

Practices of Elementary Principals in  
Influencing New Teachers To Remain in Education

By

Thelma D. Palermo

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the  
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of  
Doctor of Education

in

Educational Leadership and Policy Study

APPROVED:

Jennifer A. Sughrue, Chair

Jean B. Crockett

Lisa G. Driscoll

Patricia P. Kelly

Steve R. Parson

April 10, 2002

Blacksburg, Virginia

Key Words: New Teachers, Retention, Principal Support, School Climate

Copyright 2002, Thelma D. Palermo

Practices of Elementary Principals in  
Influencing New Teachers To Remain in Education

By

Thelma D. Palermo

Dr. Jennifer Sughrue

ELPS

(ABSTRACT)

The grounded theory presented in this study describes practices elementary principals utilize in influencing new teachers to remain in education. Eleven teachers and three elementary principals from one school division in Virginia participated in this study. Interview data were collected, elementary principals were shadowed, and documents were analyzed. Thematic categories and sub categories were formed through data analysis. The grounded theory that resulted from this study is: principals who create an atmosphere of trust, of mutual respect, and of service to children within a school foster teachers who state they feel successful, valued, safe, loyal, and professional and want to and expect to continue teaching. New teachers reported three themes that created their sense of success, value, safety, loyalty, and professionalism. Those themes are: (a) support; (b) communication; (c) first year success stories. Principals stated they employed a variety of practices to create the climate identified by the new teachers. The practices are: maintaining an open door policy, utilizing positive communication, developing leadership teams, encouraging professional

development, designing and implementing support structures, providing opportunities for professional development, participating in decision making, encouraging and expecting peer collaboration and child centered instructional and behavioral programs.

## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my Mother and Father, may their souls rest in peace. To my mother for her constant encouragement as I began this process, I regret she did not live long enough to be present at my graduation and see the culmination of a dream. And to my father who was ABD, I can now more fully understand your decision to be with your family as we grew. Thank you both for instilling in me the fervor to continue my education and to live life fully while pursuing dreams.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many people have assisted me in making this dissertation possible. I thank them with sincere appreciation and gratitude for their support in this process.

To Dr. Jennifer Sughrue, my committee chair, advisor, and friend, who has provided me with her wisdom, expertise, wit, attitude, and encouragement throughout the dissertation process, thank you. She has been a support through very personal and difficult times for which she has my deepest gratitude. To Dr. Lisa Driscoll, who has provided me with expert advice and shared with me her sage wisdom, I extend my thanks and appreciation for her trust and belief in me. And to my committee members, Dr. Jean Crockett, Dr. Pat Kelly, and Dr. Steve Parson, thank you for your time, patience, and thoughtful questions. Your input provided me with direction, clarity, and focus.

A special thanks is extended to those teachers and administrators who willingly participated in this study. Without their time and their willingness to share experiences, this study would not have occurred. And to the Richmond Cohort, who were there for me from the first day of the first class to the day of the final defense, may our friendship continue for many years hence.

The support, patience, and love extended to me by my family and friends has sustained me through the sometimes seemingly endless days and nights. To them, I give my undying love and gratitude for without them this journey would

have been all the more difficult. Each of them in different ways and at different times knew when to motivate me with a call, a hug, or a touch and when to flee the room. Thank you all for encouraging me to finish my studying and writing and to live while I worked.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	ii
Dedication.....	iv
Acknowledgements.....	v
List of Tables.....	xiii
List of Figures .....	xiii
Chapter One: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	3
Relationship to Prior Knowledge .....	3
Purpose of the Study.....	4
Research Questions.....	4
Significance of the Study.....	5
Definitions .....	5
Limitations .....	6
Overview of the Dissertation .....	6
Chapter Two: LITERATURE REVIEW .....	8
Statistics.....	8
Work: Attitude and Expectation .....	9
Building-Level Context Factors .....	11
Teacher Perceptions and Context Factors .....	11
Supportive Work Conditions .....	16

Career Decisions and Teacher Retention.....	20
The Principal's Role .....	24
Leadership Needs of New Teachers .....	24
Leadership Action and New Teachers.....	29
Conclusions.....	31
Summary.....	33
Chapter Three: METHODOLOGY.....	35
Purpose of the Study.....	35
Research Questions.....	35
Procedures.....	36
Assumptions and Rationale for a Qualitative Design.....	36
Type of Design.....	36
Researcher's Role .....	39
Gaining Access and Entry.....	40
Setting and Selection .....	41
Participant Selection.....	42
Selecting the Participant Pool.....	43
Assurance of Confidentiality .....	48
Data Collection Procedures.....	48
Means of Collecting Data .....	49
Data Analysis Procedures.....	52
Basic Operations in Data Analysis.....	53



Data Management.....	55
Addressing Quality .....	57
The Qualitative Narrative.....	60
Describing the Results.....	60
PROLOGUE TO CHAPTER FOUR .....	61
Setting.....	61
School 1 .....	64
School 2.....	67
School 3.....	68
School 4 .....	69
School 5.....	70
School 6.....	71
School 7.....	73
Participant Characteristics.....	74
Summary.....	75
Chapter 4: FINDINGS .....	77
The Grounded Theory: An Overview.....	77
Theory Through Theoretical Sampling and Coding.....	82
Support.....	86
Principal.....	88
Administrative Team.....	91
Mentor .....	91

