

VOICES OF EXPERIENCE: WHY DO SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS  
CHOOSE TO REMAIN IN A MID-ATLANTIC EXURBAN SCHOOL DISTRICT

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## Abstract

The inability of school leaders to staff the classrooms with qualified teachers and to retain them in the classrooms is a major educational concern. The failure to retain teachers hinders learning, disrupts program continuity, and affects of expenditures for recruiting and hiring (Shen, 1997). Few research studies investigate why new teachers decide to remain in the teaching profession and fewer studies examine why experienced teachers have continued in the field. Little is known about what experienced teachers think about their profession and what internal or external factors persuaded them to remain in teaching. Insight gained can provide better understanding of what motivates them to stay, and it may prove effective in guiding policies for retention. Grounded theoretical investigation, examined why experienced teachers choose to remain in an exurban school district. Interview data were collected from 25 experienced teachers with 10 years of teaching experience in the school district. The results of the study revealed that experienced teachers are motivated primarily internally but need external approval; they perceive their self-image as a teacher from the success of their students, the collegiality of fellow teachers, and from the pride of their families; they believe that school leadership can positively affect teacher retention; they believe that in the school atmosphere, interactions with students and colleagues positively affect teacher retention; and they believe that professional staff development has a positive and negative effect on teacher retention. These findings lead to significant implications and recommendations

for schools and school districts. At the school level, school leadership plays a major role in teacher retention. Teachers appreciate administrators who provide them with opportunities for self-fulfillment, growth, and development; time for teacher-student interactions; and collaboration with their colleagues. It is imperative that school districts provide teachers with continuous staff development, competitive salaries, and salary increases to meet the demands of the economy. It is also vital for schools and school districts to value the voices of experienced teachers as an avenue to recruitment and retention. The information gathered from this research may be instrumental in improving working conditions that may encourage teacher retention.

## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to Grandmother Ophelia, who instilled the importance of family, support and education. Her sense of pride, endurance, focus, and patience, are qualities she displayed all her life. These qualities were instrumental in inspiring me to follow through on this incredible experience.

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Encouragement can be defined as “to fill with courage or strength of purpose, especially in preparation for a hard task” and support can be defined as “an act or instance of giving what will benefit or assist” (Webster’s School Thesaurus, 1978). These two words can be used to describe the contributions of the numerous people who shared in my doctoral experience.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Recruitment and retention of public school teachers has long been a concern for the American public's educational community of policymakers, school officials, and parents. Challenging curricula, high-technology facilities, and state-of-the-art equipment mean little without teachers, who are the foundation of the education process. Increased staff development with accompanying quantitative and qualitative research attention has been given to supporting new teachers during their first years of teaching. However, very little information has been gathered regarding the needs and expertise of experienced teachers and ways to retain them in the teaching profession.

In the next decade, the demand for teachers will increase. Present research reflects the need for 2.4 million new teachers by the year 2012 as compared to the present teaching force of 2.8 million (Cromwell, 2002). Additionally, research indicates that approximately 200,000 new teachers will be hired annually (American Federation of Teachers [AFT], 2001; Darling-Hammond, 1999). Based on the 1999-2000 National Center for Educational Statistics analysis, Ingersoll (2002) developed a rough estimate indicating that 29% of beginning teachers leave the profession sometimes during their first three years and as many as 40-50% leave after five years (Ingersoll, 2002; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). This was based on four years of collected data from the School and Staffing Survey (SASS) and the Teacher Follow-up Survey (TFS). Ingersoll (2004) added that recruiting more teachers would not solve the teacher retention crisis if large numbers of the newly hired teachers leave the profession. Through his research, he found that over 90% of the new teachers hired were replacements for recent departures (Ingersoll, 2002).

There are several factors that contribute to this dilemma. As teachers gain experience, continued support is an important factor that must be emphasized as school districts search for new recruits. The emphasis on accountability and quality in education is another important factor in retaining experienced teachers. The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (2002) stated that "Our inability to support high quality teaching in many of our schools is driven not by too few teachers coming in, but by too many going out" (p. 3). Hoernemann and Hirth (2004) stated that many educators in charge of hiring and retaining highly qualified teachers are complying with the NCLB Act "by doing what they have always done: attending job fairs, reviewing resumes, promoting their schools via the Internet, supporting cadet teaching programs, developing mentoring and induction programs for new teachers and promoting the profession in general". (p.18). They further state that the recruitment of teachers has changed only in that it has become more sophisticated, Web-based, and more competitive. However, the focus may be detracting from the critically important need to retain teachers who have already been tested by experience.

Recruiting and retaining an adequate number of teachers does not ensure that the quality will remain high. The national and district focus of our schools is to hold onto the quality teachers already employed. This group includes new teachers and experienced/veteran/seasoned teachers. Shen (1997) stated that in addition to the quality issue, the failure to retain public school teachers hinders student learning, disrupts program continuity and planning, and directly affects the amount of expenditures on recruiting and hiring.

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) (U. S. Department of Education, 2004) that requires schools to ensure all core-subject teachers are highly qualified by the end of the 2005-2006 school year combined with the pressure to improve student achievement may affect present recruitment solutions and retention. The federal government has mandated states and local school districts to develop accountability systems, to ensure 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students can read, to test public school students annually in reading and mathematics, and to receive an annual school performance report card. Schools that do not meet the NCLB targets will not be accredited by the state and will be labeled by the press as failing schools. Parents will then have the option of transferring their children to a better performing public school.

District level recruiters and administrators generally assume that the teachers they hire will remain in the profession. This long-term commitment to teaching has been reflected in the large number of “baby boomer” teachers who have remained in teaching until they reached the age of retirement (Lucksinger, 2002). With retirement being an obvious reason for teacher turnover, the question remains as to why 40-50% of the new teachers leave the profession by the end of their fifth year.

Researchers tend to emphasize their findings on teacher turnover as results of teacher attrition and teachers leaving the profession altogether, as opposed to migration - moving to a different teaching job in another school. Some teachers will move to another district in the state in which they were hired or to another state and continue to become a career professional teacher (Guarino, Santibanez, & Daley, 2006; Ingersoll, 2002). At the local building level, teacher migration and attrition have the same effects - the loss of a teacher who must be replaced. Cross-school migration results in about half of the



turnover (Ingersoll, 2002). This migration does not decrease the overall supply of teachers, unless the outflow is greater than the inflow for certain schools/districts.

Data collected by researchers on the specific reasons as to why teachers leave the teaching profession have been compiled in accordance with the aim of the research survey. The ranking varies from study to study, but commonalities are evident. Better salaries and greater opportunities in other careers or fields are ranked highly. Certain characteristics of district/school/professional environment have been suggested as major reasons teachers leave the profession are: salaries, working conditions, preparation, and mentoring (Darling-Hammond, 2003). Inman and Marlow (2004) reported that without communities becoming more supportive of teachers and improving the conditions under which many of them teach, teachers will continue to leave the profession.

From a review of recent empirical literature on teacher recruitment and retention, Guarino, Santibanez, and Daley (2006) cited that the external school or district characteristics that affected recruitment and retention were based on the demographics in which they serve (size, location, wealth, student composition, school grade level, and school type). They further stated the schools with higher proportions of minority, low-income, low performing students, and urban schools tended to have higher attrition rates.

Most researchers have examined reasons why new or novice teachers leave the profession, but Tye and O'Brien (2002) gained insight into why experienced teachers (six to ten years teaching experience) left the profession. In their study of California's Chapman University education graduates, they found the work environment as a concern. The 114 respondents who had already left teaching ranked accountability, increased paperwork, changing student characteristics, negative or no parent support, and

unresponsive administration as reasons for leaving. Salary was ranked last. Those who were still teaching or would consider leaving the profession ranked paperwork, accountability and salary as high pressures. Steffy, Wolfe, Pasch & Enz (2000) surveyed 26 National State Teachers of the Year (NSTOY), who cited personal crisis, professional image and unresponsive administration as reasons for withdrawal from the profession.

Students should have access to competent, motivated, and qualified teachers. These teachers may be new, mid-career, or approaching retirement. Even so, experienced teachers have shown that they want to remain as contributors to the educational community and to society. Supporting their needs and valuing their expertise may be a means to retain them.

### History of the Problem

The concern about the supply, qualification, and retention of teachers is one of the top challenges educators face yearly. As staffing needs are evaluated, the pressure to fill the classrooms with competent teachers is felt nationwide. The impact of this challenge depends on geographic location, student demographics, and subject areas. School districts most often affected by this shortage of teachers are schools that serve students with the most needs (Murphy & DeArmond, 2003).

The problem of teacher supply and demand is not a new phenomenon. Research has shown that the shortage of teachers and oversupply in certain teaching areas has come and gone over the years. There is evidence dating back to the 1940's documenting the concern (Maul, 1950). Maul summarized the findings from the 1950 National Study of Teacher Supply and Demand and noted there was a critical shortage of well-prepared

elementary teachers whereas high school teachers exceeded the demand. He further demonstrated the demand for elementary teachers exceeded the supply even before 1941.

In 1950 the demands for elementary teachers were created by the need to replace retirees; to accommodate the increase in student enrollment; to relieve overcrowding; and to replace inadequately prepared teachers. Of the 20,744 new teachers hired in September 1949, approximately two-thirds replaced retiring teachers, leaving about one-third to meet the other needed replacement areas. However, only two-thirds of the 1949 high school teacher graduates had opportunities to enter the teaching profession. This was due to the oversupply in some teaching areas (Maul, 1950).

Maul (1950) concluded that state certification officers, colleges and universities, and all members of the teaching profession establish and maintain a close balance between supply and demand. He further stated, “the careful selection and encouragement of candidates of superior promise go hand-in-hand with the discouragement of those who manifestly are ill fitted for the social task of teaching” (p. 102).

Forty years later Klausmeier (1987) reported that after fifteen years of teacher oversupply, shortages in secondary mathematics, science, computers, bilingual education, special education, and English were apparent in 1985. Additionally, he stated that this shortage would negatively affect the educational quality of schools and that unqualified teachers would staff schools. The factors that contributed to the teacher shortage in the mid 1980’s were due to a rise in the school age population; the teacher surplus in the 1970’s which caused both new and experienced teachers to follow other career paths; women sought employment opportunities in fields outside education; and the 1980’s

requirement of teachers' increased knowledge of new technologies and bilingual education.

Through his 1950's investigation on the impact of the teacher shortage, Klausmeier (1987) identified six solutions as lessons learned from the past. The strategies were as follows:

1. Make the teaching profession more competitive and salaries sufficient to attract and retain quality professionals.
2. Identify and encourage capable youths to enter the teaching profession.
3. Strengthen and improve teacher preparation programs and certification standards.
4. Encourage liberal arts and other college graduates to enter the teaching profession.
5. Find ways to keep those who are already teaching to remain in the profession.
6. Colleges and universities, school districts, school boards, and communities should design programs to attract more students into the teaching profession (p 19).

### State Supply and Demand

Nationally and in the state of Virginia, the demand for teachers continues to rise. Since the 1999 early retirement legislation, the percentage of teachers leaving due to retirement has increased and this trend is expected to continue, as 15% of teachers have 25 to 30 years of teaching experience in Virginia as reported in the 2000 data (Virginia Department of Education, 2000).

The Virginia Department of Education's *Report on Supply and Demands of Instructional Personnel in Virginia* (VDOE) (2000, 2002) contained statistics for

superintendents and personnel administrators in Virginia public schools that identify critical shortages of teachers and administrators by subject area, geographic region, or school division, as well as hiring trends and practices. For the 2000-2001 school year, the projected number of new teachers needed annually was about 7,600. Of the 37 Virginia colleges and universities, fewer than 4,000 teachers were projected to graduate from teacher preparation programs. However, the number graduating from these programs does not guarantee that the graduates will enter teaching. The total number of full-time teachers this school year was 88,609. Unendorsed and unfilled teaching positions totaled 4.4% in 2002. Special education, mathematics, and science continue to be the most consistent teaching shortage areas (VDOE, 2002).

### County Supply and Demand

\*Comstock County (pseudo name) is facing the same retention problems as other school divisions and is a typical school system representative of many school systems.

\*Comstock County Public Schools (CCPS), an exurban school district in northern Virginia, educates over 66,000 students. Exurban is defined as the “outer ring” of a Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) that maintains rural characteristics, suburban qualities, population growth, and increased school and church construction

\* Note. Proper documentation of the county and the school district’s identity is not divulged. Pseudo names are used. Individuals seeking information about this school district should contact the author.

(P. Manning & B. Fraher, personal communication, March 22, 2006). During the 2005-2006 school year, the school district employed 9,050 individuals to include 4,754 teachers, and 207 school administrators. The student membership was comprised of 44.6% non-minority and 55.4% minority (22.2% African American; 22.4% Hispanic; 6.7% Asian; 4.1% other) students. Special Education students represented 12.1%, and English Language Learners (ELL) represented 12.7% of the student population. There are 51 elementary schools, 13 middle schools, 10 high schools, 4 special education schools, 2 specialty schools, and 2 alternative schools. The average class sizes were: 17.2, elementary level; 21.4, middle level; 21.1 high school level; and the teacher-student ratio was 15:1 (Comstock County, 2006).

Comstock County Public Schools is a leader in site-based management of schools, which places decision-making and accountability at the local school level. Recent innovations in education have not been satisfactorily researched in terms of their effect on teacher retention. The county is, however, in the vanguard of these new directions and it may affect how teachers feel about teaching.

In order to continue to provide optimum educational opportunities to its students, CCPS's recruiting goals for 2003 and 2004 were to increase the quantity and quality of teachers in critical subject areas; to increase the percentage of minority teachers; and to induct and retain new teachers (Comstock County, 2005). CCPS is like other school districts confronted with recruiting and retaining teachers. With the challenging and competitive labor market, the county has shortened the hiring process by utilizing the Gallup Teacher Insight online application and interview method. The Internet has been

the best referral source of teacher applicants, followed by referrals from Comstock County employees.

This challenge is further complicated by the increase in student population and the number of full-time teachers eligible for retirement. The county's retirement projection for June 2007 indicated that 264 teachers would be at least 50 years old or have at least 30 years of CCPS service by December 2008 (Comstock County, 2004).

New teacher hiring has increased over the last three years. For school year 2002-2003, 663 new teachers were hired; 702 for 2003-2004; and 951 for 2004-2005 (Comstock County, 2004). Included in the 2004-2005 new teacher recruitment, 18 teachers were hired through the Visiting International Faculty (VIF) program (Comstock County, 2004). Three critical teaching areas most difficult to fill in Comstock County were Mathematics, Special Education, Speech-language Pathology, and English as a Second Language (Comstock County, 2004). These areas were also identified, as four of ten critical need areas by the Virginia Department of Education (2002).

To assist the school district in identifying problems and areas for improvement, exit interviews were conducted for the teachers who leave the district. This voluntary process yielded 294 returned interview forms with 69% of the 2003-2004 respondents indicating that they had less than 5 years of teaching experience. The majority, 65%, indicated relocation, retirement, and personal reasons for leaving the district. The respondents also ranked professional recognition, opportunity for advancement, and quality of professional staff development as "average" or "below average" (Comstock County, 2004).

## Statement of the Problem

Teachers are the most important assets in a school. Darling-Hammond (2003) stated, “Effective teachers constitute a valuable human resource for schools – one that needs to be treasured and supported” (p. 9). Approximately 39% of new teachers leave the profession after five years (Ingersoll, 2002). The problem is less one of recruiting educators than keeping them in the teaching profession.

One of the top agenda items for schools and school districts is to keep good teachers. Research has not adequately examined why some people stay in the teaching field and others do not. The experienced teachers, those with 10 or more years of teaching experience, are continuing to educate the students. They are among the present teachers who have decided to remain in the profession. Knowledge can be gained from these experienced teachers to increase the holding power of teaching and to create a stable and consistent teaching profession (Darling-Hammond, 2003). A better understanding of what motivates teachers to stay may prove more effective in guiding policy than trying to avoid what causes teachers to leave.

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore and describe the reasons experienced secondary school teachers have for remaining in a school or school district. A grounded theory will emerge from the data by examining the experience itself and the perceptions of teacher commitment, school leadership (administrative support), professional atmosphere (school culture or climate), and professional staff development’s impact on teachers remaining in the teaching profession and in the school or school district.



## Research Questions

The central research question for this study is: Why do teachers remain in a school or school district? The subordinate questions are: (1) What reasons do experienced secondary school teachers give for remaining in a school or school district? (2) How does teacher commitment to the profession relate to teacher retention? (3) What effect does school leadership (administrative support) have on teacher retention? (4) How does the professional school atmosphere (culture or climate) affect teacher retention? (5) How do professional staff development activities influence teacher retention?

## Limitations

This study is limited to Comstock County Public Schools, a large school division in northern Virginia serving over 66,000 students in 82 schools. The population to be surveyed will be secondary school teachers with a minimum of 10 years of teaching experience in the county. The findings will be applicable to counties with similar characteristics, however, because of the universality of teacher qualifications and motivations, the insight derived from these teachers may prove useful in other settings where retention is a problem. An additional limitation may be the study self-reporting nature of the study, whereas the teachers may not be totally straight forth about their feelings. The grounded theory that will be developed in this study will emerge from the data gathered from interviews of the secondary school teachers and is only applicable to those participants. The study will not extend beyond public school teachers. Private and charter schools will not be included in this study.

## Theoretical Framework

This study will follow the theoretical framework of Bronfenbrenner's (1976) Ecological Model for conducting research in educational environments. The model proposes four sub-systems of environment: a microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and a macrosystem. Each system represents a social relationship that involves an integration of ideas taken from reality. For this study, the experienced teacher will represent the microsystem (internal), the school will represent the mesosystem (external), the school district will represent the exosystem (external), and the community will represent the macrosystem (external) (see Figure 1).

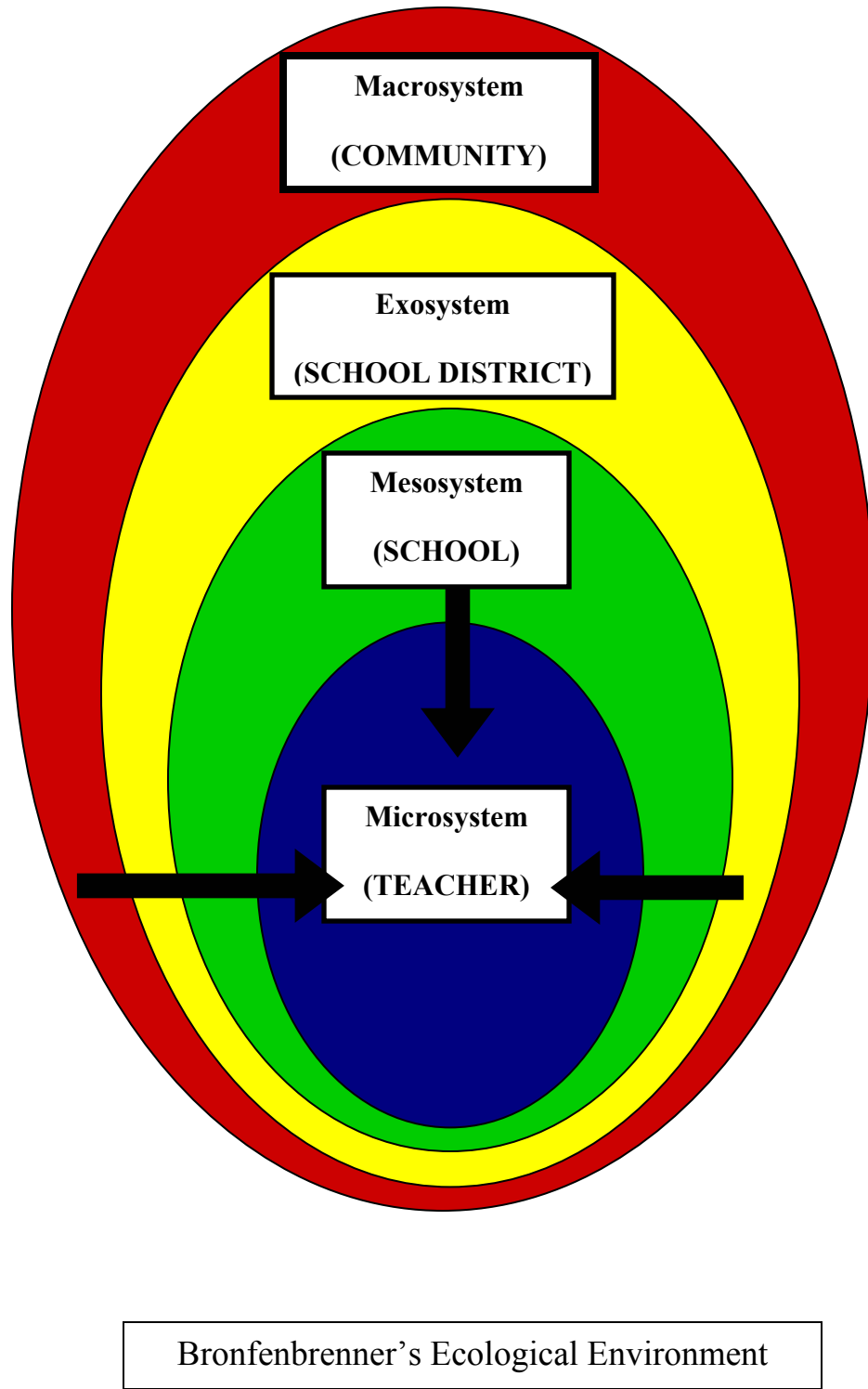
Through a grounded theory approach, I will explore the influences of the external factors of administrative support, school climate and/or culture, and professional staff development. In addition, I will investigate the internal factor of commitment to the profession as a reason why experienced secondary teachers remain in a school or school district. An analysis of the reasons/comments is expected to produce insight for retaining teachers.

## Methodology

This qualitative study will incorporate Strauss and Corbin's (1998) grounded theory methodology. Data will be collected from in-depth interviews with 25 secondary school teachers to ascertain their reasons for remaining in the school district and in the teaching profession. Verification of the relationships between concepts will involve a constant comparative method of continuous interactions between data collection and analysis. This approach increases the potential for significant findings by the interplay between researchers and the data as part of the analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Data

Figure 1:

Theoretical Framework – Influences from the Environment



will be systematically gathered and analyzed, consequently developing theory for possible explanations, which will emerge from the data.

### Significance of the Study

A national and district focus of our schools is to retain the quality teachers already employed. This group includes new teachers and experienced teachers. Shen (1997) states that the failure to retain public school teachers hinders student learning, disrupts program continuity and planning, and directly affects the amount of expenditures on recruiting and hiring. The public may view teacher turnover as a loss of continuity that may affect student performance.

The NCLB (U. S. Department of Education, 2004) Act's requirement of staffing all classrooms with highly qualified teachers is one of the major challenges faced by school districts. According to Darling-Hammond (2003), "...we produce more qualified teachers than we hire. The hard part is keeping the teachers we prepare" (p. 7).

Professionals who have accumulated years of wisdom and experience can provide unique and valuable contributions to their workplace and for the educational community. There is some research on why teachers leave schools, but little on why they stay. This kind of insight can prove to be more useful to school districts as they seek to enhance school characteristics that help teachers find the motivations to remain. This study addresses that special population and by discovering why teachers who have remained in the schools for 10 years or more may give schools and school districts some insight for retaining all teachers.

Table 1

Definition of Terms

Term	Definition
Experienced Teacher	As used in this study, a teacher who has taught in the studies public school division for at least 10 years
Exurban	the <i>outer ring</i> of a Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) that maintains rural characteristics, suburban qualities, population growth, and increased school/church construction  (P. Manning & B. Fraher, personal communication, March 22, 2006).
Commitment	Emotional or intellectual allegiance to teaching, to a school, or to a school district
Teacher Shortage	The lack of trained or licensed teachers
Teacher Attrition	Teachers leaving the profession altogether (Ingersoll, 2001)
Teacher Migration	Moving to a different teaching job in another school  (Ingersoll, 2001)
Administrative Support	Support provided by the Principal, Assistant Principal, and Teacher on Administrative Assignment
Culture	A school's shared beliefs, rituals, and ceremonies, and patterns of communications (Deal & Peterson, 1999)
Professional Development	Any learning opportunity for the staff associated with teachers' educational careers, which occurs in formal or informal settings on or off campus

The primary goal of the educational community is to provide a solid foundation for all students. Our teachers drive this foundation and require a nation to invest in all teachers.

#### Overview of the Dissertation

This dissertation will be organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 contains the problem – context of the study, background of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, conceptual or theoretical framework, limitations/assumptions, definitions, and significance of the study. Chapter 2 is a review of related literature and research studies. Chapter 3 contains the methodology used to collect and analyze the data. Chapter 4 contains the findings of the study, and Chapter 5 concludes the dissertation with a summary of findings, conclusion, implications, and recommendations for future study.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter examines the literature related to teachers remaining in the teaching profession and staying in a school or school district. Databases found to be the most productive in this research were ETD, Wilson Web, EBSCO, and Infotract. The most beneficial keywords used in the searches included teacher retention, teacher shortage, teachers leaving the profession, teachers remaining in teaching, and teacher supply and demand. The research selected for the review is related to the research questions. By using the grounded theory methodology, it is not possible to know the full extent of what problems or issues will arise or what theory may develop until the study is completed (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). When appropriate, the concepts from the literature review can provide comparisons to those derived from this study. The search provided educational journals, commentary articles on the general topic of teacher retention and recruitment and the ETD search provided four related dissertations on why teachers remain in teaching. A summary of major related studies is displayed in Appendix A.

This literature review is organized into the following sections: (a) Why teachers leave the teaching profession, (b) Why teachers remain in the teaching profession – internal influence- commitment, and (c) Why teachers remain in the teaching profession – external influences- leadership (administrative support); atmosphere (culture/climate), and professional staff development.

## Why Teachers Leave the Teaching Profession

This section presents an overview of the reasons why teachers leave the teaching profession. The review of the literature revealed that the obvious reason for the exodus from teaching is retirement. Attrition due to relocation, or to family and personal issues are other reasons why teachers leave the profession. Others cite job dissatisfaction, including working environment, administrative support, teacher influence on decisions, and salary. While retirement and attrition due to personal priorities are inevitable reasons or explanations for why teachers leave the profession, the latter reason, job dissatisfaction, is one that can be and is being addressed by many districts concerned that a drastic teacher shortage is imminent. This section of the literature review is organized into the following sections: (a) Attrition and Migration, (b) Stayers, Movers, and Leavers, (c) Job Satisfaction, (d) Workforce Shortage, and (e) Possible Solutions.

Research has shown that ease or difficulty of recruitment and retention can vary substantially from school to school or district to district. The demographics of the population and the characteristics of the schools and districts are associated with this concern (Guarino, Santibanez, & Daley, 2006). District level recruiters and administrators generally assume that the teachers they hire will remain in the profession. Some teachers will move to another district in the state in which they were hired or to another state and continue to become a career professional teacher. This long-term commitment to teaching has been reflected in the large number of “baby boomer” teachers leaving the profession, having reached the age of retirement (Luksinger, 2000). With retirement being an obvious reason for teacher turnover, the question remains as to why over one-third of the new teachers leave the profession. The National Commission



on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF) (2002) and Darling-Hammond (2003) stated that the high teacher turnover diminishes teaching quality and student achievement. To address the problem, the causes need to be understood. Salaries, working conditions, teacher preparation, and mentoring are four major influences on whether a teacher leaves a specific school or the teaching profession (Allen, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2003, 2006; Guarino, Santibanez, & Daley, 2006; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Stotko, Ingram, & Beaty-O'Ferrall, 2007).

Data collected by researchers on the specific reasons as to why teachers leave the teaching profession have been compiled in accordance with the purpose of the research survey. The ranking varies from study to study, but commonalities were evident. In some studies, better salaries and greater opportunities in other careers or fields were ranked high, while other studies included working conditions. Steffy, Wolfe, Pasch and Enz (2000) surveyed 26 National State Teachers of the Year (NSTOY), who cited personal crisis, professional image and unresponsive administration as reasons for withdrawal from the profession. Other researchers have found similar results: Inman and Marlow (2004) reported that without communities becoming more supportive of teachers and the conditions under which many of them teach, teachers will continue to leave the profession. Research based on the findings of the Education Commission of the States (ECS), Allen (2005) reported that teacher attrition is more severe among new teachers but declines significantly after four or five years in the classroom. The attrition increases once again for experienced teachers after 25-30 years in the teaching profession. Through a critical review of 48 scholarly and empirical studies on teacher recruitment and

retention, Guarino, Santibanez, & Daley (2006) also found this U-shaped pattern of attrition for experienced teachers.

### *Stayers, Movers, and Leavers*

Researchers tend to focus their findings on teacher turnover due to teacher attrition, teachers leaving the profession altogether, as opposed to migration - moving to a different teaching job in another school (Ingersoll, 2001, 2002; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). At the local building level, teacher migration and attrition have the same effects - the loss of a teacher who must be replaced. Cross-school migration results in about half of the turnover (Ingersoll, 2002; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). This migration does not decrease the overall supply of teachers; however, it does contribute to the problem of school staffing.

Shen (1997) analyzed data from the 1990-1991 School and Staffing Survey (SASS) and the 1991-1992 Teacher Follow-up Survey (TFS) to determine whether there were differences between those who stayed (stayers), those who moved (movers), and those who left altogether (leavers) by using discriminant function analysis of personal characteristics, school characteristics, and teacher perceptions. One significant school characteristic was that those who remained taught longer and had higher salaries than movers. Another significant school characteristic was that movers and leavers were frequently employed in a school with teachers that had less than three years of teaching experience and a higher percentage of minority and economically disadvantaged students.

The NCES Teacher Attrition and Mobility report (Luekens, Lyter, & Fox, 2004) based on the 2000-2001 Teacher Follow-up Survey (TFS), 8400 teachers who were originally selected from the 1999-2000 SASS completed questionnaires to gather information about mobility and attrition. Data were derived from 2,800 *leavers*, teachers

who leave the profession between one year and the next; 3,300 *stayers*, teachers who remain at the same school; and 2,200 *movers*, teachers that move from one school to another school. The responses to a variety of questions were used to compare attrition and mobility across public and private schools. Teachers classified as *movers* reported the reasons for leaving were as follows: desired a better teaching assignment (40%), dissatisfied with administrative support (38%), and dissatisfied with workplace conditions (32%). Twenty-nine percent of the *leavers* reported leaving due to retirement and were eligible to receive full pension benefits; 20% left to pursue another career and obtain a better salary or benefit.

Ingersoll's (2001) data from three cycles of SASS/TSF (1987-1988, 1990-1991, 1993-1994) showed that the demand for new teachers was due to pre retirement. In the 1990-1991 school year, about 190,000 new teachers were hired and in the next year, about 180,000 teachers (91%) of the new hires left teaching. Data from 1994 to 1995 showed that about 3 million teachers were hired and about 418,00 teachers left their teaching jobs. This included 50,000 retirees which represented 12% of the total turnover. Ingersoll stated that this image represents a "revolving door" (p. 514) of teaching as the effort to get teachers in the door are only as good as efforts to keep them. It operates at an accelerated rate especially in hard-to-staff schools.

