly disagree and 4 meaning strongly agree, the results showed that male teachers scored 2.79, and female teachers scored 2.37. The results demonstrated that male teachers scored significantly higher than female teachers in perceiving that the Strategic Compensation plan in their district should be utilized to recruit teaching candidates.

In determining if there was a difference in the mean responses based on demographic factors, the overall analysis of variance showed that the groups, based on teaching level, also exhibited significant differences in their response to survey question 16: The Strategic Compensation plan in my district should be utilized to recruit teaching candidates ($F(2, 179) = 5.505, p = 0.005$). Individual group comparisons using the Tukey-Kramer test showed there were significant differences between PK-5 teachers and both middle school and high school teacher groups. On a scale of 1 to 4 with 1 meaning strongly disagree and 4 meaning strongly agree, the results showed that PK-5 teachers scored 2.25, high school teachers scored 2.63 ($p = 0.009$), and middle school teachers scored 2.60 ($p = 0.036$). The results demonstrated that PK-5 teachers scored significantly lower than both middle and high school teachers in perceiving that the Strategic Compensation plan in their district should be utilized to recruit teaching candidates.

Survey question 17: The Strategic Compensation plan will impact the recruiting of future educators for the school district. Survey participants were asked to respond to the statement that the strategic compensation plan will impact the recruiting of future educators for the school district. 58.01% agreed or strongly agreed, while 41.98% disagreed or strongly disagreed that the strategic compensation plan will impact the recruiting or future educators for the school district (see Table 24)

In determining if there was a difference in the mean responses based on demographic factors, the overall analysis of variance showed that the groups, based on gender, exhibited significant differences in their response to survey question 17: The strategic compensation plan will impact the recruiting of future educators for the school district ($F(1, 180) = 5.795, p = 0.017$). On a scale of 1 to 4 with 1 meaning strongly disagree and 4 meaning strongly agree, the

Table 24

Survey Question 17 Responses. The Strategic Compensation Plan Will Impact the Recruiting of Future Educators for the School District

Likert-type scale response	Percentage	Count
Strongly Agree	5.52%	10
Agree	52.49%	95
Disagree	36.46%	66
Strongly Disagree	5.52%	10
Total	100%	181

results showed that male teachers scored 2.82, and female teachers scored 2.52. The results demonstrated that male teachers scored significantly higher than female teachers in perceiving that the strategic compensation plan will impact the recruiting of future educators for the school district.

In determining if there was a difference in the mean responses based on demographic factors, the overall analysis of variance showed that the groups, based on currently teaching in a hard to staff position, also exhibited significant differences in their response to survey question 17: The strategic compensation plan will impact the recruiting of future educators for the school district ($F(1, 180) = 4.331, p = 0.039$). On a scale of 1 to 4 with 1 meaning strongly disagree and 4 meaning strongly agree, the results showed that teachers in hard to staff positions scored 2.54, and teachers not in hard to staff positions scored 2.85. The results demonstrated that teachers in hard to staff positions scored significantly lower than teachers not in hard to staff positions in perceiving that the strategic compensation plan will impact the recruiting of future educators for the school district.

In addition, when determining if there was a difference in the mean responses based on demographic factors, the overall analysis of variance showed that the groups, based on teacher level, exhibited significant differences in their response to survey question 17: The strategic compensation plan will impact the recruiting of future educators for the school district ($F(2, 179) = 7.259, p = 0.001$). Individual group comparisons using the Tukey-Kramer test showed significant differences between high school teachers and both PK-5 and middle school teacher groups. On a scale of 1 to 4 with 1 meaning strongly disagree and 4 meaning strongly agree, the

results showed that high school teachers scored 2.86, middle school teachers scored 2.48 ($p = 0.015$), and PK-5 teachers scored 2.44 ($p = 0.001$). The results demonstrated that high school teachers scored significantly higher than both middle school and PK-5 teachers in perceiving that the strategic compensation plan will impact the recruiting of future educators for the school district.

Survey question 18: Strategic Compensation was a determining factor to your acceptance of employment. Survey participants were asked to respond to the statement that strategic compensation was a determining factor to your acceptance of employment. 96.55% disagreed or strongly disagreed, while 3.45% agreed that strategic compensation was a determining factor to his or her acceptance of employment (see Table 25).

In determining if there was a difference in the mean responses based on demographic factors, the overall analysis of variance showed that the groups, based on highest degree, exhibited significant differences in their response to survey question 18: Strategic Compensation was a determining factor to your acceptance of employment ($F(2, 170) = 3.080, p = 0.049$). Individual group comparisons using the Tukey-Kramer test showed there were no significant differences between teachers who have earned a bachelor's degree, master's degree, or a doctoral degree. On a scale of 1 to 4 with 1 meaning strongly disagree and 4 meaning strongly agree, the results showed that teachers with a doctoral degree scored 2.50, teachers with a master's degree

Table 25

Survey Question 18 Responses. Strategic Compensation was a Determining Factor to your Acceptance of Employment

Likert-type scale response	Percentage	Count
Strongly Agree	0.00%	0
Agree	3.45%	6
Disagree	50.00%	87
Strongly Disagree	46.55%	81
Total	100%	174

scored 1.59 ($p = 0.067$), and teachers with a bachelor's degree scored 1.52 ($p = 0.044$). The results demonstrated that teachers with a doctoral degree did not score significantly higher than

teachers with a master's degree in perceiving that the Strategic Compensation was a determining factor to your acceptance of employment. However, the results demonstrated that teachers with a doctoral degree did score significantly higher than teachers with a bachelor's degree in perceiving that the Strategic Compensation was a determining factor to your acceptance of employment.

Research question 3. What are the perceptions of teachers regarding strategic compensation as a motivating factor on teacher retention?

Survey question 13: The opportunity to earn a financial bonus incentivizes me to remain in the district. Survey participants were asked to respond to the statement that the opportunity to earn a financial bonus incentivizes him or her to remain in the district. Of the 179 responses, 58.77% disagreed or strongly disagreed, while 40.22% agreed or strongly agreed that the opportunity to earn a financial bonus incentivizes him or her to remain in the school district (see Table 26).

Table 26

Survey Question 13 Responses. The Opportunity to Earn a Financial Bonus Incentivizes me to Remain in the District

Likert-type scale response	Percentage	Count
Strongly Agree	11.73%	21
Agree	28.49%	51
Disagree	44.13%	79
Strongly Disagree	15.64%	28
Total	100%	179

In determining if there was a difference in the mean responses based on demographic factors, the overall analysis of variance showed that the groups, based on years in education, exhibited significant differences in their response to survey question 13: The opportunity to earn a financial bonus incentivizes me to remain in the district ($F(6, 173) = 2.347, p = 0.033$). Individual group comparisons using the Tukey-Kramer test showed there were significant differences between teachers with 0-2 years of experience and teachers with 21-30 years of experience. On a scale of 1 to 4 with 1 meaning strongly disagree and 4 meaning strongly agree,

the results showed that teachers with 0-2 years of experience scored 2.94 and teachers with 21-30 years of experience scored 2.10 ($p = 0.033$). The results demonstrated that teachers with 0-2 years of educational experience scored significantly higher than teachers with 21-30 years of educational experience in perceiving that the opportunity to earn a financial bonus incentivizes me to remain in the district.

In determining if there was a difference in the mean responses based on demographic factors, the overall analysis of variance showed that the groups, based on birth year, also exhibited significant differences in their response to survey question 13: The opportunity to earn a financial bonus incentivizes me to remain in the district ($F(2, 176) = 6.369, p = 0.002$). Individual group comparisons using the Tukey-Kramer test showed there were significant differences between teachers born between 1977-1995 and both teachers born between 1965-1976 and teachers born prior to 1964. On a scale of 1 to 4 with 1 meaning strongly disagree and 4 meaning strongly agree, the results showed that teachers born between 1977-1995 scored 2.55, teachers born between 1965-1976 scored 2.10 ($p=0.007$), and teachers born prior to 1964 scored 2.05($p=0.036$). The results demonstrated that teachers born between 1977-1995 scored significantly higher than teachers born between 1965-1976 and teachers born prior to 1964 in perceiving that the opportunity to earn a financial bonus incentivizes them to remain in the district

Survey question 14: The Strategic Compensation plan will positively impact the retention of educators within the school district. Survey participants were asked to respond to the statement that the strategic compensation plan will positively impact the retention of educators within the school district. Of the 180 responses, 55.56% disagreed or strongly disagreed, while 44.45% agreed or strongly agreed that the strategic compensation plan will positively impact the retention of educators within the school district (see Table 27).

Table 27

Survey Question 14 Responses. The Strategic Compensation Plan Will Positively Impact the Retention of Educators within the School District.

Likert-type scale response	Percentage	Count
Strongly Agree	5.56%	10
Agree	38.89%	70
Disagree	47.78%	86
Strongly Disagree	7.78%	14
Total	100%	180

In determining if there was a difference in the mean responses based on demographic factors, the overall analysis of variance showed that the groups, based on gender, exhibited significant differences in their response to survey question 14: The Strategic Compensation plan will positively impact the retention of educators within the school district ($F(1, 179) = 6.085, p = 0.015$). On a scale of 1 to 4 with 1 meaning strongly disagree and 4 meaning strongly agree, the results showed that male teachers scored 2.67, and female teachers scored 2.35. The results demonstrated that male teachers scored significantly higher than female teachers in perceiving that the Strategic Compensation plan will positively impact the retention of educators within the school district.

In determining if there was a difference in the mean responses based on demographic factors, the overall analysis of variance showed that the groups, based on teaching level, also exhibited significant differences in their response to survey question 14: The Strategic Compensation plan will positively impact the retention of educators within the school district ($F(2, 178) = 5.573, p = 0.004$). Individual group comparisons using the Tukey-Kramer test showed there were significant differences between high school teachers and PK-5 teacher groups. It also determined that there were no significant differences between high school and middle school teachers. On a scale of 1 to 4 with 1 meaning strongly disagree and 4 meaning strongly agree, the results showed that high school teachers scored 2.68, middle school teachers scored 2.38 ($p = 0.098$), and PK-5 teachers scored 2.27 ($p = 0.003$). The results demonstrated that high school teachers scored significantly higher than PK-5 teachers in perceiving that the Strategic Compensation plan will positively impact the retention of educators within the school

district. The results also demonstrated that high school teachers did not score significantly higher than middle school teachers in perceiving that the Strategic Compensation plan will positively impact the retention of educators within the school district.