Grade Level.....	92
Entire Staff.....	93
Summary .....	94
Communication .....	94
Principal.....	95
Peer.....	98
Summary .....	99
First Year Success Stories .....	99
Summary .....	101
Principal Interviews and Shadowing.....	101
Trust.....	102
Open Door Policy .....	104
Communication.....	105
Leadership Teams.....	109
Professional Development.....	114
Summary .....	117
Mutual Respect .....	117
Summary .....	121
Service To Children.....	122
Summary .....	124
Summary of Practices of Elementary Principals.....	124

Chapter 5: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS .....	128
Discussion and Conclusions .....	129
Trust.....	129
Open Door Policy .....	130
Communication.....	132
Support Structures.....	133
Professional Development.....	133
Summary .....	134
Mutual Respect .....	134
Decision Making .....	135
Collaboration .....	136
Summary .....	137
Service to Children.....	137
Child Centered.....	138
Strong Instruction and Positive Behavior.....	139
Summary .....	141
In Summary.....	141
Implications for Practice .....	142
Recommendations for Further Research .....	144
Personal Reflections on the Research Process .....	145
Concluding Statements .....	146
References .....	147

Appendix A .....	152
Appendix B .....	154
Appendix C .....	157
Appendix D .....	158
Appendix E .....	163
Appendix F.....	166
Appendix G .....	167
Appendix H .....	169
Appendix I.....	170
Appendix J .....	171
Appendix K .....	172
Appendix L.....	173
Appendix M.....	174
Vita.....	175

## List of Tables

Table 1	Building-Level Variables and Expressed Level of Concern: Combined Responses.....	13
Table 2	Summary of the Number of New Teacher Comments .....	15
Table 3	Summary of Survey Response .....	45
Table 4	Number of Schools and Principals Within A Teachers Career .....	47
Table 5	Characteristics of the Participating School Division .....	62
Table 6	Characteristics of Represented Schools .....	65

## List of Figures

Figure 1	Conceptual Framework.....	32
Figure 2	Framework of Study Design.....	38
Figure 3	Practices of Elementary Principals.....	79
Figure 4	Practices of Elementary Principals in Influencing New Teacher Retention .....	127

## Chapter One

### INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

New teachers exit the classrooms of America in alarming numbers within their first five years of teaching. Statistics reported on new teacher attrition range from 20% leaving within the first three years of teaching to 60% leaving within the first five years (Darling-Hammond, 1984; Darling-Hammond, 1999; Odell, 1990; Pennington, 1998; Varah, Theune, & Parker, 1986). Today, in this atmosphere of teacher shortages, concerns about new teacher retention abound among leaders in school divisions, states, and the nation.

The Virginia Legislature acknowledged the seriousness of the tenuous nature of a first-year teacher with the consideration and approval of House Joint Resolution No. 117 (HJR117) by the General Assembly in 1998. The mission of the resolution was “to study the feasibility of implementing a one-year internship of teaching following the completion of a teacher education program” (Commonwealth of Virginia, 1999, p. 4). As considered in the final report, House Document No. 33, the task force examined the following aspects of support needed for new teachers: (a) teacher induction programs; (b) identifying teachers who would be assisted; (c) mentors; (d) mentors’ roles; and (e) the cost for the program. The 25-member panel came to the conclusion that a state-wide induction program is necessary for the retention of teachers and for the benefit of the Virginia public school students.

On April 27 and 28, 2000, the Virginia Board of Education Annual Retreat was held. Information shared and discussions held focused on how to attract and retain high quality professionals in education. Although specific shortage areas were noted, the global challenge was reiterated. “The support of teachers is essential to retention of teachers and higher achievement of teachers” (p.10).

Three categories were identified and reported at the Virginia annual retreat as major areas of concern in the discussion about attracting and retaining qualified teachers. These three categories are: (a) providing professional development for administrators; (b) changing the perception that creative teaching is no longer possible; and (c) funding and other incentives for teachers (p. 6).

Of the three categories, the professional development of administrators speaks to the topic of this study. Professional development of administrators was explained as “leadership at the building level and central office that is supportive of teachers is vital to beginning and veteran teachers’ willingness to remain in the school, school division, or the teaching profession” (p. 6). Three specific areas of focus for this particular category were listed: (a) leadership sets the stage for retention of both beginning and experienced teachers; (b) beginning teacher assignments should be to supportive environments rather than to the most difficult assignment; and (c) mentor programs with involvement of clinical faculty are needed. Leadership that sets the stage for retention of teachers is the area of focus in this study

## Statement of the Problem

Researchers have studied many aspects of teacher attrition and retention. Among other issues, studies have included the influence and effectiveness of mentoring and induction programs (Odell & Ferraro, 1992; Schaffer, Stringfield, & Wolfe, 1992), mentors and their roles (Wildman, Magliaro, Niles, & Niles, 1992; Tellez, 1992), the school level context (Greenberg & Erly, 1989), and beginning teacher concerns (Odell, 1989). Each study added to the knowledge base and understanding of the new teacher and their first years in the classroom. Research, however, has not focused on examining teacher retention as it is influenced by the practices of principals. There continues to be a need to have a greater understanding of the practices of elementary principals and the influence on the retention of new teachers.