Findings from this report indicated the following: personal reasons resulted in 33% migration; 45% attrition; and job satisfaction and pursuit of a career outside education accounted for 42%. Teachers under 30 years old and teachers over 50 years old are more likely to leave teaching, as well as teachers who work in high poverty schools, special education teachers, males, minorities and private school teachers. Ingersoll (2001)

cited reasons for leaving the profession as low salaries, lack of administrative support, discipline concerns, student motivation, and lack of decision-making. Recommendations for improvements in organizational or work conditions that could increase retention were as follows: increase administrative support, reduce student discipline problems, increase teacher involvement, and increase salaries. Clearly, teachers felt as though more support in their efforts in the classroom, more inclusion in day-to-day school decisions, as well as a greater monetary recognition of their efforts were significant, yet not recognized.

A recent SASS study conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (2005) using the 1999-2000 results and the 2000-2001 Teacher Follow-up Survey (TFS), showed that 16% of the teachers left the profession which was an increase over the results from 1987-1988, 1990-1991, and 1993-1994. On average, those who transferred had worked in their last school for five years, and those who left the teaching profession had worked in their last school for nine years. Those who taught the following year, 83% of all teachers continued to teach in the same school as the previous year. New hires (transfers, returning teachers, delayed entrants, and recent graduates) made up the remaining 17%, including 4% who were brand new teachers. This was a larger percentage of replacement teachers as compared to the same identified years as stated in the NCES 2005 study. Experienced teachers, transfers, and returning teachers, represented 73% of all new hires. About half of teacher turnover was the result of transfers between schools.

Billingsley (2004) conducted a critical analysis of the research literature on special education retention and attrition. Like most research, a wide range of factors affects teacher attrition including personal reasons and priorities. Earlier, Billingsley

(1993) stated that life-cycle changes were retention variables that are difficult to influence. Her 2004 review revealed that most of the research had been on the effects of the work environment. She concluded that work environment factors could lead to negative affective reactions such as higher stress levels, job dissatisfaction, and less commitment. Further findings included the following teacher characteristics and qualifications: younger special education teachers are likely to leave the profession; uncertified special education teachers are more likely to leave; and those teachers with personal higher academic standardized test scores are more likely to leave the profession (Billingsley, 2004). As special education becomes more litigious in nature, and more federal mandates are imposed upon Special Education teachers, it is likely that more teachers who are certified in special education will either enter general education, or leave the teaching profession altogether.

Olsen and Anderson's (2007) qualitative study of 15 urban elementary teachers examined UCLA's Center X urban teacher preparation master's program on the teacher retention rate and career path. Three categories were used: *stayers* (6) planned to continue in teaching but may change in the future; *uncertains* (6) - of their future plans; and *leavers, (shifters)* (3) - veteran teachers with four to six years of teaching experience in an urban setting who decided to shift to different educational roles. Overall, three of the 15 teachers plan to stay in teaching. The Center X experience was valued by all the teachers but in advertently groomed short-term career teachers and long-term educational professionals other than classroom teachers.

### *Job Satisfaction*

Retirement accounts for 25% of attrition and 12% of total teacher turnover (Ingersoll, 2002), and is a relatively minor factor when compared with job satisfaction. Schools that are organized to support teachers' efforts to be successful with students contribute to teacher satisfaction (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Olsen & Anderson, 2007). Shann (1998) maintains that job satisfaction is "a predictor of teacher retention, a determinant of teacher commitment, and in turn, a contributor of school effectiveness" (p.67). Her study of 92 urban middle school teachers revealed wide-range differences in what contributes to job satisfaction. Commonly cited reasons for dissatisfaction were lack of administrative, colleague, and parent support, lack of involvement in decision-making, and lack of authority in developing the curriculum.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics' *Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2006-2007* (2006), many beginning teachers in poor, urban schools leave teaching after a year or two. In the New York City school system, 18 % of the teachers leave after the first year of teaching as compared to the national rate of 10% (New York Council Investigation Division (CID), (2004). The CID investigators surveyed 2,781 teachers to find out how many were planning to leave the New York City School System and why they were leaving. For the best results, the teachers were categorized into three groups: new teachers (1-5 years of experience), mid-career (6-24 years of experience), and eligible retirees (25 or more years). Within the next two years following the study, 70% of the eligible retirees were likely to retire and within the next three years, over 26% of the mid-career teachers and approximately 30% of the new teachers were likely to leave the school system. Salary and benefits, school safety, and discipline were identified as the

areas of crucial dissatisfaction for all three groups. Stoko, Ingram, & Beaty-O’Ferrall, (2007) found that in many urban schools new teachers are assigned to the most challenged schools, which require high levels of skills, and as the teachers gain experience, they transfer to less challenging and demanding schools.

Job dissatisfaction leads to stress and burnout. Stress is caused by the individual’s perception of the workplace demands and the individual’s personal abilities to achieve the goals set by the workplace (Hancock, 1999). He further stated that if the balance of perceived capabilities and demands are not met, teachers would flee the environment causing them stress. Teachers struggle to balance family responsibilities, preparation of lesson plans, evaluation of student work, provision of one-on-one instruction, discipline, and numerous other daily activities. The result of this balancing act leads to academic and personal burnout and thus, early departure from the teaching profession. Johnson and Birkeland (2003) found that teachers who left the profession within the three years expressed a feeling of frustration or a sense of failure.

Johnson (2007) noted that teachers need reasonable and appropriate teaching assignments and class sizes. If not, the teachers may experience stress and dissatisfaction and are more likely to leave. Large class, heavy workloads, and out-dated facilities may also cause stress (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2006). Additionally, a study conducted by Barmby (2006) in England and Wales, ranked workload and stress as two of the top four reasons listed by teachers for leaving the teaching profession. Abel and Sewell (1999) reported that stress management programs should be developed to meet specific needs of the school system or district. Their research indicated that stress was from poor working conditions and staff relations.

Most researchers have examined reasons why new or novice teachers leave the profession, but Tye and O'Brien (2002) gained insight on why experienced teachers left the profession. Those who had left or would consider leaving the profession considered the work environment as an important factor. The authors suggested that job satisfaction was systemic rather than personal. Teachers need to know their roles in the culture of the school. Tye and O'Brien provided reasons why 114 California experienced teachers with 6 to 10 years teaching experience left teaching or would consider leaving the profession. The respondents who had already left teaching ranked "accountability, increased paperwork, student attitudes, no parent support, unresponsive administration, low status of the profession, and salary considerations" (p. 26) as reasons for leaving. Those who were still teaching or would consider leaving the profession ranked paperwork, accountability and salary as high pressures. In comparing the seven reasons given, both groups ranked increased paperwork the second highest and unresponsive administrators as the fifth reason they left teaching or would consider leaving teaching. Salary was ranked seventh by those who had already left teaching whereas those who would consider leaving ranked it number one (Tye & O'Brien, 2002). Certo and Fox (2003) found that experienced teachers listed insufficient salary, lack of administrative support, and lack of planning time were the top reasons why teachers left the profession.

### *Workforce Shortage*

An investigation of the career that is most similar to teaching and its causes of attrition might shed light on the causes of teacher attrition. According to the U.S. Bureau of Census (1998), teachers represented 4% of the civilian workforce, which is twice the size of registered nurses, and five times the number of lawyers. Although the teacher



representation was larger, teacher turnover was also higher. Employee shortage is also evident in the nursing profession. In her 2001 testimony before Committee of Governmental Affairs, Janet Heinrich, Health Care Director, (General Accounting Office [GAO], 2001) reported that there was an emerging shortage of nurses. An examination of the factors that contributed to this shortage included that of job dissatisfaction (e.g., staffing, lack of respect and recognition, salaries), aging workforce, and the shrinking pool of new workers to replace the nurses who retire or leave the profession. The physical demands of a nurse's aide work and the workplace environment were also identified concerns contributing to the retention problem.

A serious nurse shortage is expected in the future unless more young people choose to go into the nursing profession (GAO, 2001). Improvements in the workplace environment could reduce the number of nurses leaving or considering leaving and thereby increase the nursing pool. Various interventions have been used to increase the supply of nurses and nurse aides but limited research has been designed to determine which initiatives are most effective (GAO, 2001). Nursing, like teaching, is a predominantly female occupation that has experienced staffing problems (Ingersoll, 2001).

#### *Possible Teacher Shortage Solutions*

Each year, school districts must hire new teachers in order to replace those who have migrated to other schools within the district, to replace those who have left the school district or the teaching profession altogether, and to meet the needs created by increased student enrollment. Teachers, new and experienced, leaving the classrooms, contribute to the individual school, school district, state, and national teacher shortage.

Alvy (2005) and Indiana University (2006) reported that retention of new teachers is vital but we should not neglect the support and retention of veteran teachers. If educational leaders are serious about restructuring the schools to meet the professional needs of both new and veteran teachers, Alvy suggested seven strategies that school districts could use to keep effective experienced teachers, especially those who are ready to retire, in the classroom for a few more years.

1. Shape and support a school culture that honors experience and wisdom
2. Honor veterans through mentoring
3. Support for mentoring on the “other end” of one’s career
4. Promote creative job sharing
5. Restructure state retirement programs
6. Promote differentiated professional growth to meet the needs of veteran teachers
7. Use central office resources (Alvy, 2005, pp. 765-766, 771).

Once these suggestions are in place, veteran teachers could consider the alternatives to retirement. Alvy maintained that we all benefit from being around teachers who “provide balance, maturity, character, perspective, insight, understanding, experience, and wisdom” (p. 771). Moreover, Indiana University (2006) suggests the use of incentives for retired teachers to return to shortage area classrooms.

Shen’s (1997) analysis of the 1990-1991 SASS showed that teachers were more likely to stay if the school system had higher salaries for masters degrees and 20 years of teaching experience, as well as a mentoring program for new teachers. Stayers “perceived that teaching has more advantages than disadvantages” (p. 87). The stayers were involved

in the decision-making process, and their administrators supported them. Shen summarized that by incorporating a career ladder into teaching, empowering teachers, and providing incentives for teachers in schools with high minority and economically disadvantaged students are policy suggestions that may increase teacher retention and attrition.

To increase the supply of teachers in hard-to-staff rural localities, Garrison (2006) suggests “to train and hire” from within those areas. This recruitment effort focuses on a pool of people committed to living in the area. Stotko, Ingram, Beaty-O’Ferrall, (2007) propose, “attention must be directed at all stages of the process of urban teacher recruitment and teacher retention” (p. 47). Changes in the hiring timeline and providing incentives that are geared toward the reasons teachers are attracted to the urban setting (altruistic and self-actualizing reason) can increase the pool of teachers. Additionally, special attention should be focused on the following characteristics of urban teachers: “tenacity, flexibility, sense of efficacy and belief in students’ ability to achieve high levels of academic performance” (p. 48).

Many school districts have instituted pay incentives, advanced certification opportunities, and mentoring programs in an effort to retain effective teachers. To encourage career longevity among teachers, many states build in years of service into their pension policies, while other states have developed policies to keep retirement-eligible teachers in the classroom and to bring back retirees to the classroom. Due to the teacher shortage crisis, many states and school districts are continuing to develop incentives to prolong teacher’s careers (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). Additionally, Tye and O’Brien (2002) concluded that there is a need to create a work

environment that is less burdensome and where teachers feel valued and respected. By providing this environment, schools “will continue to draw the bright, committed new teachers we need-and keep them enthusiastic, energetic, and productive throughout their careers” (p. 31).

### Summary

In summary, teacher migration and attrition have the same effect – the loss of a teacher who must be replaced (Ingersoll, 2001). Although reasons for leaving the teaching profession represented internal and external influences and varied by individual teacher, commonalities include working conditions; lack of administrative support; decision-making opportunities; student motivation, attitudes, and discipline; and salary. Job satisfaction, another reason, directly affects teacher commitment, which affects teachers’ decisions to leave or remain in the school or school district. A summary of reasons why teachers leave the profession is displayed in Figure 2.

With retirement being the obvious reason why teachers leave the profession, and in an effort to combat the teacher shortage crisis, many states and districts have developed incentives to keep the experienced teachers and retirement-eligible teachers in the classroom. Building length of service into the state’s pension formulas and re-entrant of retirees are among several incentives to keep experienced teachers from leaving the profession.

## Why Teachers Remain in the Teaching Profession

This section details the data on internal and external influences on why teachers remain in the teaching profession. A review of the literature revealed limited research on why experienced teachers remain in the profession and more on why new teachers choose and remain in the profession. This review of literature on commitment includes a combination of research findings and strategies recommended in the literature for keeping teachers in the field. It is organized into the following sections: (a) Job satisfaction, (b) Self-satisfaction, (c) Motivation to teach, and (d) Organizational perspective.

### Internal Motivation

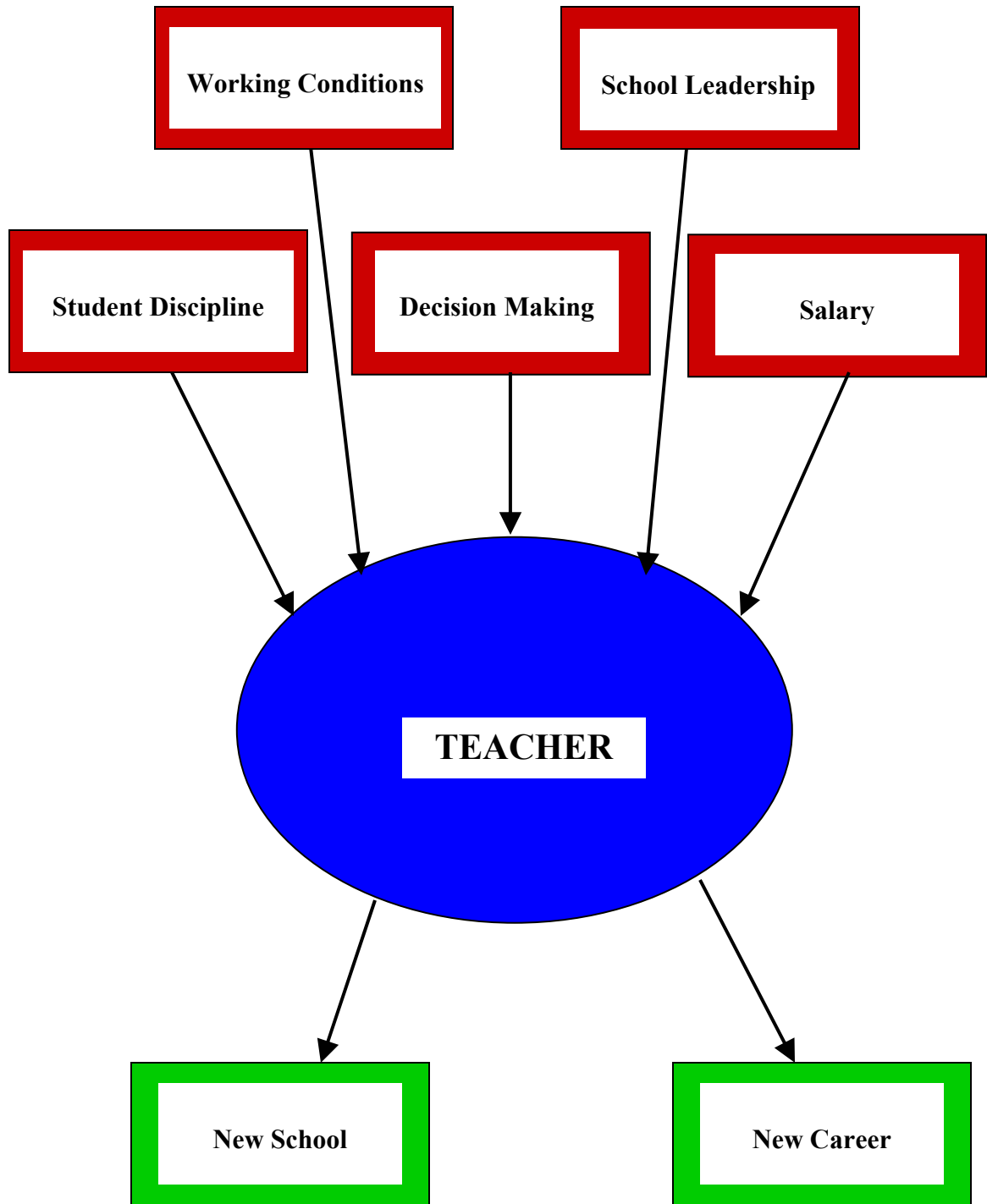
Most psychology research indicates that intrinsic motivation is derived from within a person or from an internal reward system. For some teachers, being a teacher was something they always wanted to do, it was satisfying to them, and it was a self-motivator. Motivation also came in a form of passion for teaching or for the subject matter. This intrinsic desire for teaching has motivated teachers to remain in the profession. For this study, Bronfenbrenner's microsystem (teacher) was the central system under examination.

### *Influence of Commitment*

Ayers (2001) reported that teachers are asked hundreds, maybe thousands of times why they choose teaching as a profession. He describes teaching as a "calling" for many people, "an intensely intimate encounter" ... "a complex journey, a journey of discovery and wonder, disappointment and fulfillment" (p. 7). People are called because they love

**Figure 2:**

**Summary of Reasons Why Teachers Leave the Profession**



children and love to see them grow. He further stated “people teach as an act of construction and reconstruction, and as a gift of oneself to others” (p. 7) and “the rewards of teaching are neither ostentations nor obvious - they are often internal, invisible, and for the moment” (p. 24). Moreover, in a Public Agenda opinion study, Farkas, Johnson, and Foleno (2000) reported that new teachers stated that teaching was something they loved to do, it allowed them time for family, and as teachers, they were contributing to society.

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (1997) defines commitment as the degree of positive, affective or emotional bond between the teacher and the school that involves internal motivation, enthusiasm, job satisfaction, and efficacy. Their research indicated that one of the most important aspects of teacher performance and quality is teacher commitment. They found that four teacher demographic characteristics- gender, race, education, and teaching experience- were associated with commitment. Male teachers were slightly less committed than female teachers; minority teachers were slightly less committed than White teachers; teachers with graduate degrees were less committed than those with bachelor’s degrees; and more experienced teachers were slightly less committed than those with less experience. Schools with a mentoring program were less important for teacher commitment than the quality of assistance for new teachers.

Research completed by Williams (2003) on why exemplary teachers stay in the teaching field offered insights on why some teachers endure, what their sources of inner strength were, and what workplace conditions contributed to their success in the classroom. She conducted interviews with 12 North Carolina teachers who had at least 15 years of experience and an average of more than 23 years of teaching experience.

Selected by their principals and central office administrators, these “beyond good-the best that exist” (p. 71) teachers represented all grades and subjects and both urban and rural communities.

The findings revealed that intellectual stimulation was a need of veteran teachers. These teachers readily accepted the challenges of meeting the needs of their students and they “describe teaching as a nonstop quest for novelty, variety and new approaches” (p. 72). These teachers discovered how to work with optimism and determination. They were also willing to take risks and welcomed change. The teachers described the rewards of teaching as consisting of opportunities to observe students grow, change and learn, while helping the students believe in themselves. These rewards were motivators for teachers to remain in the field. Furthermore, the teachers “believe they are doing what they are meant to do...some refer to it as a ‘sacred calling’” (p. 72).

Further findings by Williams (2003) indicated that flexibility was crucial for their longevity and at times the feeling of uncertainty whether their inner resources could sustain them in their career choice; resiliency helped the veteran teachers to regain their confidence. All 12 teachers had considered leaving the profession sometimes during their career; eight actually left the profession and returned. Both lengthy and short breaks provided opportunity for renewal and rejuvenation, summer vacation, weekend retreats and self-styled sabbaticals that included intense learning and reflection. These breaks were powerful in replenishing their personal resources (Williams, 2003). In summary, these 12 teachers have remained in the classroom because they have been able to fulfill their need for autonomy and creativity, gain rewards from meaningful relationships, and they believe they were making a difference in the lives of their students.



*Job satisfaction.* The MetLife Survey of American Teachers (2006) stated that teachers' satisfaction has increased over the past two decades. Over half (56%) are very satisfied with teaching, however the number of teachers (27%) changing careers has remained the same. In a BBC News Report, "Teaching 'the least boring job'" (2006), a survey of 2000 graduates aged 21 to 45 found that teachers are least bored when compared to 14 other occupations. The reasons given for this perception were: interaction with people (86%); challenge of the teaching role (81%); "no two days are the same" (81%); and opportunity to use their creativity (64%).

Job satisfaction, motivation to remain as classroom teachers, and commitment to their subject area were topics surveyed by Burnetti (2001). The study included 426 regular education high school teachers from one large Northern California school district. More than 60% of the teachers "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that they were satisfied with their job and from that percentage, 28 teachers were interviewed. The study found that those teachers were highly satisfied with their jobs, and that they believed they had a positive impact on their students. The two main motivators for remaining in teaching were working with the students and seeing them learn and grow. "To sum up, there is little question that the experienced teachers' satisfaction in working with adolescent students was the single most-powerful motivator underlying their decision to remain in the classroom" (p. 61).

Shann's (1998) research on urban middle school teachers' perceptions of job satisfaction found that the most satisfying aspect of their job was "the kids". Nieto (2003) posed the question "What keeps teachers going in spite of everything?" (p. xi) to eight veteran urban teachers from the Boston Public School System. The answers included a

love of children, a commitment to social justice, and a belief in the promise of public education.

Using a rural, low-income, large minority, Mexican border school district, Garrison (2006) compared her study to Luekens, Lyter, & Fox, (2004) study. She found that poverty and cultural and linguistic diversity were not associated with attrition and teachers remained in the profession at a higher rate. The attrition rate was 1% annually over the first six years whereas Luekens et al. reported 6.8% attrition. Moreover, teacher attrition equated 6% for the first six years compared to the national range as reported by Ingersoll and Smith (2003) of 40-50%. Teachers in this district had strong personal support structures, experience, and knowledge of the area, which helped them to remain in the county and in the teaching profession.

Hertzberg's (1973) motivation-hygiene theory listed "achievement, recognition, work itself, responsibility and advancement" as strong determiners of job satisfaction (p. 92). The hygiene factors, "company policy and administration, supervision, salary, interpersonal relations and working conditions" were major dissatisfiers and rarely led to positive job attitudes (pp. 93, 94).

*Self-satisfaction.* Self-satisfaction was found to be a reason to remain in teaching. In a doctoral dissertation, Walker (2004) revealed that the intrinsic domain of self-satisfaction was the reason teachers in an urban district remained in that district. She surveyed 525 teachers with 10 years teaching experience in the Norfolk Public School District to gather reasons for selecting to teach in an urban school district and reasons for remaining in the district. The commitment factor section of a survey instrument developed by Allen and Meyer (1990) was used as the survey instrument. Statistical

Table 2

Reasons Why Teachers Remain in One Urban School District

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The top three reasons for selecting an urban school setting were:

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- (a) Teachers were familiar with the needs of urban children,
- (b) Teachers were provided opportunities to build a rapport with urban children,
- (c) Cultural diversity of children was an important draw.

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The top three reasons for remaining in an urban school district were:

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- (a) Teachers were effective in working with urban children
- (b) Teachers developed good collegial relationships within the district,
- (c) Teachers gained a sense of self-satisfaction in urban schools.

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The top three professional development activities suggested were:

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- (a) Classroom management
- (b) New teacher support groups
- (c) Mentoring.

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In the area of commitment, the teachers reported the following:

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- (a) The school district valued student achievement,
- (b) The district was committed to meeting the needs of all children, and
- (c) They would be happy to spend the rest of their career in this district (Walker, 2004).

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analysis included a Likert-type scale, a correlation matrix, t-test, ANOVAs, and Tukey post-hoc tests. The survey included four domains: extrinsic, intrinsic, professional development, and commitment. Table 2 shows summary results from the 32-item survey indicating the reasons why teachers chose to remain in one urban district. The reasons were intrinsic. The teachers felt they had been effective in working with urban children, had developed collegial relationships, and felt a sense of self-satisfaction in working with urban children (Walker, 2004).

In a similar study, Bradley and Loadman (2005) investigated urban educators' views related to staffing a large Midwest district's urban public high schools. A pen/paper and web-based survey from 815 teachers provided data for reasons for teaching, best teacher qualities, job satisfaction and recruitment. Motivating factors for these urban teachers were more intrinsic (perceived social mission and philosophical orientation), than extrinsic (practical reasons). Burnett (2001) found that practical motivators (e.g. salary and benefits, job security, vacation time) received the lowest rating as motivators to remain in teaching when compared to professional satisfaction and social factors. Bradley and Loadman found that the teachers chose teaching because they enjoyed seeing students learn new things, they made a difference in students' lives, and they loved working with children. Stotko, Ingram, & Beaty-O'Ferrall (2007) were in agreement that urban teachers are primarily motivated by altruistic motives.

Based on the data from Wilson, Bell, Galosy, & Shouse's (2004) *What keeps dedicated teachers in the classroom?*, teachers who remain in teaching, especially those from diverse backgrounds and challenging social environments, are often the center of

student success. They remain for many reasons but the primary motivation is the teachers' fundamental belief in their students. Researchers have found numerous qualities that define job satisfaction and success for successful urban schoolteachers to include having high expectations for all students, staying committed to the students in spite of obstacles, and being resilient in difficult situations.

*Motivation to teach.* The influence of two motivational variables, which were academic self-concept of ability and self-efficacy, on why 10 Roanoke City Public School African American teachers selected and remained in teaching, was investigated in another doctoral dissertation (Stuart, 2000). Purposeful sampling was used to identify the participants for the study as they represented both genders, differing ages, years of experience, and teaching assignments. Of the 10 participants, six were non-tenured to nine years of teaching experience, and four participants represented longevity in teaching with 12 to 25 years of experience. Data from this investigation were gathered from interviews and two survey instruments. The first interview and survey elicited the participants' perceptions of environmental influences on academic self-concept of ability, self-efficacy, and motivation for teaching. The second interview and survey were intended to capture the teachers' perception about institutional influences on the self-construct and the motivation to remain in teaching (Stuart, 2000).

This single explanatory case study further examined the effects of two intervening variables: environmental influences (i.e., home, school, and community) for selecting a teaching career and institutional influences (i.e., experience in workplace, school climate) for remaining in teaching. Results from this research indicated both variables had positive and negative influences on selecting and remaining in teaching (Stuart, 2000).

Stuart (2000) found that home environmental factors and preparation for teaching were positive influences. The majority of the participants cited that direct assistance and verbal encouragement from their parents and other family members as motivating factors for academic self-concept of ability and self-efficacy. A number of school related experiences were influential in choosing and remaining in the teaching profession. Five factors were noted:

1. Teachers' high expectations for achievement
2. Critical but supportive feedback about coursework
3. Teachers as role models
4. Students' persistence in producing quality work
5. Personal adjustment to the academic and social learning environment (Stuart, 2000).

Community groups (role models, church affiliations, and school and community/business partnership) played a significant financial and moral support role. These resources also included use of technology, mentoring, and verbal encouragement. The involvement in church activities reinforced self-concept in ability and the business partnership supplied financial assistance for some participants.

Edwards (2003) utilized purposeful sampling of 21 Knox County, Tennessee veteran public school teachers to gain insight into the motivation and retention of veteran teachers. This research identified the unique needs of these teachers and examined how schools met the personal and professional needs of these veterans. The implications drawn from this examination could be used for schools to support, motivate, and rejuvenate veteran teachers (Edwards, 2003).

To gain a broader perspective, Edwards interviewed classroom teachers and support personnel (speech/language therapists or resource teachers) who had taught at least 10 years and constantly compared information gained by emergent sampling. Many veterans noted the personal unique need for challenge or a need for changing their educational field. Family needs (i.e., raising children, college tuition) and mental and physical stamina were also personal needs unique to the mid-career teachers.

These veteran teachers also stated that they were more stressed now than when they began their teaching careers. Frequently identified stressors were: change in parent and student support; salary and benefits (increased insurance cost); time to plan, reflect, and complete duties; and staff development. Nine of the 21 participants stated that they gained satisfaction from being a teacher and they were contributing to society and to the students they teach. They further indicated that the change in students and increased workload affected their job satisfaction. Through their experiences, the veteran teachers stated that lessons have been learned. “Most stated they have a better understanding of their subject matter, how students learn, and how to control a classroom” (Edwards, 2003, p. 92).

*Organizational perspective.* Farkas et al. (2000) completed a multifaceted research study on the perceptions, assumptions, concerns and aspirations of currently employed teachers, college graduate students who did not choose teaching, and principals and school superintendents. This Public Agenda opinion study involved three national telephone surveys, six focus groups discussions, and 25 personal interviews about what new teachers had to say about their profession.

The studies showed that the majority of new teachers (five or less years of teaching) were doing something they wanted to do, were motivated, committed, and had a passion for teaching. Further indicated in the results, 96% said that teaching was work they loved to do; 68% said they got satisfaction from teaching; 72% stated they were contributing to society and help others; and 75% viewed their job as a life-long career. Additionally, 98% of the principals and superintendents said the new teachers were highly motivated and energetic and 97% of the non-teaching college graduates said teachers contribute to society and help others (Farkas et.al, 2000).

In another study, Certo and Fox (2002) investigated teacher attrition and retention from the organizational perspective in seven Virginia school divisions. Nine focus group discussions, personal interviews with 42 teachers, who taught in a school for eight or less years, and telephone interviews with 23 exiting teachers were conducted to ascertain reasons why teachers, regular and special education, stay or leave the teaching profession. The focus group results indicated the reasons for leaving and for staying acted as inverse variables. For example, administrative support or lack of it was cited as a reason to stay or to leave.

Of the 42 participants in the classroom, 35 had eight or more years of teaching experience. The survey revealed commitment to children was chosen by all of the participants; commitment to teaching was chosen by 13 teachers; 10 teachers stated that they were looking elsewhere; and two felt that they were “stuck” in the profession (Certo & Fox, 2002). The three reasons for staying in a school division were commitment to children and/or subject area; school-level support of policies and practices that treated teachers as professionals; and collegial relations that involved collaboration.



Johnson (2004), through the 1999 Project on the Next Generation of Teachers, completed a longitudinal study on 10 new teachers' experiences during the initial years of their career. In 1999 this project began with 50 Massachusetts first and second year teachers. Ten teachers of the original 50 were selected for the study and they were divided into two groups: first-career entrants, those who always wanted to be teachers; and mid-career teachers, those who changed careers. After year two of the study, two of the 10 left teaching, three moved to different schools and five stayed in their original schools. Of the original 50 teachers, 11 left teaching, 11 changed schools and 28 were still teaching in their original schools. Almost four years after the study in 2003, eight of the 10 teachers remained in the educational field; 33 of the 50 were still teaching in public school (17 at the same school, 16 at different schools); 17 of the 50 are in education fields other than public education; 11 left teaching completely.