Research question 4. What are the suggestions of teachers regarding improvements to the strategic compensation plan?

Survey question 1: I fully understand the structure of the strategic compensation plan currently utilized in the school district. Survey participants were asked to respond to the statement, I fully understand the structure of the strategic compensation plan currently utilized in the school district. Sixty-eight-point six percent agreed or strongly agreed that he or she understood the structure of the current strategic compensation plan, while 30.94% disagreed or strongly disagreed that they understood the structure of the current strategic compensation plan (see Table 28).

Table 28

Survey Question 1 Responses. I Fully Understand the Structure of the Strategic Compensation Plan Currently Utilized in the School District

Likert-type scale response	Percentage	Count
Strongly Agree	16.57%	30
Agree	52.49%	95
Disagree	27.07%	49
Strongly disagree	3.87%	7
Total	100%	181

In determining if there was a difference in the mean responses based on demographic factors, the overall analysis of variance showed that the groups, based on years in the district, exhibited significant differences in their response to survey question 1: I fully understand the structure of the strategic compensation plan currently utilized in the school district ($F(6, 175) = 2.783, p = 0.013$). Individual group comparisons using the Tukey-Kramer test showed there were significant differences between teachers with 0-2 years of experience and teachers with 21-30 years of experience. On a scale of 1 to 4 with 1 meaning strongly disagree and 4 meaning strongly agree, the results showed that teachers with 0-2 years of experience scored 2.94 and

teachers with 21-30 years of experience scored 2.10 ($p = 0.033$). The results demonstrated that teachers with 0-2 years of educational experience scored significantly higher than teachers with 21-30 years of educational experience in perceiving that they fully understand the structure of the strategic compensation plan currently utilized in the school district.

In determining if there was a difference in the mean responses based on demographic factors, the overall analysis of variance showed that the groups, based on birth year, also exhibited significant differences in their response to survey question 1: I fully understand the structure of the strategic compensation plan currently utilized in the school district ($F(2, 178) = 4.045, p = 0.019$). Individual group comparisons using the Tukey-Kramer test showed there were significant differences between teachers born prior to 1964 and both teachers born between 1977-1995 and teachers born between 1965-1976. On a scale of 1 to 4 with 1 meaning strongly disagree and 4 meaning strongly agree, the results showed that teachers born prior to 1964 scored 3.22, teachers born between 1977-1995 scored 2.74 ($p = 0.014$), and teachers born between 1965-1976 scored 2.81 ($p=0.070$). The results demonstrated that teachers born prior to 1964 scored significantly higher than teachers born between 1977-1995 in perceiving that they fully understand the structure of the strategic compensation plan currently utilized in the school district. The results also demonstrated that teachers born prior to 1964 did not score significantly higher than teachers born between 1965-1976 in perceiving that they fully understand the structure of the strategic compensation plan currently utilized in the school district.

In addition, in determining if there was a difference in the mean responses based on demographic factors, the overall analysis of variance showed that the groups, based on teaching level, also exhibited significant differences in their response to survey question 1: I fully understand the structure of the strategic compensation plan currently utilized in the school district ($F(2, 179) = 3.058, p = 0.049$). Individual group comparisons using the Tukey-Kramer test showed there were no significant differences between high school teachers and both middle school and PK-5 teacher groups. On a scale of 1 to 4 with 1 meaning strongly disagree and 4 meaning strongly agree, the results showed that high school teachers scored 2.61, PK-5 teachers scored 2.91 ($p = 0.062$), and middle school teachers scored 2.91 ($p = 0.120$). The results demonstrated that high school teachers did not score significantly lower than PK-5 and middle school teachers in fully understanding the structure of the strategic compensation plan currently utilized in the school district.

Lastly, in determining if there was a difference in the mean responses based on demographic factors, the overall analysis of variance showed that the groups, based on their 2016-17 summative evaluation rating, also exhibited significant differences in their response to survey question 1: I fully understand the structure of the strategic compensation plan currently utilized in the school district ($F(4, 177) = 3.572, p = 0.008$). Individual group comparisons using the Tukey-Kramer test showed there were significant differences between teachers with a 2016-17 summative evaluation of exemplary and new teachers. On a scale of 1 to 4 with 1 meaning strongly disagree and 4 meaning strongly agree, the results showed that exemplary teachers scored 2.97, and new teachers scored 2.50 ($p = 0.047$). The results demonstrated that exemplary teachers scored significantly higher than new teachers in fully understanding the structure of the strategic compensation plan currently utilized in the school district. There were no other significant differences between the other groups recorded under the demographic for 2016-17 summative evaluation rating.

Survey question 2. My supervising administrator explained how I can achieve an exemplary summative evaluation during the planning and post-observation feedback processes throughout the year. Survey participants were asked to respond to the following statement: my supervising administrator explained how I can achieve an exemplary summative evaluation during the planning and post-observation feedback processes throughout the year. Of the 181 responses, 70.72% agreed or strongly agreed, while 29.28% disagreed or strongly disagreed that his or her administrator explained how he or she can achieve an exemplary summative evaluation during the planning and post-observation feedback processes throughout the year (see Table 29).

Table 29

Survey Question 2 Responses. My Supervising Administrator Explained How I Can Achieve an Exemplary Summative Evaluation During the Planning and Post-Observation Feedback Processes Throughout the Year

Likert-type scale response	Percentage	Count
Strongly Agree	22.65%	41
Agree	48.07%	87
Disagree	23.76%	43
Strongly disagree	5.52%	10
Total	100%	181

In determining if there was a difference in the mean responses based on demographic factors, the overall analysis of variance showed that the groups, based on highest degree completed, exhibited significant differences in their response to survey question 2: My supervising administrator explained how I can achieve an exemplary summative evaluation during the planning and post-observation feedback processes throughout the year ($F(2, 177) = 3.109, p = 0.047$). Individual group comparisons using the Tukey-Kramer test showed there were no significant differences between bachelor's degree, master's degree and doctoral degree teacher groups. On a scale of 1 to 4 with 1 meaning strongly disagree and 4 meaning strongly agree, the results showed that teachers with a doctoral degree scored 2.00, teachers with a master's degree scored 2.80 ($p = 0.226$), and teachers with a bachelor's degree scored 3.00 ($p = 0.96$). The results demonstrated teachers with a doctoral degree did not score significantly lower than teachers with masters and bachelor's degrees in perceiving that their supervising administrator explained how they can achieve an exemplary summative evaluation during the planning and post-observation feedback processes throughout the year.

Survey question 3: Teachers were a part of the development process for the Strategic Compensation plan. Survey participants were asked to respond to the following statement: teachers were a part of the development process for the strategic compensation plan. Of the 178 responses, 56.18% agreed or strongly agreed, while 43.83% disagreed or strongly disagreed that teachers were a part of the development process for the strategic compensation plan (see Table 30).

Table 30

Survey Question 3 Responses. Teachers were a Part of the Development Process for the Strategic Compensation Plan

Likert-type scale response	Percentage	Count
Strongly Agree	3.93%	7
Agree	52.25%	93
Disagree	35.96%	64
Strongly Disagree	7.87%	14
Total	100%	178

Survey question 6: Participation in the Strategic Compensation plan should be voluntary for those who want to receive an end of year bonus by meeting additional prescribed requirements. Survey participants were asked if the strategic compensation plan should be voluntary for those who want to receive an end of year bonus by meeting additional prescribed requirements. Of the 181 responses, 67.41% agreed or strongly agreed that the program should be voluntary, while 36.6% disagreed or strongly disagreed that the program should be voluntary (see Table 31).

In determining if there was a difference in the mean responses based on demographic factors, the overall analysis of variance showed that the groups, based on teaching level, exhibited significant differences in their response to survey question 6: Participation in the strategic compensation plan should be voluntary for those who want to receive an end of year bonus by meeting additional prescribed requirements ($F(2, 179) = 15.708, p = 0.000$). Individual group comparisons using the Tukey-Kramer test showed significant differences between PK-5 teachers and both middle and high school teacher groups. On a scale of 1 to 4 with 1 meaning strongly disagree and 4 meaning strongly agree, the results showed that PK-5 teachers scored 2.38, Middle school teachers scored 2.89 ($p = 0.001$), and high school teachers scored

Table 32 displays the top 10 Word Sift terms used by frequency in overall responses to survey question 19.

Table 32

Survey Question 19 Top 10 Word Sift Responses

Word	Frequency
Teacher	183
Compensation	97
Strategic	79
Student	62
Reward	38
Beyond	36
Work	36
Think	34
School	32
Money	31

Table 33 records open responses from survey participants regarding their opinion of the primary purpose for Strategic Compensation using the top 10 Word Sift word responses while controlling for the word's teacher, compensation, and strategic. The purpose of controlling for the word "teacher" is due to the overlap within responses that also included words within the top ten. In addition, the words compensation and strategic were controlled because respondents used those terms to repeat the initial question posed during their response.

Table 33

Survey Question 19 Responses. In Your Opinion, What Should be the Primary Purpose of Strategic Compensation?

Quote	Code	Key Word (count)
The primary purpose of Strategic Compensation should be to reward teachers who go above and beyond to ensure all their students demonstrate substantial measured growth.	S1	Student (62)
The primary purpose should be to reward excellent teachers who are innovative and creative in their teaching practices.	S7	Reward (38)

(continued)

Table 33 (cont.)