## Relationship to Prior Knowledge

Researchers note the importance of the role of the building administrator in shaping the quality of the first years of a new teacher. Administrators who assist new teachers during their first years in the classroom may contribute to their decision to continue in education (Gold, 1996). Teachers view school leadership that incorporates teacher participation as supportive and claim that this influences their decision to stay in teaching (Sclan, 1993). Conditions that give rise to frustrations come more from the lack of support from the building administration than from the students (Yee, 1990). Administrators who provide positive recognition and pay attention to the quality of professional life for new



teachers may influence the careers of the new teachers (Chapman & Greene, 1986). Even with these findings, the literature on teacher retention lacks a theory about the role elementary principals have in influencing new teachers to remain in education.

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to develop a grounded theory that describes the practices of elementary principals in influencing new teachers to stay in education. In grounded theory, the researcher systematically gathers and analyzes data and allows the theory to emerge from the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The theory developed in this study provides an explanation of the practices of elementary principals, how these shape the climate of the school, and how new teachers respond.

### Research Questions

The central question that guided this study was: *What is the theory that explains the practices of elementary principals in influencing new teachers to remain in education?* Sub-questions for this study that guided the study and the development of the grounded theory are: (a) What practices do principals perform that support new teachers and influence them to stay beyond the first years of their career? (b) What practices of principals do new teachers identify as important to their decisions to stay beyond their first years of their teaching career?

## Significance of the Study

Retention of new teachers is important for several reasons; budget and student performance (Theobald, 1990; Yee, 1990) are two issues that have consequences in the mind of the public. A teacher leaving a particular district is a loss in terms of resources spent on hiring, inducting, and mentoring that individual. The public views teacher turnover in schools as a loss of continuity of instruction in the schools. Continuity of instruction contributes to student performance. Greater knowledge of what administrators can do to influence the retention rate of new teachers beyond their first years can benefit the student, the teacher, and the school system.

The development of the grounded theory from this study contributes and adds to the current research on what influences new teachers to remain in education. The theory provides a framework of practices for elementary principals and other members of the school community. It offers insight into what new teachers value as important to their success in the classroom and in education.

## Definitions

The following terms are used in this study and are explained for the benefit of the reader.

New Teacher is a state-licensed individual who entered the school division under study with no prior teaching experience within the school years 1996-1997 through 1999-2000.

Elementary Principal is a credentialed and state licensed individual who has the responsibility for leading and managing a school which houses students in kindergarten through fifth grade.

Context in this study refers to building-level context factors. These are the factors that make up the organization, system, or culture within which a teacher works. They include orientation, space, time, course assignment, resources, class size, student performance, assistance, administrative duties, lesson planning, extra duties, teaming opportunities, collegial relationships, and communication.

Climate is the feeling of family characterized by the support a teacher feels within a school and the success they experience there.

#### Limitations

The grounded theory developed in this study has emerged from data gathered from documents, interviews, and observations of instructional personnel in a suburban school division located in the state of Virginia. Readers of this study are reminded to make the decision of transferability of the findings to their individual situations and circumstances. The prologue to Chapter 4 of this study provides an overview of the school division, description of the schools, and of the participating individuals to allow the reader to make the decision of transferability.

#### Overview of the Dissertation

Chapter One of this dissertation provides the reader with an introduction to the study, a statement of problem and purpose, the research questions, the significance of the study, definitions, and limitations. Chapter Two supports the

importance of this study by a review of the pertinent literature. The methodology for the study along with the sampling procedures, data collection, management procedures, and data analysis procedures are outlined and explained in Chapter Three. A Prologue to Chapter Four is included. It provides a description of the school division, schools, and new teachers and elementary principals who participated in the study. Chapter Four presents and describes the grounded theory. Chapter Five includes a discussion of the study's outcomes, conclusions, implications, and recommendations for further research. A listing of references and appendices is included.

## Chapter Two

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter examines the literature related to retention of teachers and the role of administrators in manipulating the building-level context variables. This subject is important for several reasons. First, national statistics indicate that there are an increasing number of students to be educated, a large number of the teaching force is nearing the age of retirement, and new teachers leave the classroom within the first few years at an alarming rate. Second, Herzberg (1966), a renowned researcher, developed a theory on attitudes and expectations for work that provides insightful information regarding job satisfaction for individuals who supervise others. Third, studies show that teachers identify building-level context factors as important to them in their decision process when making the determination to remain in education. Finally, and most importantly, because it is the focus of this study, what do researchers report about the practices of principals in the retention of new teachers.

#### Statistics

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (1993) predicted an increase of 13% among 5 to 17 year-olds from 1978 to 2003. Statistics gathered indicate the number of public school teachers needed to educate these students is expected to increase from approximately 1.4 million in 1960 to 3.3 million in 2007 (NCES, 1997). A number of factors contribute to these predictions. The student increase is credited to the baby boom echo along with other factors such

as: higher birth rates of minorities, increases in immigration, more children attending Pre K programs and kindergarten, and a higher rate of students persisting and graduating from high school (NCES, 1997).