According to the National Education Association (NEA) (2003) teacher survey analysis of reasons why teachers were attracted to teaching resulted as the same reasons teachers continued to teach. The results of the 2001-2002 survey, 73% of the teachers selected "a desire to work with young people", 44% selected the "value or significance of education in society", and 36% chose an "interest in a subject matter field".

### Summary

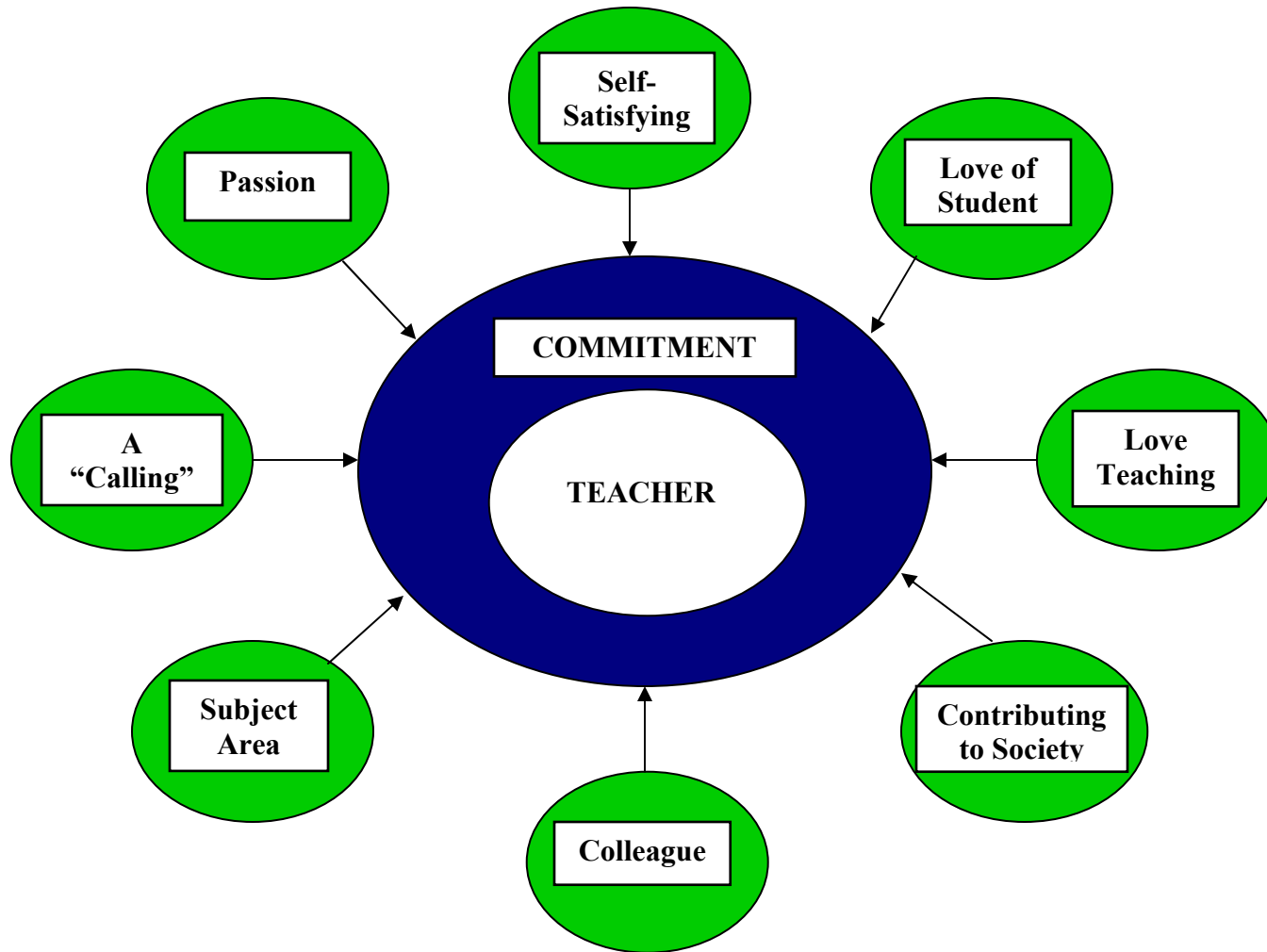
The internal influence of commitment as a reason to stay in the teaching profession has been revealed in the literature as being driven from within the individual and the reasons for this inner desire was based on the individual. As displayed in Figure 3, teachers have expressed being a teacher as a "calling" (Ayers, 2001; Williams, 2003).

The passion for teaching (Farkas et al., 2000) was seen as self-satisfying (Burnetti, 2001; Farkas et al., 2000; Williams, 2004) and the love for students and teaching were internal factors associated with teachers who remain in the profession. The research also indicated that the teachers' believed they were making a difference in the lives of their students and they, the teachers, were contributing to society (Edwards, 2003; Farkas et al., 2000).

Figure 3:

Influence of Commitment on Teacher Retention

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## External Motivation

For this study, external motivation was viewed as being influenced to teach by outside contributors. These contributors may act as positive or negative reinforcers for a teacher to remain in the teaching profession. Other outside influences (macrosystem) may affect reasons why teachers remain in a school or school district (e.g. the location of the school or school district; near hometown; spouse’s workplace; desire to raise a family; salary; years in the district; job opportunities) (Garrison, 2007; Hanushek, Kain, Rivkin, 2003). Following Brofenbrenner ecosystems, the mesosystem (school), exosystem (school district), and macrosystem (community) will be the focus of this literature review. It is organized into the following sections: (a) Influence of School Leadership, (b) Principals’ Characteristics, (c) School Leadership and New Teachers, and (d) School Leadership and Working Conditions.

Table 3

Internal and External Influences

System	Location	Represented by	Other Descriptors
Microsystem	Internal	The teacher	Commitment
Mesosystem	External	The school	Administrative Support, School Climate and/or Culture Professional Staff Development
Exosystem	External	The school district	Professional Staff Development
Macrosystem	External	The community	

### *Influence of School Leadership*

Other research has pointed in the direction of the leadership of the school as being a critical component in influencing a teacher's decision to stay or leave (Charlotte Advocates for Education, 2004; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Kapadia & Coca (2007), Olsen & Anderson, 2007; Otto & Arnold, 2005; Palermo, 2002; Singh & Billingsley, 1996). In the review of literature most researchers offered information on what principals could do to make the environment more conducive to retention.

Teachers wanted to be recognized and supported by the principal. Credit was given to administrators who incorporated the right combination of challenge and support (Williams, 2003). Darling-Hammond (2003) stated that satisfaction was also derived from both solitude and a sense of community in the workplace. As stated by Steffy et al. (2000), "Administrators must think about what they are doing to enhance or diminish collegiality within their building, districts and subject areas-they must provide opportunities for teacher leadership and ownership" (p. 71).

Classroom autonomy was vital for ideal workplace conditions (Darling-Hammond, 2003; Guarino et al., 2006; Williams, 2003). To keep good teachers, both new and veterans, attention should be given to key working conditions that provide administrative support, professional development, and opportunities that allow teachers to participate in decision-making. Darling-Hammond further stated that teachers gravitate to school systems that are committed to finding, keeping, and supporting teachers. This magnetic effect of the school system transforms its teachers into magnets who attract other professionals seeking collegial support and success for their students.

*Principals' characteristics and influences.* The Charlotte Advocate for Education (CAE) (2004) conducted an investigation into the influence of the principal on retention. Their research included a study of 20 successful Charlotte-Mecklenburg School principals to gain insight into the relationship between principals' culture and teacher retention. A written survey and a focus group discussion were conducted to identify traits and successful strategies of principals, especially those in high need schools, which focused on increasing student achievement and retaining teachers.

One finding of the study was that these principals had innate characteristics typically associated with successful entrepreneurs. They were visionary leaders; risk-takers; self-motivators; problem-solvers, who had a committed passion about their profession (CAE, 2004). These innate qualities are needed for success. Secondly, these principals believe that instructional, operational, and strategic leadership are equally significant. However, time spent on operational issues left very little time for instructional leadership. Third, these principals were teacher-focused. They understood the value of people and they valued their teachers. They provided continual feedback, professional development, ensured opportunities to work collaboratively with peers, and involved the teachers in the decision-making process. Lastly, these principals believed that principal preparation and continuing professional development must include practical information as well as theory (CAE, 2004).

Palermo (2002) developed a grounded theory that described the practices of an elementary principal's influence on new teachers to remain in teaching beyond the first year. This design utilized a survey, interviews, and observations. Survey results from 44 new teachers yielded views of principals' practices as having a positive or negative

influence on their decision to remain in teaching. From the 44 respondents, 11 teachers were interviewed and three principals were nominated by these teachers to be interviewed and shadowed.

The setting was an urban, suburban, rural district, which borders on cities to the north, east, and west. Of the 42 elementary schools in the district, the self-nominated teacher participants represent seven elementary schools. Four of the teachers had been in one school and with one principal; three teachers were in one school with two different principals; three teachers were in two different schools with two different principals; and one teacher was in three schools with three different principals.

Based on the results of the teachers' interviews and administrators' interviews and shadowing, Palermo (2002) developed a grounded theory that stated, "Principals who create a school climate of trust, mutual respect, and service to children have teachers who feel successful, valued, safe, loyal, and professional and want to and expect to continue teaching" (p. 78). Principals who set specific positive expectations and model them, communicate effectively, and focus on children, instruction, and behavior, assist in creating teachers who feel successful, valued, safe, and professional (Palermo, 2002).

Palermo's research led to four implications which should be investigated by the current study: add a course on administrative practices that support new teachers to the principal preparation program; offer training on communication skills and strategies; evaluate the existing mentor program or establish one; and encourage a school-wide commitment to support new teachers.

*School leadership and special education teachers.* Additional research also investigated the influence of the principal from the perspective of special education

teachers – one of the positions that is more difficult to fill. The key factors in teacher commitment are administrative support and teacher role definition (Singh & Billingsley, 1996). Role definition is part of the school leader's responsibility. Results from a questionnaire of 658 Virginia special education teachers on work-related variables and on the intent to stay in teaching, Singh and Billingsley (1996) found four common effects: job satisfaction had a direct effect on intent to stay in teaching; teaching experience had a moderate effect; and role-related problems and the effect of stress had negative effects on remaining in teaching. The authors suggest that administrators who collaborate with teachers, involve them in decision-making, and support them, are more likely to have teachers with less stress, more satisfaction, more commitment, and greater likelihood to remain in teaching.

When administrative support was perceived by special education teachers to be present, the teachers considered it an incentive for retention. Otto and Arnold (2005) conducted a survey of 228 South Texas experienced special education teachers on their perceptions of support from school administrators. The experienced teachers indicated that 69% of them were satisfied with the level of administrative support. The finding was consistent with the results of other national studies of experienced special education teachers' perceptions, although it is a contrast to perceptions of new teachers (those with five years experience).

Additional principal support strategies to help retain special education teachers were suggested by Wasburn-Moses (2005). The four strategies were: to create an environment where teachers feel valued, respected, and supported, principals can establish professional collaboration with special education and general education



teachers, provide direct support, choose mentors wisely, and provide meaningful professional development.

*School leadership and new teacher support.* According to Kapadia and Coca (2007), the strength of the school leadership can influence new teachers. This leadership includes providing ongoing assistance and encouragement, and facilitating a supportive school atmosphere. From a 2005 Chicago Public School survey on the influence of teacher induction on the intent to continue teaching or to remain in the same school, they found that principal encouragement and peer collaboration most influenced new teachers' (elementary and high school) intent to continue teaching and principal support was one of the top three reasons chosen by both groups to remain in a school.

If principals do not provide the instructional and emotional support through orientation and induction activities for new teachers, then the new teacher will seek support in another school (Hope, 1999; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). Hope (1999) maintained that many researchers believe that the most critical year for new teachers is the first year and this year may determine what kind of teacher a person may become or if a person will remain in teaching. Edwards (2003) further added that providing a professional culture with a clear mission or vision statement, and a safe learning environment, as well as the inclusion of mentoring could improve retention of teachers. Other researchers (Darling-Hammond, 2003; Guarino et al., 2006; Johnson, 2007; Kapadia & Coca, 2007; MetLife, 2006) found that mentoring can have a positive effect on job satisfaction and retention. However, Gilmer (2006) reported that Duke University's survey of 217 first-and-second year teachers in a small urban school district found that although the new teachers enjoyed the mentoring experience, there was no

relationship between mentoring support and teacher retention. Satisfaction with principal leadership and school climate were viewed as more significant factors for retention.

Recruiting New Teachers' (RNT) (n.d.) 1999 research, Honaker (2004), and Garrison (2006), found that principals needed to understand how to orient new teachers, create supportive working conditions, and meet teachers' professional needs.

Furthermore, Bradley and Loadman (2005) stated that the practical reasons (extrinsic influences) were generally under the control of school administrators who should consider how they could create conditions to align with the teachers' philosophical orientation. To help principals help new teachers, Palermo (2002) suggests that principal preparation programs and professional development should include administrative practices that support new teachers.

Watkins (2005) stated that new teachers, those directly from a teacher education program or as a second-career entrant, share the need for support and belonging. He suggested three strategies (mentoring, action research, and study groups) that principals can implement to the induction and retention process. He further added "Principals have the challenge and obligation to develop an environment that not only attracts the best teachers available, but one that also retains and develops them throughout their career" (p. 86).

*School leadership and working conditions.* In a state-wide study of teacher working conditions, North Carolina conducted a survey in 2002 and 2004 on five working condition areas: time; empowerment; facilities and resources; leadership; and professional development. Every teacher and principal in the state had the opportunity to participate in the study. The results of the 34,000 surveys indicated that teachers believed

an increase in time available to them and participation in decisions were the greatest perceived needs for improving working conditions (Emerick & Hirsch, 2006).

*Education Week* conducted the first analysis of teachers' perceptions of working conditions based on the 1999-2000 U.S. Department of Education's School and Staffing Survey (SASS). The analysis found that teachers at high-poverty or high-minority schools experience more difficult working conditions and are less satisfied with their pay. From this analysis, "the majority of teachers from all types of schools are reasonably satisfied with their schools and their administrators" (¶ 5). Further results were: 88% believed that their principals let them know what was expected of them; 82% believed their principals enforced student discipline rules; 79% believed that their principals were supportive; 71% believed that routine duties and paperwork interfered with teaching; and 68% believed they were recognized for jobs well done. (Park, 2003).

Research solutions for teacher retention are focused on the national, state, and school district levels; however, suggestions have also been developed for building administrators/principals (Emerick & Hirsch, 2006; Honaker, 2004; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Johnson, 2007; Shann, 1998; Shen, 1997; Steffy et al., 2000). Listed below are the most frequent suggestions for teacher retention at the local school level.

1. Involve teachers in decision-making
2. Improve student discipline
3. Increase administrative support for new teachers
4. Provide meaningful and effective professional staff development
5. Support career advancement
6. Assign new teachers in subject areas in which they are licensed to teach

As stated by Steffy et al. (2000), “the absence of shared values, meaningful relationships, and positive interactions among teachers and administrators has negative impact on teacher learning and growth” (p. 20). Additionally, Glatthorn and Fox (1996), agreed by stating that it was essential that the principal provide an environment that allows teachers to grow as leaders.

In addition to administrative leadership, Park (2003) conducted research suggesting that working conditions and salary are deciding factors as to where teachers’ teach and whether they stay or leave the teaching profession. Guarino, Santibanez, & Daley (2006) found several studies, Brewer, 1996; Gritz and Theobald, 1996; Kirby, Berends, and Naftel, 1999; and Stockard and Lehman, 2004, that suggested teacher salaries were positively associated with retention. “The recent empirical literature found that higher salaries were associated with lower teacher attrition and that teachers were responsive to salaries outside their districts and their profession” (p.194).

In contrast, Allen’s (2005) report on the Education Commission of the States (ECS) research found that when teachers are satisfied with the working conditions of their schools, they would decline a higher salary at another school. Additionally, salary was the most frequently cited reason to leave or stay but not necessarily the most important. Surveyed teachers in England and Wales listed salary as a low priority factor for entering and leaving the profession (Barmby, 2006). Teacher salary was not an important issue for teachers in a rural district located on the California and Mexico borders. Teacher salaries in this area were 62% higher than their childhood family income and most homes could be purchased based on their salary (Garrison, 2006).

### *Influence of Professional Atmosphere*

An investigation of the research studies that examine the effect of school culture or climate on retention did not distinguish it as a separate retention factor. The studies often included all or several elements of the educational community (principals, teachers, students, and parents) and how these elements affected teacher retention. Furthermore, the literature often provided solutions for retaining teachers to include the effects of the principal's role on the school's atmosphere. This section is organized into the following sections: (a) Inside the school, (b) New Teacher's Perceptions, (c) School Atmosphere and Student Achievement, and (d) Possible Solutions.

*Inside the school.* Research suggests that the key to addressing the teacher shortage is in the schools and classrooms. The behavioral climate of the school can affect teacher retention (Guarino et al, 2006). Teachers decide whether or not to continue to teach based on their success and satisfaction in the schools and classrooms. The provision of support systems and an integrated professional culture, where new and veteran teachers benefit from meaningful interactions, increases teacher cohesiveness (Honaker, 2004; Johnson, 2007; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Johnson & Kardos, 2005; Stotko et al., 2007). School-level support of policies and practices that treated teachers as professionals, and collegial relations that involved collaboration were cited as reasons for staying in a school (Certo & Fox, 2002).

Stuart (2000) found that experiences in the classroom and in the school district were institutional factors that affect the teachers' sense of efficacy and academic capability for teaching. Daily demands of teaching, interaction with colleagues, relationships with building principals, and inclusion in the decision making process had a

direct influence on self-efficacy and for teaching. This relationship affected school climate, job satisfaction, and could affect self-efficacy to remain in teaching (Stuart, 2000). Furthermore, Johnson (2004) stated that schools that support teachers succeed in hiring and retaining them by purposefully engaging new teachers in the culture and practices of the school.

The critical leverage point in recruitment, induction, and retention is the nature and structure of the workplace (Darlington-Hammond, 2003; Guarino, et al.; Ingersoll, 2001; Johnson, 2007; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). The impact of school culture affects every aspect of the school from faculty conversations in the hallways and teacher lounge, to the value of instruction and staff development, to student learning. Principals, teachers, and key people reinforce, nurture, shape, or transform the underlying norms, values, beliefs and assumptions in a school (Deal & Peterson, 1999). Edwards (2003) found that socialization with colleagues and with students was cited as a reason for veteran teachers to continue teaching. Fellow teachers provided them with support and encouragement in both their personal and professional lives.

*New teachers' perceptions.* Inman and Marlow (2004) used the *Professional Attitude Survey*, a 10-item survey instrument related to teacher career stability, to identify perceived positive aspects of teaching that might lead to beginning teachers remaining in the profession. The participants were 500 volunteer beginning teachers in five randomly selected Georgia counties. Teachers responded to questions related to demographics, teacher background, job satisfaction, and reasons for remaining in the teaching profession. Questions were classified into three categories: external, employment, and personal. For reporting purposes, the surveyed group was divided into two groups: Phase

1, teachers with 0 – 3 years of teaching experience; and Phase 2, teachers with 4 – 9 years of teaching experience.

In response to the external context of the teaching environment (administrators, retirement incentives, the community, availability of outside jobs, and salary), both groups identified salary as the only factor as a reason to stay in the profession. Phase 2 teachers ranked this context higher whereas 23% of the Phase 1 teachers did not identify any of the external factors as determinants to remain in teaching.

The Phase 2 group indicated that employment factors (working conditions, job security, and collegiality) play a significant role in their decision to remain in teaching. This group with 4 to 9 years of teaching experience was better able to view their compatibility and ideology for a more collegial and professional atmosphere. Mentoring for Phase 1 teachers was suggested as a means to assist them in comparing their ideologies with others and in assessing their compatibility to the working conditions (Inman & Marlow, 2004). Both groups ranked perceived job security the highest employment factor.

Responding to the personal context question, “How does the professional prestige (from the community) of teachers compare to your expectations prior to your beginning to teach?” 58% of Phase 1 teachers indicated, “as expected” and 52% of the Phase 2 teachers indicated “worse than expected”. Inman and Marlow suggested that Phase 2 teachers’ response was a direct result from sources outside of education and the manner in which education was presented in the media.

The researchers concluded that beginning teachers need a supportive professional environment if they are to remain in the teaching profession. As implied by the

researchers, retention may be improved by providing a support system for beginning teachers, such as mentoring. Administrators that support beginning teachers' new ideas, promote their accomplishments, and provide meaningful staff development opportunities, encourage retention of new teachers. In addition, administrators can positively impact the professional prestige of all teachers through open communication between the school and the community (Inman & Marlow, 2004).

New teachers are especially stressed by the demands and challenges of the teaching profession. They are expected to enter a classroom equipped with successful teaching and management techniques and assume all the duties of the veteran teacher from the first moment of their first school year. Without district or local school support, these challenges and responsibilities can lead to teacher resignation or non-renewal of a contract which in turn leads to teacher turnover (Stephenson, 2001).

“The school environment appears to be more significant in retaining new and experienced teachers than salary or pay incentives” (Luksinger, 2000). Most new teachers said they would sacrifice higher salaries if they could work in schools with less discipline problems and more parent support (86%), work with motivated and effective colleagues (82%), and a supportive administrator (82%) (Farkas et al., 2000). Hanushek et al. (2003) added that teachers transfer to other schools as a reaction to the characteristics of the students than for better salaries.

*School atmosphere and school achievement.* An examination of how seven high-performing, high-poverty Texas middle schools improved student achievement, Picucci, Brownson, Kahlert, and Sobel (2002) found that the embedded qualities of equity and high achievement existed in all the schools and this shaped the culture and how the staff



performed their daily duties. Effective leaders were essential and instrumental in building and maintaining positive school environment. When a strong positive culture exists, the staff felt responsible to protect that culture.

In a study to investigate the correlations of collaborative school cultures with student achievement, Gruenert (2005) gathered data from 81 Indiana schools. During the 2002-2003 school year, 2750 school faculty members completed a 35-item survey of six factors (collaborative leadership, teacher collaboration, professional development, unity of purpose, collegial support, and learning partnership) to correlate with student achievement in math and language arts. The results showed that in all levels (elementary, middle and high), both math and language arts were positively correlated with a collaborative school culture where teachers work together in a collegial climate. Professional development was one of the strongest correlations, which indicated that it was important for learning organizations (Gruenert, 2005).

*Possible solutions.* School culture can support or impede teacher growth. It might be more effective than supportive programs for individuals. Interaction with students and colleagues influence teachers' learning, growth, and satisfaction (Steffy et al., 2000). To keep teachers in the profession, Cochran-Smith (2004) stated that teachers need working conditions where they are recognized and supported, given time to collaborate with their peers, have a career ladder, and salaries comparable for what they do.

The work environment leads to levels of job satisfaction. A key role in keeping teachers in the profession is job satisfaction, which is often equated with work conditions (Certo & Fox, 2002). Glatthorn and Fox (1996) maintained that positive staff morale has a high correlation with a positive school climate. If the climate is upbeat, productive, and

positive, the staff will want to come to work. On the other hand, if the climate is negative and full of tension, it will eventually exhaust any positive feelings that might have existed. The climate that encourages trust, risk-taking, innovation, and dialogue, and that communicates success and value is the climate for successful retention of teachers (Palermo, 2002).

North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL) (n.d.) surveyed 2,413 superintendents in seven midwestern states to collect information on recruitment and retention strategies and their effectiveness. The report stated that 75% to 100% of the teachers leaving the profession were ranked as “highly effective” or “effective” in the classroom. The most successful retention strategies were for improving the working conditions of teachers. Implementing common planning time, interdisciplinary teaching, and involving teachers in the decision-making process are highly effective approaches that are low cost. Another approach to improve retention was that of increasing teacher salaries to competitive levels. The approach was complicated but could be used to attract teachers into the profession and keep them from leaving. Additionally an investment in high quality staff development was a very effective strategy in keeping teachers and improving the quality of teachers.

In a similar study conducted by the Southeast Center for Teaching Quality (2003), a collection of recruitment and retention strategies was provided to states. A variety of state and local strategies were examined. Strategies included offering scholarships, signing bonuses, and increased salaries to alternative routes to teaching and rehiring retirees. Three suggestions to recruiting and retaining teachers included improving work conditions, increasing the teaching pool by asking people to teach and preparing them to

teach, and collecting data to determine the effectiveness of the teacher development programs.

Additionally, Darling-Hammond (2006) referred to her previous research and offered recommendations at the national level to improve teacher quality, which could result in teacher retention. Federal government suggestions included: service scholarships; forgivable loans; “grow your own” programs for urban and rural and eliminate the negativity of teaching in these areas; better support for new teachers; better pay; removal of teacher interstate barriers; and keep accurate statistics and monitor teacher supply and demand.

#### *Influence of Professional Staff Development*

To keep experienced teachers in the profession, staff development has been suggested to be an external motivator. Most of the research in this area focused on the need for schools and school districts to offer staff development as a means of professional growth and to increase teacher retention. This section is organized as follows: (a) Effectiveness of Staff Development and (b) Possible Solutions.

Teachers need opportunities to renew, educate, and energize through meaningful professional staff development. If they enjoy and learn from these opportunities, they will be more willing to try something new in the classroom and to explore possibilities to future teaching success (Whitaker, Whitaker & Lumpa, 2000). Other researchers agree with the importance of professional staff development (Certo & Fox, 2002; Edwards, 2003; Johnson, 2004; Washburn-Moses, 2005).

Johnson (2004, 2007) contributed that teachers are more likely to consider teaching a long-term career when schools provide opportunities for professional growth

beyond the classroom. To meet the needs of veteran teachers, Edwards (2003) suggested that administrators and school systems should provide recognition, relevant staff development, and continuous learning opportunities. Additionally, resources and supplies and professional development offered by the central office were cited reasons to remain. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (1997) maintained that staff development has a positive effect on teacher commitment. The importance of staff development has been recognized as an avenue to continue engagement, effectiveness, and retention of teachers.

The 1999-2000 SASS data were used to report how professional development was organized and managed, what activities were available to teachers, and the teachers' participation level in those activities (NCES, 2006). The survey results from teachers, principals, and districts were: about one-third of the teachers thought they had a great deal of influence in determining the content of in-service activities; about one-third of the teachers "strongly agreed" that the school environment was collaborative; and about one-half of all principals said that the professional development activities were evaluated on improvements in classroom practices and student achievement. Almost all teachers participated in some type of in-service activity and some teachers participated in identified high quality activities. About one-half to two-thirds of all teachers participated in content area programs. Evidence from this report stated that the more time spent in professional development, the more likely teachers found it very useful.

*Effectiveness of staff development.* To continue to assist teachers' professional growth, school leaders should be aware of how adults learn. The importance of the learning structure and learning climate on the teachers' cognitive development,

motivation, and stage of career development can provide insight into what approaches are most effective (Glatthorn & Fox, 1996).

Watlington, Shockley, Earley, Huie, Morris, and Lieberman (2004) conducted a multi-year project of four South Florida school districts to study various demographic variables on teacher retention. The researchers utilized three years of archival data to track 2,129 teachers hired in the 2000-2001 school year to teach in Broward, Palm Beach, St. Lucie, and Okeechobee County School Districts. As stated in the results, the researchers suggested that the high retention rates might be due to their implementation of the New Teacher Support System (NESS) that included district-wide mentoring, staff development, and technical assistance for all new teachers

The results of this analysis showed the overall retention rate for the first year was 95.6%. During the second year the retention rate dropped to 79.8%. Out-of-state and out-of-field variables for the first two years were less likely to be retained. In year three, the retention rate declined to 72.8% and the two above mentioned variables along with male teachers were less likely to be retained whereas alternative preparation teachers were more likely to be retained. Of the four districts, Broward County retained more new teachers than the other three districts. (Watlington et al., 2004).

The Fast Response Survey System (NCES, 2001) tracked survey results from more than 5000 teachers who responded that at least 8 hours of professional development training was needed to positively affect teachers' feelings of competence. The amount of professional development received in certain activities influenced the feeling of preparation. Forty-five percent perceived they were "very well prepared" to implement new methods of teaching; 44% to implement state or district curriculum; 37% to use

student performance assessments; 32% to address diverse students needs; and 27% to integrate technology into the classroom. To promote teachers' feelings of competence, collaborative activities (e.g., regularly scheduled meetings with other teachers, networking with teachers in other schools, mentoring) appeared to be effective (Holloway, 2003).

Although most of the research has been on retaining new teachers, Edwards' (2003) research on the personal and professional needs of veteran teachers identified staff development as an identified stressor of veteran teachers. The results from her study showed that the veteran teachers' unique needs in the workplace were professional growth, recognition, variety, and interaction with colleagues. Holloway (2003) stated that experienced teachers also need support in order to remain in the classroom. He suggested by providing support throughout teachers' careers, school districts could ensure a pool of high-quality teachers. Therefore, schools can retain experienced teachers by increasing their job satisfaction.

*Possible solutions.* The National Partnership for Teaching in At-Risk Schools (2005) documented that to increase the satisfaction, effectiveness, and retention of veteran teachers; states and school districts have awarded compensation to teachers who gain certification by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards or for significant gains in student achievement. This strategy produced "the additional benefit of motivating teachers to immerse themselves in professional development, pursue career advancements within education, and regard teaching more as a long-term profession" (p. 12). The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards' (NBPTS) (2006) staff development opportunity was designed to retain, reward, and advance experienced

teachers by completion of rigorous performance-based assessments. The recognition and visibility of these teachers affects their classrooms and the culture of their schools.

As cited by RNT (n.d.) in order to keep experienced teachers, schools should give the teachers opportunities to grow and develop, use them as role models for new teachers, and improve the educational climate. They affirmed that even for the most experienced teachers, maintaining the enthusiasm and energy teaching requires was important. RTN recommended ways for teachers to stay motivated: by participating in professional development opportunities, attending educational conferences and workshops, joining professional organizations, and staying abreast of new innovative teaching and learning techniques and strategies.

Studies have shown that well-designed and well-supported mentoring and induction programs raise retention rates for new teachers (Johnson, 2007; Darling-Hammond, 2003, 2006; Stotko et al., 2007). Additionally, this interaction has been beneficial for veteran teachers. Darling-Hammond (2003) and Edwards (2003) stated that veteran teachers need ongoing learning and leadership challenges to remain stimulated and excited about the teaching profession

Recent research conducted by Johnson and Kardos (2005) suggested that to make a substantive improvement in teaching and learning, principals must bridge the generation gap between veteran teachers and new teachers by combining both professional knowledge and skills that the veteran teacher has accumulated and refined over the years with the energy and fresh ideas of the new teachers. They suggested mixing new teachers with veteran teachers across grades and courses; ensuring time for new and veteran teachers to meet; integrating a comprehensive induction program, led by

experienced teachers, with one-to-one mentoring; providing ongoing curriculum professional development; and encouraging teacher leadership for experienced and new teachers. By bridging this gap, experienced teachers would leave a legacy of skills and knowledge that will be beneficial to the school and to new teachers thus leading to higher retention rates.