Quote	Code	Key Word (count)
To motivate teachers to go beyond daily work in the classroom; To encourage teachers to put in extra time before/after school to work with students; To foster positive relationships between teachers and students	S153	Beyond (36)
Strategic compensation should be used to promote teachers to work harder, have higher goals within their classrooms and entice teachers to want to be the very best.	S9	Work (36)
The primary purpose should be to encourage teachers to go above and beyond the "call of duty" and ensure that every aspect of the school year is used to the best of their ability. Currently, Strategic Compensation is a great incentive that I do think about throughout the year. I just wish that the sheet we are given at the end of the year (in which we tally our "scores") was distributed at the beginning as a sort of "rubric" that we could tick off throughout the year to increase our end-of-year compensation. I think that this would encourage myself and other teachers to adhere to these expectations more purposefully and help better our chances of receiving compensation in June. I also believe that Strategic Compensation is a positive incentive for employment by ____; however, I think it would be more enticing to other _____ teachers if our salaries were more competitive. For example, if our salaries were similar to those in ____ AND we had the chance to earn Strategic Compensation, I think that could sway some teachers to choose ____ over other counties.	S102	Think (34)
I believe that Strategic Compensation should be there to reward good teaching. It should focus on what occurs in the classroom. Being on a committee or supervising an extracurricular activity should not be a factor. Excellence in teaching is what we should be awarding. Until there is inter rater reliability for teachers' evaluations I think that a system like the points sheet (that was previously used) should be considered - as long as it no longer includes the out of the classroom stuff, like committees, and removes the school and district goals (that just incentivized everyone to route against those goals, since more points meant less money/point).	S49	School (32)
I believe the money needs to be used in our budget in a different way. I would like to see the money affiliated with strategic compensation be used in professional development, tuition reimbursement, hiring new positions or for teachers who do extra, such as after-school clubs, tutoring or other activities like that. Strategic compensation should not be a means of competition between employees.	S18	Money (31)

Table 34

Survey Question 20 Top 10 Word Sift Word Responses. Please Share any Additional Insights you Have Regarding the Strategic Compensation Plan and its Impact on your Decisions

Word	Frequency
Teacher	118
Compensation	88
Strategic	75
Year	70
Student	44
Money	41
School	40
Feel	37
Work	34
Think	29

Table 35 displays open responses from survey participants regarding their additional insights regarding the Strategic Compensation plan and its impact on his or her decisions using the top 10 Word Sift word responses while controlling for the word's compensation, teacher, and strategic. The purpose of controlling for the word teacher is due to the overlap within responses that also included words within the top ten. In addition, the words compensation and strategic were controlled because respondents used those terms to repeat the initial question posed during their response.

Table 35

Survey Question 20 Responses

Quote	Code	Key Word (count)
I would love a check list at the beginning of the year and be able to check items off as we move through the year . Obviously, some items will not be able to be a simple check but it would help in long term planning.	S113	Year (70)
I think that the majority of teachers in our county do not need financial rewards to do what is best for our students . Financial rewards should not be tied to how well a teacher meets their academic goals because those goals are tied to student performance. This adds unnecessary pressure to the testing environment that teachers already feel. I also think that the evaluation process is too subjective to have such high stakes. This concept creates an unnecessary competitive and negative work environment that overall is not beneficial to our county.	S46	Student (44)

(continued)

Table 35 (cont.)

Quote	Code	Key Word (count)
<p>I think the money could be better spent on improving overall teacher salaries, providing better stipends to teachers who take on extra responsibilities (after-school events, tutoring, leadership positions, after-school clubs or ensembles, or fully funding needed positions that are currently part-time or do not exist in the county (because we are a small county, lots of people have to wear many hats), given that these positions would improve both teacher quality of life and student outcomes. I also think the evaluation system needs to be better explained and adapted for different positions. What is the purpose of the evaluation? Is disenfranchising your teachers and making them feel less valued really worth the opportunity cost of attracting a young money-motivated teacher? Is creating more division between staff and administration, in addition to decreasing overall morale really worth it?</p>	S27	Money (41)
<p>I have seen this from the start and it has been very unfair in the past to the high school and middle school teachers - for years we saw all the money and credit go to the elementary school teachers. It has caused some hurt feelings over the years and negative feelings between the schools. It is something in the back of my mind - if I get it great if I don't I still do my job the best I know how and always strive to improve myself.</p>	S105	School (40)
<p>In my opinion, if the amount of money budgeted for Strategic Compensation is significant enough I would rather see the money divided and shared by all teachers in an overall raise. If the money would not mean a significant raise/bonus for all teachers, I would rather it be filtered to the innovation grants. I feel the innovation grants that have been award do encourage teachers to try new strategies and seek professional development that improves overall teaching.</p>	S39	Feel (37)

(continued)

Table 35 (cont.)

Quote	Code	Key Word (count)
<p>I believe the SC plan, if funded correctly, can be a strong resource in maintaining exemplary employees, recruiting exemplary employees and motivating proficient employees to strive to improve. By funded correctly I mean the bonus needs to be an amount high enough to match the additional amount of work desired. If we are already doing a solid job and are considered proficient then the additional pay should match the desired level of output. This can be personal for each teacher but I feel that something around a month's bonus would be a sufficient motivator. In the last few years with the diluted pool of compensation the motivation has been lacking. This work the same in recruiting and retaining. As a teacher if I can make an additional month's check by being here (over a surrounding county) and being exemplary that would make it harder for me to change districts. The same can be said of recruiting exemplary teachers from surrounding counties.</p>	S73	Work (34)
<p>I think that Strategic Compensation can have a positive impact on some educator's motivation to teach at the highest level possible. However, I think adding smaller (non-monetary incentives) can have a larger impact on the teacher population. I would also encourage participation to be voluntary with no negative repercussion for not participating.</p>	S69	Think (29)

Focus group interview. The following research data were collected through a focus group interview of 7 of the 8 administrators responsible for the summative evaluations of the teacher survey respondents above. An interview protocol was created to guide the conversation throughout the interview of the focus group to ensure that responses were recorded for research questions 5-8. The questions created for this interview were developed based on the common themes presented during the researcher's review of the literature. In addition, the interview questions were reviewed by a group of experts outside of the school district and central office administrators within the rural school district to collect responses regarding their alignment with the research questions. The interview protocol was then revised to reflect the suggestions from the experts and central office administrators.

Research question 5. What are the perceptions of administrators regarding strategic compensation as a motivating factor on teacher quality?

Interview question 1. How does the strategic compensation plan motivate teachers to perform at an exemplary level? Share evidence of your response. Interview participants were

asked how the strategic compensation plan within their district motivates teachers to perform at an exemplary level and to share evidence. Participants in the focus group cited that the rural southeastern school district's strategic compensation does not motivate teachers to perform at an exemplary level. However, Participant 6 cited the allocation of significant funds (\$5,000 or more) may have contributed to the success of the strategic compensation plan in its inception. Participant 7 stated that the strategic compensation plan focuses more on rewarding exemplary teachers rather than as a motivator to teachers to perform at an exemplary level. Table 36 displays responses from interview participants.

Table 36

Interview Question 1 Responses. How Does the Strategic Compensation Plan Motivate Teachers to Perform at an Exemplary Level? Share Evidence of Your Response

Quote	Code	Transcription Line Number
I don't think that it does. I think that, um most teachers, if they are true teachers, they are not in this for a job or for the pay. Of course, they want money, but they are not in it for that. What they want to do is do their best job so that they can make a difference in the lives of the students. So, I don't see that a strategic comp motivates them to be exemplary. I think teachers want to be exemplary, those who want to be exemplary, they want to be exemplary because of themselves, because of their attitude towards the children and what they want to accomplish, not because they are going to get a specific amount of money for it.	P1	15-21
Teachers want to be exemplary because that's what we do, that is who we are; we want to be excellent for our kids.	P4	32-33
I would say after year one, when checks are going out at 5000 dollars, it was a big deal. And I think that the second year, it was a little less...they wanted to maintain that exemplary rating, but they knew that the money, the 5000 which was the top, I think, wasn't going to be there any longer. So, there was some motivation to get that money because that paid for whatever was happening at home with, you know, childcare or with vacations and some people actually said that they needed it to take vacations. So, the first couple of years, I feel as if it did matter, but then when the pot started dwindling down, then I think it just didn't matter.	P6	43-50
It definitely awards an exemplary teacher who is truly in it for the heart of teaching rather than motivate.	P7	51-52

Research question 6. What are the perceptions of administrators regarding strategic compensation as a motivating factor on teacher recruitment?

Interview question 3. How does the Strategic Compensation plan contribute to teacher recruitment to the district? Interview participants were asked how does the Strategic Compensation plan contribute to teacher recruitment to the district? The focus group participants agreed that the strategic compensation plan does not contribute to teacher recruitment to the rural southeast school district. In fact, none of the participants cited that they used strategic compensation as a recruitment tool during teacher interviews. Participant 2 indicated that working conditions within the rural southeast school district serves as the greatest recruitment tool for the school district. Participant 6 noted that some teachers were not aware of the rural southeast school district's strategic compensation plan until it was discussed in individual teacher goal setting meetings held during the fall of each school year. Table 37 displays responses from interview participants.

Table 37

Interview Question 3 Responses. How does the Strategic Compensation Plan Contribute to Teacher Recruitment to the District?

Quote	Code	Transcription Line Number
I hear that it's offered by the central office, it's put out there as something to attract, but it has never come up in interviews for me not being asked of by or you know "what questions do you have" at the end of the interview.	P2	123-125
People are, I feel like beating down the doors because of working conditions right now. People are coming to me from neighboring counties because they have heard great things about this school system and what we do and they want to come work here because of the professionalism piece and working conditions and risk taking and how we respect and value education resources that we put at their fingertips not once did strategic compensation come up.	P2	127-134

(continued)

Table 37 (cont.)

Quote	Code	Transcription Line Number
The couple of years after we implemented this we had new teachers come on board, and we didn't know that it wasn't brought up to them in new hire... They didn't know before they got the job, they didn't know during new teacher academy and they found out through us as administrators maybe during our smart goal meeting, maybe, if I remembered that they didn't know and if not it was mid-year or at the end of the year. So, it just wasn't a topic of conversation from the time they were hired all the way through.	P6	139-145

Research question 7. What are the perceptions of administrators regarding strategic compensation as a motivating factor on retaining teachers?