The need for teachers has increased for several reasons. First, the increase in the student population to be educated necessitates additional teachers. Second, more than 33% of the teacher currently in the classrooms are 50 years of age or older (Recruiting New Teachers, 1998), additionally these teachers are likely to retire within the next few years (Morrow, 1999). And finally, teachers are leaving the profession. Statistics reported range from 20% of teachers leaving within the first three years of teaching to 60% leaving within the first five years (Darling-Hammond, 1984; Darling-Hammond, 1999; Odell, 1990; Pennington, 1998; Varah, Theune, & Parker, 1986). Based on the increased numbers of students, the number of teachers required, and the number of leavers, there is reason to be concerned about the retention of teachers.

#### Work: Attitude and Expectation

As reported in research literature, job satisfaction results from a summation of many factors. Two of which are personal evaluation of the occupation and job-related experiences. When considering why teachers stay, examination of attitudes and expectations brought to the job should provide insightful information for those who supervise teachers and for those concerned with teacher retention.

Herzberg (1966) theorized that man has two sets of needs: that of an animal, to avoid pain, and that of a human, to grow psychologically. The study to test this theory was conducted in and around Pittsburgh at nine different locations, primarily in companies dealing with design and construction machinery and other engineering activities. The participants in the study were two hundred engineers and accountants.

Participants were interviewed about events at work which resulted in “marked improvement in their job satisfaction or . . . led to a marked reduction in job satisfaction” (Herzberg, 1966, p. 71). Herzberg labeled the strong determining factors of job satisfaction as “satisfiers” and the factors leading to negative feelings as “dissatisfiers.” The interviews indicated that there were five factors that strongly influenced job satisfaction--achievement, recognition, work itself, responsibility, and advancement. The latter three factors held the greatest importance for a lasting change of attitude. Later, when participants described events at work that resulted in negative feelings about work, the five factors noted above were rarely mentioned. Instead, the terms mentioned were company policy and administration, supervision, salary, interpersonal relations, and working conditions.

If, as Herzberg has theorized, workers have job satisfaction when they experience achievement, receive recognition, are satisfied with their work, and are provided with responsibility and advancement, then those concerned with the retention of teachers should consider the applicability of these factors to teachers

and the issue of retention. With this information, peers, principals, and central office personnel may, in some way, because of their interaction with new teachers assist in improving the quality of a first year teacher's experience.

### Building-Level Context Factors

Building-level context factors comprise the organization, system, or culture within which a teacher works. These factors include orientation, space, time, course assignment, resources, class size, student performance, assistance, administrative duties, lesson planning, extra duties, teaming opportunities, collegial relationships, and communication (Brock & Grady, 1998; Gayles, 1989; Greenberg & Erly, 1989; Odell, 1990; Sclan, 1993; Theobald, 1990; and Vonk, 1993). Yee (1990) expanded the meaning of school context to include the total workplace experience at each school. Understanding the effect of school context variables on teachers has been the focus of researchers.

### Teachers' Perceptions and Context Factors

Teacher perceptions regarding building-level context factors that can be affected by administrative practice and policy were the focus of a study in a large school system that had improved procedures for recruiting and retaining new teachers (Greenberg & Erly, 1989). A questionnaire was administered to 368 teachers who were participating in a staff development day. The population included teachers from a variety of grade levels and content areas, those with prior experiences in other localities, those who returned to teaching after an absence, and those with no teaching experience.



Data were gathered from the teachers in the areas of demographics, issues of concern, committee assignments and extra duties, and comments. In keeping with the focus of this study, attention is drawn here to the issues of concern and comments sections. The issues of concerns were listed as 14 school building variables: orientation, space, time, assignment, resources, class size, student performance, assistance, administrative duties, lesson planning, extra duties, opportunity to observe, teaming opportunity, and collegial relationships. Participants were requested to provide comments and descriptions of three things that teachers believed helped and hindered them at the building level as well as three things they wished had been done at the building level but were not.

When considering the 14 building-level variables, participants in the study were directed to rank them from 1 to 5, (1 being of lowest concern and 5 the highest,) if the variable was perceived as an area of concern. The 14 variables and the combined number of responses from those participants who rated the variable as a concern with a score of 3, 4, or 5 are shown in Table 1.

More than half of the 368 participants in this survey rated 10 of the 14 building-level variables as an area of medium to high concern. This information supports further examination of building-level context factors when considering the current focus on the need to retain teachers.

The written comments provided by the participants about the three helps, hindrances, and wished for but not provided assistance were analyzed.

Table 1

Building-Level Variables and Expressed Level of Concern: Combined Responses

Variables	Level of Concern
Resources	241
Student performance	239
Time	237
Class size	225
Administrative duties	208
Space	208
Opportunity to observe	204
Assistance	203
Lesson Planning	192
Teaming opportunities	185
Extra Duties	174
Orientation	163
Assignment	153
Collegial relationships	141

Note. Areas of concern are listed, highest to lowest, from respondents who rated the variables as a level of concern with a 3, 4, or 5.

Note. Adapted from School-Building-Level Variables and the Induction of New Teachers (p.37), by J. D. Greenberg and M. C. Erly in Teacher Induction by J. Reinhartz (Ed.), 1989, Washington DC: National Education Association.