The empirical research of Guarino et al., (2006) found that “recruitment and retention of teachers depends on the attractiveness of the teaching profession relative to the alternative opportunities available” (p 201). The attractiveness, *total compensation*, was described as a comparison of all rewards stemming from teaching, extrinsic and intrinsic. Factors that can be altered through policy can influence individuals to enter teaching, migrate to other schools, or to leave the profession.

#### Summary

As shown in Table 4, terms or phrases identified in the literature review surfaced as positive or negative retention motivators. Research on the external motivators (school leadership, professional atmosphere, and professional development) was interwoven. One or all the areas were dependent on the others with school leadership having the most influence on providing a professional atmosphere conducive to retaining teachers. The literature review provided a glimpse of the effect of the macrosystem, the community, on teacher retention. As stated earlier, teachers may reflect reasons for remaining in a school or school district as it relates to their personal or family’s present and future plans.



Table 4

Frequently Used Words/Phrases Identified As Retention Motivators

Commitment	School Leadership	Professional Atmosphere	Professional Development
Passion	Working Conditions	Working Conditions	Professional Growth
Self-satisfying	Professional Collaboration	Professional Collaboration	Mentoring
Students	Decision-making	Decision-making	Teacher Leaders
Colleagues	Supportive Environment	Administrative Support	Career Leaders
Subject Area	Teacher Recognition and Support	Student Achievement	Content Area
Contributing to Society	Professional Growth	Teacher Recognition	Collaborative Activities
		Interaction with students	
		Career Ladder	

## Conclusion

Teachers need to feel that schools and school districts value their concerns and recognize their successes. Darling-Hammond (2003) stated that to keep good teachers, both new and veterans, attention should be given to key working conditions that allow teachers to participate in decision-making, have administrative support, and provided learning opportunities. Working conditions, specifically those that can be manipulated by administrators through policy and practice, can influence teachers' perceptions about remaining in a school, school district, or exiting the profession.

Although studies have examined the reasons teachers leave or stay in the profession, few have linked teachers' attitudes about staying to their perspectives on whether conditions under the control of others in the school system, school leadership, school atmosphere/environment, and professional staff development would make a difference in their decision to continue in teaching. This study endeavors to work directly with experienced teachers, a group which has not been carefully investigated, to learn what has motivated them and continues to motivate them to remain in their teaching career.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

Limited research studies have investigated why new teachers decide to remain in the teaching profession and fewer studies examine why experienced teachers have continued in the field. This chapter explains the research procedures used to explore the reasons why experienced teachers remain in a school or school district. This qualitative study utilizes grounded theoretical approach as described by Strauss and Corbin (1998). This approach provides guidelines to the research design, selection of the participants, data collection and data analysis techniques.

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore and describe the reasons experienced secondary school teachers have for remaining in a school or school district. A grounded theory will emerge from the data by examining the teachers' perception of the experience itself, commitment, school leadership (administrative support), professional atmosphere (school culture or climate), and professional staff development's impact on teachers staying in the teaching profession and in the school or school district.

#### Research Questions

The central research question for this study was as follows: Why do teachers remain in a school or school district? The subordinate questions are: (1) What reasons do experienced secondary school teachers give for remaining in a school or school district? (2) How does teacher commitment to the profession relate to teacher retention? (3) What effect does school leadership (administrative support) have on teacher retention? (4) How

does the professional environment (school culture or climate) affect teacher retention? (5)  
How do professional staff development activities influence teacher retention?

### Rationale for a Qualitative Design

The examination of why experienced teachers remain in the teaching profession can appropriately be explored by utilizing a qualitative research methodology. This methodology provides greater insight on the larger and complex reality by examining it in a holistic way and by examining components of that reality. Strauss and Corbin (1998) stated, "...qualitative methods can be used to obtain the intricate details about the phenomena such as feelings, thought processes and emotions that are difficult to extract or learn about through more conventional research methods" (p. 11). The goal of qualitative research is to better understand human behavior and experiences. This methodology characteristically involves a limited number of participants when the outcome includes description, interpretation, and the understanding of that phenomenon (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). This study will focus on discovery, by going into the field, rather than by testing hypothesis (Patton, 2002).

### Research Design

"Qualitative research is an umbrella term that has numerous variations" (Merriam, 1998, p. 10). There is a lack of consensus among researchers as to the number of major types of qualitative research. Some researchers listed as many as 45 approaches and others as few as five. Merriam identified five common types of qualitative research found in education - "basic or generic qualitative study, ethnography, phenomenology, grounded theory and case study" (p. 11). Although each research design has its unique qualities, they all share the essential characteristics of qualitative research: "the goal of

eliciting understanding and meaning, the researcher as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis, the use of fieldwork, an inductive orientation to analysis, and findings that are richly descriptive” (p. 11).

This qualitative study incorporated Strauss and Corbin’s (1998) grounded theoretical methodology, where the theory was “derived from the data, systematically gathered and analyzed through the research process...the researcher begins with an area of study and allows the theory to emerge from the data” (p. 12). For this study, data were collected from in-depth individual interviews with 25 secondary school teachers to ascertain their reasons for remaining in the teaching profession in one school district. The design provided an opportunity for professionals to share their perceptions and experiences directly.

Verification of the theory’s relationships between concepts involved a constant comparative method of examining continuous interactions among the data during the process of collection and analysis. Following the interviews, data were transcribed, reviewed for patterns, themes, and categories, and coded (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Through systematically gathered and analyzed data, theory emerged.

Bronfenbrenner’s (1976) *Ecological Model for conducting research in educational environments* described a theoretical framework that was useful to this study (see Figure 1). The model proposed four sub-systems of environment: a microsystem, mesosystem, ecosystem, and a macrosystem. Each system represented a social relationship that involved an integration of ideas taken from reality. The model was used for analyzing teachers’ interactions and perceptions in the workplace and interconnections that exist between these environments (Bronfenbrenner, 1976;

Brownwell & Smith, 1993). This framework of systems may influence teachers' career decisions.

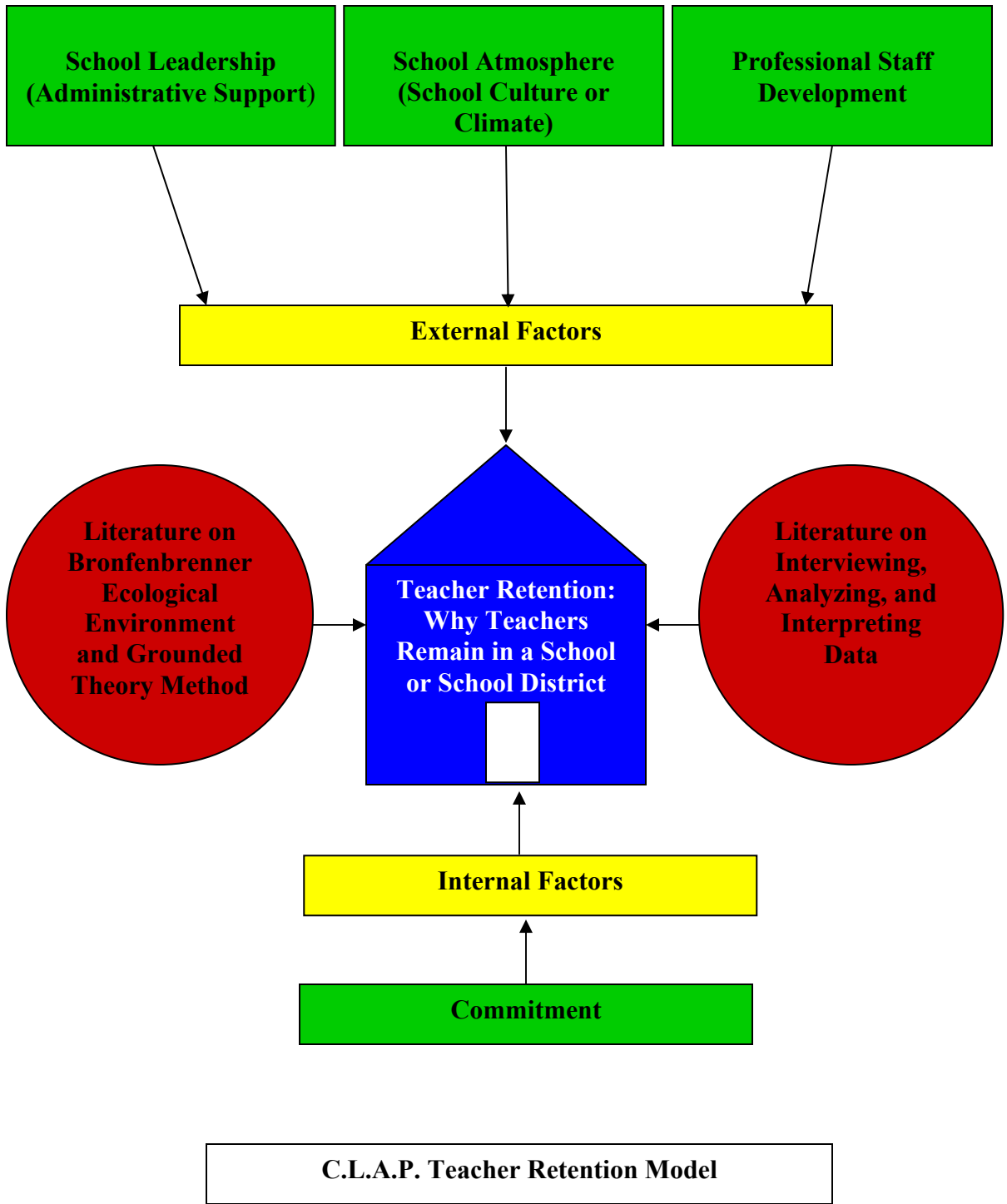
For this study, the external system, mesosystem, represented by the school, was investigated by noting what the teacher said about experiences in the school, particularly in the areas of administrative support, and school climate and/or culture. Reflections of the teacher about the ecosystem (external), represented by the school district, included the area of professional staff development, among other ways that school districts affect teachers. The community represented the macrosystem, the third external system, and the investigation noted the teachers' reflections on the larger community. In addition, the internal system, the microsystem, was investigated by listening to the teacher explain his/her personal reasons, emotions and attitudes (see Figure 4).

#### Role of the Researcher

In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument for gathering and analyzing data unlike in quantitative research when a measurement tool is usually the primary instrument (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Merriam, 1998). Describing and interpreting the data shared through interviews is a key goal in the development of theory. Merriam (1998) reported that tolerance for ambiguity, sensitivity, and communication skills are three ideal investigator characteristics to conduct qualitative research.

As a qualitative researcher, Merriam affirmed that "there are no set procedures or protocols that can be followed step by step...the researcher must be able to recognize that the best way to proceed will not always be obvious" (p. 20). The lack of structure allows the researcher to adapt and change direction in pursuit of meaning. A more traditional

**Figure 4:**  
**Research Design**



research design is recommended for the researcher who has no patience for ambiguity and who prefers an established format (Merriam, 1998). A qualitative researcher must also be sensitive to all elements of the inquiry and any personal biases that may affect the study. The success of both data collection and analysis is dependent on the researcher's sensitivity and analytical skills. Moreover, establishing rapport, asking good questions, listening intently, and being able to write are communication skills needed for success (Merriam, 1998).

My personal experiences as a teacher, guidance counselor, guidance director, and assistant principal allowed me to view this research from a variety of angles. These experiences in the culture of public schools influenced my interest in this research, which can also create the potential for personal biases. As recommended by Bogdan and Biklen (1998), I did "attempt to objectively study the subjective states" (p. 33) of my participants and recorded personal feelings, insights, questions, and points of personal bias as side notes to the analysis for the purpose of capturing new ideas as well as recognizing and controlling for bias. Following the suggestion of Patton (2002), these personal notes and reflections of the interview process, data collection and analysis, were maintained in a research journal. Additionally, I sought clarification and validation from the participants.

My flexibility and adaptation to change are qualities that have developed through experience. My communication skills and good questioning and listening techniques permitted me to establish an atmosphere of trust with the participants.



## Selection of Setting

The role of the researcher is to “identify the purposefully selected sites or individuals for the proposed study...that will best help the researcher understand the problem and the research question” (Creswell, 2003, p. 185). For this study, secondary teachers with 10 years of teaching experience in the Comstock County School system were the participants under investigation.

Each participant determined the setting for the interview, which encompasses 13 middle schools and 10 high schools located in this northern Virginia county. Comstock County Public Schools (CCPS), an exurban school district in northern Virginia, is the third largest school district in Virginia, serving over 66,000 students in 82 schools. During the 2006-2007 school year, the school district employed 9,049 individuals to include 4,754 teachers, and 206 school administrators (Comstock County, 2006). Based on Comstock County 2005-2006 County’s Annual Employee Recognition for Years of Service, there were 32 identified middle school teachers and 20 high school teachers with 10 years of teaching experience in the county, the criterion for inclusion in this study. (Comstock County, 2005). The list of names was provided by the county’s Department of Human Resources. From that list, one teacher employed in my school was excluded from the study. Ultimately, eight middle schools and seven high schools were represented.

## Selection of Participants

The participants selected for the study were experienced teachers with 10 years of teaching experience in Comstock County Schools. To discover, understand, and to gain insight for the teachers’ reasons for remaining in this school district, purposeful sampling

(deliberately chosen rather than randomized) was used. These findings will be useful to Comstock County, as it will provide personal perceptions for teacher retention.

Rossmann and Rattis (2003) stated that in qualitative research, the purposeful sampling strategy is used rather than random sampling. The researcher has reasons or purposes for selecting specific participants, events, or processes. Creswell (2003) stated that the idea to purposefully select participants was to help the researcher understand the problem. Likewise, Patton (1990) reported that purposeful sampling was used for information-rich cases that allow the researchers to focus in-depth on the needs, interests, and incentives of individuals or small groups of carefully selected subjects. He later suggested selecting informants from whom the most can be learned and to permit inquiry into and understanding of a phenomenon *in depth* (Patton, 2002).

In-depth individual interviews were conducted in August – October 2006, with 25 diverse (race, age, subject area, grade level) teachers who had taught 10 years in a school or the school district. The characteristics of the participants can be found in Chapter 4. The participant selected the interview site where he/she felt relaxed and free to speak openly. Twelve were conducted in their individual schools, seven at my school, one in a private room at an athletic event, one in the participant's home, and two via telephone. Written permission to tape record the interviews and to take notes was granted from each participant. Following the interviews, I transcribed the recordings.

#### Ethical Consideration and Confidentiality

To promote a trustful relationship, each individual participant and the school district were assured of ethical considerations (assurance of confidentiality and anonymity; informed of purpose, design, and voluntary nature of participation; written

consent for participation) before the research process was conducted. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) stated that the two issues that dominate official guidelines of ethics in research with human subjects are: “(1) Subjects enter research projects voluntarily, understanding the nature of the study and the dangers and obligations that are involved; and (2) Subjects are not exposed to risks that are greater than the gains they might derive” (p. 43). To ensure proper guidelines are followed, permission from the Virginia Polytechnic and State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Research was sought (see Appendix B).

Written consent for participation in the study included a statement of ethical consideration (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Merriam, 1998; Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Prior to interviews, this statement was read to each of the participants. The protocol of ethics assured that participation was voluntary and they could withdraw at any time; the information shared would be treated in a confidential manner; pseudonyms were chosen by the individual participants and their schools were not identifiable in the written report; and interpretations of the emergent findings from the data gathered would be shared with the participants and the school division.

### Gaining Access and Entry

As required for approval from the Virginia Polytechnic and State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Research to conduct research on human subjects (see Appendix B), I followed Comstock County Public School’s protocol for conducting research. A letter was forwarded to the county’s Human Resources Department and the Office of Accountability to seek approval for the research. This letter described the proposed research, the purpose of the study, and the data collection procedures. A copy

of this letter is included in Appendix C. Once approval was granted from the Comstock County 's four area superintendents, the proposed research letter was adapted and emailed to the potential participants (see Appendix D) and to middle and high school principals (see Appendix E).

The entry point procedure initially began with the first teacher to respond to the invitation. With a return thank you correspondence, we arranged for the first interview. Once the initial invitation was extended, follow-up emails and telephone contacts were made to elicit participation. Nine volunteers agreed following the first email, eight following the next two emails, and eight through telephone contact. From a participant pool, I made personal telephone contact to those who had not responded to the invitation. I purposefully solicited males and high school math or science teachers for a more diverse interview pool.

#### Data Collection Procedures

“Data collection techniques are determined by the researcher’s theoretical orientation, by the problem and purpose of the study, and by the sample selected” (Merriam, 1998, p. 70). Qualitative research can involve three strategies: interviewing, observing, and analyzing documents (Merriam, 1998). For this study, the data were collected from in-depth individual interviews.

The purpose of interviewing is “to enter the other person’s perspective...to find out what is in and on someone else’s mind...self-report data” (Patton, 2002, p. 341). Patton further stated that the purpose of the interview is “to capture how those being interviewed view their world, to learn their terminology and judgments, and to capture the complexities of their individual perceptions and experiences” (p. 348).

### *Pilot Study*

The interview questions were designed in a semi-structured format with open-ended questions. A copy of the interview guide is included in Appendix F. To field test the questions, taped pilot interviews were conducted with three teachers who met the study criteria. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed to see if themes emerged. The purposes of this pilot were to assess whether the developed questions and probes would generate relevant data and to assess my interviewing and listening skills. Additionally, the interview questions were peer reviewed by a doctoral cohort. The pilot participants and the cohort members were asked to describe what was good/bad, strong/weak about the questions and procedures. They were also asked to give other suggested areas of questioning. Appropriate changes were made based upon the pilot interviews and analysis, and peer review.

### *Interviews*

Each interview began with the explanation of the study. Next, I read the contents of the Research Information Sheet which included the purpose, procedures, risks, benefits, confidentiality, and written consent for participation.

The interviews were scheduled at a convenient time for the participants and ranged in length of 30 to 60 minutes. The interview guide provided demographic and teacher background information. From there, questions were asked that focused on the study why teachers remain in the teaching profession. As I taped recorded each interview, I took notes by writing key words or phrases. I asked the same questions in each interview and summarized groups of questions at the same points (after question 5, 9, and

14). This was to ensure that each participant responded to each question and immediate clarifications and corrections could be added.

### *Field notes*

After each interview, I wrote my reflections that included general observations of the participant's mood, tone, gestures, and body language as well as key words or phrases and metaphors. The use of metaphors, as suggested by Noblit and Hare (1988), are included to help the reader understand the feelings portrayed by the use of the participants' language and to improve the readers' understanding of what was communicated by the teachers. The telephone interview notes could not include the visual observations, but the verbal responses painted a picture of their words. My self-reflections as the interviewer helped to guide me to become more comfortable and confident as I completed each interview. The field notes included my insights, interpretations and beginning analysis. Each interview was transcribed verbatim in typewritten form.

Although transcribing was a very time-consuming endeavor, it allowed me to capture the teachers' words, to listen more carefully to the voices of experiences, to gain a better understanding of their individual world of teaching, to reflect on their response, and to begin a mental analysis. I found it to be one of the most important parts of the process. After the interviews were transcribed, I gave the participants a copy for their review. Twenty-four agreed with the interview as written and one made grammatical corrections.

## Data Analysis Procedures

Grounded theory research methodology was the process used in this study. Strauss and Corbin's (1998) data analysis procedures for developing grounded theory, which included questioning and making comparisons, were utilized. Their analysis begins with basic descriptions, moves to conceptual ordering, and then to theorizing. Through this microscopic examination of data, the main goals were to identify categories within the data, identify properties and dimensions of those categories, and to establish how categories relate to one another, therefore developing a grounded theory.

### *Data Management*

In qualitative research, data collection and data analysis go hand-in-hand. Due to the large amount of information accumulated from 25 different informants on their perceptions of 14 different questions, it was vital to manage and organize the data. Miles and Huberman (1994) suggested techniques for data management. They stated that a process was needed for data collection, storage, and retrieval. Tables were created for each interview question to display the data. They were developed to view how well all parts fit together (Merriam, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994). I was able to view, sort, and describe similarities and differences in the responses, which brought focus and clarity for reporting the data and theory.

### *Coding and Analysis*

From the data, the patterns, themes, and categories were documented by using inductive analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Patton, 2002). To organize and manage the data, coding was used first to identify characteristics of the data and later to interpret

constructs related to analysis (Merriam, 1998). Strauss and Corbin (1998) describe three different types of coding that can be used sequentially or as separate approaches:

1. *Open Coding* – to discover, name, and categorize phenomena according to their properties and dimensions; to break down into discrete units; to keep the collection process open to all possibilities; 2. *Axial coding* – how categories relate to their subcategories and to categories to be developed in the future in terms of their properties and dimensions - a phenomenon, a significant issue, event, or happening; 3. *Selective coding* – to integrate and refine the categories at the dimensional level to form a theory; develop a single category.

*Open coding.* During open coding, the data were divided into small meaningful units based on the participants' own words. Generating categories was the focus. First, to compare similarities and differences, each transcript was analyzed line-by-line and compared to my field notes and memos. I recorded my analysis of vocabulary, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs by writing and color-coding key concepts for each question and for each participant.

Next, I constantly compared each piece of information with previous data. This process continued until all had been compared to each other. When the categories were overlapping, sometimes I had to refine them. Similar ideas were grouped and regrouped into categories and subcategories, and a label was given for each category or subcategory. This method of grounded theory analysis explains something of human behavior and experience (Merriam, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). For some questions, similarities were rare. After the categories were outlined, specific characteristics were explored.



*Axial coding.* Axial coding rejoined the data. To view all the data, the key concepts were listed separately and then together on separate sheets of paper to make relationships and comparisons. In many instances, especially when the categories did not tell the whole story, I had to revisit my open-coding ideas and re-categorize to find more meaningful properties. Color-coding again was used to match similar characteristics. This resulted in tentative merging themes.

*Selective coding.* When applying selective coding, the process included selecting a core category, relating it to the other categories and checking for meaningful relationships. To accomplish this step, I looked for the central ideas or themes. In most cases, the central category was easily identified, while others emerged after repeated reading of the transcripts, field notes, memos, and tables. At various points, I had to move back again to open and axial coding for clarity and revision. After reaching saturation, this interconnection led to developing central themes and concepts as they related to the internal influences, external influences, and recruitment and retention practices.

#### *Addressing Quality*

Techniques of assessing the quality of quantitative research are not adequate for assessing qualitative research (Cresswell, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Regarding qualitative research, Merriam (1998) stated, “validity and reliability are concerns that can be approached through careful attention to a study’s conceptualization and the way in which the data were collected, analyzed, and interpreted and the way in which the findings are presented” (pp. 199-200). Lincoln and Guba (1985) emphasized that qualitative study involves examining its components: interviews reliably

and validly constructed; content of the documents properly analyzed; and conclusions based upon data.

Patton (2002) pointed out that trustworthiness has been judged by the quality, credibility, and inherent rigor of qualitative research. In comparison to reliability and validity in quantitative research, trustworthiness is the parallel concept for qualitative research (Guba and Lincoln, 1981). Trustworthiness contains four criteria: credibility (internal validity in quantitative research), transferability (external validity), dependability (reliability), and confirmability (presentation).

*Credibility.* Are the results of the research credible or believable? The findings were based on the perceptions of the 10 year experienced teachers. Member checking with the teachers was used to determine the accuracy of the interview transcripts and the credibility of the analysis. To control possible bias, I maintained a research journal that included my own ideas, responses and thoughts about the process. Additionally, I shared the study with three colleagues. This peer debriefing enhanced the study's procedures and findings as I attended to their questions, suggestions and feedback, and incorporated their ideas when appropriate.

*Transferability.* By using purposeful sampling, I was able to understand and gain insight on specific reasons why secondary school teachers chose to remain in the teaching profession. As described by Creswell (1998), I was able to provide a thick, rich description of the participants, the school district, and the findings.

The extensiveness of the selective sample, incorporating teachers of varying ages, genders, race, subject areas, and grade levels and the typical nature of their responses make them applicable to most exurban and suburban secondary school settings. This

allows the readers of the report to compare the context of the study to their own specific context and to make individual determinations of transferability.

*Dependability.* The research methodology, the data collection procedures, and the data analysis procedures addressed dependability. The study followed grounded theory strategies that incorporated coding, constant comparison of data with emerging categories, theoretical sampling to maximize the similarities and differences (Creswell, 2003), and the emphasis upon theory development (Merriam, 1998).

I described each step of the study so that it can be replicated. I was careful to ensure that the categories were not overlapping so there would be less chance of a later researcher interpreting similar data differently. I worked with the data to make sure that each piece of information fit into a category. I ensured that the categories were meaningful and fit constructively into the larger picture of the school environment. These categories made sense and formed a whole picture.

*Confirmability.* As expressed by Lincoln and Guba (1985), the reader needs to confirm that the findings are grounded in data. The data collection and the data management procedures addressed confirmability. The interview transcripts, field notes, memos, and data displays were checked and rechecked throughout the study. They were maintained and kept in an organized manner.

A clear trail was maintained from one step to the next, and each finding can be tracked back to the original supportive data. For each broad thematic category, illustrations using the participants own words allowed the reader to understand the content, context, and intended meanings. The summary findings were reviewed and confirmed by 23 of the participants. For the two remaining participants, one agreed that

*self-satisfaction/enjoying what I do* had a strong correlation for remaining in the teaching profession and one participant is on parental leave.

### The Qualitative Narrative

A narrative analysis is presented based the data gained from the first-person accounts of the experienced teachers' knowledge, experiences, and perceptions of why they remain in the teaching profession. The research approach that was used to report the qualitative data was a descriptive case study. Merriam (1998) explained, "the end product of a case study is a rich, 'thick' description of the phenomenon under study" (p. 29). Qualitative researchers do not have a single mode of presenting their findings. Merriam (1998) suggested three tasks when writing a final report: determine the audience, select a focus, and outline relevant data. Patton (2003) suggested focusing on what will be the most useful and meaningful.

The final report contains the themes that emerged from the grounded theory analysis as it relates to Bronfenbrenner's ecological educational systems. The participants' original words, phrases, and metaphors as suggested by Noblit and Hare (1988) are included to help the reader understand the feelings portrayed by the use of the participants' language and to improve the readers' understanding of what was communicated by the teachers.

### Summary

In chapter 3, I described the methodology for the research, which included the purpose of the study, the research questions, the research design, the method of data collection, and the data analysis. The results of the data analysis will result in the development of grounded theory. In chapter 4, the findings of the study will be presented.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this chapter is to develop a theory that explains why secondary school teachers choose to remain in a Mid-Atlantic exurban school district. This section delineates findings in the form of a grounded theory as related to internal and external motivational factors derived from data collected from in-depth interviews. The following research questions were used to direct the collection and analysis of data: (1) What reasons do experienced school teachers give for remaining in a school or school district? (2) How does teacher commitment relate to teacher retention? (3) What effect does school leadership (administrative support) have on teacher retention? (4) How does the professional school atmosphere (culture or climate) affect teacher retention? (5) How do professional staff development activities influence teacher retention? From this analysis, the findings of the study are presented.

#### Characteristics of Participants

A total of 50 secondary teachers were invited to participate via electronic mailing. Two teachers located in the researcher's school were excluded from the interview pool. After two mailings, 18 teachers responded. In addition, personal telephone invitations were accepted by 7 of the 10 teachers contacted yielding a total of 25 secondary teachers in the interview pool. The participants included 15 females and 10 males ranging from the age group of under 35 to over 55. The majority was Caucasian (n=21), followed by African American (n=2), Asian (n=1), and bi-racial (Caucasian and African American) (n=1). Twenty of the participants held masters degrees; three held a second masters

degree or additional endorsements; one individual completed the National Board Certification and one awaits results from the National Board.

Secondary schools in the Mid-Atlantic district included middle schools, grades 6-8, and high schools, grades 9-12. The participants included 15 middle school teachers from eight different middle schools and 10 high school teachers from seven different high schools. Additionally, the participants represented 11 subject areas; six core academic subjects: [English/Language Arts/Reading (n=7); Mathematics (n=5); History/Social Studies (n=4); Science (n=2), Special Education (n=3); and English as a Second Language (n=1)]; and five elective areas: Family and Consumer Science (n=3); and one teacher from each of the following areas: Computer Science, Construction and Power and Transportation, Music, and Physical Education.

Although all of the participants had completed 10 years in the county, their years of teaching experience ranged from 10 years experience (n=15) to 26 years or more (n=3). Furthermore, 10 teachers remained in the same school for 10 years, and 15 had transferred from other school districts within and outside the state. Before entering teaching profession, 15 of the participants indicated they were in other professions prior to entering the teaching. A summary of the participants' characteristics is displayed in Table 5. Pseudo names of the participants are used to protect confidentiality.

#### Internal Influences

To set the foundation for examining the reasons why experienced teachers choose to remain in the teaching profession, I asked 14 interview questions. (See Appendix F). Questions 1, 2, 6, 13 and 14 were related to internal motivation. The findings reveal the participants' reasons for staying in the profession and the influence of commitment.

Table 5

## Characteristics of Participants

ID #	Name	Subject	Male/ Female	Age	Ethnicity	Degree	Other Professions	Years at Present School	Exurban District	Other Districts	Total Years in Teaching
T1	Sandy	(HS) History	F	3	C	B	X	10		VA 6	16
T2	Merry	(HS) English	F	2	C	M	X	4	6	PA 1 NJ 1	12
T3	Jill	(MS) Math and Social Studies	F	2	C	M	X	10			10
T4	Fred	(MS) Reading	M	4	C	M	X	4	6	GA 6 VA 3 Adult Center 8	27
T5	Ramona	(MS) Music	F	3	C	M		10		WV 17	27
T6	Savannah	(HS) Algebra and Computer Science	F	2	C	M	X	6	4		10
T7	Madeline	(MS) FACS	F	2	C	B	X	10		VA 7	17
T8	Susan	(MS) Learning Disabilities	F	3	C	M	X	5	5		10
T9	Herman	(HS) Construction and Power/ Transportation	M	2	C	M	X	10		VA 6	16
T10	Porter	(HS) English	M	2	AA	B		2	8		10
T11	Nancy	(MS) Learning Disabilities	F	4	C	B		8	2	NY 3	13

ID #	Name	Subject	Male/ Female	Age	Ethnicity	Degree	Other Professions	Years at Present School	Exurban District	Other Districts	Total Years in Teaching
T12	Elizabeth	(MS) FACS	F	4	C	M	X	8	2		10
T13	Audry	(MS) Learning Disabilities	F	2	C	M	X	10			10
T14	Louis	(MS) Science and Language Arts	M	2	C	M	X	10			10
T15	Joe	(HS) English and ESOL	M	2	C	M		5	5		10
T16	John	(HS) English	M	1	A	M		2	4, 4		10
T17	Christian	(MS) PE and Health	M	1	C	M		10			10
T18	Nana	(MS) FACS	F	4	C	B	X	2	8		13
T19	Josephine	(HS) World Geography	M	1	C	M		2	8		10
T20	Ken	(MS) Math and Science	M	3	C	M		10			34
T21	Bailey	(HS) Math	F	2	C	M	X	10			10
T22	Allan	(MS) Math	F	4	C	M	X	5	5		10
T23	Bruce	(MS) Civics	M	1	AA	M		5	5	NJ 1	11
T24	Marie	(MS) Language Arts	F	2	C	M	X	6	4		10
T25	Ava	(HS) English	F	1	O	M	X	9	1		10

*Note:* High School (HS), Middle School (MS); Age: Categories: (1) under 35; (2) 35-45; (3) 46-55; and (4) over 55;

Degree: B = Bachelors Degree, M = Masters Degree; Other Professions: Other professions before entering teaching. Other Districts: state abbreviation and years of teaching



Questions 3, 4, 5, 10, and 12 will provide findings related to external motivation. To conclude, perceptions of retention were identified from the responses to address questions 7, 8, 9, and 11.