Interview question 2. How does the Strategic Compensation plan contribute to teacher retention in the district? Interview participants were asked how does the Strategic Compensation plan contribute to teacher retention in the district? Survey participants generally agreed that the strategic compensation plan does not contribute to teacher retention within the rural southeast school district. Two of the focus group participants cited working conditions as a contributing factor to teacher retention within the school district, and participant 1 cited that some teachers have returned to the school district after leaving to teach in another school district because they are treated as professionals within the rural southeast school district. Table 38 displays some of the responses from interview participants.

Table 38

Interview Question 2 Responses. How Does the Strategic Compensation Plan Contribute to Teacher Retention in the District?

Quote	Code	Transcription Line Number
I think that teachers are more concerned with working conditions, their working environment, being treated as professionals and not, you know, what money I am going to get to stay here, I stay here because I like where I am, I like my work environment. Honestly, I have teachers who have gotten jobs other places, making you know, have been offered five to ten thousand more, but they returned because of two things that I've said, I like this work environment and I like the idea of being treated like a professional and that my opinion really matters, that you truly do listen to what I have to say.	P1	65-71
When we changed it to exemplary and proficient to be the recipients of some money, I did see a few of the proficient level teachers really almost try to debate or argue with me why they should be exemplary to get more money.	P7	75-77
We have positioned ourselves as an alternative to some of our peers and surrounding counties through working conditions	P3	84-85

Research question 8. What are the suggestions of administrators regarding improvements to the strategic compensation plan?

Interview question 4. What end of year bonus amount of money would incentivize teachers to be exemplary? What compels you to this conclusion? Interview participants were asked what end of year bonus amount of money would incentivize teachers to be exemplary? They were also asked, what compels you to this conclusion? Focus group participant 6 cited that the rural southeast school district's strategic compensation plan has served its purpose to reward exemplary teachers, but the current plan is no longer needed to motivate teachers. Participant 7 suggested \$1,000 or more, and participant 5 suggested 5% of a teacher's annual salary. Table 39 displays responses from interview participants.

Table 39

Interview Question 4 Responses. What End of Year Bonus Amount of Money Would Incentivize Teachers to be Exemplary? What Compels You to this Conclusion?

Quote	Code	Transcription Line Number
A thousand or more I think, I think, that's sufficient.	P7	163
I would say up to 5%, I mean I think, you know, having, we were having this similar conversation today and I think people need to know what they are working towards, if that is their motivation.	P5	168-169
When they first introduced it, it was a matter of giving teachers an opportunity to be rewarded for what they are already doing. So, that was the whole premise of it. It wasn't that one-day you're going to want to do it too to get money. It was, let's reward people who are already doing the stuff and they don't get anything extra. So, it's kind of hard to say, "become exemplary or stay after school and do this program," because it's not intrinsic. So, it all started with the people that were just doing it just because it's natural for them to do it. I don't think that it was ever meant that everybody got 13 dollars. But now what we've done, is we've weeded out the proficient and we have a majority of exemplary teachers and the pot is less now and so now it doesn't really mean anything because we have the best of the best.	P6	184-196
When it all started, I think it served its purpose, and I think that's it. That's I don't think we'll ever get there again.	P6	201-202

Interview question 5. What are the most challenging aspects of the Strategic Compensation plan for administrators? Interview participants were asked what are the most challenging aspects of the Strategic Compensation plan for administrators? Focus group participant 1 cited that there is inconsistency in the model because the framework has changed from year to year. Participant 6 indicated that the strategic compensation plan contributes to inconsistencies between the different levels of schools (i.e.- elementary, middle, and high). Participant 7 furthered the opinion of participant 6 by citing the different extracurricular expectations of teachers at the secondary level that are not accounted for in the strategic compensation rubric used prior to the 2017-18 school year. In addition, participant 2 cited that

there are implicit biases attached to the evaluation system that play a role in the final outcome.

Table 40 displays responses from interview participants.

Table 40

Interview Question 5 Responses. What are the Most Challenging Aspects of the Strategic Compensation Plan for Administrators?

Quote	Code	Transcription Line Number
It's the inconsistency of the model. I don't know what the expectations are of me as an administrator are from year to year, it changes and I think it's hard to really implement something when we are forever changing it. We need to establish something and at least stick with it for three years without changing.	P1	255-258
Initially, for me, one of the most challenging things was what's important to another level of school. If I'm one level, you're a different level, what's important to you and should get a point, that shouldn't get a point for my school... And so, that bothered me a lot from elementary to middle to high school we all are doing different things which means who gets more boxes checked and how many points can a teacher get at one level versus another. We never talked about that, we just threw everything on a form.	P6	279-287
One thing that I found to be just, not really difficult but just a question, um, was you know about, about 60-70 percent of the extra things that each teacher does, but then there's that 30 percent that you may have done this, I don't see proof of that, I don't know, I don't know if you've actually done that or not, so about 6 years ago, I think was the last year we kept binders of teachers in the district, and it was all of the professional things that we did and it was ongoing and it had your resume in there and all of that and so if we were going to keep this system and us as administrators need to continue to check off then it would be nice to have that binder, here is your certificate on this, and here is that and just to keep your professional portfolio updated and that's more of an extra task but I think it would be helpful on a professional level as well	P7	297-305

(continued)

Table 40 (cont.)

Quote	Code	Transcription Line Number
<p>The research shows that all of it points to the formal evaluation process kind of being flawed, there is not good evaluation metric. Um, so tying it to that versus like I think when we were looking this year at the rubric like these things count as completion toward exemplary, and this standard model looks a little more like national boards. That, that is, a little more research supported, I think, for like, does this actually show the people are teachers who have national award certification and do that sort of thing that generally are, I think a little higher quality by virtue, I think of the research on that. So, anyway, that's what it looks like. But yeah, I think tying it. And it's not that I don't trust, I don't feel my evaluations are legitimate but they are just a snap shot.</p>	P3	306-315
<p>It's a quantifiable process, it's supposed to be, but it's extremely human. And so that is the biases there. Implicit biases. And then confirming it's inconsistent between schools. And that requires norming, which we are trying to do in the district, is it making me a stronger instructional leader to give suggestions for further instruction but at no point did any of that conversation does money come up...A large part I wrote is a large part depends on kid's performance which is based on so many variables. Who was that kids last year's teacher, what is the cohort of children that are in there, you sit there with a higher percentage of a teacher's score being based on Standard 7, that waves into really whether or not you're going to get exemplary or proficient... But there are so many factors and variables that goes into kids' performance that can suddenly destroy that teacher's reputation, not reputation, but how you rate them in the scale whereas compared to other merit-based pay type of industries where you are producing widgets and products that are just an item that is,</p>	P2	323-340

Interview question 6. What improvements, if any, would you make to the current structure of the Strategic Compensation plan? Interview participants were asked what improvements, if any, would you make to the current structure of the Strategic Compensation plan? Focus group participant 3 cited that the rural school district should incentivize the desired behaviors; while participant 5 specified that the strategic compensation plan should focus on specific state standards to do so. Participant 3 also suggested that the rural southeast school district adopt a portfolio rubric to determine who receives a strategic compensation bonus at the end of each school year. Participant 2 agreed with the suggestion of a portfolio, but also cited that the school district should continue to support the growth of their administrators regarding the

formal observation and feedback for teachers. Participant 2 also cited the need for additional funds to support an increase in the monetary value of the end of year strategic compensation bonus to further incentivize the program. Table 41 displays responses from interview participants.

Table 41

Interview Question 6 Responses. What Improvements, if any, would you Make to the Current Structure of the Strategic Compensation Plan?

Quote	Code	Transcription Line Number
You incentivize the behaviors you want.	P3	431
If you have a teacher who instructional planning is, you know, they're proficient at it or the instructional delivery needs help. Maybe you tie, you need to be exemplary in Standard 7 and Standard 3, you know, and like on the final evaluation not that, so that they can't necessarily get exemplary without kind of meeting those specific goals set out.	P5	440-444
There needs to be some buy-in, it just can't be what we think. It's a matter of working together, just like smart goals are. But I think there needs to be some professional growth goals, you know, incorporating more technology or looking at the SAMR Model and getting to modification versus substitution like we need to work towards some instructional goals but it needs to be together.	P6	459-463
I like the idea of like the portfolio. Like these things, evidence of these things having been completed and even, we can define what that evidence is, but evidence of these things having been completed.	P3	489-491
I feel like we've got to continue to make it better, and this isn't an endorsement on keeping the strategic compensation, but continue to develop evaluators together, as this county has been doing, to make sure we are norming each other. Also becoming stronger instructional leaders that can know how to give critical feedback to make better teachers... not to make teachers that can earn strategic compensation but rather just better... I think the concrete portfolio though is a better idea, so it is more black and white, but then I think you've got to watch the hoops you make them jump through because it gets too long of a list and then that's just annoying and then are they in it for the money in making a list or are they in it for teaching. I think you'd have to increase the money pool. It's kind of a combination of shrinking the exemplary range or increase the money pool, because if we are saying that the money matters then you've got to have money.	P2	561-575

Summary

This chapter included the results of data collected throughout the duration of the study regarding the perceptions of strategic compensation as a motivating factor on teacher quality, recruitment, and retention. The data collection process included a 28-question survey administered to faculty and staff members eligible to receive strategic compensation in the rural southeast school district during the 2017-2018 school year and a focus group interview with 7 administrators responsible for the summative evaluations of teachers during the 2017-2018 school year. This study sought the perceptions of teachers and administrators regarding the district's strategic compensation plan. The data findings aligned to each of the research questions; the implications of this study and recommendations for future studies are disclosed in chapter five.

Chapter Five

Findings and Conclusion

Summary

The purpose of the study was to identify the perceptions of teachers and school administrators regarding a strategic compensation plan in a rural southeast school district. More specifically, the study aimed to investigate the impact of strategic compensation as a motivational factor on the following: 1) teacher quality within a rural southeast school district, 2) teacher retention within a rural southeast school district, and 3) teacher recruitment within a rural southeast school district. In addition, the study sought suggestions from teachers and school administrators regarding improvements to the strategic compensation plan in a rural southeast school district. The eight research questions addressed in this study were:

1. What are the perceptions of teachers regarding strategic compensation as a motivating factor on teacher quality?
2. What are the perceptions of teachers regarding strategic compensation as a motivating factor on teachers' recruitment?
3. What are the perceptions of teachers regarding strategic compensation as a motivating factor on teacher retention?
4. What are the suggestions of teachers regarding improvements to the strategic compensation plan?
5. What are the perceptions of administrators regarding strategic compensation as a motivating factor on teacher quality?
6. What are the perceptions of administrators regarding strategic compensation as a motivating factor on teacher recruitment?
7. What are the perceptions of administrators regarding strategic compensation as a motivating factor on retaining teachers?
8. What are the suggestions of administrators regarding improvements to the strategic compensation plan?