The resulting categories along with the number of individuals who reported the categories in their comments are displayed in Table 2. As a reminder, survey respondents were instructed to write three comments for each category. Some did and some did not. Greenberg and Erly (1989) chose to assume there was no concern for that category with those individuals. Of interest to this study is the number of times comments were made about the helpful and cooperative nature of administration and staff. Comments were made eight times more than for materials and supplies, the next closest category. This phenomenon would lead one to think that teachers want the people connection when considering what is important to them.

In the comments that teachers made addressing hindrances and wished for, administrative logistics made the top of the list with 145 comments in the hindrances category and 67 in the wished for category. Administrative logistics was explained as teaching out of one's area of certification, number of class preparations, interruptions, nonpermanent or inadequate teaching space, and administrative demands.

Using the explanation provided by Greenberg and Erly (1989) for administrative logistics, the potential exists for principals to control these areas by some of their practices or behaviors. By doing so and also by giving attention

Table 2

Summary of the Number of New Teacher Comments

Category	Helpful	Hindrance	Wished For
Administration/Staff	403	97	37
Administrative Logistics	30	145	67
Materials and Supplies	50	85	32
Program	20	23	55
Communication	2	16	12
Students	1	26	5
Time	0	38	15
Parents	3	5	2

Note. Teachers were asked to provide three comments regarding helps, hindrances, and wished for, but not provided, assistance.

Note. Adapted from School-Building-Level Variables and the Induction of New Teachers (p.39-40), by J. D. Greenberg and M. C. Erly in Teacher Induction by J. Reinhartz (Ed.), 1989, Washington DC: National Education Association.

to building-level context factors, there would be the potential for reducing some of the areas of concern and difficulty as expressed by teachers. Of particular interest to the present study is Greenberg's and Erly's (1989) recommendation to learn more "about the kinds of administrative decisions and behaviors perceived to be particularly supportive and helpful as well as those perceived to be detrimental and destructive" (p. 41).

In conclusion, the building-level context factors that teachers indicated as areas of concern were resources, student performance, time, class size, administrative duties, space, opportunity to observe, assistance, lesson planning, and teaming opportunities. In the year 2000, some of these same issues continue to plague new teachers. College deans and directors of teacher preparation programs were quoted at the Virginia Board of Education Annual Retreat (2000). They shared the following reasons frequently cited for high attrition rates in teaching: (a) lack of administrative, collegial, and parent support; (b) insufficient involvement in decision making; (c) student discipline; (d) low salaries; (e) issues in the work environment; and (f) lack of time (planning, meeting, interacting with other teachers, and meaningful professional development) (p. 7).

### Supportive Work Conditions

The quality of the work environment leads to varying levels of job satisfaction. Links between job satisfaction and teacher retention have established by researchers (Billingsley, 1993; Chapman & Green, 1986; Odell &

Ferraro, 1992; Theobald, 1990). For Yee (1990), understanding why some non-committed teachers stayed and why some committed teachers left was a way to examine the connection between the work environment and job satisfaction.

Yee's study was based on case studies, in-depth interviews, surveys, conversations, document inspection, and observations. The study report utilized vignettes, developed from interview transcripts that captured the individual viewpoints of teachers, to illustrate its findings.

This qualitative study, sought to provide "insight into how workplace conditions affect variation in career outcomes" (p. 10). Three "good" metropolitan area comprehensive high schools were selected for the study. A "good" school was defined as a school where someone would want to teach relative to other schools in the same district (p. 7). One school was an inner city school with a high dropout rate (New York City); another was a wealthy suburban school with the majority of students continuing in a four-year college (San Francisco Bay Area); and the third was a working-class, suburban school with students achieving in the average range on standardized tests (Los Angeles).

In-depth interviews were conducted with 59 teachers (15 former and 44 current). Yee (1990) elected to include former teachers in order to have their views represented, as she reported few studies had done so. Results from the close-ended surveys were incorporated into the study. Yee reported that 216 teachers completed the survey with a response rate of 64% from New York City, 71% from San Francisco Bay Area, and 69% from Los Angeles. Participants in

the study represented a range of content taught, age, gender, and stage of career. Fewer than 5% of the teachers interviewed were between the ages of 21 and 29. The explanation provided for this was the metropolitan areas represented in the study were experiencing declining enrollment and diminishing financial resources, which resulted in the hiring of few new teachers. The results shared in this study, therefore, are a commentary based on veteran teachers who have been through the difficult beginning years of teaching.

Building-level context factors identified by Yee (1990) were discipline, course assignment, level of support during induction, class size, workload, professional stimulation, collegial interaction, opportunities for input, and organizational choices such as administrative policies and practices. Course assignment was differentiated further to either working out of one's endorsement area, or carrying a heavy load of remedial or general courses where student achievement may be slow. Additionally, issues of context were different for the teachers of the three schools in the study. Yee attributed this to the various needs, strengths, and weaknesses of each school's location; inner city, wealthy suburban, or working class suburban.