*Reasons for Remaining in Teaching*

To begin the interview process, the 10-year teachers were asked to give three reasons for remaining in the teaching profession. The top three reasons expressed by the participants were: the love of teaching and/or love of the subject area (n=21), the relationship with students (n=14), and the relationships with colleagues (n=8) (see Table 6). Two of these reasons were identified in Question 6 as other factors that influenced the teachers to remain in the profession: teaching/subject (n=14) and students (n=10). See Table 7 for percentages.

*Enjoying what I do/Self-satisfaction.* The love of teaching was the most frequently declared reason for remaining in teaching. Nine teachers said that they enjoy teaching. Ava (T25), a 10-year high school teacher, stated, “I consider it a calling - as cliché as it sounds. I absolutely love what I do.... I really think that there are people who are born to be teachers, and I think I was one of them.” Simply stating their enjoyment of teaching, six teachers expressed it in a similar manner, “I enjoy it” (Nana, T18); I enjoy

Table 6

Reasons for Remaining in the Profession

Theme	Number of Participants	Number of Responses	Percentage
Enjoying what I do/Self-satisfaction	25	21	84%
Students as motivators	25	14	56%
Colleagues as motivators	25	8	32%

Table 7

Other Reasons for Remaining in the Profession

Theme	Number of Participants	Number of Responses	Percentage
Enjoying what I do/Self-satisfaction	25	14	56%
Students as motivators	25	10	40%

what I do” (Joe, T15); I am enjoying the intellectual challenges of teaching” (Nancy, T11); the enjoyment I get from the profession” (Porter, T10); and “I enjoy the process of education” (Bruce, T23). Finally, Elizabeth (T12) exclaimed, “I enjoy teaching. This is my love.... I had substituted and found out that I was really passionate about what I was doing, and I really decided to go ahead and finish up certification and become a teacher.”

Another teacher expressed her thoughts from the interest and satisfaction aspects by saying:

I think that teaching is interesting every single day, and it gives me the opportunity to do a good job and feel satisfied every single day. And it allows me tremendous flexibility as far as bringing in other interests, being able to communicate or talk about things. I feel like in other professions...I would be so limited in all of those areas.... When I am with kids, I hear their music and I see what they are doing and I feel like as long as I am a part of that, then I am always going to be happy or young, but not young, but a lot more intellectual stimulating than being in a cubical (Susan, T8).

Teachers also cited the subject taught as a reason for remaining in the profession (n=7). These teachers, academic and elective, felt their subject was important to the total

curriculum and to the development of the total child. The academic teachers expressed the importance of their subject as it related to public education, whereas elective teachers centered on the importance to the students' social or career development. John (T16), a high school English teacher put it in simple terms, "The love of the subject, English." A middle school Language Arts teacher, Marie (T24) affirmed this by saying:

I love Language Arts. I love Reading. I think it is important for children to be able to communicate. I think it is important for them to be able to read and be able to write and effectively communicate with each other. It's a need. I'm driven by this. I like the thought that it's a need.

Fred (T4), a middle school Reading teacher, further added:

I believe teaching Reading is extremely important.... I transferred to a school where I could concentrate on Reading...I could have smaller classes, and felt I could have a greater impact on the students than a general studies teacher...help those students be successful in courses and generally in life.

Nancy (T11) indicated the importance of teaching the students social skills that may affect their interaction with others, their future employment, and family relationships.

In the elective subject area, Madeline (T7), a Family and Consumer Science teacher said, "I like the subject matter that I teach. I think it is fun and I think it is really relevant for the kids.... that type of life skills instruction that they are not necessarily going to get from their parents." Additionally, Greg (T9) an elective teacher declared the need for his subject by saying, "As a Career and Technology teacher, I firmly believe that we need to teach our young people how to have a job and hold a job. They need to know or have some type of marketable job skill."

*Students as motivators.* The second most frequent influence response and the first choice for 10 of those teachers were “the students” or “the kids” (n=14). Often the participants used the verb “love”, “like”, or “enjoy” as they articulated their three top reasons for remaining in the profession. John (T16) expressed this sentiment, “My top three reasons for staying in the teaching profession are obviously number one, the students.... They just bring original thought every day. Each day is different.” Josephine (T19) stated “My first reason will be that I really enjoy working with kids.” Others expressed their feelings by saying: “I really love the children” (Sandy, T1). “The kids, definitely what you can do for the kids. Being there for the kids.... I like being a stable person in their lives” (Audry, T13). “I enjoy the kids. I enjoy their perspective. I enjoy the thought that I can influence their perspectives on how they view life and how they approach each other” (Marie, 24). Susan (T8) added,

I like being with the kids. I like talking to them. I like listening to them. I have fun everyday, everyday.... That’s my goal is to teach and have everybody say, “It was a good day. It was a good day for me.”

Nancy (T11) proclaimed, “You know it is fun when you see a kid...the light goes on, and they figure something out.”

*Colleagues as motivators.* Relationships with colleagues (n=8) was the third most frequently stated reason. The experienced teachers interviewed praised other teachers in their schools as a source of encouragement for remaining in teaching. Their comments include: “The staff” (Audry, T13); “I like the people with whom I work” (Sandy, T1); “The people I work with” (Jill, T3); “The other teachers within my department” (Herman, T9); “I enjoy being around my colleagues” (Nancy, T11); “The rapport I have with

colleagues” (John, T16); “The relationship I encounter with the staff” (T10); “I enjoy the companionship of being with other adults...the challenges we face on a daily basis” (Ken, T20). Bailey (T21) identified her co-workers as an additional influence to remain in teaching.

My co-workers probably...they’ve come and gone too in Math. There’s such a shortage of Math teachers and people moving on...but there’s a few that have been there for a while, and you develop your friendship with and you commensurate with. I think that helps if you have somebody to talk to, somebody there that you know is there to help you and understand what you are going through.

In summary, the 10-year experienced teachers’ indicated that the enjoyment of teaching and self-satisfaction were the most important reasons for remaining in the teaching profession. The teacher-student relationships and the teacher-teacher relationships were also reported motivators for their retention.

### *Teacher Commitment*

*Enjoying what I do/Self-satisfaction.* As shown in question one, the passion of teaching and the dedication to their students are evident. This passion and dedication were once again identified as strong links to teacher commitment (see Table 8). This commitment often was related to the participants’ beliefs about teaching or education itself.

Table 8

Results of Commitment

Theme	Number of Participants	Number of Responses	Percentage
Enjoying what I do/Self-satisfaction	25	12	48%
Students as motivators	25	7	28%

About half of the participants identified the enjoyment of teaching as the top commitment influence (n=12). Most of the statements made by them demonstrated their commitment as personal (internal) factors. One teacher began by saying, “I always wanted to be a teacher” (Herman, T9). Another one stated, “I think teaching is a calling” (Ramona, T5) and “I believe in what I am doing...you know it sounds so cliché but heartfelt. You feel like you are making a difference” (Marie, T24). Susan (T8) compared teaching to a marathon.

The drive to get it right...to be able to say I went through the year, I started out good, and I ended up better. Sort of like a marathon. I finished and I finished better in this marathon than I did the marathon I ran the last time. And maybe that is not enough for ten years for somebody. I’m not sure, but I think it keeps everybody in every profession - to just be able to say I get so much thrill out [of teaching], so much satisfaction.

While Joe (T15) summed it up by proclaiming “I feel committed to the job.... It is something that I enjoy and something that I keep trying to get better at doing.”

Some teachers attribute their commitment to the profession by stating that teaching is a great profession, and they enjoy what they do. Bruce (T23) saw his commitment to teaching as a learning process for the students and for himself.

The learning process...I've found over my ten years of teaching it's not necessarily kids per se or children that has kept me in it, but more or less the process of education. The process of being able to teach things and apply those concepts or having people to apply those concepts to real life situations...to watch somebody in the beginning of the year and look at them at the end of the year and see where that growth has taken place and to reflect on your own processes in which you used to help people learn.

Simply stated by Allan (T22), "Enjoy doing it - personal satisfaction."

*Students as motivators.* As documented in question 1, teachers also view their commitment to students (n=7) as influences to their commitment to teaching. These teachers mentioned the elements of student development and growth as related to teacher satisfaction. This inclusive proclamation made by Ramona (T5) reflects the sentiments of two other teachers. "I like working with students, watching them discover and to learn. I think it's...a two-way street working together, watching them grow and I've learned as much from them as they do from me." Marie (T24) sees students as motivators by saying:

The kids. That's the simplest part. Because without them, the job itself... wouldn't have (the) dynamics that it has. It wouldn't change all the time. It wouldn't be so challenging. It wouldn't be so interesting. I mean it's the students are what makes it.

The impact the teacher had on the student's future achievement was also seen as motivation for teachers.

- “When I see a student leave our school and go to another school, and they go to high school, and they are successful.... That keeps me in the business” (Ramona, T5).
- “...having certain children come back and visit and knowing that I made an impact even if just a little bit, that's very important to me”(Audry, T13).
- “...my influence is not great, but if I could do one little thing for every child or most of them, then I've been successful” (Ken, T20).

*Commitment and the future.* As research has indicated, intrinsic motivation is derived from within a person or from an internal reward system. Teacher commitment is viewed as intrinsic or internal motivation. To further investigate the participants' commitment to teaching, questions 13 (considered leaving the profession) and 14 (future teaching plans) were asked to better understand their dedication. The findings from these questions related to job satisfaction and teacher commitment.

During their ten years in this exurban school district, over half of the participants stated that they had not considered leaving the education profession (n=13). The reasons the teachers gave for not considering leaving varied according to the participant. The enjoyment of teaching (n=9), the students (n=6), and the staff (n=4) were reasons most often mentioned. The other 12 teachers indicated they had considered leaving, including two who left the education profession and then returned to teaching. The reasons for leaving were family leave for Merry (T2) who stated, “I took off two years, one year with each child, but I always wanted to come back because I'm just not made to stay home forever and ever.” Susan (T8) explained her resignation as:



I took a two-year break. One of my kids was going into middle school, and I knew the school he was going in was horrible. So, I wasn't going to be torn so I resigned and maybe I would return when everything is all good. One of the big reasons I was happy resigning at that moment was I wasn't real crazy about the professional staff development.

Two of the participants also indicated that they had left teaching prior to coming to the county. Herman (T9) indicated dissatisfaction with teaching.

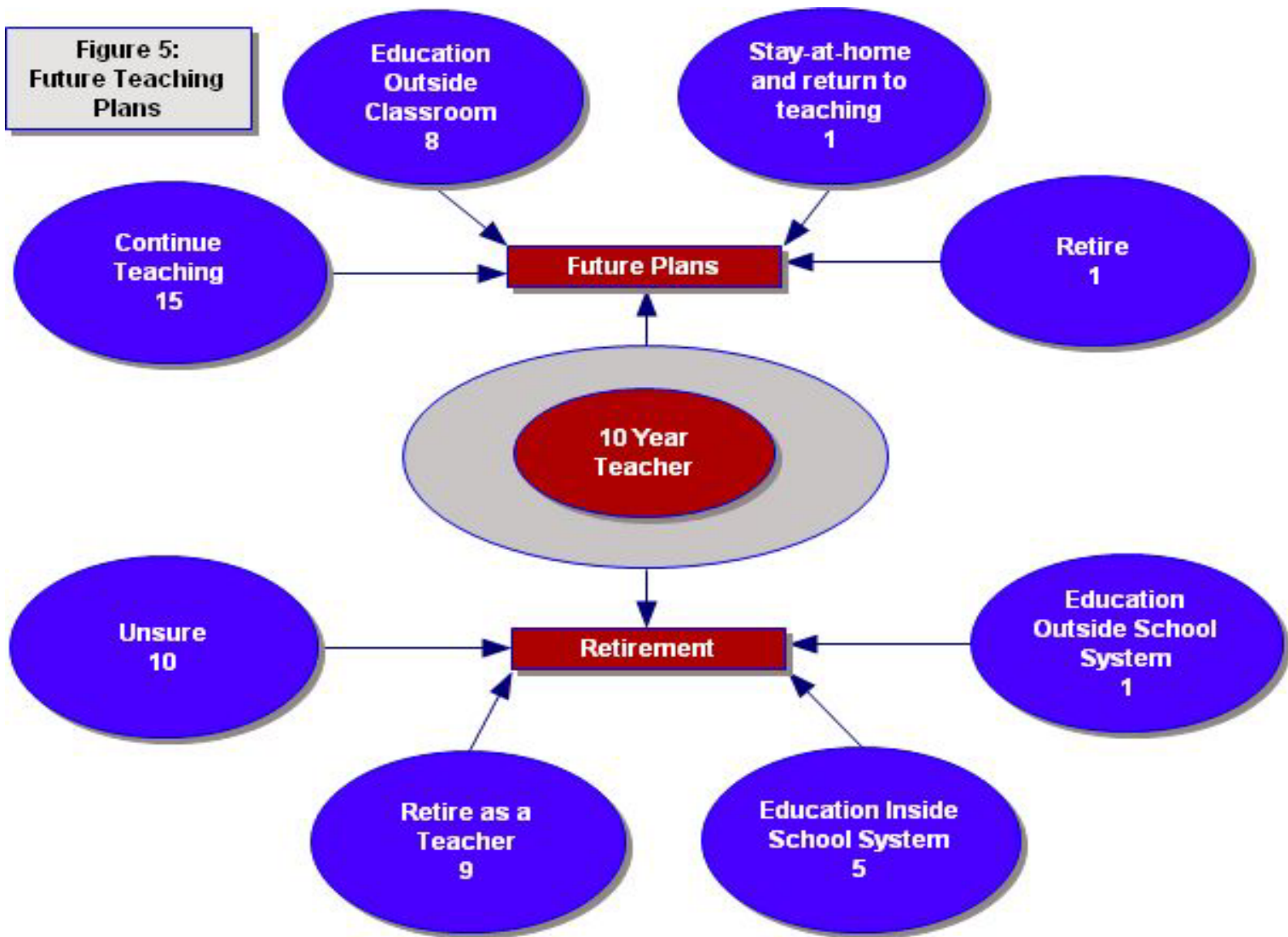
My first teaching experience at (another district)...at the end of the three years I got out of teaching for two years.... You couldn't go outside the box. You had to stay inside the box.... and I just formed an opinion after three years working there, that if this is what public education is all about, I didn't want to be a teacher anymore.

Another teacher, Sandy (T1), took a year off before coming to the county.

Yes, I did take that year off previously; I was burnt-out at that point. I was tired and I just needed a break, and I found out that I really didn't need the break. What I really needed was a different situation.

The future plans of the 25 participants as shown on Figure 5 are as follows: 15 teachers plan to continue as a classroom teacher; eight teachers plan to pursue a different educational positions outside the classroom; one teacher plans to be a stay-at-home mom for five years and then return to teaching; and one teacher will retire this year. When asked about retirement plans, the teachers indicated that: nine plan to retire as classroom teachers; three plan to retire as other educational professionals; seven are not sure if they will retire from teaching or the profession; four made no reference to retirement; one

**Figure 5:  
Future Teaching  
Plans**



plans to retire from the school district and work in another educational field; and one teacher said that she would never retire.

I don't anticipate retiring. I think I'm going to go until I croak. Be in the classroom and when I'm no longer wanted or able to be in the classroom, then I would switch over to private school tutoring...work with soldiers. I'm not ever going to quit (Susan, T8).

Ken (T20) stated that his future plans for teaching were:

If I taught in (the county) my whole life, I would have been at the stage to retire... I'm also at the age where if I up and quit, I don't think anyone is going to employ me anywhere else. My plans are just keep on teaching.... I often joke to other teachers that they will find me collapsed at my desk, but I hope not. But that's what I often envision...just I'll keep on teaching as long as I can give.

Ava (T25) stated that she was not sure what her future plans in teaching were, but she did want to continue to take different educational courses.

I would like to not get to the point where I'm bored or bitter. I want to continue having the enthusiasm so that I know this is what I'm supposed to be doing. I don't want to be one those teachers where the students' say 'why is she here?'

John (T16) stated that students, his subject area, and his colleagues influenced him to remain in teaching. His thoughts about retirement are as follows:

I honestly plan to go all the way. I'd like to teach for at least 30 years. If God's willing...I'd teach more than that, great. I really do not see myself doing any other profession. I like being around the students. The students keep me young. Their energy keeps me invigorated because they inspire me still with their essay

ideas, with their discussion ideas. Although the materials are virtually the same, it is the students that make the difference. Colleagues as well make the difference because colleagues come and go. Some stick around. They are your support for as many years as they stick around. Administrators also change. But this profession is about change and each day is different. As long as you can stay stable and know what your plans are each day and know how to deal with stress, any teacher could be successful and have a long career in a rewarding profession.

In conclusion, the teachers' beliefs about teaching, the personal satisfaction of being a teacher, the influence of being with students (seeing them learn and grow), and collegial relationships has a positive impact on teacher commitment. The individual intrinsic perceptions about these factors may affect the experienced teachers' future commitment in teaching.

### Summary

As shown in Figure 3 (Influence of Commitment on Teacher Retention) in the literature review, the identified influences are parallel with the macrosystem's influences identified in the study. The internal influence of commitment was perceived as a passion for teaching and was often expressed as a "calling." In the words of the teachers, the enjoyment of being a teacher and teaching their subject were viewed as being self-motivating factors. Many also expressed their enjoyment and love of the students and their relationships with their colleagues as motivational influences to remain in teaching. These experienced teachers believed they were making a difference in the lives of their students and they, the teachers, were contributing to society.

During their ten years in this exurban school district, 13 participants stated that they had not considered leaving the education profession. The future plans of the 25 participants include 15 teachers who plan to continue as classroom teachers and 12 plan to retire as classroom teachers or as other educational professionals.

### Conclusion

Teaching is a reward in itself. The experienced teachers enjoy what they do. Some teachers said it is a *calling* while others expressed teaching as a *sense of duty* – doing something important. This feeling is expressed as a form of self-satisfaction and self-sufficiency, caused by witnessing students learn and being successful as a result of the teachers' efforts. The teachers also proclaimed that they are contributing to society. However, according to some interviews, this contribution is about making a difference. Intrinsically, these teachers are responding to a strong human need of self-fulfillment, and teaching allows them to express their energies, beliefs, and meet their needs in a way that improves society and individual students. The teachers believe that the students, their colleagues, and society recognize them for their dedication and efforts.

Teaching is a marathon. The thrill and satisfaction of teaching provides an adrenalin surge for teachers. Each year these teachers are competing with themselves to get better. When the teachers and students win, the teachers' hard work is validated. Constant self-reflection enables the teachers to internalize the rewards of teaching.

Teaching is change. Teaching involves constant variety and change. These changes can occur daily, weekly, yearly, and with each new and different group of students. Teaching involves a sense of adventure and challenge, which is perceived as

lacking in a 9 to 5 cubical job. Acceptance of change, adjusting to change, or evolving with change are welcome challenges for teachers who delight in their students' academic victories.

Students are motivators. Teachers recognize that the smallest of things within individual student are of utmost importance. The one-to-one communication between the teacher and the student, the bond, the recognition of the other as a valuable human being worthy of recognition and respect, are very powerful stimulators for the teacher. These experienced teachers stated that they *love, like, or enjoy* being with students. The students keep them young, current and inspired. Seeing *the light go on* in students or seeing them reach an *A-ha* moment, also serves as a reward to teachers. These feelings may reinforce their own experiences of success as students. Therefore, teachers are eternal students.

Colleagues are sounding boards. The experienced teachers stay for the collegiality and/or friendship of teachers in their school. Their colleagues listen to their concerns, offer advice, and share ideas. They live in a similar world. This relationship is seen as a form of personal affirmation for the experienced teachers. The feedback received from their fellow teachers is important, because the collegial support encourages them to come back to school the next day, or the next year.

#### External Influences: Part I

External motivators can affect experienced teachers' perceptions for staying or leaving. The teachers were asked to judge whether external motivators were retention attractors or inhibitors. Their perceptions were gained by the answers to question 3, the influence of school leadership/school administrators; question 4, the influence of school

atmosphere; question 5, the influence of professional staff development; and question 10, the influence of salary.

*School Leadership*

The influence of school leadership/school administration on experienced teachers' remaining in the profession was examined by the responses to question three. The participants viewed school administration as the principal and the assistant principals in the school. School administration was found to be an influencing factor in retention decisions. As shown in Table 9, a significant number of participants (n=19) described this influence in terms of support. The others (n=6) did not agree with this opinion.

As the teachers responded to the effect of leadership, it was apparent that the meaning of support differed for each participant. Sometimes it meant support of materials, supplies, and discipline issues. Ramona (T5) said,

Table 9

Results of External Influences: Part I

Areas	Total	Positive Influence	%	Little/No/Negative Influence	%
School Leadership	25	19	76%	6	24%
School Atmosphere	25	19	76%	6	24%
Professional Staff Development	25	12	48%	13	52%

I know that in my early years of teaching, the administrators that I had were all pro teacher, were very helpful in every way. I think that was instrumental in helping me stay in the profession in the beginning...very supportive. Tried to

make sure we had the resources that we need to teach and to work in and outside the classroom.... Administrators that I have worked with have all been talented in unique ways...knowing what their strengths are...being able to draw on them. I've found that all the administrators that I have had over the years, we may not always agree about every thing; they always had kids in mind first.

Fred (T4) also exclaimed that,

They allowed me to have small classes...provided pretty good support in resources...allowed me to teach reading. Those were the things that were encouraging and helpful to want me to remain there, remain in teaching, teaching reading, and remaining our school system.

Others spoke of leadership as helping them grow as a teacher or as an individual.

One teacher stated, "They encourage and allow you to grow on your own. They observe and guide and mentor you" (Herman, T9). "They forced me to accept things that were out of my comfort range, and I found that I was good at it" (Susan, T8). John (T16) stated, "After three schools I have taught at, they have always been supportive, open to ideas, open to teamwork concepts.... So it's always been a supportive system when other occupations do not have as much as that team work atmosphere. Porter (T10), a non-educational graduate proclaimed,

School administration had a huge effect because the first job I had coming out of college, a principal took a chance on me, because I had no educational background. I was on a provisional license. Through that provisional license, there were some stumbles...reaching certain criteria in terms of certification and the administration and leadership of that particular school...were very



instrumental in making sure that I went through the proper channels to go through (to) become certified.

Allan (T22), retired military and second career teacher affirmed “It’s more of a case of what, had it been bad, would have resulted. Had the leadership not been as good as it is and has been, I would have been tempted to find a third career.”

Certain teachers differed in their perception to the influence of school leadership. Four teachers (Elizabeth, T12; Joe, T15; Christian, T17; Ken, T20) believed that there was no, very little, or only some positive and negative influence. Louis (T14) expressed himself by using a stronger tone,

I would say that unfortunately if anything, school administration would make me want to quit teaching.... I think there is a dichotomy between teachers and administrators, and, I kind of look at them as being them and not one of us.... I think that 90% of what the administration does is, I hate to say it, but drive teachers away rather than try to retain them. It’s not very positive.

Madeline (T7) exclaimed, “Principals come and go, so there hasn’t been necessarily one person that has influenced me to stay. There has been some people might have influenced me to go away if they hadn’t first.”

The majority of the experienced teachers perceived their administrators as influencing their desire to stay, and as being supportive. The encouragement gained from these experiences was viewed as instrumental to their growth as teachers.

#### *Professional School Atmosphere*

The influence of school atmosphere (school culture or climate) was parallel to that of school leadership with the number of positive influence perceptions (n=19) and little

or no influence (n=6). Individually, the participants expressed their opinions as it related to the students, staff, or administration or the combination of the three. Herman’s (T9) experience in two other school districts was not positive. After being in this exurban school district and in the same high school for ten years, he stated, “This is a very positive teaching environment and a very positive learning environment.” Nana (T18) confirmed this belief by adding, “I enjoy being at school, very comfortable there in both schools.”

*Students as motivators.* To explain their perceptions, 12 participants, as shown in Table 10, referenced students as motivators and the diversity of the student population.

Table 10

Results of School Atmosphere

Theme	Number of Participants	Number of Responses	Percentage
Students as motivators	25	12	48%
Colleagues as motivators	25	10	40%
School leaders	25	4	16%

“The kids are great. I mean the kids keep you current. They keep you active. They keep you young. They keep you busy” (Nancy, T11). Marie (T24) added,

They’re [students] half the reason you stay.... They are the pinnacle...everything else revolves around [them]...they’re what you come every day for. If you don’t enjoy the kids and you don’t like them, then I don’t think you can stay in teaching.

Some teachers in diverse schools, perceived the culture of the school as their relationship to the diversity. Their ideas indicated that they enjoy the cultural diversity, and the challenge that comes with it. Josephine's (T19) opinion was "At my old school...we had mostly middle class kids and very, very, diverse, and I really need diversity like that. Ken (T20) noted the change in the student population by saying, "They've changed the school boundaries. Now it is more a mixed community...the culture and climate has changed. Every year it is completely different. And as a professional you have to keep adjusting."

Christian (T17) is now teaching in the school where he was a middle school student. He said that the school atmosphere had a great influence on him.

It has a great deal [of influence] because I grew up here and I went to school at [school name]. And back when I was coming up, the majority was 80% Caucasian, maybe 10% African American and 10% other, and now it has changed so much to where it is close to 50% Latino, 30% African American and may be 10-15% Caucasian. So the challenge for me to come back and teach here and see how it's changed, to see how the kids are, and how right around here, this neighborhood has changed. And it is real challenging to me to communicate with the Latinos and I've learned a great deal of Spanish and I enjoy it.

Ava (T25) viewed her perceptions from the classroom side.

Depending on the classes, the culture definitely changes. I think there can be times when you feel the climate works against. I think we all have had those classes where there's a certain mix and you think you are fighting a battle that

can't be won. There are too many issues to deal with, that curriculum is the last thing on your mind.

Ramona (T5) stated

Kids are kids, no matter where you are. Whether you are in [this county] or you are in a tiny one-room schoolhouse, they're still kids. I think knowing the demographics of the area you are teaching, understanding the culture and kids you are teaching, will help you be a successful person. I know that our school...all of us actually having to take a look at our culture changes and to deal with our demographic changes right now in order for us to be more successful. If you don't evolve like that, you will not be a happy person and you will want to leave. Me, I'm going to make the evolution and not to go there.

*Colleagues as motivators.* The influence of colleagues (n=10) was often referred to as a relationship or friendship that contributed to a positive school atmosphere.

Experienced teachers often said was that they enjoyed the people they worked with in their school (Audry, T13; Fred, T4; Josephine, T19; Nancy, T11; Porter, T10). Elizabeth (T12) confirmed that her colleagues were very close-knit and compassionate towards each other. After moving to this exurban school district from another state, Bruce's (T23) encounters with his colleagues were expressed in this manner: "I've been really fortunate...to work with people who share a common goal or shared desire but also building a relationship that went outside the school building, outside the classroom, almost like a surrogate family."

Being around positive teachers assisted in creating a positive school atmosphere and directly influenced these experienced teachers. Louis (T14) believed,

There are a lot of teachers that I really admire and that I really respect. And it's a pretty positive place. I think most of teachers are pretty positive here, and just because of that, I think it helps you stay positive and stay motivated to see that kind of a thing.

Marie's (T24) insight was reflected this way:

I think it is really important that you have positive people around you. That you close the door on the people who want to set and whines and wants to complain. Every job has things you can complain about. You need to have people around you who want to take positive action or listen to your ideas about positive action and not be very critical. So I would have to say that's a significant factor too is your school culture or climate.

*School leaders.* For the teachers who described school atmosphere (n=4) in terms of school leadership, school safety and the focus on students and academics were important. Madeline (T7) stated, "I've never been in a school where I didn't feel safe and I've never been in a school where the administration didn't have my back most of the time." Two teachers referred to the administration as contributors to a positive atmosphere. Ramona (T5) said that she liked her administrators because they always had kids in mind and Savannah (T6) recognized that having administrators dedicated to academics not just to athletics was impressive to her.

The change of administration was also influential to two participants. Both of the teachers viewed the change as positive. Audry (T13), a middle school teacher, said,

It is a very positive, climate and especially after [new principal] came. The climate really turned around for [school], and it was a lot more positive, and that's

important as far as wanting to come everyday and having people to lean on and share ideas with.

From the viewpoint of a high school teacher, Bailey (T21) added:

The school atmosphere has changed...with three principals just in the twelve years...and then not only the principals' changing but if your assistant principal that you report to, your department reports to, changes. That's changed more than the principal. So it's kind of enjoyable actually in a way because if you have a conflict with that person it's typically one year maybe two, and then it's going to change. So it's been a very dynamic atmosphere. So even if you have a problem. It's a temporary problem so it makes it kind of easier to deal with.

However, Herman (T9) announced that the administration and school atmosphere in two previous school districts, contributed to his leaving the school and the profession for two years.

Those teachers who did not agree that the school atmosphere influenced them to stay in the profession, they did state that they enjoyed their job and the relationships with the staff and students (Joe, T15; Porter, T10). On the other hand, a change in school atmosphere was beneficial to those teachers who transferred to a different school (Herman, T9; John, T16; Nana, T18; Susan, T8). Susan (T8) summed up her thoughts about the effect of school atmosphere like this:

There were times that the school atmosphere gave me every reason to bail and say this is intolerable, but I still found something that had been unsolved for me or that I needed to do within myself that I can find in this school atmosphere...I sort

of think I reached my peak in this one location and I wanted to go someplace else within [the county].

In summary, over three-fourths of the teachers stated that the school atmosphere was a motivator for their 10-year retention. The relationship with students was ranked higher than teacher relationships and administrators' influences. Although the student population may have changed, the teachers believe they must evolve and adjust to the changing demographics. Additionally, the value of the collegial "surrogate family" relationships was influential, whereas administrative influence received minimal recognition in this area.

#### *Professional Staff Development*

The teachers were divided as to the effectiveness of professional staff development on their 10-year retention. The school district and the local school's staff development opportunities were designed to keep the teachers up-dated in their field, to use this knowledge for self-improvement, and to improve student learning. Twelve of teachers indicated that staff development had a positive influence to their 10-year retention. The other 13 participants viewed it differently: as a positive and negative influence (n=4); not much of an influence (n=2); no influence (n=4); and a negative influence (n=3) (see Table 11).