A mixed methods methodology was selected for this study, as it provided multiple levels of analysis for the purpose of determining the perceptions of teachers and administrators regarding the motivational impact of the rural southeast school district's strategic compensation plan on teacher quality, retention and recruitment (Clark, 2019). The researcher administered the

survey to teachers during faculty meetings in the spring of 2018 and held the focus group interview with administrators responsible for the summative evaluations within the school district during the spring of 2018. The focus was placed on a rural southeast school district, as it was the only district within its state that locally funded and operated a strategic compensation plan for its teachers.

Findings

The findings from this study were based on data collected from a survey administered to teachers in a rural southeast school district and a focus group interview with administrators responsible for the summative evaluations of the teachers within the rural southeast school district. After analysis of the data, the following findings were identified.

Finding one: The ideal amount of money that would motivate a teacher to perform at an exemplary level ranges between \$1,000 and \$3,000. Of the teachers who responded to the survey, 60.9% suggested that bonus amounts range between \$1,000 and \$3,000 to motivate them to perform at an exemplary level (see Table 15). This finding supports Stephens (2015) conclusion that the “monetary reward must be high enough for teachers to find it motivating” (p. 102). In addition, administrators in the focus group cited the significant decrease in the amount of compensation awarded to teachers between the inception of the plan and its status at the time of the survey has impacted the effectiveness of the strategic compensation plan with regard to teacher motivation. Focus group participant 6 stated “the first couple of years, I feel as if it did matter, but then when the pot started dwindling down, then I think it just didn’t matter” during the focus group interview of administrators within the rural southeast school district (see Table 36). Focus group participant 5 also suggested that the school district strategic compensation bonus should be 5% of a teacher’s salary (see Table 39). Since the rural southeast school district salary scale ranges from \$44,000 and \$54,000, the bonus amount suggested would range from \$2,200 and \$2,700 mirroring the survey participants’ suggestions.

Finding two: Strategic Compensation was not a determining factor in teachers’ decisions to accept employment within the rural southeast school district. Of the survey participants, 96.55% of teachers disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement strategic compensation was a determining factor to your acceptance of employment (see Table 25). This concept was supported by participants in the focus group interview. Focus group participant 2

stated that “people are, I feel like beating down the doors because of working conditions right now” (see Table 37). One caveat to this finding might be a direct result of finding three below.

Finding three: Teachers were unaware of the district’s strategic compensation plan prior to their employment with the district. Survey participants hired after the strategic compensation plan was implemented were not aware of the opportunity to earn an end-of-year bonus prior to employment. In fact, 49.92% (90) of the participants responded “no” to the question regarding the knowledge of the strategic compensation, while 45.86% of the respondents were employed by the district prior to the implementation of the strategic compensation plan. Also, only 4.42% (8) of the survey participants responded, “yes” to the question (see Figure 7). In addition, administrators in the focus group acknowledged that they had not mentioned strategic compensation during the recruitment process. Focus group participant 6 stated that “they didn’t know before they got the job, they didn’t know during new teacher academy and they found out through us as administrators maybe during our smart goal meeting, maybe, if I remembered that they didn’t know and if not, it was mid-year or at the end of the year” (see Table 37). This finding was in correlation with the finding of Carter et al. (2015), who cited that many of the teachers they studied were unaware of the strategic compensation plan until after the district hired them.

Finding four: School administrators in the rural southeast school district do not believe strategic compensation is a determining factor in teachers’ decision to remain with the district. Focus group participant 1 stated, “I think that teachers are more concerned with working conditions, their working environment, being treated as professionals and not, you know, what money I am going to get to stay here; I stay here because I like where I am; I like my work environment” (see Table 38). Focus group participant 3 echoed that statement by saying, “we have positioned ourselves as an alternative to some of our peers and surrounding counties through working conditions” (see Table 38). Carter et al. (2015) also found that teachers within the district they studied cited intrinsic motivation and job satisfaction as contributing factors to their continued employment. In addition, Boyd et al. (2011) found that school contextual factors such as teacher influence, administrative support, staff relations, student behavior, facilities and overall safety of the school play a significant factor in teacher retention.

Finding five: Teachers believed that their supervising administrators explained how to achieve an exemplary summative evaluation during the planning and post-observation

feedback process throughout the year. Of the 178 participants in the teacher survey, 70.72% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “my supervising administrator explained how I can achieve an exemplary summative evaluation during the planning and post-observation feedback processes throughout the year” (see Table 29). This contradicts the findings of Murane and Cohen (1986) who found that supervisors have difficulty expressing how teachers who did not receive incentive pay can improve their practice to be eligible for incentive pay in the future. This finding is also in contrast to Carter et al.’s (2015) conclusion that teachers in their study asked for greater transparency for teachers regarding the planning and implementation of the strategic compensation plan.

Finding six: Teachers and administrators believed that participation in the strategic compensation plan should be voluntary for those who want to receive an end of year bonus by meeting additional prescribed requirements. Of the 178 participants in the teacher survey, 67.41% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that participation in the Strategic Compensation plan should be voluntary for those who want to receive an end of year bonus by meeting additional prescribed requirements (see Table 31). One of the survey participants stated, “I would also encourage participation to be voluntary with no negative repercussion for not participating” (see Table 35). In addition, focus group participant 6 stated that “there needs to be some buy-in; it just can’t be what we think” (see Table 41).

While the current program does not provide teachers with the option to decline participation in the rural southeast school district’s strategic compensation plan, there are implications that moving towards a voluntary plan might increase teacher motivation to perform at an exemplary level. This finding might support the research of Satterfield (2016), who found that teachers who voluntarily “participated in the strategic compensation plan reported significantly higher TVASS single year individual teacher index results than teachers who did not participate in the strategic compensation plan” (p.72).

Finding seven: Male teachers responded more positively than female teachers with regard to their perceptions of the rural southeast school district’s strategic compensation plan.

Professional development pursued. Of the 39 male teachers who responded to survey question 9, fifty-four percent of them agreed or strongly agreed that the Strategic Compensation plan in their school district is contributing to improvements in the quality of professional

development pursued by teachers. Conversely, 32% of the 141 women who responded to survey question 9 agreed or strongly agreed with the same statement.

Goal setting. Of the 39 male teachers who responded to survey question 10, sixty-seven percent of them agreed or strongly agreed that the Strategic Compensation plan affects how they complete their goal setting planning form at the beginning of the school year. In contrast, 50% of the 141 women who responded to survey question 10 agreed or strongly agreed with the same statement.

Negative impact. Of the 39 male teachers who responded to survey question 11, ninety percent of them disagreed or strongly disagreed that the Strategic Compensation plan has a negative impact on the school culture and professional collegiality in their school. Of the 141 women who responded to survey question 11, fifty-one percent disagreed or strongly disagreed with the same statement.

Positive impact on retention. Of the 39 male teachers who responded to survey question 14, fifty-nine percent of them agreed or strongly agreed that the Strategic Compensation plan will positively impact the retention of educators within the school district. In contrast, 40% of the 141 women who responded to survey question 14 agreed or strongly agreed with the same statement.

Utilize strategic compensation to recruit. Of the 39 male teachers who responded to survey question 16, seventy-seven percent of them agreed or strongly agreed that the Strategic Compensation plan in their district should be utilized to recruit teaching candidates. Of the 142 women who responded to survey question 16, forty-two percent agreed or strongly agreed that the strategic compensation plan in their district should be utilized to recruit teaching candidates.

Impact on recruitment. Of the 39 male teachers who responded to survey question 17, eighty percent of them agreed or strongly agreed that the strategic compensation plan will impact the recruiting of future educators for the school district. In contrast, 52% of the 142 women who responded to survey question 17 agreed or strongly agreed that the strategic compensation plan will impact the recruiting of future educators for the school district.

Finding eight: There were differences among elementary, middle school and high school teacher responses with regard to their perceptions of the strategic compensation plan.

Improving teaching practices. Of the 78 PK-5 teachers who responded to statement 5 on the survey, 75.6% of them disagreed or strongly disagreed and 24.4% agreed or strongly agreed that the strategic compensation plan is helping to improve teaching practices at his or her school. In contrast, the high school and middle school teacher responses were more balanced. In fact, of the 45 middle school respondents, 44% agreed or strongly agreed and 56% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that the strategic compensation plan is helping to improve teaching practices at his or her school. Additionally, 49% of the 55 high school respondents agreed or strongly agreed and 51% disagreed or strongly disagreed that the strategic compensation plan is helping to improve teaching practices at his or her school. With significance levels of $p=0.022$ and $p=0.003$, it can be determined that elementary school teachers disagreed at a higher rate than high school and middle school teachers respectively that the strategic compensation plan is helping to improve teaching practices at his or her school.

Voluntary participation. Of the 57 high school teacher survey respondents, 84% of them agreed or strongly agreed that the strategic compensation plan should be voluntary for those who want to receive an end of year bonus by meeting additional requirements. In addition, 78% of the 45 middle school teachers agreed or strongly agreed with the same statement. In contrast, only 49% of the 79 PK-5 teachers agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that the strategic compensation plan should be voluntary for those who want to receive an end of year bonus by meeting additional requirements. With significance levels of $p=0.000$ and $p=0.001$, it can be determined that elementary school teachers rating of disagreement was higher than high school and middle school teachers respectively regarding the statement that the strategic compensation plan should be voluntary for those who want to receive an end of year bonus by meeting additional requirements.