As the setting of each school was different, Yee (1990) looked beyond the physical confines of school buildings, when she considered context factors and the influence they had on teachers. "Schools are open to their environment. Community, district, and state conditions influence school conditions" (p. 111). Teachers interviewed for her study referenced characteristics of students and

behaviors of parents (community), when they spoke of their working conditions. Dealing with student absenteeism or attrition, dropouts, drugs, discipline, security, parental involvement or the lack-there-of, and student achievement were “community” context factors that teachers reported as influencing their decisions to stay at a particular school or in teaching.

Using Yee’s more global explanation of school building context, it is understandable that teachers in different schools struggle with varying issues of school building context. Conditions at one school may be such that many teachers want to transfer in and none want to leave. While another school in the same division, perhaps across town or a short mile down the road, will have less than ideal working conditions, perhaps, resulting in the demoralization and defection of the teaching staff.

Yee concluded that teachers develop their attitudes about their teaching career over a period of time. Major themes that emerged were: (a) supportive workplace conditions were important to a teacher’s sense of career and achievement; (b) professional discretion rather than maintaining bureaucratic top-down control allowed teachers to be more competent in their work; and (c) self-efficacy and overall commitment to teaching were linked to job satisfaction and intrinsic rewards.

A further examination of the workplace conditions teachers reported nearly mirror those reported by Greenberg and Erly (1989). They included: minimizing classroom interruptions; providing support for discipline issues; course



assignment out of one's licensed subject area or a heavy load of remedial or general courses; large class size; collegial interaction; support for professional development; induction programs; and having a voice in decisions making. These examples of workplace conditions were reported as important in all three of the study settings (Yee, 1990). However, the degree of importance varied depending upon the strengths and weaknesses of the workplace and the context conditions at each location.

In summary, workplace conditions, specifically those that can be manipulated by administrators through policy or practice, are key to teachers' attitudes and decisions about staying in their field (Yee, p. 112). Course assignment, class size, induction programs, collegial interactions, and professional development were the factors referenced most frequently by the interviewees in Yee's study. As would be expected, particular conditions varied from school to school, with class size of greater concern in one situation and administrator support of discipline being more important in a different location. Yet, the administrator's knowledge, understanding, and willingness to act on providing supportive workplace conditions mattered greatly to teachers when making decisions about their teaching career.

#### Career Decisions and Teacher Retention

A variety of factors affect teachers' decisions to remain in the classroom. Herzberg (1966) identified factors that influenced job satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Greenberg and Erly (1986) investigated building-level context

variables, as did Yee (1990). Looking beyond the single notion of issues of context, Yee examined how teachers arrive at career decisions and how building-level context issues may affect these career decisions and therefore teacher retention.

Yee identified two broad categories, “good-fit” and “weak-fit” teachers, as measures of initial reasons for which individuals chose teaching as a career. “Good-fit” teachers were described as those who knew all along that they wanted to be teachers. Their reasons were “a desire to work with young people, a commitment to service, an interest in teaching a particular subject, or inspiration from a teacher” (p. 9). These reasons fit the “satisfiers” or “motivator” factors identified by Herzberg (1966). “Weak-fit” teachers are described as those who chose the job by default. The job was initially considered a temporary position, one to carry the individual for a few years until something else more appealing came along. These two descriptions are divided further to describe career patterns: “good-fit stayers, good-fit undecideds, good-fit leavers, weak-fit stayers, and weak-fit leavers” (p. 10).

As defined by teacher interviews in Yee’s (1990) study, good-fit stayers began teaching expressing a “strong commitment to social change and a desire to work with young people” (p. 21). Strong collegial and administrative support beginning with the first year of teaching helped provide positive imprinting to carry the teachers through the difficult times that occurred during their ensuing career. Continuous professional development and involvement supported the

good-fit teachers as they shared their belief that teaching well is an on-going task. Yee found that generally teachers became good-fit stayers as a result of “positive workplace experiences that yield sufficient intrinsic rewards” (p. 98).

Good-fit undecideds, like the good-fit stayers, entered teaching with similar philosophies. Classroom conditions such as large classrooms, behavior management, student absences, and lack of student progress led to a sense of failure with students and were noted as reasons for dissatisfaction. One interviewee pointed to “the administrative atmosphere . . . as a significant source of stress and ambivalence” (p. 99). With extrinsic rewards, which do not counter balance the weakened intrinsic rewards, potentially good-fit stayers are good-fit undecideds, teetering on the see saw of whether to stay or leave the classroom.

Good-fit leavers also began teaching with positive reasons. Yee found their initial attitudes changed as a result of both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards in the workplace experiences. Shifts in the academic focus, reduced fiscal resources, out-of-field teaching assignments, inadequate administrative and collegial support, and students’ behaviors were sited as the workplace factors that led to their leaving the classroom and teaching.

As a group, weak-fit stayers became teachers, because “they fell into it or simply had nothing better to do” (p. 103). Beyond this similarity, Yee (1990) pointed out these teachers subdivide into two groups, high-involvement and low-involvement teachers. High-involvement teachers credit their workplace conditions with their transformation. For some weak-fit stayers, their beginning

teacher success became a reality due to the support and reinforcement of strong and positive administrative and collegial assistance. The extrinsic rewards of pay, vacation, and benefits ranked lower than the intrinsic rewards of working with students for the high-involved, weak-fit stayers.