The participants, who stated that staff development was a motivational factor, expressed it in a numerous ways: "Staff development makes you feel like a professional" (Marie, T24); "The staff development...is one thing that kind of gets me motivated. At least it makes me try new things" (Nana, T18). John (T16) stated that one of the reasons he chose to teach in this exurban county was for the staff development opportunities.

Table 11

Results of Professional Staff Development

Total	Positive Influence	%	Negative Influence	%	Pos/Neg Influence	%	Not Much	%	None	%
25	12	48%	3	12%	4	16%	2	8%	4	16%

Staff development in [Comstock County], is very strong. I have a choice between [another county] and [Comstock County] and I always heard that [Comstock] had strong professional development whether it [is] for teaching my field or multicultural education. It helps with new ideas and it keeps up to date with the latest research in education.

Fred (T4) added, “It has been helpful in developing my understanding of professional literature, but also developing a collegial atmosphere among the staff.”

In relations to personal growth, content specific staff development (e.g., Family and Consumer Sciences, Math, Physical Education, Spanish for Educators, Teachers as Readers, Wilson Reading, etc.) was perceived as most beneficial to five of the participants. Others listed classes and programs outside their teaching areas (e.g., gang awareness, masters degree cohorts, mentoring, multicultural summits, Praxis preparation classes, tuition paid classes, etc.) as being helpful. Josephine (T19), a National Board Certified teacher, stated,

I have been to so many staff development events. I feel like I have been inspired, my knowledge has expanded because of the opportunities I had. Some of them, most of them, I didn’t have to pay for which was wonderful. Since I did National Board, you don’t just go to enhance yourself. You take it back to the classroom;



make sure you are enhancing the learning of your students. So going to professional development is really important to me.

Herman (T9) affirmed his belief by adding, “It has allowed me to grow on my own.”

For the teachers who expressed a different perception about the influence of staff development centered their views on the county’s requirement of 30 hours of staff development per year. According to the Comstock County Regulations, if the teachers did not fulfill this obligation, they would not receive a contract to teach the following year. The teachers stated that they found staff development to be repetitive (Jill, T3; Sandy, T1) and a waste of time (Jill, T3; Joe, T15). Ava (T25) expressed her opinion this way:

Forced staff development doesn’t work a lot of the times. There are so many things I’ve gotten out of small group settings with peers that have been more beneficial to me. And I think when you have certain hours that people need to commit to professional development, that a lot of times, it breeds resentment.

People are sitting there not because they want to be, but because they are required to be.

In agreement with this, Merry (T2) said,

A lot of the courses that we are required to take; I don’t feel are very useful to me.

The ones that I elect to take, I enjoy them and they help me. But I don’t think they have any bearing on whether I remain a teacher or not.

Finally, Christian (T17) aimed his views towards the county’s involvement in staff development,

I feel it's a lot of time, energy, probably money that they had to bring the speakers in. I think they need to think things through before they just say, 'Ok, we're going to do this', and get excited about it. I just think it needs to be effective and be geared [to a] particular school.

To conclude, about half of the teachers expressed that staff development was influential to their remaining in teaching. These opportunities allowed the teachers to feel like professionals and to grow professionally. The other half viewed its influence as being both positive and negative to no influence on their return status.

#### External Influences: Part II

In this section, the experienced teachers gave their perceptions of other attractors or inhibitors for remaining in the profession. These factors may affect their personal and professional satisfaction with the teaching profession. Their impressions were gained through the answers to question 10, the influence of family, friends, or colleagues; and question 12, the influence of salary.

##### *Influence of Family, Friends, and Colleagues*

The support and encouragement of other people (family, friends, and colleagues) served as a motivational factor for remaining in teaching. Overwhelmingly, 24 of the 25 participants stated that their family was supportive of them being teachers and was influential in their remaining in the profession. Participants also identified friends (n=9) and colleagues (n=19) as external influences (see Table 12).

Table 12

Results of External Influences: Part II

Areas	Total	Positive Influence	%	Little/No Influence	%	No Response	%	Other	%
Family	25	24	96%	1	4%				
Colleagues	25	19	76%			6	24%		
Friends	25	9	36%	2	8%	10	40%	4	16%

*We are family.* During the interviews, the family was described as a spouse, children, or parents. Providing the teachers with encouragement and being good listeners were identified components of family motivation. When speaking of family encouragement, Ava (T25) stated “Family has influenced me just by listening. They note that there’s a genuine love of what I do and I think they support that.” Susan’s (T8) first response was, “My kids like the idea that I’m a teacher”, and Nana (18) proclaimed it this way, “My family has always been supportive. My husband tells me all the time ‘I’m so proud of you’. He acts like I have done something really wonderful.” Family members were also influential in encouraging three teachers to choose teaching as a profession (Bruce, T23, mother; Fred, T4, mother; and John, T16, grandmother).

During the interviews, the teachers would often refer to other family members who were teachers. Seven participants had spouses or children who are employed in the county or in nearby school districts. Sharing the same profession was viewed as a positive influence. Allan (T22) stated, “Positively, as my wife decided to become a teacher at the same time that I retired from the Army.” Louis’ (T14) response indicated discussing information with his wife was important.

The big one is that my wife is also a teacher and she works in a [this county] high

school...occasionally we turn on the School Board meeting at night and we listen and we talk about it together. So it's part of our routine...she's taught nine years, so it's become just a part of our lives. That's the big thing that has influenced me. Ava (T25) said, "Even though my sister and I teach two totally different things, we bounce ideas off of each other a lot of times."

The teaching schedule, vacations, and summers off with family were also recognized to be somewhat influential. Savannah (T6) stated, "My kids have said over and over again they're so glad I'm home when they are there. They really appreciate me being there when they need me." Merry (T2) said,

My husband...he's like, this is the best job in the world for you because you can be home with the kids. You've got two months off and you can reconnect with them. When there is a snow day, you can be home.

Madeline (T7) also emphasized the teaching schedule as important. "My family definitely has - just because I have the summer to spend with them and having the same holidays and my husband is a teacher too. So it's kind of a family thing."

*A friendly favor.* Friends were the lowest of three influences (family, friends and colleagues) in Port Encouragement with nine participants responding that friends were motivators to their retention. Four participants identified other associates as influential; one teacher stated that friends were not influential; one teacher stated that he had no friends; and 10 teachers did not identify friends in their response. Ava (T25) declared, "My friends, in and out of the profession, again have listened to complaints, concerns, and happy ending stories...if you have someone who will listen to you, that's a big help." Merry (T2) affirmed this by saying, "My friends outside the profession actually hold me

in higher esteem than I guess the usual public. Teachers are always saying, ‘Oh, we get no respect’. Well, I get a lot of respect from my friends.”

*Colleagues as motivators.* Although colleagues were seen as positive internal motivators they were also perceived as external motivators (N=19). Six participants did not indicate the influence of colleagues in their responses. For those responding, they found these relationships as positive interactions that influenced their staying power.

The participants explained that they shared similar teaching ideas with their colleagues, they enjoy being with them and some think of their colleagues as their friends. Some of their comments were as follows: “I made my best friends here in the profession” (Merry, T2). “My friends tend to be all teachers.... We take care of each other...I say, these people are thinking like me” (Susan, T8). John (T16) expressed it this way,

Colleagues are probably the best because I see them five days a week sometimes 6 days a week depending on athletic events. Colleagues are always there to support you because they can relate to the stresses of the classroom, the misbehaviors, parent phone calls, administration expectations, county and state regulations. So colleagues are probably at the top of the list as influencing me to remain in the teaching profession.

Jill (T3) stated, “I like the people I work with a lot.... I think they are pretty positive.... We have very similar ideas. We have a lot in common and probably work with kids pretty similarly...just a pretty positive environment.” Nancy (T11) simply said, “I enjoy the relationships here at school.” Joe (T15) added, “[I] enjoy working with my colleagues

and I like what they are doing because a lot of them like what they are doing and planning to stay in the profession.”

The working relationship was also perceived as encouragement for both the experienced teachers and their colleagues. Audry (13) said, “My colleagues...it’s just bouncing things off of them if something goes wrong...just going to them...they remind you what it’s all about. Marie (T24) proclaimed that this relationship was like a two way street.

Colleagues...just by being positive and understanding people to discuss options, how to do things, how to change the way you do things. Almost like a two-way street in learning ability. I’ve been fortunate enough to have colleagues who share. They share their ideas. They don’t mind if you take their idea and change it some. They’re very receptive to my ideas, you know, that kind of openness is supportive just in and of itself.

Ava (T25) reflected on the impact of colleagues by stating,

The people in my department, colleagues have influenced me by their staying power. There are a few in my department who have been there a very long time and I remember when I started, thinking...they are like these legacies. They just must have these files of assignments and can do no wrong and ...I was in awe when I got my ten-year pin and [we] all were all talking about when I first started...it was good to see that they think of me as a good teacher. And that contributed to my staying.

In conclusion, family, friends, and colleagues who listened to the concerns and successes of the experienced teachers in the classroom, school, or county, were identified

as motivators for the teachers to continue in the field. Family support was recognized as the highest of these external influences followed by collegial relationships. The sharing of teaching experiences with their peers was viewed as two-way learning. This valuable relationship and the staying power of other classroom teachers serve as an incentive to remain in the teaching profession.

### Influence of Salary

Salary, as an incentive to remain in teaching, received a mixed review among the experienced teachers. As shown in Table 13 their perceptions represented the following: 10 teachers stated salary was an influence (8 as a positive influence and 2 viewed it as a negative influence); 4 teachers stated that salary somewhat influenced their decision; and 11 teachers stated that salary did not influence their decision to remain in the profession.

Table 13

#### Results of Salary Influence

Total	Positive Influence	%	Negative Influence	%	Some Influence	%	No Influence	%
25	8	32%	2	8%	4	16%	11	44%

Of the eight teachers who viewed salary as a positive motivator, three (Merry, T2; Louis, T14; and Ava, T25) said it was a “good salary.” Merry (T2) explained, “It’s a good salary. I mean even part time, I pay for my daycare and I have extras so it’s good.” Other teachers explained the influence of their salary differently. Joe (T15) “I would say that it’s the positive reason, and I would say that because I believe that [Comstock] as far

as pay is pretty decent if you look at nation wide.” John (T16) referenced his comments towards job security.

In today’s age in market, teaching and getting tenure in teaching, the job security is great. In most other professions, there are so many turnovers and the salary can be whatever it is but I’m maintaining a living. I’m able to live within ten minutes from my school by owning a house. So the salary has improved over the past few years. It is getting closer to cost of living. Each year this county has done a good job with cost of living adjustments.

Ken (T20) stated that being the main financial supporter in the family, he held a second job during his ten-year tenure.

A lot because my wife’s...salary wasn’t very high and I was drawing most of the money to support the family... So at different times over the past ten years, I’ve had to have a second job... thinking about the salary and doing the extra studies (and) I have a masters...was a big force in staying.

Two female teachers proclaimed that their salary was a negative influence but they continue to stay in the profession. Audry (T13), a single teacher, expressed it this way.

That’s one reason I’ve looked outside of teaching is because it’s very hard to live, especially in [another county] on my own on a teacher salary. But I don’t feel like it is the salary that keeps me here. It’s what I’m doing for the kids that keep me here. I am glad that the salary increases. And I was glad for the increase when I got my masters.



Jill (T3), a married teacher declared, “If I hadn’t gotten married, I don’t know if I would have stayed in the profession honestly because of the pay. The pay is just tough.”

Those who stated that the salary somewhat influenced them, related it to retirement possibilities. Allan (T22) stated,

It’s satisfactory because I think that [Comstock] does do a good job in trying to be competitive with the other school districts in the area. And the fact that I can supplement that with my retirement pay makes it so I can have a good standard of living.

Fred (T4) perceived it a little differently.

The salary issue was what kept pushing me in other directions. The summers I worked construction, I wanted to stay because I made a lot more money as a construction worker than I did as a teacher... at my age, now that is not such a big issue because I want to stay and maintain a retirement. But as a younger person, that was a big issue.

A significant number of teachers (n=11) shared the perception that salary did not influence their ten-year retention. Three of them indicated this based on their spouse’s salary contributing to the family income. Bailey (T21) said, “That wasn’t really an issue because for me it’s like, my husband works as well, so it’s a second salary and I was already on the master’s schedule. So it wasn’t a very big influence for me.” Savannah (T6), a career switcher stated,

Salary didn’t have a lot for me. My husband makes a good amount. We both were engineers prior to starting this.... I took a huge cut when I went from industry to teaching. So really salary, if it didn’t keep up.... I might look elsewhere once the

kids were older. But the salary and the benefits are reasonable, not great, but they're reasonable...if something happened to my husband earlier on, I'd probably would have gone back to industry...just so that I could have provided more of the things my kids wanted to do, places they want to go, things like that.

Josephine (T19) added,

I don't want you to tell the county that they are paying us enough but they're paying us pretty decent. Well, if I were in this for the money, I wouldn't be doing this job. So let's just put it that way. The money really doesn't influence me that much, but I do also have two incomes. If I only had one income, I'd probably be suffering a little bit especially with the cost of housing around here. So I think it is different for everybody. But it is the health insurance is pretty nice which is included in the salary. Decent.

However, Bruce (T23) felt recognition was more important than salary. "I don't think it has a major impact...it's more the processes that are involved. Being compensated for it, I think, would be more a recognition or emotional compensation as oppose monetary."

Others articulated that salary did not influence their retention in a more direct way. "None whatsoever. I have frequently said that I would teach if they didn't pay me. Don't tell the county that. Because the next thing I know, I'll be getting a notice..." (Sandy, T1). "It didn't have any influence at all. I understood and knew about the salary before going into the profession...it had no bearing on whether I stayed in the profession or left...and that because I enjoy the job" (Porter, T10). Herman (T9) added,

None. I knew coming into the teaching profession that it was not a well-paid profession. And I accepted that from the very beginning. I just manage my money

accordingly. I'm here for the kids. If I wanted to make money, lots of money, then I could go to work in the construction industry and make a whole lot more than I make as a teacher. So for me, salary isn't a big issue.

Marie (T24) summed up her thoughts by saying, "None. I made more money in each of my professions before this."

Overall, 32% of the teachers perceived salary as an influence to their retention. The pay scale with benefits and the continuation of salary increases to meet cost of living were viewed as positive incentives to remain in the district. Forty-four percent of the teachers said that the salary had little or no influence on their retention. Those teachers justified their position by explaining that they had other financial supports.

### Summary

The working conditions for teachers are essential elements for retaining them. The study of the direct effect of the mesosystem (school leadership, school atmosphere, school-level professional staff development) and exosystem, (school district professional staff development and salary) on the participants' ten-year retention indicated that the influence of school leadership and school atmosphere were important external retention motivators.

The feelings and experiences within the teachers were motivators. Teaching students provided an environment where teachers could work without adult competition (be in charge) and could receive affection as well as personal pride in seeing the students learn. In more diverse schools, the teachers indicated that they enjoy the cultural diversity and the challenge that comes with it. As a separate motivator in the mesosystem, the

participants perceived the school administration as supportive and influential. The findings also indicated that these experienced teachers were divided as to the influence of professional staff development, and the influence of salary was perceived as having less of an influence. Additionally, the support and encouragement from family were perceived as a positive motivator.

Commonalities from this study and Table 4 (Frequently Used Words/Phrases Identified as Retention Motivators), in the literature review were found. Of the areas listed, the participants did not emphasize their involvement in decision-making, student achievement, and mentoring as internal motivators. However, the school atmosphere that included support, interactions with students, interaction and professional collaboration with colleagues, and avenues for professional growth were identified working conditions conducive to continuation in the teaching profession.

### Conclusion

In this section, external motivational factors were investigated. Seventy-six percent of the experienced teachers perceived school leadership and the professional school atmosphere as a positive influence. The school administration is viewed as supportive, encouraging, and instrumental to the teachers' retention. Students and colleagues are believed to be the major contributors to the school atmosphere. This is where the teaching evolution revolves around the students, who keep the teachers inspired, current, constantly changing and adjusting to meet the students' needs as well as the teachers' feeling of self-fulfillment. This atmosphere also illustrates that the experienced teachers' colleagues are close-knit surrogate families providing them with

support, compassion, and the desire to continue teaching. This two-way learning is beneficial for the experienced teachers and their fellow teachers.

About 50% of the teachers perceived professional staff development as a positive influence. Some teachers felt like professionals, received motivation, personal growth, and a willingness to try new things while others found this port to be repetitive and a waste of time.

Eighty-six percent of the teachers viewed the influence from family and colleagues as positive. They are considered sounding boards for the teachers' concerns and successes. This feedback and encouragement helps the teachers to continue to recognize their genuine love for teaching and enhances their staying power in the education field.

Finally, 40% of the experienced teachers perceived salary as a positive influence. The salary, benefits, and job security offered by the school district helped to recruit teachers to this exurban district. However, the other 60% found the district's location, their passion for teaching, and having two incomes overshadowed the salary's influence.

### Recruitment and Retention

Retaining effective teachers and recruiting new teachers are goals for all public education stakeholders. In this section, dealing with stress (Question 11) was investigated as a retention strategy for experienced teachers. Next, the experienced teachers gave their perceptions regarding ways to recruit and retain teachers. Their suggestions were gained by the answers to question seven, attracting and retaining teachers (school district); question eight, retaining teachers (school level); and question nine, suggestions to new recruits.

## Dealing with Stress

Teaching can be stressful. When asked the questions, “How are you dealing with or dealt with stress or burnout? Has it been a problem?” twenty-two of the 25 experienced teachers said “Yes,” they have dealt with stress and had developed their own coping mechanisms. When dealing with stress, these coping mechanisms or stress relievers have allowed them to return to the classroom for ten years.

The causes of stress varied according to the participant. Thirteen teachers gave reasons for their stress with no two of the reasons being the same. The only common thread among all the participants was that they had experienced stress. Herman (T9) stated, “Stress is always an issue. There is always going to be stress in the teaching field.” Nancy (T11) added, “I get stressed sometimes but I don’t care what job you’re in, you get stressed sometimes.” “You can’t escape stress,” exclaimed Louis (T14).

Some of the participants related their stress to their teaching field. Susan (T8) said, “Stress is a daily part of special ed...there’s issues that regular classroom teachers often do not come across...Either paper work stress or child stress or parent stress.” However, Marie (T24), a regular classroom teacher, viewed it this way, “I think that class sizes and the amount of paperwork are hard. It’s really hard.” Louis (14) added, “That’s the reason people leave because of stress.”

Burnout was not addressed by many of the participants. Five teachers stated that they had experienced burnout while in the county or in another school district (Ava, T25; Herman, T9; Jill, T3; Ken, T20; Nana, T18). Two teachers indicated that they had never experienced burnout (Ramona, T5; Madeline, T7); and one teacher said she did not believe in burnout (Susan, T8).

To deal with stress or burnout, the participants identified the following stress relievers:

- “doing outside activities” (e.g., exercise, reading, hobbies, etc.) (n=14)
- “talking to others” (e.g., colleagues, family, others) (n=11)
- “enjoying a personal day,” “vacations,” “summer breaks” (n=5) and
- “changing subjects/grade level or schools” (n=4).

In their own words, here are some of their suggestions: “When it gets really stressful, I exercise. Sometimes I’ll step up my exercise routines...I’ll work out. I think dealing with stress has come easier as the years have gone by as I’ve gotten older” (Audry, T13). “It’s been a huge problem and I deal with it by talking.... I’ve looked for other positions within the county and outside of teaching. But there is always something that keeps me here”(Savannah, T6).

Suggestions including changing schools, subject area, or grade level are as follows: “It has been a problem in the past, and one way was transferring schools” (Fred, T4). “I think that stress and burn out has been a problem and that’s why after five years at [a high school]. I wanted to try something different. I got certified in reading and [transferred to a middle school]” (Ava, T25).

Indirectly, I’ve been burnt out a couple of times. How I deal with it? Now I either change a grade level, change a subject; I try to teach something else, so I am continually restarting myself over. Learning a new subject. Learning a new level so that you are not just being stuck there. Not so much being stuck, but just vegetating. It’s like replenishing your battery - it gives you a new insight (Ken, T20).

Bailey (T21) and Christian (T17) offered these ideas to relieve stress:

I take a mental health day every now and then when I need it. How do I deal with it? I usually blow off some steam with my colleagues, and just having them tell me that they understand, and they have been through that, or they are experiencing the same problem, kind of make me feel better. I become extremely organized, and I am a very good time management person. I can multi-task and get a lot more done than most people probably could in the same amount of time.

So, I've learned to use my time more wisely (Bailey, T21).

“Burnout.... Someone who gets burnt out, I can't imagine...we get June, July, August off, Christmas break. You got Spring Break, Thanksgiving. You got snow days. What else do you need?” (Christian, T17). John (T16) expressed his viewpoint as influenced by his years of experience:

It's been an amazing ten years. I can't believe that I've taught for ten years. I go back to my faith as the key foundation of why I'm not too stressed and too burnt out. Before I said I took naps. Naps are a key thing that helps me to relax. I coach volleyball.... The blocks that we have, planning or duty that also helps relieve stress.... I've been able to deal with the stress and burn out issues, because I've got routines down; lesson plans down, parent support, student support, department support, and admin support.

To conclude, stress can affect job satisfaction and job performance. The majority of the experienced teachers stated they had experienced stress had developed multiple ways to relieve stress in order to continue in the education profession.



## Recruitment Suggestions

Recruitment of quality teachers is the goal for all school districts. Here the participants gave suggestions to the school districts for recruiting teachers to the county. The ten-year experienced teachers proclaimed that being a teacher gave them the opportunity to work with children and help them set goals, serve as a role model, and the provided opportunity to establish collaborative relationships with colleagues and administrators. To give new teachers the opportunity that these experienced teachers have enjoyed, thirty-six suggestions (with some duplications) for attracting teachers were given.

The top attractors as perceived by these experienced teachers consist of: salary and benefits (n=15), the mentoring program (n=10), and offering assistance for housing (n=6). See Table 14 for a list of common recruitment attractors. In addition, the location of the school district was noted as a selling point. Susan (T8) stated, “I love the area. I will probably never leave. It’s got everything.” Bruce (T23) added, “The locality itself...being 30 minutes from Washington, D.C...not far from Richmond, Fredericksburg...its history. It offers opportunities [for a] history teacher.”

On the other hand, the locality of this exurban school district had some negative appeal due to the cost of living and housing in the area. The following comments were made:

- “I would think that would be difficult in that the cost of living here is so high. It would be difficult to attract young, single folks” (Nancy, T11).
- “It’s tough because if you are single and you are going to try and make it and come here and buy a house or whatever, the prices are outlandish” (Christian, T17).

Table 14

Common Recruitment Attractors

Attractors	Participants' Comments
Salary	<p>The most obvious attractor is the starting salary (Herman, T9)</p> <p>It comes down to money and the starting salary (Louis, T14)</p> <p>Salaries are pretty good (Merry, T2)</p> <p>It has competitive pay (Marie, T24)</p> <p>Money is a big factor (Elizabeth, T12)</p> <p>Pay Scale (Audry, 13)</p> <p>The pay (Jill, T3)</p> <p>The county has raised the level of money for new teachers (Ken, T20)</p>
Benefits	<p>Good benefits package, health benefits, and they contribute to your 401K (Madeline, T7)</p> <p>Benefits package (Herman, T9)</p> <p>Fringe Benefits are definitely an issue (Elizabeth, T12)</p> <p>The majority of the benefits are great (Audry, T13)</p> <p>They pay 7% of your retirement (Josephine, T19)</p> <p>We have a very good retirement plan (Ava, T25)</p>
Mentoring	<p>Strong mentoring program (Sandy, T1)</p> <p>Mentoring program (Bailey, T21; Bruce, T23; John, T16; Ramona, T5; Savannah, T6)</p> <p>Mentoring of lead teachers (Merry, T2)</p> <p>Mentoring program has been helpful (Fred (T4)</p>

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	Mentorship program, we do an excellent job (Ken, T20)
	Mentoring program to give a support base for the teachers (Bruce, T23)

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Assistance for	Assist young, new teachers with finding housing (Fred, T4)
Housing	Try to help them with housing (Jill, T3)
	Need to look at housing, affordable housing (Nancy, T11)
	Helping with the cost of living (Marie, T24)
	Use bulletin board advertisement about roommates (Merry, T2)

- “Housing, in particular in this area is very discouraging for new teachers” (Nana, T18).
- “It’s just the cost of living here is so high that is it difficult to pull people from lower cost of living areas” (Bailey, T21).
- “It’s expensive to live here and yet many teachers have found places to live” (Susan, T8).

Other thoughts about the recruitment efforts of the school district included continuation of existing incentives and changes to others.

- “I think what we are doing is working” (Ava, T25).
- Continue to promote and explore the superintendent’s theme of a ‘World Class’ education and school accreditation (Christian, T17; Nana, T18).
- Continue to promote the county’s specialty schools (John, T16).
- Continue to promote professional staff development as a means for educators to increase their education (Elizabeth, T12).
- Eliminate some of the certification tests barriers (Porter, T10).

- Lessen the workload for new teachers (Bruce, T23; Merry, T2; Sandy, T1).
- Monitor class size for all teachers (Audry, T13; Jill, T3; Marie, T24).
- Assign new teachers a classroom (Josephine, T19).
- Incorporate more diversified electives in all schools so that “schools are more cooperative than competitive” (John, T16).

In brief, to recruit teachers to this exurban school districts, the experienced teachers listed common attractions of salary, mentoring, and assistance with housing. Although the location of this school district has the benefits of being near historical and cultural attractions, the cost of living and housing were viewed as hindrances to attract some teachers to the area.

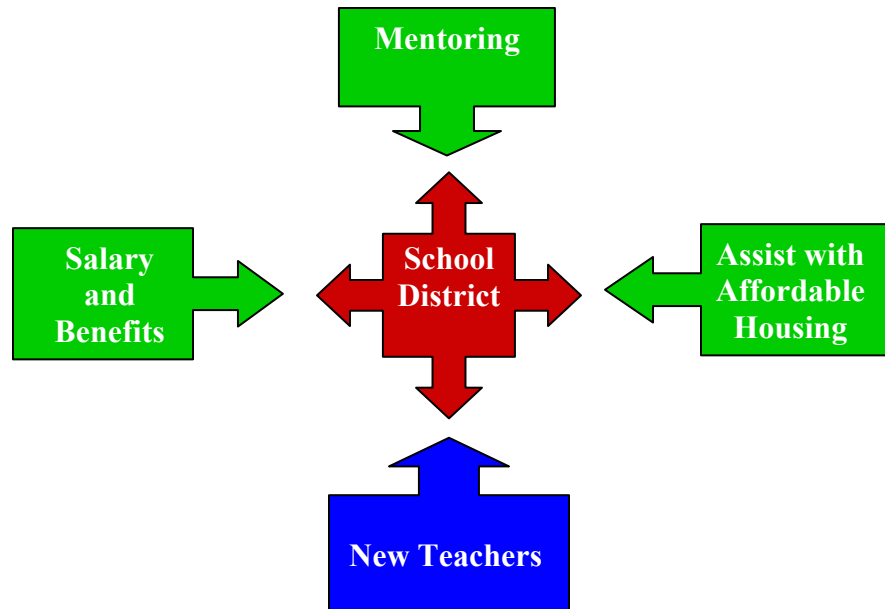
#### *Retention Suggestions – School District and Schools*

The experienced secondary teachers’ offered a variety of suggestions for retaining teachers in the school district. Based on their perceptions, attraction and retention go hand-in-hand. Three of the attractors were also identified as retention: continue or improve the mentoring program (n=6), increase the salary and/or keep it up with the cost of living (n=5), and assistance with affordable housing (n=6) were common themes seen as both attraction and retention motivators or incentives (see Figure 6).

Mentoring of new teachers has been an incentive for attracting teachers to the school district. It was also given as a retention factor. Fred (T4) stated that mentoring had been helpful but needed to be strengthened; and Sandy (T1) agreed that it had improved and is continuing to improve. Savannah (T6) declared to “make sure that they (new teachers) have a good mentor...someone who is experienced.” Allan (T22) confirmed

Figure 6:

Attraction and Retention Motivators



this by saying, “Make sure that the mentor program has people in it who truly want to mentor a new teacher. Willing to spend the time and provide the leadership and environment to build a good teacher.”

At the school level, the mentoring program was also highlighted. Nine teachers indicated the importance of continuing it as a means of retention. Joe (T15) said, “The mentoring is great.” Ken (T20) said, “We are doing a mentoring system and that works quite well.” Herman (T9) added, “Their mentorship program has done very well with helping the younger teachers to stay in teaching.” Meanwhile, Nancy (T11) saw mentoring as a benefit for both the mentor and the protégé.

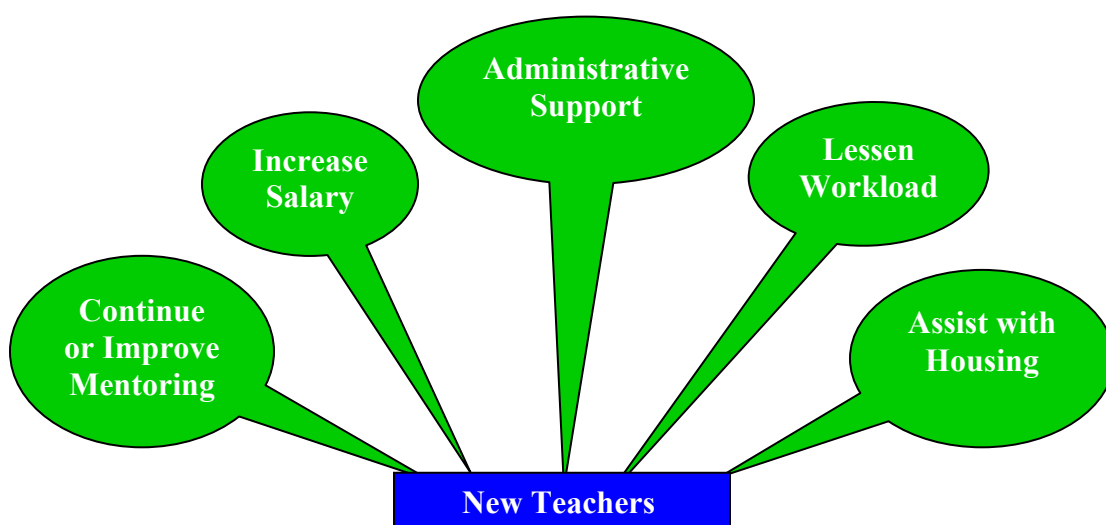
When discussing salary as a retention motivator, the teachers expressed their beliefs centered on increasing the salary as a means for new teachers to afford to live in

this exurban district and to assist them with affordable housing. The participants did not offer ways to do this but they explained the importance of the issue. Ramona (T5) stated, “Teachers who are young, single, they cannot afford to live in this area. There are some things they can do monetarily to help them get started, get established.” Savannah (T6) stated, “Obviously pay has to commensurate with the ability to live in a reasonable distance from the school you work at.”