Impact on recruitment. Of the 57 high school teacher survey respondents, 79% of them agreed or strongly agreed that the strategic compensation plan will impact the recruiting of future educators for the school district. In contrast, 48% of the 45 middle school teachers and 48% of the 79 PK-5 teachers agreed or strongly agreed with the same statement. With significance levels of $p=0.015$ and $p=0.001$, it can be determined that high school teachers agree that the strategic

compensation plan will impact the recruiting of future educators to the school district when compared to middle school teachers and PK-5 teachers, respectively.

Finding nine: Teachers with 0-2 years of experience and/or born between the years of 1977 - 1995 believed that the opportunity to earn a financial bonus incentivized them to remain in the district. Of the 16 teacher survey respondents with 0-2 years of teaching experience, 75% agreed or strongly agreed that the opportunity to earn a financial bonus incentivized them to remain in the district. In addition, 80% of the 15 teacher survey respondents who were born between 1977-1995 with 0-2 years of experience agreed or strongly agreed with the same statement.

Implications for Practice

The suggested implications for practice below are based on the findings of this research study. These implications should be used to inform the work of school districts considering implementing a strategic compensation plan as a motivating factor for teacher quality, recruitment, and retention.

Implication one: School districts who are interested in implementing strategic compensation may want to fund bonuses ranging from \$1,000 to \$3,000. Of the 178 teacher survey respondents, 60.9% (see Table 15) suggested a compensation range between \$1,000 and \$3,000. At the time of the study, strategic compensation bonuses did not match the suggested compensation range because the district no longer received state grant money and funded the strategic compensation plan with local funds. As cited by Marcotte (2015), “the inability to sustain performance pay programs in the past was due to unreliable funding and the amount of bonus pay teachers received” (p. 99). While several teachers acknowledged their appreciation of the end of year funds, administrators cited the differential of funding for the strategic compensation plan between its inception and its current status. The difference in bonus amounts from the beginning of the program to its 2018 status was a direct result of the loss of the state grant that originally funded the program. After the stopped funding the program, the rural southeast school district had to fund the strategic compensation plan with local funds. Those funds were significantly less than the original \$450,000 used to fund the program, resulting in significantly reduced bonus amounts awarded to teachers eligible to receive strategic compensation bonuses.

For this reason, school districts considering the implementation of a strategic compensation plan must adequately fund the program by utilizing local funds. This implication supports the findings from Kelley and Odden (1996), who stated, “adequate funding which is integrated within the school finance structure is less likely to be vulnerable to cuts than a separate funding pool” (p. 8). School districts that rely upon state grants to fund strategic compensation plans run the risk of having significant reductions in funding to adequately motivate teachers to improve their quality of instruction, desire employment, or remain within the district after employment.

Implication two: School districts that choose to implement a strategic compensation plan may want to consider allowing teachers to choose participation on a voluntary basis.

While participation in the rural southeast districts strategic compensation was not optional for teachers, survey data identified the potential for the school district to offer voluntary participation. Of the 178 respondents to the teacher survey, 67.41% agreed or strongly agreed that participation in strategic compensation should be voluntary (see Table 31). The concept of voluntary participation was also cited in one of the open-ended responses to question 20 (see Table 35). School districts that are considering the implementation of a strategic compensation plan should also consider offering voluntary participation, which may increase teacher motivations to improve teaching practices. This implication supports the finding of Albright (2011), who also found that state leaders believed that district and teacher participation should be voluntary.

Implication three: School districts may want to consider using strategic compensation to retain teachers who have 0-2 years of teaching experience and/or were born between 1977-1995. Of the 16 teachers with 0-2 years teaching experience, 75% of them agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “the opportunity to earn a financial bonus incentivizes me to remain in the district.” In addition, 80% of the 15 teachers who had 0-2 years of teaching experience and were born between 1977-1995 agreed or strongly agreed with the same statement. This suggests that strategic compensation should be considered by school districts to new teachers to the profession. This matches the findings of Albright (2011) who stated, “researchers have agreed the recruitment and retention of effective teachers could occur if merit pay were implemented” (p. 151).

Implication four: School districts with strategic compensation plans may want to place an emphasis on marketing their strategic compensation plan during the recruitment process of teachers. School districts considering strategic compensation should market it as a recruitment tool on its district website, during recruitment fairs, and during the interview process of teachers. Of the 98 teachers employed by the rural southeast school district after the implementation of strategic compensation, 90 of them were not aware of the strategic compensation plan prior to accepting employment. Upon review of the rural school district's website by entering "strategic compensation" into a search box, 0 results populated. In addition, an administrator in the focus group acknowledged that it was not mentioned during teacher interviews (see Table 37). Without proper marketing and communication of strategic compensation during the recruitment process of teachers, it is difficult to determine whether or not strategic compensation would play a significant role in the recruitment of teachers to a school district.

Implication five: School districts considering strategic compensation may want to explore portfolio evaluations instead of using a checklist method. Unfortunately, the teacher survey did not ask a question about including a portfolio as a part of voluntary participation. However, focus group participant 3 cited the potential use of a portfolio option in lieu of the current program (see Table 41). Focus group participant 2 agreed, stating "I think the concrete portfolio though is a better idea" (see Table 41). Carter et al. (2015) also noted that "most teachers were willing to take on the additional workload in return for additional pay" (p. 106). Districts considering strategic compensation as a part of their salary and benefits plan should consider using a portfolio system as a means to check completion of the required steps to attain a strategic compensation bonus.

Implication six: School districts may not want to consider strategic compensation as a means of improving instruction among elementary school teachers. Based on the findings from the teacher survey question 5, school districts considering strategic compensation should not consider offering it to elementary school teachers. Of the 79 PK-5 teacher respondents, 76% of them disagreed or strongly disagreed that strategic compensation is improving instruction in his or her school. As a result, school systems wishing to implement a strategic compensation plan should explore offering it to secondary teachers only. This is not to imply that high school and middle school teachers would improve instruction as a result of strategic compensation, but

rather that strategic compensation may have more of a motivational impact on teacher quality with high school and middle school teachers.

Implication seven: School districts may want to consider the impact of strategic compensation as a recruitment tool for high school teachers to the district. Based on the findings from the teacher survey question 17, school districts considering strategic compensation should consider the impact strategic compensation could have on the recruitment of high school teachers. Of the 57 high school teacher respondents, 79% of them agreed or strongly agreed that the strategic compensation plan will impact the recruiting of future educators for the school district. As a result, school systems wishing to implement a strategic compensation plan should collect data to determine if offering strategic compensation to high school teacher recruits will impact the potential the district has at hiring them. This is not to imply that districts that offer strategic compensation will be more competitive in the recruitment of high school teachers, but rather that strategic compensation may have more of a motivational impact on the recruitment of high school teachers than with PK-5 and middle school teachers.

Recommendations for Future Research

Other researchers attempting to assess the benefits of merit-based pay systems, specifically strategic compensation, can reference the results from this study. While the data collected through this survey and focus group interview lack generalizability, there are implications that confirm the need for future research regarding strategic compensation as a motivating factor on teacher quality, recruitment and retention. The body of research on strategic compensation and merit-based pay systems is still limited due to the small number of school districts that offer performance pay.

Since the structure of the rural school district's strategic compensation primarily focused on individual incentives, there may be merit in conducting further research regarding the mix of individual and group incentives (Padgursky & Springer, 2007a). This suggestion aligns with Douglas-McNab's (2014) concept that strategic compensation has "the potential to not only aid in rewarding and retaining excellent teachers, but also promote collaboration and create opportunities for teachers to help students make gains in the classroom" (p. 5). **In addition, there is a need for further analysis to determine if there is a statistically significant difference between elementary and secondary teacher motivation to improve teacher quality, recruitment and retention as a result of strategic compensation.**

The mixed methods design of this study measured the motivational impact of strategic compensation of individuals employed by the district at the time of the research. **It is recommended that further research is conducted using exit surveys of teachers leaving school districts with strategic compensation plans.** In addition, **more research should be conducted regarding the perceptions of administrators responsible for the summative evaluations of teachers eligible for strategic compensation bonuses.** The focus group of administrators consisted of 7 participants due to the size of the rural southeast school district studied. The body of research regarding the perceptions of administrators responsible for teacher evaluations within strategic compensation structures is extremely limited.

It is also recommended that a follow-up study is performed regarding the rural southeast school district examined in this study, as the rural southeast school district discontinued its strategic compensation plan following the 2017-18 school year. As the decision to discontinue program funding lies in the hands of the rural southeast school districts superintendent and school board, perhaps individual interviews with the superintendent and school board members may lead to further implications for school districts considering strategic compensation as a part of their overall teacher compensation plan.

There is also a need for further research linking professional development opportunities and strategic compensation. Since all teachers were required to participate in the rural southeast school district's strategic compensation plan, it is assumed that professional development offerings were not separated between participants and non-participants. Perhaps plans that are offered on a voluntary basis that also require participation in additional professional development sessions might produce higher teacher quality and greater levels of student achievement. Carter et al. (2015) cited that one of the possible factors related to the lack of a statistical difference between teacher effectiveness as a result of participation in a strategic compensation is due to the blanket approach to teacher development with regard to building teacher capacity to attain student achievement goals (p. 118). More research is needed to determine if those who participate in strategic compensation with separate or additional professional development requirements produce higher levels of student success.

Reflection on the Study

This mixed-methods study sought to inform leaders and decision-makers within the rural southeast school district of the teacher and administrator's perceptions of the strategic

compensation plan as a motivating factor on teacher quality, teacher recruitment and teacher retention. In addition, the study sought to identify the perceptions of teachers and administrators regarding improvements to the current structure of the strategic compensation plan. Since the completion of this study, the rural southeast school district decided to discontinue its strategic compensation plan and allocate the funding elsewhere.

While the results of my study lack generalizability, I am excited to add to the body of research regarding strategic compensation. As school districts continue to seek ways to motivate, recruit and retain teachers, it is imperative that they search for new ways to incentivize those behaviors, potentially through financial bonuses. It is also essential that school districts reward teachers who exhibit exemplary teaching methods and acknowledge teachers who work to build positive relationships with their students. As a school leader, I believe that my number one job is to recruit and retain the best teachers to my school district. There is no greater impact on the individual growth of a student than that of a teacher who provides exemplary instruction. That is why it is imperative that school districts across the country continue to research different ways to motivate, recruit and retain great teachers.