Low-involvement teachers differed from the high-involvement teachers in that they spent as little time as possible on the job. They remained in teaching for the extrinsic rewards. Vacation days and scheduling allowed time to be with family or to be involved in other personal pursuits. Classes were taught with minimal preparation with the same lessons repeated year after year. Lack of enthusiasm was noted as a hallmark of the low-involvement weak-fit stayer.

Weak-fit leavers began teaching with the same reasons as the weak-fit stayers. They were identified by themselves and by administrators as someone whose heart was not in teaching. Traumatic first year experiences with little to no help from administrators and colleagues, being assigned to different subject areas, lack of professional stimulation, unsatisfactory workplace conditions, and poor performing students were reasons weak-fit leavers shared for their decision to leave teaching.

Yee (1990) concluded that retaining teachers is a process that begins with induction into the profession. It is a process which requires “nurturing through administrative and collegial support of teaching conditions and competence” (p. 124). Again, the importance of supporting teachers’ extrinsic needs as

exemplified by building-level context variables and their intrinsic needs and interests as proposed by Herzberg (1966) is illustrated through research.

### The Principal's Role

A principal's daily responsibilities are numerous. From morning until night they address late arriving buses and early arriving children, angry parents and honored teachers, changing standards of learning and out-of-date computers. In a people business, it would seem that the most important component of the principal's job was people. Findings reported by Greenberg and Erly (1989) highlighted the importance of the helpful and cooperative nature of administration and staff. The issues of administrative logistics (space, schedule, demands, and interruptions) were at the top of the list when hindrances at the building level were reported, thus supporting efforts by administrators to consider context when thinking about ways to increase teacher retention.

### Leadership Needs of New Teachers

According to Herzberg (1966), knowing and addressing only "hygiene" needs or wants result in a temporary and short-lived fix or level of happiness. Applying his theory to new teachers may improve their retention rate. If teachers have needs and wants from at least some of the "motivator" characteristics and have these needs satisfied, then their personal satisfaction and sense of efficacy increase, and teachers may choose to stay in education. Chapman's (1984) and Chapman and Greene's (1986) studies support this. Chapman (1984) noted that important correlates with teacher retention had "to do with personal and family

characteristics, a person's initial commitment to teaching and subsequent perceptions of career mobility" (p. 657). In addition to the importance of initial career commitment and early work experience, Chapman and Greene (1986) reported that "the attention administrators give to assuring the quality of professional life that new teachers experience can have long-term impacts on the career development of those teachers" (p. 277).

Salary, class size, and number of class preparations are some of the extrinsic or "hygiene" factors that actuate individuals (Chapman, 1984; Darling-Hammond, 1984; Herzberg, 1966; Huling-Austin, 1992; Sclan, 1993; Theobald, 1990; Yee, 1990). The types of inducements that drive hygiene seekers are short-lived, needing regular changing or improving, and individuals feel they have been wronged, if these factors are not addressed. Dissatisfaction, grumbling, and leaving are the result.

Herzberg (1966) explained that the hygiene seeker unlike the motivator seeker "is motivated by the nature of the environment of his job rather than by his tasks" (p. 88). Intrinsic rewards such as student success, teacher autonomy, and participating in decision-making are the "motivating" factors that more positively influence teacher retention (Sclan, 1993; Yee, 1990).

The factors that produce job satisfaction are separate and distinct from those that produce job dissatisfaction (Herzberg, 1966). An analogy used to provide a clearer understanding of this result was a comparison of vision and hearing. If vision is equated to job satisfaction and hearing to job dissatisfaction,

then it is readily apparent that the two are different and each requires different stimuli to increase or decrease either visual or auditory performance. Thus, changing one has no effect on the other. Yee (1990) commented that instead of treating attrition and retention as opposites, it would be more accurate and more constructive to the retention discussion to examine career decisions made by teachers in light of building-level context factors and administrators' actions. Consideration must be given to the role of administrators as it pertains to the retention of teachers, as a school's context or workplace conditions do contribute to an individual's job satisfaction and make new teachers feel supported (Billingsley & Cross, 1992; Greenberg & Erly, 1989).

Chapman (1984) developed a model applying social learning theory to teaching careers. His model suggested that

To understand teachers' decisions to persist in or leave teaching, it is necessary to take into account (a) the personal characteristics of the teachers, (b) the nature of the teacher training and early teaching experiences, (c) the degree to which the teacher is socially and professionally integrated into the teaching profession, (d) the satisfaction teachers derive from their careers, and (e) the external environmental influences impinging on the teachers' career (p. 646).

Chapman's model substantiates the findings of Herzberg (1966), Yee (1990), Greenberg and Erly (1989) and Sclan (1993). Two points, consideration of a teacher's personal characteristics and the satisfaction a teacher derives from a

career, affirm Herzberg's (1966) theory on work and human nature.

Consideration of the influences of the external environment on a teacher's career support Greenberg's and Erly's (1989) as well as Yee's (1990) and Sclan's (1993) findings. Satisfaction from a career is confirmed by findings in Yee's (1990) study. And finally, research results from both Yee and Sclan (1993) underscore the importance of a teacher being socially and professionally integrated into the teaching profession. It would seem worthwhile then, for principals to apply Chapman's (1984) model of social learning theory to their work with new teachers in anticipation of improving the retention rate.