In addition to mentoring, increasing salary, and assistance for affordable housing, administrative support was perceived as a retention motivator at the district level (n=8) and the school level (n=16). (See Figure 7 for the common retention suggestions.) The administrative support identified at the district level was proclaimed in general terms. The overall suggestions for administrators were to be supportive, ensure that the teachers feel supported, and to effectively communicate with teachers. Fred (T4) offered the following suggestion:

Figure 7:

Common Retention Suggestions



The administration needs to ask teachers more about what they think should be done, could be done to make their teaching more effective, make the school's academic atmosphere more conducive to learning, and make the atmosphere more inviting to teachers and students.

At the school level, specific suggestions were given for administrative support. Each participant based their responses on their relationships with their present or previous administrators. The following list provides suggestions for administrators to improve retention at the local school level.

- (1) Listen to the staff (Be open to suggestions and opinions/improve communication lines)
- (2) Get to know your staff (Talents and strengths)
- (3) Recognize your staff
- (4) Be more proactive than reactive
- (5) Be more consistent
- (6) Be a strong leader
- (7) Be visible

Another retention motivator for the school district and the schools, was to lessen/minimize the workload for new teachers. Six participants commented on the effect of the new teachers' work assignment levels and their relationship to retention. Sandy (T1) stated "I think we need to take some of the workload off of young teachers or new teachers, and instead of giving them a full (load), give them a little more time for planning and for paperwork, which is overwhelming." Ken (T20) agreed, "I know it would be helpful if the first-year teacher would have a lighter load than experienced

teachers...(at least) until they did find their feet.” One teacher, Bruce (T23), compared the teaching expectations of new teachers and experienced teachers.

We have these brand new teachers and the expectation is for them to come and do the same thing as a teacher (with) 10 years or more (experience). They are expected to do the same exact job. It’s really kind of unfair to them and that’s why they get burnt out.

Additional workload perceptions were cited by Marie (T24), who stated, “...to retain teachers is to control the size of the classes because that manages the workload.” Louis (T14) said, “I definitely think that there is truly a feeling among teachers that they do too much work that is not related to teaching the students.” Louis’s (T14) perception is the same as Bailey’s (T21), who advises, “I think there needs to some way of making it easier without tying them up, so they can focus on the instruction and stuff important to the kids, because that’s what we’re here for.”

Two teachers’ responses relate to staff development. Merry (T2) commented, “Another thing that might retain teachers (is) more time to plan rather than go to all those orientation meetings when you are new...maybe some in-house things that directly pertain to what you are doing.” Additionally, Sandy (T1) implied the same by saying, “I think we overload these people with information and under load them with experience.” In summary, although mentoring, salary, and affordable housing are seen as both recruitment and retention incentives, administrators who support and recognize their teachers, lessen the workload of new teacher, and who are more proactive than reactive could increase teacher retention.



### *Retention Suggestions - New Teachers*

As new teachers enter the teaching arena in this exurban school district, the 10-year experienced teachers offered them suggestions for a long tenure in the profession. Each participant on average offered at least three suggestions. The most common ideas appeared in the areas of mentoring (n=8), seeking help (n=8), concentrating on teaching and students (n=6), and developing organizational skills (n=6). Overall general suggestions for retention were also given (n= 12). See Table 15 for suggestions for retention.

Teaching is a learning profession. Teachers learn to teach, and they learn from their students how to teach. Each day is different and the approach to teaching a concept may change by class period, by day, or by year. “It’s almost like the weather. If you don’t like the weather, just wait, it will change. Well, that’s how...teaching is. It is constantly changing” (Marie, T24). Ramona (T5) stated “...you are training America’s future and tomorrow these kids are 2 one day and 22 the next...and you have to work with differences. That’s a hard thing to do. Everyday is different and it should be.” Nana (T18) said, “It [teaching] takes a lot of perserverance and lots of patience and you don’t always see...immediate results.”

To gain expereince and satisfaction from the profession, five teachers expressed their perceptions on how much time it may require to become comfortable as a teacher. Porter (T10) stated, “Realize that it takes at least three or four years to get to the point where you feel comfortable being in the classroom.” Merry (T2) stated “...they need to realize that after the first five years, it becomes easier.” Whereas Elizabeth (12) commented, “First of all, it is going to take at least three years before you find out if you

Table 15

25 Suggestions for Teacher Retention

Area	Suggestions	Participant(s)
Mentoring	Use your mentor	Fred, T4; Ramona, T5; Herman, T9; Elizabeth, T12; Audry, T13; Ken, T22; Bruce, T23; Marie, T24
Seek help	Ask questions	Fred, T4; Madeline, T7; Josephine, T19; Ken, T20; Bruce, T23; Marie, T24)
	Get with a good group of people	Jill, T3
	Work with your department or team	Fred, T4; Madeline, T7; Audry; T13
	Listen to the voice of experienced teachers	Madeline, T7; Ava, T25
Concentrate on Teaching and Students	Focus on teaching and students	Ramona, T5; Nancy, T11; Joe, T15; Ken, T20
	Know your content	Elizabeth, T12
	Learn good strategies/Soak in as much as you can	Porter, T10; Allan, T22
	Set short and long goals	Herman, T9
	Know your students	Sandy, T1; Elizabeth, T12; Christian, T17

Organization	Be organized/Adopt organizational systems	Merry, T2; Elizabeth, T12; Nana, T18; Herman, T9; Josephine, T19
	Try to find a routine	Joe, T15
	Find your teaching style	Susan, T8; Joe, T15
	Implement in a less aggressive pace	Marie, T24
	Prioritize	Nancy, T11
	Plan, plan, plan	Merry, T2; Jill, T3
	Develop management skills	Elizabeth, T12
<hr/>		
General	Remain patient	Porter, T10; Nana, T18
	Don't give up	Nana, T18; Ken, T20
	Take a deep breath	Sandy, T1
	Try not to get frustrated/overwhelmed/stressed	Sandy, T1; Madeline, T7; Joe, T15; Nana, T18; Allan, T22)
	Relax, don't sweat the small stuff	Nancy, T11
	Talk to your administrator(s)	Fred, T4; Marie, T24
	Set aside time for family, friends -	Ramona, T5; Louis, T14; John, T16
	Don't take it home	
	Happy Hour	Bruce, T23

really like it or not.” Finally, Christian (T17) exclaimed his feeling about teaching by saying “If you don’t feel that self-satisfaction from teaching, then you should not be in the field.”

At the beginning of this chapter, Sandy’s (T1) interview was submitted as an introduction to the teaching journey. To welcome aboard new teachers to this exurban school district, she concluded by saying:

Take a deep breath. Don’t expect to be perfect in your first year. Don’t expect to be perfect any year. You do get better as you go along. You do get more comfort with the classroom; you get more comfortable with the material. No matter how smart you are and how much information you have walking into that classroom, until you have actually taught it for couple of years, you’re not going to be...a terrific teacher.

Overall, to welcome aboard new teachers to the school district and to increase their tenure, the experienced teachers offered four suggestions: use their mentor, ask questions, be organized, and concentrate on teaching and students.

### Summary

Retention and recruitment of teachers are educational dilemmas, which have led many states and school districts to develop incentives to attract and prolong teachers’ careers. In this section, Bronfenbrenner’s ecological environment (the experienced teacher – microsystem; the school – mesosystem; the school district - the exosystem; and the community represents – macrosystem) was explored, and the experienced teachers reflected their perceptions regarding each area.

Tables 13 and 14 list suggestions for recruitment and retention of teachers. The continuation of the school district's existing recruitment incentives was also suggested. Salary and benefits, mentoring, and assistance with affordable housing were viewed as both recruitment and retention attractors. When discussing salary as a retention motivator, the teachers expressed their beliefs centered on increasing the salary as a means for new teachers to afford to live in this exurban district and to assist them with affordable housing. Additionally, school administrators' efforts to provide a supportive and collaborative atmosphere for new and experienced teachers, as well as lighter workloads for new teachers were perceived as strong school level retention motivators.

### Conclusion

The perceptions of the 10-year experienced teachers were used to provide insights into those issues that influenced their deciding to stay in teaching and could influence the attraction and retention of new recruits. The following metaphor is illustrative: The school system is a cruise line. The administrators are ship captains. New teachers are in the steerage section – lacking experience, confidence, but with hopes for a better view. School administrators need to support new teachers so that they are convinced that this ship was one where they could be personally fulfilled, contribute to the children, and that the view will get better.

The experienced teachers are the passengers on board who have the clearest views and know the ship well. They are the best source for learning what the newest passengers will need to choose to stay aboard. The journey will hopefully be long and satisfying both personally and professionally.

CHAPTER 5  
DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS,  
IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the study a grounded theory emerged that describes the reasons why secondary school teachers choose to remain in a mid-Atlantic exurban school district. The study involved the collection of data through interviews of 25 experienced teachers. Based on the review of the literature and the findings of the study, insights into the internal influences, external influences, and recruitment and retention suggestions are discussed, followed by conclusions of the study, implications, and recommendations. See Appendix G for an overview of the findings.

Discussions of Findings

*Internal Influences*

The internal influence of commitment was perceived as a passion for teaching and was often expressed as a “calling.” In the words of the teachers, the enjoyment of being a teacher and teaching their subject were viewed as being self-motivating factors. Many also expressed their enjoyment and love of the students and their relationships with their colleagues as motivational influences to remain in teaching. These experienced teachers believed they were making a difference in the lives of their students and they, the teachers, were contributing to society.

*(1) Teachers are motivated by the love of teaching.* In this study, being in the teaching profession motivates teachers. They viewed the decision to teach as a personal one, something that they felt called to do; something they knew would fulfill their

personal goals and ambitions. The “passion” for teaching, the “calling” to the profession, “teaching was something that I’ve always wanted to do”, and “I can’t imagine myself doing anything else” were expressions used by the teachers. These internal motivators also affected their commitment to the profession.

This finding was confirmed in the literature review. Ayers (2001), Farkas et al. (2000), and Williams (2003) described teaching as a “calling” for many people. Teachers said that teaching was something they loved to do (Farkas et al., 2000). Additionally, Herzberg (1973) identified “work itself” as a strong determiner of job satisfaction (p. 92). Ayers (2001) further reported it as “a journey of discovery and wonder, disappointment and fulfillment” (p. 7).

This intrinsic domain of self-satisfaction was also found to be a reason for teachers with 10 years teaching experience in an urban school district to remain in the district and teaching (Walker, 2004). The MetLife Survey of American Teachers (2006) stated that teachers’ satisfaction has increased over the past two decades. Over half of the teachers are very satisfied with teaching, however the number of teachers changing careers has remained the same. In a BBC News Report, “Teaching ‘the least boring job” (2006), found that teachers are least bored when compared to 14 other occupations.

Edwards (2003), in her study to gain insight regarding the motivation and retention of veteran teachers, found that these teachers gained satisfaction from being a teacher, and they were contributing to society and to the students they teach. This was further supported by Farkas’ et al. (2000) study of new teachers (five or less years of teaching). These teachers indicated that they were doing something they wanted to do, were motivated, and committed. They further added that teaching was work they loved to

do; they got satisfaction from teaching; they were contributing to society and helping others; and viewed their job as a life-long career.

(2) *Teachers are motivated by student-teacher relationships.* The love of students or enjoyment of being with students was one of the first reasons cited by the teachers as to why they remain in this exurban school district and in the teaching profession. Students were also identified as positive motivators towards teacher commitment. The respect and appreciation shown to the teachers by students who they have guided and instructed reinforces teachers' commitment to their profession. The emerging themes *enjoying what I do/self-satisfaction* and *students as motivators* evolved as the most frequent reasons for remaining in this exurban school district, in the teaching profession, and for teacher remaining committed to education.

In the literature review, researchers were in agreement with this finding. Ayers (2001) stated that people are called to teaching because they love children-love to see them grow and that the rewards of teachers are often internal (NCES, 1997) and invisible. Neito (2003) and Wilson et al. (2004) found that teachers remain for many reasons but the primary motivation is the teachers' fundamental belief in their students. Shann's (1998) research on urban middle school teachers' perceptions of job satisfaction found that the most important and most satisfying aspect of their job was "the kids." Certo & Fox's (2002) study revealed that commitment to children was chosen by all of the teachers surveyed for staying in a school division.

Moreover, other researchers indicated that teachers described the rewards of teaching as consisting of opportunities to observe students grow, change and learn (Bradley & Loadman, 2005; Burnetti, 2001; Williams, 2003). Burnetti (2001) added that



working with adolescent students was the single most-powerful motivator underlying experienced teachers' decisions to remain in the classroom.

*(3) Teachers are motivated by the thought that they are making a difference in students' lives and contributing to society.* In the current study, the experienced teachers believed that teaching is an important job and by teaching, teachers are contributing to society. This feeling of importance leads to the belief that what the teacher does matters. Furthermore, this is confirmed when students are successful after they have left the teacher's classroom. The experienced teachers believe that they have an impact on the future. They teach for the students and for what the students will become.

These findings were substantiated by the research. In the literature review, researchers were in agreement with these findings. Bradley and Loadman (2005), Edwards (2003), and Farkas et al. (2000) indicated that teachers believed they were making a difference in the lives of their students. Edwards (2003) and Farkas et al. (2000) further stated that the teachers believed they were contributing to society. The NEA (2003) teacher survey analysis of reasons why teachers were attracted to teaching identified in the same reasons that explain why teachers continued to teach. The results of the 2001-2002 survey, indicated the teachers selected "a desire to work with young people", the "value or significance of education in society", and the "interest in a subject matter field."

*(4) Teachers are motivated by teacher-to-teacher relationships.* In this study, the third emerging theme for reasons why teachers remain in the profession was the relationship with colleagues with, "*colleagues as motivators.*" The support and encouragement they received from their colleagues in this exurban school district helped

the experienced teachers face the challenges of teaching. Having someone to talk to, someone who could help and understand what he or she was going through was influential in the experienced teacher remaining in his or her school, in this exurban school district, and in the profession.

Several researchers were in agreement with this finding. Certo and Fox (2002) found that collegial relations that involved collaboration were cited as reasons for staying in a school. Interaction with students and colleagues influence teachers' learning, growth, and satisfaction (Steffy et al., 2000). To keep teachers in the profession, several researchers stated that teachers need time to collaborate with their peers (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Guarino, et al., 2006; Johnson, 2007; Piccucci et al., 2002). Interaction with colleagues was one of the conditions that had a direct influence on self-efficacy, on teaching and on remaining in teaching (Stuart, 2000). Edwards (2003) found that socialization with colleagues and with students was a reason for veteran teachers to continue teaching. Fellow teachers provided them with support and encouragement in both their personal and professional lives.

The rank order of internal influences for remaining in the exurban school district was as follows: (1) enjoyment/love of teaching or subject area, (2) the relationship with the students, and (3) the relationship with colleagues. These top three reasons declared by the 25 experienced secondary school teachers consistently ranked among those found by earlier research on internal motivational factors and commitment.

#### External Influences

In the literature review, research on the external motivators (school leadership, professional atmosphere, and professional development) was interwoven. The findings

also indicated that one or all the areas were dependent on the other. To explain this interdependence, working conditions of the teachers were the prime emphasis of most studies. Darling-Hammond (2003) stated that to keep good teachers, both new and veterans, attention should be given to key working conditions that provide administrative support and professional development. The North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL) (n.d.) found that the most successful retention strategies improved the working conditions of teachers. To keep teachers in the profession, Cochran-Smith (2004) stated that teachers need working conditions where they are recognized and supported and given time to collaborate with their peers. The following discussions include the working conditions of school leadership, professional atmosphere, and professional staff development.

#### *School Leadership*

*(5) School leadership had a positive influence on the experienced teachers' retention.* Teachers appreciate opportunities for self-fulfillment, growth, and development. This study found that administrators were a motivation to stay at the school if they were supportive of teachers' professional growth, and if they were student focused. As a separate component, the experienced teachers found their administrators to be supportive. Insight gained from the teachers indicated that their administration encourages self-fulfillment. Therefore, an administration that supports what a teacher is doing provides for teacher growth and/or development. This support was perceived as a positive influence for their continued retention in the profession.

One teacher (Louis, T14) had a strong opinion that “there is a dichotomy between teachers and administrators.... I think that 90% of what the administration does is, drive

teachers away rather than try to retain them”. Herman (T9) announced that the administration and school atmosphere in two previous school districts, contributed to his leaving the school and the profession for two years.

These findings were confirmed in the literature review. Research reveals that school leadership is a critical component in influencing a teacher’s decision to stay or leave (Charlotte Advocates for Education, 2004; Guarino et al., 2006; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Kapadia & Coca, 2007; Olsen & Anderson, 2007; Otto & Arnold, 2005; Palermo, 2002; Singh & Billingsley, 1996; Watkins, 2005). The results of the 1999-2000 SASS (Park, 2003) report indicated that the majority of the teachers surveyed were satisfied with their school and their administrator. Williams (2003) said credit was given to administrators who incorporated the right combination of challenge and support. Holloway (2003) stated that experienced teachers also need support in order to remain in the classroom. He suggested by providing support throughout teachers’ careers, school districts could ensure a pool of high-quality teachers. Therefore, schools can retain experienced teachers by increasing their job satisfaction. This support and encouragement was expressed as a motivational factor in the study as being “pro teacher.”

Charlotte Advocates for Education (2004) said that effective principals were teacher-focused. They understood the value of people and they valued their teachers. Additionally, Glatthorn and Fox (1996) stated that it was essential that the principal provide an environment that allows teachers to grow as leaders. Palermo (2002) developed a grounded theory that stated, “Principals who create a school climate of trust, mutual respect, and service to children have teachers who feel successful, valued, safe, loyal, and professional and want to and expect to continue teaching” (p. 78).

*(6) As part of school atmosphere, school leadership did not influence the experienced teachers' retention.* In this study, the experienced teacher viewed school leadership's influence differently. When discussed as a separate influence, school leadership was a motivational factor for retention; however, the participants did not relate school leadership with school atmosphere. The relationships with students and colleagues were cited as motivators in the school environment. Those teachers who referred to school administration as a part of the school atmosphere stated that the administration had little or no influence on their retention status; a change in administration influenced his or her retention status; and that the influence of the administration would make him want to "quit" teaching.

This finding was not confirmed in the literature. Most of the research has shown that school leadership was noted as being an important influential factor in providing a professional atmosphere conducive to retaining teachers (Charlotte Advocate for Education, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 2003; Edwards, 2003; Guarino et al., 2006; Picucci et al., 2002; Palermo, 2003; Williams, 2003).

#### *School Atmosphere*

*(7) Teachers appreciate a positive school atmosphere and relationships with students and colleagues.* Working in a school atmosphere that promotes a positive attitude for the teachers and students, and collaborating among the teachers were viewed as important components for teacher retention. In this study, the participants indicated that the school atmosphere (school climate/culture) had a positive influence on their ten-year retention in this exurban school district. The teachers noted that their relationship with students was important to the school atmosphere. Being around students kept the

experienced teacher “current”, “active” and “young” (Nancy, T11). Marie (T24) stated that “they’re [students] what you come every day for.” These teachers teach to receive affection from students. Those who teach in more diverse schools, enjoy the challenge, the adjustment, and the personal growth they experience on a daily basis (Christian, T17; Josephine, T19; Ramona, T5).

Additionally, teacher relationships were viewed as an important influence to their retention. Interactions with colleagues were perceived as a positive factor for continued retention. Colleagues were viewed as compassionate and understanding. Some described them as a “surrogate family”, “friends”, someone who you can “share ideas with” and who you can “lean on.” These fellow teachers “have my back”, are “good listeners”, and “we care about each other.” From the teachers’ comments, it’s not just colleagues that keep the teachers motivated; it’s positive colleagues who matter.

In the literature review, researchers were in agreement with these findings. Edwards (2003) found that socialization with colleagues and with students was cited as a reason for veteran teachers to continue teaching. Fellow teachers provided them with support and encouragement in both their personal and professional lives. Steffy, Wolfe, Pasch, and Enz (2000) said that school culture could support or impede teacher growth. Interaction with students and colleagues influence teachers’ learning, growth, and satisfaction. Finally, Stuart (2000) found that daily demands of teaching, interaction with colleagues, relationships with building principals, and inclusion in the decision making process had a direct influence on self-efficacy and for teaching. This relationship affected school climate and job satisfaction. The work environment affects levels of job satisfaction.

*(8) Respect of colleagues, family, and friends is a powerful motivation to continue teaching.* This study also pointed to the internal and external influences of family and friends on the participants' perception of remaining in the profession. Overwhelmingly, the teachers stated that their family was supportive of their being teachers and that this was influential to their retention status. The support of family and friends and having them to talk to affected the participants' perception of their working environment and the teaching profession. They were "sounding boards", for the teachers' "complaints, concerns, and happy ending stories". Although the influence of friends was the lowest of the three external influences (family, friends, and colleagues), the teachers indicated the need for respect from their friends. The respect of others was a powerful force and motivator.

The literature review did not include research on the influence of family and friends. However, Garrison's (2006) study indicated that teachers in a rural school district along the Mexican border chose to teach and live in the area because of the proximity to family and friends.

#### *Professional Staff Development*

*(9) The influence of professional staff development has a positive and negative effect on teacher retention.* In this study, the teachers were divided on the influence of professional staff development. The teachers who expressed that staff development was a positive influence perceived it as motivator for their retention and increased their sense of professionalism. Although expressed in numerous ways, the participation in professional staff development made the teachers feel like professionals. Through these opportunities they could try new things, receive new ideas, keep up with the newest research, and grow

on their own. Content staff development was viewed as most beneficial for personal growth. In contrast to the findings, however, teachers who believed that professional staff development did not influence their retention status, found it to be repetitive and a waste of time. The forced staff development requirement often would breed resentment among those who felt they had to attend because they were “required” to do so. The courses that they elected to take were more beneficial but had no bearing on their retention in teaching.

The positive influence of professional staff development was confirmed in the literature review. Darling-Hammond, (2003), Edwards (2003), NCREL (n.d.) and Washburn-Moses (2005) related professional staff development to retention. This professional learning was needed to help teachers thrive and grow throughout their careers. Whitaker, Whitaker & Lumpa, (2000) stated that teachers need opportunities to renew, educate, and energize through meaningful professional staff development. If they enjoy and learn from these opportunities, they will be more willing to try something new in the classroom and to explore possibilities to future teaching success. Edwards (2003) suggested that administrators and school systems should provide recognition, relevant staff development, and continuous learning opportunities.

Johnson (2004) stated that teachers are more likely to consider teaching a long-term career when schools provide opportunities for professional growth beyond the classroom. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (1997) maintained that staff development has a positive effect on teacher commitment. The importance of staff development has been recognized as an avenue to continue engagement, effectiveness, and retention of teachers. As cited by RNT (n.d.) in order to keep experienced teachers,



schools should give the teachers opportunities to grow and develop, use them as role models for new teachers, and improve the educational climate. They affirmed that even for the most experienced teachers, maintaining the enthusiasm and energy teaching requires were important. However, Edwards' (2003) research showed staff development as an identified stressor of veteran teachers.

### Recruitment and Retention

Numerous researchers have investigated recruitment and retention strategies. The working conditions of the teachers were the prime emphasis of most studies. In this section, the experienced teachers offer suggestions for new teacher recruitment and retention that include the influence of salary, administrative support, mentoring, and dealing with stress.

#### *Salary Influence*

(10) The influence of *salary was inconclusive for teacher retention and a positive incentive for recruitment*. Salary, as an incentive to remain in teaching, received a mixed review among the experienced teachers. The majority of the participants in this study stated that salary had some, none, or a negative influence on their ten-year retention in this exurban school district. Their reasons ranged from the having a competitive salary, the benefit package, the retirement plan, job security, the passion for teaching, and the relationships with students and colleagues to having other financial support and to the effect of the high cost of living and affordable housing for a single teacher. The teachers also indicated that salary was a positive influence for many of the same reasons however, the pay scale with benefits and the continuation of salary increases to meet the cost of living were viewed as positive incentives to remain in the district. To attract teachers to

the district, the teachers specified that the school district's salary and benefits package were incentives for recruitment. Due to the high cost of living and lack of affordable housing, an increase in salary was suggested as a retention motivator.

Similar findings were in the literature review. Researchers found that salary was cited as a reason to stay and leave the teaching profession. Guarino's et al. (2006) review of recent empirical literature on teacher recruitment and retention found a large amount of studies that suggest teacher salaries were positively associated with retention. The U.S. Department of Education (2004) stated that many school districts have instituted pay incentives in an effort to retain effective teachers. A collection of states' recruitment and retention strategies was produced by the Southeast Center for Teaching Quality (2003), which listed salary increases as one of the strategies states have used to recruit and retain teachers. Additionally, Cochran-Smith (2004), the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL) (n.d.), and the Southeast Center for Teaching Quality (2003) suggested increasing salaries to competitive or comparable levels. The NCREL (n.d.) stated that this approach was complicated, but could be used to attract teachers into the profession and keep them from leaving.

Inman and Marlow's (2004) research on two study groups (Phase 1 teachers: 1 –3 years of teaching experience and Phase 2 teachers: 4 – 9 years of teaching experience) stated that the two groups identified salary as the only factor listed as a reason to stay in teaching. In contrast, Tye and O'Brien's (2002) research ranked salary as number one for those who would consider leaving. Other researchers have found that salary was cited as a reason for leaving (Certo & Fox, 2003; Darling-Hammond, 2003; Hanushek et al., 2003; Ingersoll, 2001; Luekens et al., 2004; Shen, 1997; U.S. Department of Education,

2004). Park (2003) found that working conditions and salary were deciding factors as to where teachers teach and whether they stay or leave the teaching profession.

Allen's (2005) report on the Education Commission of the States (ECS) research found that salary was the most frequently cited reason to leave or stay but not necessarily the most important. Hertzberg (1973) indicated salary as a job dissatisfier. Surveyed teachers in England and Wales listed salary as a low priority factor for entering and leaving the profession (Barmby, 2006). Teacher salary was not an important issue for teachers in a rural district located on the California and Mexico borders. Teacher salaries in this area were higher than their parents childhood income and most homes could be purchased based on their salary (Garrison, 2006).

#### *Working Conditions Influence*

*(11) For new teachers, administrative support or lack of it affects teacher retention.* As a retention suggestion for new teachers, the participants in this study indicated that administrators who are recognized as being supportive of teachers, and who effectively communicate with them, could increase retention. Additional suggestions included a lighter workload for new teachers, recognition of staff, and for administrators to be more proactive than reactive.

Research confirms these findings. Policymakers are recognizing that the teacher's working conditions affect retention. Inman and Marlow (2004) and Kapadia and Coca (2007), stated that beginning teachers need a supportive professional environment if they are to remain in the teaching profession. Palermo (2002) proclaimed that the climate that encourages trust, risk-taking, innovation, dialogue, and that communicates success and value strengthens the climate for successful retention of teachers. Glatthorn and Fox

(1996) said that if the climate is upbeat, productive, and positive, the staff will want to come to work. On the other hand, if the climate is negative and full of tension, it will eventually exhaust any positive feelings that might have existed.

Inman and Marlow (2004) stated that administrators that support beginning teachers' new ideas, promote their accomplishments, and provide meaningful staff development opportunities encourage retention of new teachers. Alvy (2005) reported that retention of new teachers was vital, but that we should not neglect the support and retention of veteran teachers and should honor their experience and wisdom. Ingersoll (2001) stated that administrative support and increased teacher involvement could increase retention. Certo and Fox (2002) indicated the reasons for leaving and for staying in the teaching profession acted as inverse variables. For example, administrative support or lack of it was cited as a reason to stay or to leave (Certo & Fox, 2002; Guarino et al., 2006; Ingersoll, 2001; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). Furthermore, Watkins (2005) stated, "Principals have the challenge and obligation to develop an environment that not only attracts the best teachers available, but one that also retains and develops them throughout their career" (p. 86). New and experienced teachers need the support of leadership and colleagues to be effective.

*(12) Induction programs that include mentoring are considered to be recruitment and retention influences.* In this study, the mentoring program was perceived to be as one of the top attractors to the exurban school district as well as a retention motivator. The existing program was viewed as being beneficial for new teachers. In order for the program to continue to be successful, it was suggested that administrators choose experienced teachers who truly want to work with new teachers as mentors. These

experienced teachers often serve as mentors, and that might influence their feelings about the mentoring program.

The literature review confirmed this finding. The shortage of teachers and the retention of those already create a challenging situation. Induction programs that include mentoring have been a noteworthy recruitment and retention incentive. Researchers found that the inclusion of mentoring can have a positive effect on job satisfaction and retention (Darling-Hammond, 2003; Edwards, 2003; Guarino, et al., 2006; Inman & Marlow, 2004; Johnson, 2007; Kapadia & Coca, 2007; MetLife, 2006; U.S. Department of Education, 2004). However, Gilmer (2006) reported that Duke University's survey of 217 first-and-second year teachers in a small urban school district found that although the new teachers enjoyed the mentoring experience, there was no relationship between mentoring support and teacher retention. Satisfaction with principal leadership and school climate were viewed as more significant factors for retention.

Watkins (2005) stated that new teachers, those directly from a teacher education program or as a second-career entrant, share the need for support and belonging. He suggested mentoring as a strategy to help the new teachers. Holloway (2003) found that to promote teachers' feelings of competence, collaborative activities/ mentoring appeared to be effective.

Darling-Hammond's (2003) research studies have shown that well-designed and well-supported mentoring and induction programs raise retention rates for new teachers. Additionally, this interaction has been beneficial for veteran teachers (Alvy, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2003). Hope (1996) said that if principals do not provide the

instructional and emotional support through orientation and induction activities for new teachers, then the new teacher will seek support in another school.

*(13) Developing strategies to deal with stress help teachers to remain in the profession.* As expressed in the study's findings, the majority of the teachers said that they had experienced stress. Stress can affect job satisfaction and job performance. The causes of stress varied (i.e. accountability; teaching assignment[s]; paper work; student stress, parent stress) and coping mechanisms were offered. Even though stress is an issue and developing strategies to cope with stress is an ongoing challenge, the teachers remain in this exurban school district and in the teaching profession. They identified doing outside activities; talking to others; enjoying a personal day, vacations, summer breaks; and changing subject/grade levels or schools as stress relievers. Although teaching is stressful, Savannah (T6) said, "But there is always something that keeps me here."

In the literature review, researchers confirmed this finding. Johnson (2007) noted that teachers need reasonable and appropriate teaching assignments and class sizes. If not, the teachers may experience stress and dissatisfaction and are more likely to leave. Large class, heavy workloads, and out-dated facilities may also cause stress (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2006). Additionally, a study conducted by Barnby (2006) in England and Wales, ranked workload and stress as two of the top four reasons listed by teachers for leaving the teaching profession.