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Appendix A

Strategic Compensation Survey

Start of Block: Informed Consent

Informed Consent Welcome to the research study on Strategic Compensation!

We are interested in understanding your perceptions of the Strategic Compensation Plan in your school district. You will be asked to answer some questions about your perceptions of the Strategic Compensation Plan and its impact on teacher motivation, teacher retention and teacher recruitment. Please be assured that your responses will be kept completely confidential

The study should take you around 20 minutes to complete. Your participation in this research is voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw at any point during the study, for any reason, and without any prejudice. If you would like to contact the Principal Investigator in the study to discuss this research, please e-mail Christopher W. Collier at cwc60@vt.edu

By clicking the button below, you acknowledge that your participation in the study is voluntary, you are 18 years of age, and that you are aware that you may choose to terminate your participation in the study at any time and for any reason

Please note that this survey will be best displayed on a laptop or desktop computer. Some features may be less compatible for use on a mobile device.

Your participation in this research is voluntary, so you may withdraw at any time. Rest assured that your confidentiality is my top priority; so personal identifiers will be removed from any documentation to preserve anonymity. Should you have any questions or concerns about the study's conduct or your rights as a research subject, or need to report a research-related injury or event, you may contact the Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board at irb@vt.edu or (540) 231-3732. If you have any questions, please call me on my personal cell (XXX-XXX-XXXX) or email me (cwc60@vt.edu). You may also contact the committee chair, Dr. Carol Cash by email at ccash48@vt.edu.

I consent, begin the study

D1 Years in education

- 0-2
 - 3-5
 - 6-10
 - 11-15
 - 16-20
 - 21-30
 - 30+
-

D2 Years in the school district

- 0-2
 - 3-5
 - 6-10
 - 11-15
 - 16-20
 - 21-30
 - 30+
-

D3 Gender

- Male
 - Female
-

D4 Highest Degree Completed

- Bachelor's Degree
- Master's Degree
- Doctoral Degree

D5 Currently teaching in a “hard to staff” position (Identified by the state as the following: Career and Technical Education, Elementary Education PK-6, English, Foreign Languages PK-12, Health and Physical Education PK-12, Science Grades 6-12, Mathematics 6-12, Middle Education 6-8, School Counselor PK-12, Special Education).

- Yes
 - No
-

D6 Birth Year

- Prior to 1964
- 1965-1976
- 1977-1995
- 1996 or later

D7 Indicate your current teaching assignment (if multiple, choose the selection that the majority of your contractual hours are spent)

- PK-5
- Middle (6-8)
- High (9-12)

D8 What was your 2016-17 Summative Evaluation Rating?

- Exemplary
- Proficient
- Developing/Needs Improvement
- Other
- New Employee

Q1 I fully understand the structure of the strategic compensation plan currently utilized in the school district.

- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
-

Q2 My supervising administrator explained how I can achieve an exemplary summative evaluation during the planning and post-observation feedback processes throughout the year

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Q3 Teachers were a part of the development process for the Strategic Compensation plan

- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
-

Q4 In your opinion, what is the ideal amount of money that would motivate a teacher to perform at an exemplary level?

Q5 The Strategic Compensation plan is helping to improve teaching practices at my school.

- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
-

Q6 Participation in the Strategic Compensation plan should be voluntary for those who want to receive an end of year bonus by meeting additional prescribed requirements.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Q7 The Strategic Compensation plan motivates teachers to learn and implement new instructional strategies in the classroom.

- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
-

Q8 The Strategic Compensation plan motivates teachers to analyze student achievement data and student growth data to implement effective remediation plans.

- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
-

Q9 The Strategic Compensation plan in my school district is contributing to improvements in the quality of professional development pursued by teachers.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Q10 The Strategic Compensation plan affects how I complete my goal setting planning form at the beginning of the school year.

- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
-

Q11 The Strategic Compensation plan has a negative impact on the school culture and professional collegiality in my school.

- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
-

Q12 The Strategic Compensation plan motivates me to improve the growth of each of my individual students through classroom instruction.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Q13 The opportunity to earn a financial bonus incentivizes me to remain in the district.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Q14 The Strategic Compensation plan will positively impact the retention of educators within the school district.

- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
-

Q15 Did you know about the Strategic Compensation plan prior to applying for a job within the school district?

- Yes
- No
- My employment predates the introduction strategic compensation

Q16 The Strategic Compensation plan in my district should be utilized to recruit teaching candidates.

- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
-

Q17 The Strategic Compensation plan will impact the recruiting of future educators for the school district.

- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
-

Q18 Strategic Compensation was a determining factor to your acceptance of employment.

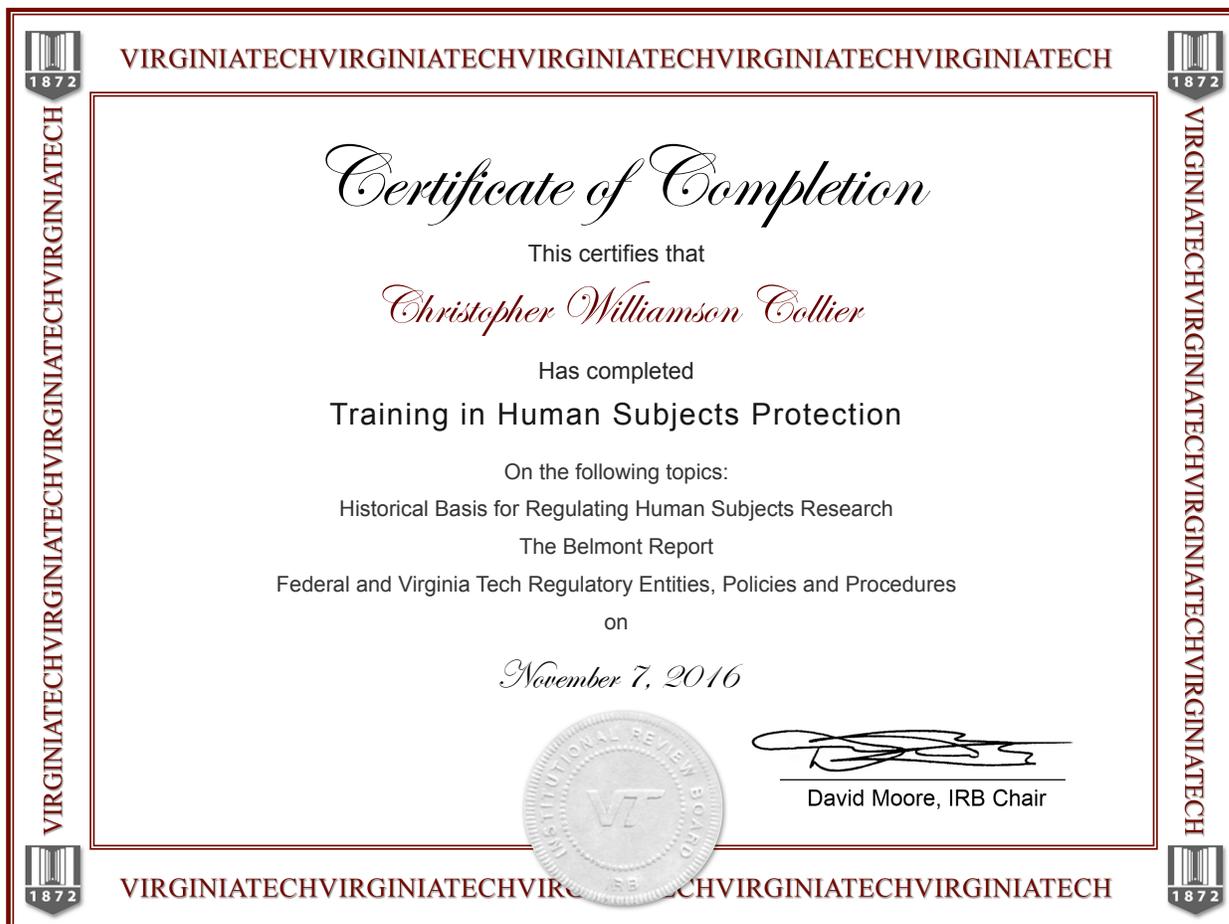
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
-

Q19 In your opinion, what should be the primary purpose of Strategic Compensation?

Q20 Please share any additional insights you have regarding the Strategic Compensation plan and its impact on your decisions and actions.

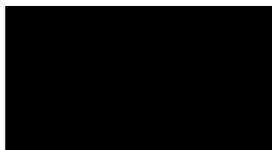
End of Block: Survey Questions

Appendix C
IRB Training Certificate of Completion



Appendix D

WIRB Approval Letter



March 26, 2018

Dr. Carol Scott Cash
Virginia Tech
2810 N. Parham Road, Suite 300
Richmond, VA 23294

Dear Dr. Cash:

SUBJECT: REGULATORY OPINION—IRB EXEMPTION
Protocol Title: Perceptions of strategic compensation as a motivating factor on teacher quality, recruitment, and retention in a rural southeast school district
Investigator: Dr. Carol Scott Cash

This letter is in response to your request to Western Institutional Review Board (WIRB) for an exemption determination for the above-referenced research project. WIRB's IRB Affairs Department reviewed the exemption criteria under 45 CFR §46.101(b)(2):

- (2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless:
- (i) Information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and
 - (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

We believe that the research fits the above exemption criteria. The data will be collected in a way so that the subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the participants. However, any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research will not reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation. You have also confirmed that the results of this study will not be submitted to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for marketing approval.

This exemption determination can apply to multiple sites, but it does not apply to any institution that has an institutional policy of requiring an entity other than WIRB (such as an internal IRB) to make exemption determinations. WIRB cannot provide an exemption that overrides the jurisdiction of a local IRB or other institutional mechanism for determining exemptions. You are responsible for ensuring that each site to which this exemption applies can and will accept WIRB's exemption decision.

Western Institutional Review Board®

1019 39th Avenue SE Suite 120 | Puyallup, WA 98374-2115
Office: (360) 252-2500 | Fax: (360) 252-2498 | www.wirb.com

Appendix E

Email to Superintendent

Dear [District Superintendent],

I am writing this email as a doctoral student at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University to request your participation in my dissertation research. My dissertation focuses on teacher and administrator perceptions of your school district's strategic compensation plan as it pertains to teacher motivation, teacher recruitment and teacher retention. In addition, my dissertation requests participant suggestions for improvements to the current structure of the strategic compensation plan. I'm formally requesting permission to conduct a survey of employees eligible to receive a strategic compensation bonus. In addition, I'm requesting permission to conduct a focus group interview of administrators responsible for the summative evaluations of employees eligible for strategic compensation. As a school administrator, I certainly understand the demands placed on the teachers and administrators within your school district. As a result, I appreciate your school district's assistance in advance.

The Strategic Compensation Faculty Survey ([hyperlink](#)) is available through Qualtrics. Please click on the hyperlink to review the survey. Upon opening the survey, teachers may review the implied consent phrase prior to participation. The survey is composed of 28 questions: 8 demographic identifiers, 17 Likert Scale questions, 1 short answer question, and 2 open ended questions. It will require approximately 20 minutes of their time to complete. In addition, I plan to work with principals within your district to visit each of your schools in March during a faculty meeting to answer any questions teachers may have about the process and assist them with completion of the survey.

In order to accommodate the busy schedules of your administrator's responsible for teacher summative evaluations, I will request responses to a doodle poll to select a date, time and location that is mutually agreeable to conduct a focus group interview. Once the date, time and location are verified, I will communicate the details through email. Additionally, I have attached a copy of the Focus Group Interview Questions for your review. I have also attached the Informed Consent Form for your review prior to sending it to participants in the focus group interview.

Your school district's participation is critical to the successful completion of my research. Individual employee participation in this research is voluntary, so they may withdraw at any time. Rest assured that the confidentiality of your school district and its employees is my top priority, so district and personal identifiers will be removed from any documentation to preserve anonymity. If you have any questions, please call me on my personal cell (XXX-XXX-XXXX) or email me (cwc60@vt.edu). Once the teacher survey and focus group interview is complete, results will be provided to you by request.

Sincerely,

Christopher W. Collier
Doctoral Candidate
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

Appendix F
Email to Focus Group Administrators

Dear Administrators,

I am writing this email as a doctoral student at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University to request your participation in my dissertation research. My dissertation focuses on teacher and administrator perceptions of your school district's strategic compensation plan as it pertains to teacher motivation, teacher recruitment and teacher retention. In addition, my dissertation requests participant suggestions for improvements to the current structure of the strategic compensation plan. As a school administrator, I certainly understand the demands placed on you and the value of time lost. As a result, I appreciate your assistance in advance.

In order to accommodate your busy schedules, I request your response to a doodle poll to select a date, time and location that is mutually agreeable. Once the date, time and location are verified, I will communicate the details through email. Additionally, I have attached a copy of the Focus Group Interview Questions for your review and reflection prior to the selected date. I have also attached the Informed Consent Form for your review and signature prior to participation in the focus group interview.

Your participation in this research is voluntary, so you may withdraw at any time. Rest assured that your confidentiality is my top priority; so personal identifiers will be removed from any documentation to preserve anonymity. If you have any questions, please call me on my personal cell (XXX-XXX-XXXX) or email me (cwc60@vt.edu). Once the focus group interview is complete, results will be provided to you by request.

Sincerely,

Christopher W. Collier
Doctoral Candidate
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

Appendix G
Focus Group Consent Form

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY
Informed Consent for Participants
in Research Projects Involving Human Subjects

Title of Project: Perceptions of Strategic Compensation as A Motivational factor on Teacher Quality, Recruitment and Retention in a Rural Southeast School District

Investigator(s): Christopher W. Collier cwc60@vt.edu/XXX-XXX-XXXX
Name E-mail / Phone number

I. Purpose of this Research Project

The purpose of this study is to investigate the perceptions of teachers and administrators in a rural southeast school district regarding the impact of a strategic compensation plan as a motivating factor on teacher quality, recruitment and retention. Perceptions will be collected through a teacher survey and a focus group interview with administrators responsible for the summative evaluations of teachers eligible for strategic compensation bonuses. Currently there are 237 eligible candidates for strategic compensation bonuses, and eight administrators responsible for summative evaluations within the district. The demographics of the interview participants vary between years of service to education, years served within the district, years served in an administrative capacity and school level. The results from this study will be used in my dissertation and may be used for publication.

This study will add to the body of research regarding teacher pay for performance plans. The element of feedback from administrators responsible for summative ratings during a focus group interview will add unique data to the body of research that already exists.

II. Procedures

A small focus group will be assembled of four principals and four assistant principals employed by the rural southeastern school district during the 2017-2018 school year. Each administrator interviewed is responsible for completing summative evaluations of individuals eligible for strategic compensation at the conclusion of the 2017-2018 school year. Prior to the focus group interview, you will be sent the list of questions so that you have time to prepare.

We will meet at the School Board Office in the downstairs conference room at 3:45 on March 15, 2018. You will be asked to participate in a 60-minute audio-recorded interview, and your participation is strictly voluntary during the question and answer portion. Your presence is only requested for this one interview. The interview recording will be later transcribed into a word document for analysis using coding techniques. After the focus group interview is transcribed, the researcher will review the document and identify common words and phrases used by the participants. Following the review, the researcher will identify common themes as they pertain to the research questions.

At the beginning of the interview, you will be notified of your right to withdraw from the focus group interview at any time, and I will collect this consent form. In addition, your confidentiality as an individual participant, and as a part of the individual school you serve, will be a priority. In order to avoid identification, you will be assigned a non-identifiable number to protect your anonymity.

III. Risks

Even though your personal identity will be removed by utilizing coding numbers, given the small number of focus group participants your responses may identify you to central office personnel and school board members. While there are no immediate risks for you as a participant, there may be unintended, but minimal, risks not yet identifiable.

As the school district is the only district in the state still utilizing a strategic compensation plan, there is potential to identify the school district studied.

IV. Benefits

There are potential benefits to you by participating in this focus group interview.

First, your perceptions of your school district's Strategic Compensation plan will add a new element to the body of research regarding performance pay. The structure used in your school district is unique, and your feedback provides data from administrators directly responsible for the summative evaluations of eligible teachers.

Second, your perceptions will provide valuable feedback to school board members and district leaders that may lead to improvement of practice.

Third, your perceptions of the impact the Strategic Compensation plan regarding teacher recruitment and retention may drive decisions to improve those practices in your district. As a school leader, the value placed on recruiting and retaining exemplary teachers is invaluable and makes your job as a leader much easier.

** No promise or guarantee of benefits has been made to encourage you to participate **

V. Extent of Anonymity and Confidentiality

The interviews will be recorded using a portable recording device and Audacity computer program. For the purpose of data collection, each participant will be coded as P1-P8. Other than your voice on audio recordings, your personal identity will not be included in the research data.

Following the interview, a transcriber, not associated with the school district, will transcribe the interview into a word document. The transcribed data will be stored by the researcher in an encrypted word document using CloudLock Selective Encryption. Chris Collier, the transcriber, and Carol Cash (committee chair) will be the only persons with access to identifiable data.

Once data are coded, the de-identified data may be shared with the dissertation committee, the district superintendent, the district executive director of business, the district coordinator of analytics and technology, and the district director of finance. At no time will the researchers release identifiable results of the study to anyone other than individuals working on the project without your written consent.

The Virginia Tech (VT) Institutional Review Board (IRB) may view the study's data for auditing purposes. The IRB is responsible for the oversight of the protection of human subjects involved in research.

VI. Compensation

You will not be compensated for your participation in the study.

VII. Freedom to Withdraw

It is important for you to know that you are free to withdraw from this study at any time without penalty. You are free not to answer any questions that you choose or respond to what is being asked of you without penalty.

VIII. Questions or Concerns

Should you have any questions about this study, you may contact one of the research investigators whose contact information is included at the beginning of this document.

Should you have any questions or concerns about the study's conduct or your rights as a research subject, or need to report a research-related injury or event, you may contact the Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board at irb@vt.edu or (540) 231-3732.

IX. Subject's Consent

I have read the Consent Form and conditions of this project. I have had all my questions answered. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent:

_____ Date _____
Subject signature

Subject printed name

(Note: each subject must be provided a copy of this form. In addition, the IRB office may stamp its approval on the consent document(s) you submit and return the stamped version to you for use in consenting subjects; therefore, ensure each consent document you submit is ready to be read and signed by subjects.)

Appendix H

Email to Survey Participants

Dear Administrators,

Please forward this to your faculty:

I am writing this email as a doctoral student at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University to request your participation in my dissertation research. My dissertation focuses on teacher and administrator perceptions of your school district's strategic compensation plan as it pertains to teacher motivation, teacher recruitment and teacher retention. In addition, my dissertation requests participant suggestions for improvements to the current structure of the strategic compensation plan. As an educator, I certainly understand the demands placed on you and the value of time lost. As a result, I appreciate your assistance in advance.

The Strategic Compensation Faculty Survey ([hyperlink](#)) is available through Qualtrics. Please click on the [hyperlink](#) to participate. Upon opening the survey, you may review the implied consent phrase prior to participation. The survey is composed of 28 questions: 8 demographic identifiers, 17 Likert Scale-type questions, 1 short answer question, and 2 open ended questions. It will require approximately 20 minutes of your time to complete. In addition, I plan to work with your principal to visit each of your schools in March during a faculty meeting to answer any questions you may have about the process and assist you with completion of the survey.

Your participation in this research is voluntary, so you may withdraw at any time. Rest assured that your confidentiality is my top priority; so personal identifiers will be removed from any documentation to preserve anonymity. Should you have any questions or concerns about the study's conduct or your rights as a research subject, or need to report a research-related injury or event, you may contact the Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board at irb@vt.edu or (540) 231-3732. If you have any questions, please call me on my personal cell (XXX-XXX-XXXX) or email me (cwc60@vt.edu).

Sincerely,

Christopher W. Collier
Doctoral Candidate
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University