Singh and Billingsley (2004) revealed that stress had a negative effect on remaining in teaching. The authors suggest that administrators who collaborate with teachers, involve them in decision-making, and support them, are more likely to have teachers with less stress, more satisfaction, more commitment, and greater likelihood to

remain in teaching. Abel and Sewell (1999) indicated that stress was from poor working conditions and (negative) staff relations. In contrast, Edwards (2003) found that socialization with colleagues and with students was cited as reasons for veteran teachers to continue teaching. Hancock (1999) found that job dissatisfaction leads to stress and burnout, and that if the balance of perceived capabilities and demands are not met, teachers would flee the environment causing them stress.

### Conclusions

This study used grounded theory to explore and describe the reasons experienced secondary school teachers gave for remaining in an exurban school district. A grounded theory emerged from the data by examining the perceptions of teacher commitment, school leadership (administrative support), professional atmosphere (school culture or climate), and professional staff development and their impact on teachers staying in the teaching profession. Twenty-five (25) experienced teachers with 10 years of teaching experience in the district were interviewed. Following each interview, the data were transcribed; reviewed for patterns, themes, and categories; coded, and analyzed following the grounded theory procedures recommended by Strauss and Corbin (1998). By using open, axial, and selective coding and constant comparative analysis, theory emerged.

The grounded theory that emerged from this study is as follows: (1) experienced teachers are motivated primarily internally but need external approval and commendation to confirm how they feel; (2) they perceive this from the success of their students, the collegiality of fellow teachers, and from the pride of their families; (3) as a separate motivator, school leadership can positively affect teacher retention; (4) as a part of the

school atmosphere, interactions with students and colleagues positively affect teacher retention; and (5) professional staff development has a positive and negative effect on teacher retention.

The insight gained from the experienced teachers perceptions indicated that teaching is a reward in itself, it's a marathon, and it involves constant variety and change. Teaching students provides the environment where teachers could work without adult competition (be in charge) and could receive affection as well as personal pride in seeing the students learn. The experienced teachers' colleagues can be surrogate families providing them with support, compassion, affirmation, and the desire to continue teaching. Being around positive people helps the teachers to remain positive and motivated. Moreover, the support and encouragement of family who listen to the teachers' concerns and successes enhances their staying power in the education field.

In this exurban school district, working conditions that include school leadership and school atmosphere directly affect the experienced teachers' retention. A supportive administration and a school atmosphere that encourages positive interactions with students, positive interaction and professional collaboration with colleagues, and avenues for professional growth are working conditions reported to be conducive for continuation in the teaching profession. Teachers in more diverse schools enjoy the diversity and challenges. However, professional staff development's influence on retention is divided among the teachers. About half of the experienced teachers perceived that these opportunities allowed them to feel like professionals and to grow professionally. The other half viewed its influence as being both positive and negative and no influence on their return status.



For new teachers who enter the teaching arena in this exurban school district, the 10-year experienced teachers offered suggestions for a long tenure in the profession. The most common ideas are for the new teachers to take advantage of the mentoring program; seek help when needed; concentrate on teaching and students; and develop effective organizational skills. To deal with stress or burnout, the participants identified the following stress relievers: do outside activities (e.g., exercise, reading, hobbies, etc.); talk to others (e.g., colleagues, family, others); enjoy a personal day, vacations, summer breaks; and change subjects, grade level, or schools.

Schools and school districts can benefit from the information gained from these teachers on retention and recruitment. Salary and benefits, mentoring, and assistance with affordable housing are viewed as both recruitment and retention attractors. As a retention incentive, an increase in salary is perceived as a means for new teachers to afford to live in this exurban district and to assist them with affordable housing. Although mentoring, salary, and affordable housing are seen as both recruitment and retention incentives, administrators who help teachers be self-fulfilled, provide a collaborative environment, lessen the workload for new teachers, and who are more proactive than reactive could increase teacher retention.

### Implications

The following implications for practice are suggested for schools and school districts desiring to retain experienced teachers and for recruitment and retention of new teachers. These implications are based on the perceptions of 10-year experienced teachers in an exurban school district. Schools and school districts should consider the voices of

experienced teachers when considering recruitment and retention efforts. The information gained from these perceptions can serve as a guide for the improvement of working conditions that may enhance teacher retention.

Teachers are motivated by the love of teaching. They believe they are making a difference in students' lives and contributing to society. Being in the teaching profession, the experienced teachers believe that the respect of family, friends, and colleagues serve as motivation to continue teaching. These intrinsic motivators affect teachers' self-satisfaction and self-fulfillment. It is difficult for administrators or school districts to have an effect on internal motivators. However, by showing respect, encouragement, and recognition for the teacher's efforts, administrators can influence teachers to remain in the teaching profession.

Teachers are motivated by student-teacher relationships and they appreciate a positive school atmosphere that encourages these interactions. Through these extrinsic interactions, the teachers' value is celebrated through the successes of their students thus increasing the teacher's desire to remain in this exurban school district and in the teaching profession. Administrators should create conditions and opportunities for more of the teacher-student interactions. One means of encouraging students to interact more with their teachers is by ensuring that teachers have their own rooms where students can seek them out. Block scheduling, which allows for longer classes on an alternating basis, provides more time for teachers to interact with students while learning is taking place. Other possibilities that would encourage students to recognize the talents of their teachers may include students' nomination a Teacher of the Month; hold non-academic competitions between departments where students and teachers are on the same team; or

create individual school initiatives where students and teachers work cooperatively on a special project.

Teachers are motivated by teacher-teacher relationships. Colleagues are sounding boards and viewed as a surrogate family for the experienced teachers. In this study and in the literature review, the positive interactions and collaborative relationships with fellow teachers can increase teacher retention. Administrators can have an impact by creating a positive environment that includes teacher collaboration. Additionally, this support system can provide an avenue for sharing research-based instruction, successful classroom management techniques, and the enjoyment of teaching and education.

For new teachers, a well-developed mentoring program is vital. In this study, mentoring of new teachers was viewed as a recruitment and retention incentive. When establishing this program or improving an existing one, the administrator or the school district must focus on developing or enhancing the program in order to provide more meaningful relationships and stronger mentoring experiences for both the new teacher and experienced teacher. Administrators or their designees should be careful not to assign just anyone to the mentoring role. The mentor should be a teacher who is dedicated to mentoring new teachers. A predetermined process for selecting and matching mentors is essential to the quality of the program.

School leadership influences teacher retention. Teachers appreciate school leaders who provide them opportunities for self-fulfillment, growth, and development. It is essential that school administrators dedicate themselves to providing a school atmosphere that increases teacher retention. Administrators should create an environment where teachers feel supported; administrators must acknowledge the strength of collegiality

among the teachers. Through this growth-producing atmosphere, administrators should devise strategies to help teachers feel self-fulfilled by giving them the freedom to grow and to develop new ideas to try with the students. When teachers are in schools where they cannot contribute, they feel stress or burn out and may choose change schools. However, they were not burned out from teaching. Administrators should create environments where teachers are given the freedom to meet those societal and individual needs, with informal and formal opportunities for affirmation.

Quality staff development is essential for teacher growth. In this study, the influence of professional staff development had a positive and negative influence on the experienced teachers' retention status. For some teachers, staff development activities made the teachers feel like professionals. Forced staff development in this exurban school district that did not relate to teacher growth was viewed as useless and a waste of time. It is imperative that schools and school districts provide teachers with continuous learning opportunities and quality staff development that are practical and useful. A plan should be developed to assess the effectiveness of current professional staff development activities. Additionally, a needs assessment of what schools and teachers believe to be important for teacher growth and student achievement is needed.

The influence of salary was inconclusive for teacher retention and a positive incentive for recruitment. To recruit and retain teachers in this exurban school district, continuation of a competitive salary scale and salary increases to meet the cost of living and affordable housing are essential. The locality of this school district is an attractor but remaining in the district and surrounding areas is a concern for teacher retention. Although teachers enter the teaching profession for the intrinsic satisfaction of teaching

and working with students, the extrinsic factor-money-could be a motivator for recruitment and retention.

### Recommendations for Future Research

This study consisted of a current literature review and interviews with 25 experienced secondary school teachers in a mid-Atlantic exurban school district. These teachers provided their perceptions for choosing to remain in a school or school district for ten years. From the findings of this study, recommendations for future research include the following:

1. Compare the reasons for remaining in teaching among teachers with other tenures, for example, five years, fifteen years, and twenty years.
2. Conduct research in another school district replicating this study to determine how findings might be are similar or different.
3. Conduct research at the elementary level replicating this study to determine how findings might be are similar or different.
4. Conduct research in 5 years with these participants to see if their perceptions have changed and if they are continuing in the teaching profession.
5. Conduct research on the relationship between professional staff development and teacher retention.
6. Conduct research on the influence of family and friends on teacher retention.
7. Conduct research to discover reasons why experienced teachers leave a school, school district, or the teaching profession.

In conclusion, the experienced teacher perceived teaching as a reward in itself. They enjoy what they do. Some teachers said it is a *calling* while others expressed teaching as a *sense of duty* – doing something important. The feelings and experiences within the teachers were motivators. These feelings are expressed in the forms of self-satisfaction and self-sufficiency caused by witnessing students learn and be successful as a result of the teachers' efforts. Intrinsically, these teachers are responding to a strong human need of self-fulfillment, and teaching allows them to express their energies, beliefs, and meet their needs in a way that improves society and individual students.

Moreover, the experienced teachers stay for the collegiality and/or friendship of teachers in their school. Their colleagues listen to their concerns, offer advice, and share ideas. They live in a similar world. This relationship is seen as a form of personal affirmation for the experienced teachers. The feedback received from their fellow teachers is important, because the collegial support encourages them to come back to school the next day, or the next year. The teachers believe that the students, their colleagues, and society recognize them for their dedication and efforts. The future plans of the 25 teachers are as follows: 23 plan to continue as classroom teachers or in the education field; 15 plan to retire as teachers or as other educational professionals.

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## Appendix A

### Summary of Major Related Studies

Author(s)	Purpose	Sample	Methodology	Findings
Burnetti, 2001	To provide information on teachers' satisfaction and their motivation to remain in the classroom	426 (40% returned) Northern California high school teachers. Twenty-eight teachers, with at least 15 years of experience were interviewed.	Qualitative - The Experienced Teacher Survey and interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers were highly satisfied with their jobs and were motivated by working with students and seeing them learn and grow.</li> <li>• Professional satisfaction factors were teaching area, serving society, and autonomy.</li> <li>• Salary and benefits (Practical Satisfaction Factors) were less important than the above listed reasons.</li> </ul>
Certo & Fox, 2002	To obtain data on teacher attrition and retention from the organizational perspective.	40 randomly selected regular and special education teachers (with less than eight years of experience) from seven Virginia school divisions	Qualitative - Focus groups with teachers who were staying in their school division; telephone interviews with those who migrated or left the profession	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The study found that organizational influences play an important part in teachers' decisions to stay, move, or leave teaching.</li> <li>• Teachers identified supportive administration, collegial relationships, autonomy, and involvement in decision-making as reasons to stay</li> <li>• The top reasons for leaving were salary, lack of administrative support, and lack of planning time.</li> </ul>

Summary of Major Related Studies (cont.)

Author(s)	Purpose	Sample	Methodology	Findings
Barmby, 2006	To examine the factors that impact why teachers enter and leave the profession	246 English, math and science teachers in England and Wales	Qualitative - survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intrinsic and altruistic reasons were given as reasons for entering teaching. Teacher workload and pupil behavior were reasons for not entering the teaching profession and for leaving the profession.</li> </ul>
Edwards, 2003	To identify the unique needs of veteran teachers and to examine how schools as organizations met the personal and professional needs of the veteran teachers	21 (four males and 17 females) Knox County, Tennessee, veteran public school teachers with at least 10 years of experience	Qualitative - Emergent sampling; interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mid-career teachers need a work environment that promotes growth, recognition, variety, and collegial relationships.</li> <li>• Standardized testing, increased accountability, and changing curriculum were identified stressors.</li> <li>• Continuous learning opportunities and meaningful staff development are recommended to increase retention.</li> </ul>
Farkas, Johnson, & Foleno, 2000	To explore the perceptions, assumptions, concerns, and aspirations of new teachers, superintendents and principals, and non-teaching college graduates on teacher recruitment and retention.	The study consisted of 664 public school teachers and 250 private school teachers, 511 superintendents and principals, and 802 college graduates	Mixed Methods - Survey instrument developed by Public Agenda. Telephone surveys, focus group discussions, and interviews were conducted.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Based on this study, new teacher were motivated, committed, doing what they wanted to do, and believe that teaching is a calling. They are more committed than their non-teaching colleagues.</li> <li>• New teachers want working conditions that include parental involvement, supportive administrators, well-behaved students, and smaller classes.</li> </ul>

Summary of Major Related Studies (cont.)

Author(s)	Purpose	Sample	Methodology	Findings
Garrison, 2006	To examine why teachers in a rural, low-income, large minority and diverse population stay in the teaching profession	21 randomly selected teachers who had grown up and gone to school in the local area and had remained in the county to teach	Qualitative - interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comparisons were made with Ingersaoll &amp; Smith (2003) report.</li> <li>• The attritions rate was 1% annually over 6 years.</li> <li>• Rate of dissatisfaction- 19% dissatisfied with their salary and most homes could be purchased on their salary.</li> <li>34% - student discipline</li> <li>38% - decision making</li> <li>Teachers were split on the satisfaction level of administrative support.</li> </ul>
Gilmer, 2006	To assess teacher perceptions of mentoring, school climate, and principal leadership	217 first-and-second year teachers in a small, urban school district	Qualitative - survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Although the teachers were satisfied with the mentoring program, there was no relationship between mentoring support and the teacher's decision to remain in a school or the district.</li> <li>• When teachers are satisfied with the principal's leadership and the school climate, they are more likely to stay in the school.</li> </ul>

Summary of Major Related Studies (cont.)

Author(s)	Purpose	Sample	Methodology	Findings
Guarino, Santibanez, & Daley 2006	To provide researchers and policymakers with a comprehensive, evaluative, and up-to-date review of teacher recruitment and retention literature	46 scholarly, empirical studies – 1990 or later and published by the end of 2004	Quantitative and/or qualitative conclusions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consistent research was found on the characteristics of individuals who enter and leave the teaching profession; the external characteristics of schools and districts; and compensation policies.</li> <li>• Studies on the impact of pre-service policies were sparse.</li> <li>• Mentoring and induction programs and collegial support lowers new teacher turnover. More autonomy and administrative support lowers teacher attrition and migration.</li> </ul>
Ingersoll, 2001	To examine teacher turnover and school staffing problems from the organizational perspective and conditions of schools	The 1991-1992 TFS results from 6,733 elementary and secondary teachers	Quantitative - Three cycles of SASS/TFS data (1987-1988, 1990-1991, 1993-1994) was used with emphasis on the 1991-1992 TFS results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• From the organizational perspective, rather than increase the quantity of teachers, decrease teacher turnover.</li> <li>• A large number of teachers leave teaching for pre-retirement reasons with job satisfaction and pursuing other jobs as the main reasons.</li> <li>• Increased administrative support, reduced student discipline, inclusion of teachers in decision-making, and increased salaries are suggested organizational conditions needed to increase teacher retention.</li> </ul>

Summary of Major Related Studies (cont.)

Author(s)	Purpose	Sample	Methodology	Findings
Inman & Marlow, 2004	To examine new teachers' attitudes in identifying positive aspects of teaching that may lead to retention	Forty percent (approximately 100) of 500 teachers from 50 randomly selected counties in Georgia. These teachers had fewer than 10 years of experience	Quantitative - The Professional Attitude Survey, a 10 item survey regarding 21 characteristics related to teacher career stability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phase 2 teachers (4-9 years of experience) identified salary, collegiality, and work conditions as reasons for remaining in teaching.</li> <li>• Both Phase 1 (0-3 years of experience) and Phase 2 teachers ranked job security as the highest employment factor.</li> <li>• Over half of the teachers indicated that professional prestige was as they had expected and over 40% indicated it was worse than expected.</li> </ul>
Johnson, 2004	To gain insight on the views and experiences of new teachers and reasons to stay, move, or leave the teaching field	10 first-and second-year Massachusetts new teachers selected from the original 50 teachers (1999) from the Project on the Next Generation of Teachers	Qualitative - Interviews; Longitudinal study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Four years after the study, six teachers were continuing to teach, two were in charter schools, and two left the profession.</li> <li>• Supporting and training of new teachers at the school site is the key to retention.</li> </ul>

Summary of Major Related Studies (cont.)

Author(s)	Purpose	Sample	Methodology	Findings
MetLife Survey, 2006	To examine what it takes to be a teacher and what contributes to a fulfilling career	1,001 public school teachers, 500 public school principals, 200 deans of education	Mixed method – interviews and focus groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers are more satisfied with teaching as a career and the profession has gained more prestige.</li> <li>• Teachers leave the profession due to unmet expectations; lack of preparation; lack of support by colleagues and principal; lack of involvement in decisions.</li> <li>• To seek a different occupation, veteran teachers with 21 or more years of experience are more likely to leave teaching than new teachers.</li> </ul>
Olsen & Anderson, 2007	To examine why teachers stay in or consider leaving a urban school where they currently teach	15 urban elementary school teachers	Qualitative – UCLA’s Center X Urban Teacher Preparation master’s program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stayers – planned to stay in teaching but may change in the future</li> <li>• Uncertains – of their future plans</li> <li>• Leavers – also known as “shifters” who moved to different educational roles</li> <li>• Program groomed short-term career teachers and long-term educational professionals.</li> </ul>
Otto & Arnold, 2005	To describe experienced special education teachers’ perception of the level of administrative support	228 South Texas experienced special education teachers	Qualitative - The Retention Study for South Texas Special Educators survey was used	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experienced special education teachers perceived their administrators as supportive: 29% “strongly agreed” and 40% “agreed”.</li> <li>• When administrative support was present, the teachers considered it as an incentive for retention.</li> </ul>



Summary of Major Related Studies (cont.)

Author(s)	Purpose	Sample	Methodology	Findings
Palermo, 2002	To develop a grounded theory that describes practices of elementary principals in influencing new teachers to remain in education.	11 new teachers in seven elementary schools and three elementary school principals	Qualitative - Grounded theory; developed by using a survey and interviews with teachers; interviews and shadowing principals; and an analysis of documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Principals, who create a school climate of trust, mutual respect, and service to children, have teachers who feel successful, valued, and safe and want to remain in education.</li> </ul>
Singh & Billingsley, 1996	To examine work-related variables on job satisfaction, commitment to teaching, and intent to continue in teaching.	By using the Virginia Department of Education personnel file, 412 special education teachers and 130 emotional disorder teachers were randomly selected to participate in this study.	Quantitative - A seven-page questionnaire was mailed to the participants.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Job satisfaction was identified as the strongest influence on intent to stay in teaching followed by the professional commitment.</li> <li>• Principal support, role-related problems and stress had direct effects on job satisfaction.</li> </ul>
Stotko, Ingram, & Beaty-O'Ferrall, 2007	To examine urban school recruitment policies	Review of current research literature	Research document	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To improve recruitment of urban teachers, districts must address the characteristics and motivations of teachers who want to work in these areas. This begins with improving the hiring timelines and to screen candidates for important characteristics of urban teachers.</li> </ul>

Summary of Major Related Studies (cont.)

Author(s)	Purpose	Sample	Methodology	Findings
Stuart, 2000	To examine why 10 African American teachers in Roanoke City selected to teach and remain in the profession and how two motivational variables (academic self-concept of ability and self-efficacy) influenced their decision.	10 (two males and eight females) Roanoke City, Virginia, African American teachers with 12 to 15 years experience	Qualitative - A single explanatory case study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Home environmental influences of assistance with schoolwork and verbal encouragement, school experiences, involvement in church activities and supportive business partnerships enhanced the teachers' academic self-concept of ability and self-efficacy.</li> <li>• Influential institutional factors were experiences in the classroom, rapport with the principal, and the perception of school system.</li> </ul>
Tye & O'Brien, 2002	To discover if the work environment, test mania, influences experienced teachers to stay or leave the profession	114 Chapman University (California) graduates with six to 10 years of teaching experience	Quantitative - Questionnaire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The top reason for leaving teaching was increased accountability (high-stakes testing, test preparation, and standards).</li> <li>• Those continuing in the field ranked paperwork second and accountability third.</li> </ul>
Walker, 2004	To identify reasons why teachers remain in an urban school district	525 Norfolk Public School, (Virginia) teachers with at least 10 years of teaching experience	Qualitative - Case study; Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• These urban school teachers remain in teaching because they feel they are effective with urban school children, have a collegial relationship with the school district, and that have gained self-satisfaction working in the district.</li> </ul>

Summary of Major Related Studies (cont.)

Author(s)	Purpose	Sample	Methodology	Findings
Watlington, Shockley, Earley, Huie, Morris, & Lieberman, 2004	To assess the relationship between teacher retention and geographic variables (age, gender, race, preparation and assignment) and to develop a model for predicting teacher retention.	2,129 South Florida teachers in four school districts hired for the 2000-2001 school year	Quantitative - 3 year longitudinal study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• After one year, 96% of the teachers were retained, 79% in year two (retention problems were noted in three of the four districts), and 72% in year three.</li> <li>• Gender, out-of-state hires, preparation, and placement were significantly associated with the 3<sup>rd</sup> year retention rate.</li> </ul>
Williams, 2003	To examine factors that influence the retention of exemplary teachers	12 western North Carolina teachers with at least 15 years of experience	Qualitative - Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers have stayed in the classroom because they had been able to fulfill their needs for autonomy, creativity, development of meaningful relationships, and the knowledge of making a difference in students' lives.</li> </ul>

## Appendix B

### Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board



Office of Research Compliance  
Institutional Review Board  
1880 Pratt Drive (0497)  
Blacksburg, Virginia 24061  
540/231-4991 Fax: 540/231-0959  
E-mail: moored@vt.edu  
www.irb.vt.edu

FWA00000572( expires 7/20/07)  
IRB # is IRB00000667.

DATE: February 13, 2007

#### MEMORANDUM

TO: Walt Mallory  
Renee Chinn

FROM: David M. Moore 

Approval date: 8/8/2006  
Continuing Review Due Date: 7/24/2007  
Expiration Date: 8/7/2007

SUBJECT: **IRB Amendment 2 Approval:** "Voices of Experiences: Why Do Secondary School Teachers Choose to Remain in a Mid-Atlantic Exurban School District?", IRB # 06-338

This memo is regarding the above referenced protocol which was previously granted approval by the IRB on August 8, 2006. You subsequently requested permission to amend your IRB application. Since the requested amendment is nonsubstantive in nature, I, as Chair of the Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board, have granted approval for requested protocol amendment, effective as of February 8, 2007. The anniversary date will remain the same as the original approval date.

As an investigator of human subjects, your responsibilities include the following:

1. Report promptly proposed changes in previously approved human subject research activities to the IRB, including changes to your study forms, procedures and investigators, regardless of how minor. The proposed changes must not be initiated without IRB review and approval, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects.
2. Report promptly to the IRB any injuries or other unanticipated or adverse events involving risks or harms to human research subjects or others.
3. Report promptly to the IRB of the study's closing (i.e., data collecting and data analysis complete at Virginia Tech). If the study is to continue past the expiration date (listed above), investigators must submit a request for continuing review prior to the continuing review due date (listed above). It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain re-approval from the IRB before the study's expiration date.
4. If re-approval is not obtained (unless the study has been reported to the IRB as closed) prior to the expiration date, all activities involving human subjects and data analysis must cease immediately, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects.

## Appendix C

### Letter for County Approval

\_\_\_\_\_ 2006

Name  
Human Resources  
Comstock County Schools  
Address

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

I am a doctoral student in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at Virginia Polytechnic and State University, Blacksburg, Virginia. I am writing my dissertation on reasons why teachers choose to remain in a school or school district. I would like to conduct this research in Comstock County Public Schools. I am presently an assistant principal in the county and the information gained from this research may assist the county and me in our efforts to retain teachers.

Forty secondary teachers received their ten-year pin at the Comstock County Employee Recognition ceremony in May 2005. These teachers are the data source for my study. My initial step will be to mail a letter to these fifty-one teachers requesting their participation in this study. From those who respond affirmatively, twenty-five will be interviewed. Their participation will be voluntary, confidential, and individuals and schools used in the study will not be identifiable in any way. The final results of these interviews will be shared with the participants and the school division.

Numerous studies have been conducted seeking the reasons why teachers are leaving the field of education and what can be done to retain them. However, limited information has been gathered regarding the reasons why experienced teachers stay in the profession and ways to retain them. I chose this area of investigation because I believe that it is vital for Comstock County Public Schools to motivate, support, and retain these experienced teachers.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of approval for this study. If you have any questions or concerns about this research project, please contact me at (email address) or by phone (telephone number).

Sincerely,  
Reneé P. Chinn

Appendix D

Letter Requesting Participation in Study

Name \_\_\_\_\_ 2006  
School/Street Address

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

Congratulations on your completion of ten years of teaching in Comstock County Public Schools. Through your dedication and experience, our students are making gains academically and behaviorally. I am an Assistant Principal in Comstock County and a doctoral student at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, Virginia. As a requirement for my degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies, I am seeking your assistance in exploring the reasons why teachers remain in a school or school district.

Teachers with ten years of teaching experience in Comstock County are being asked to participate in this study. Your participation will involve an interview that will require your responses to questions relating to factors that influenced you to stay in the teaching profession. This interview will last approximately 30 minutes and will be taped and later transcribed. You will be asked for an appropriate time and place conducive for this interview. Prior to the final written document, you will be invited to review the draft copy for accuracy of your responses.

Your participation is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time. Please be assured that the information shared will be treated in a confidential manner. In the final report your name and school will not be identifiable in any way and the findings will be shared with you and the school division.

Numerous studies have been conducted seeking the reasons why teachers are leaving the field of education and what can be done to retain them. However, limited information has been gathered regarding the reasons why experienced teachers stay in the profession and ways to retain them. I chose this area of investigation because I believe that it is vital for the Comstock County School system to motivate, support, and retain our experienced teachers.

Thank you in advance for your participation in this study. By discovering why you, the experienced teacher, have remained in the county, may give the school division some insight for retaining all teachers. If you are interested in participating in this study, please contact me at (email address) or by phone (telephone number) by (date).

Sincerely,  
Renee P. Chinn

## Appendix E

### Letter to Principals

Dear Principal:

I am an Assistant Principal in Comstock County and a doctoral student at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, Virginia. As a requirement for my degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies, I am seeking the teacher assistance in exploring the reasons why they remain in a school or school district.

Teachers with ten years of teaching experience in Comstock County are being asked to participate in this study. Their participation will involve a 30-minute interview that will require their responses to questions relating to factors that influenced them to stay in the teaching profession. Their participation is voluntary and they may withdraw at any time. Please be assured that the information shared will be treated in a confidential manner. In the final report the name of the participant and school will not be identifiable in any way and the findings will be shared with the participant and the school division.

Numerous studies have been conducted seeking the reasons why teachers are leaving the field of education and what can be done to retain them. However, limited information has been gathered regarding the reasons why experienced teachers stay in the profession and ways to retain them. I chose this area of investigation because I believe that it is vital for the Comstock County School system to motivate, support, and retain our experienced teachers.

I have received Comstock County's division leadership approval for this research. This letter is to inform you of my research, which may involve teachers in your school. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at (email address) or by phone (telephone number).

Sincerely,  
Renee P. Chinn  
Assistant Principal  
(Name of School)

Appendix F

Interview Guide (Response Form)

Study ID: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Background Information:**

Gender: \_\_\_\_\_ Female \_\_\_\_\_ Male

Age: \_\_\_\_\_ under 35 \_\_\_\_\_ 35-45 \_\_\_\_\_ 46-55 \_\_\_\_\_ over 55

Ethnic group: \_\_\_\_\_

School \_\_\_\_\_

What is your highest degree? \_\_\_\_\_ Degreed area(s)? \_\_\_\_\_

What subject(s) do you teach? \_\_\_\_\_

What grade level(s)? \_\_\_\_\_

How many years have you been at your present school? \_\_\_\_\_

How many years total have you been teaching? \_\_\_\_\_

Have you taught in other schools in Comstock County? \_\_\_\_\_ If yes, which school and what years? \_\_\_\_\_

What other professional occupation(s) did you have before entering the teaching field?

\_\_\_\_\_

**Interview Questions:**

1. You have been a teacher in Comstock County for 10 years. What are your top three reasons for staying in the profession?

2. My study involves factors that may influence a teacher to stay in teaching. What influenced your commitment to stay in teaching for 10 years?



3. What effect did school leadership/school administration have on you to remain in teaching?
4. What effect did the school atmosphere (school culture or climate) have on your decision to remain in the profession?
5. What influence did professional staff development have on your ten-year retention?
6. What other factors had an influence on your remaining in the profession?
7. What are some of your suggestions that the school district can implement to attract teachers to the county? To retain teachers once they have been hired?
8. What are some suggestions that your school can implement to retain teachers?
9. What would you suggest to less experienced teachers to help them to remain in teaching for 10 years?
10. How has your family, friends, or colleagues influenced you to remain in the profession?
11. How are you dealing with or dealt with *stress* or *burn- out*? Has it been a problem?
12. What influence did your salary as a teacher have on your remaining in the profession?
13. During your 10 years of teaching, did you ever consider leaving the profession? Why or what made you stay?
14. What are your plans for the future in regards to teaching?

## Appendix G

### Overview of Findings

#### *Broad Themes*

The grounded theory that emerged from this study is as follows: (1) experienced teachers are motivated primarily internally but need external approval and commendation to confirm how they feel; (2) they perceive this from the success of their students, the collegiality of fellow teachers, and from the pride of their families; (3) as a separate motivator, school leadership can positively affect teacher retention; (4) as a part of the school atmosphere, interactions with students and colleagues positively affect teacher retention; and (5) professional staff development has a positive and negative effect on teacher retention.

#### *Emerging Categories*

##### Discussions of Findings: Internal Influences

- (1) Teachers are motivated by the love of teaching.
- (2) Teachers are motivated by student-teacher relationships.
- (3) Teachers are motivated by the thought that they are making a difference in students' lives and contributing to society.
- (4) Teachers are motivated by teacher-to-teacher relationships.

##### Discussion of Findings: External Influences

#### *School Leadership*

- (5) As a separate motivator, school leadership had a positive influence on the experienced teachers' retention.

- (6) As part of school atmosphere, school leadership did not influence the experienced teachers' retention.

#### *School Atmosphere*

- (7) Teachers appreciate a positive school atmosphere and relationships with students and colleagues.
- (8) Respect of colleagues, family, and friends is a powerful motivation to continue teaching.

#### *Professional Staff Development*

- (9) The influence of professional staff development has a positive and negative effect on teacher retention.

#### Discussion of Findings: Recruitment and Retention

#### *Salary Influence*

- (10) The influence of salary was inconclusive for teacher retention and a positive incentive for recruitment.

#### *Working Conditions Influence*

- (11) For new teachers, administrative support or lack of it affects teacher retention.
- (12) Induction programs that include mentoring are considered to be recruitment and retention influences
- (13) Developing strategies to deal with stress help teachers to remain in the profession.