In a study designed as a test of this model of the influences on teacher retention, Chapman (1984) found that administrators may intervene but had little direct influence on attrition of new teachers. He noted that if an administrator was concerned with teacher retention, then working with new teachers, particularly in the area of tone and quality of the first year, was key. This study's results were gleaned from survey responses from 1,282 University of Michigan graduates from 1946 through 1978 with teaching certificates. Respondents were organized into three categories: (a) those who taught continuously; (b) those who left within five years; and (c) those who never taught. Chapman indicated that he used three respondent groups instead of two due to the potential for those whom left teaching after only a short time and those who never taught to reach similar decisions for different reasons.



Results from the study indicated that creating a distinction between the last two groups was valid. The individuals who never entered teaching reported the lowest commitment to teaching and the highest levels of job satisfaction. Whereas those who began teaching, quickly left, and switched careers continued to report low career satisfaction.

In a later study, Chapman and Green (1986) conducted a further examination of the Chapman 1984 study. An important expansion of the initial model was the separation of those leaving teaching permanently from the intermittent teachers or those that left and returned at a later date. Results “suggest that the attention administrators give to assuring the quality of professional life that new teachers experience can have long-term impacts on the career development of those teachers” (p. 277). This finding provides support for Gold’s (1996) assertion regarding the importance of the positive nature of a new teacher’s first year, the resulting imprinting, and how this positive imprinting supports an individual’s decision to remain in teaching.

The results stated above from the studies by Chapman (1984), Chapman and Green (1986), Sclan (1993), and Yee (1990) highlight the importance of career satisfaction to new teachers as they make the choice to stay or leave. Additionally, the positive or negative effects on new teachers by what principals may or may not do is illustrated by the studies’ findings.

## Leadership Action and New Teachers

The purpose of Sclan's (1993) study was to examine new teachers' work and career commitment and retention in teaching, specifically determining what might strengthen these areas. The component of Sclan's (1993) study that is applicable to this paper is the focus on beginning teacher perceptions of school leadership.

The data for the 1993 study came from the 1987-88 Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) database. Sclan opted to eliminate data for beginning teachers who overlapped or were assigned to more than one level in the elementary, middle, and high levels in order to have mutually exclusive categories. The final population for her study consisted of 651 first year teachers.

In Sclan's (1993) study, three items from the 1987-88 SASS Teacher Survey were used to measure work commitment, career commitment, and retention. First, to measure work commitment, was the item "I sometimes feel it is a waste of time to try to do my best as a teacher." The second item measuring career commitment was "If you could go back to your college days and start over again, would you become a teacher again." The third item, which was used to measure retention, was "How long do you plan to remain in teaching."

Sclan (1993) utilized hierarchical linear regression in testing the variables in her study. She explained the approach "as a practical statistical control for the affects of antecedent variables" (p. 8). This approach facilitated examining the prediction of workplace and specialty field of work assignment variables on work

commitment, career choice commitment, or planned retention over and above demographic or academic background. In this study, workplace variables were identified as perceived school leadership, perceived autonomy and discretion, and perceived social climate and student behavior.

Sclan's (1993) findings indicated that "beginning teachers experience autonomy and discretion as a function of school leadership. Furthermore, they evaluate school leadership by how effectively it creates a school culture that is collaborative and supportive" (p. 28). She reported that her findings held major implications for school district and state policy. Beginning teachers placed great importance on the social organizational structure of teaching. "Beginning teachers' perceptions of school leadership and culture and teacher autonomy and discretion significantly shape the extent of their willingness to work, to commit to teaching as a career choice again, and to plan to stay in teaching" (p. 26).

In summary, Sclan's (1993) and Yee's (1990) findings concur. The manner in which new teachers and administrators interact has a role in determining career choice and commitment, both of which have been shown to influence a teacher's decision to stay or leave. Greater leadership support and work involvement is associated with higher job satisfaction according to findings by Billingsley and Cross (1992) and is supported by Herzberg's (1966) theory. It is time to further investigate and understand the effects of non-pecuniary benefits on teacher retention (Theobald 1990) as the context of the workplace and the

administrative interactions with new teachers do influence a teacher's decision to stay in or leave teaching.

### Conclusions

The conceptual framework shown in Figure 1 illustrates the path used in this chapter to focus on the issue of retention of new teachers. Starting at the center of the circle with the new teachers, statistics provide the data supporting the need for a large numbers of teachers to educate the expected increase of students. In addition, studies indicate that new teachers have many needs to be satisfied in order for them to feel successful and to want to continue to remain in the classroom. Next, as in a teacher's reality, the building-level context factors surround the teachers and positively or negatively influence them. The third and final ring represents the principals and their practices. Principals have some control over these factors and may or may not exercise that control to assist the new teachers during their first year in the classroom.

The review of literature provided a realization of the nature of the task facing those interested in the retention of new teachers. Contextual variables including resources, time, class size, course assignment, and student performance were found to have an influence on a teacher's decision to remain in teaching (Billingsly & Cross, 1992; Greenberg & Erly, 1989; Sclan, 1993; Wildman et.al., 1992; Yee, 1990). Principals positively or negatively influence new teacher in their consideration to remain in teaching, by the quality of

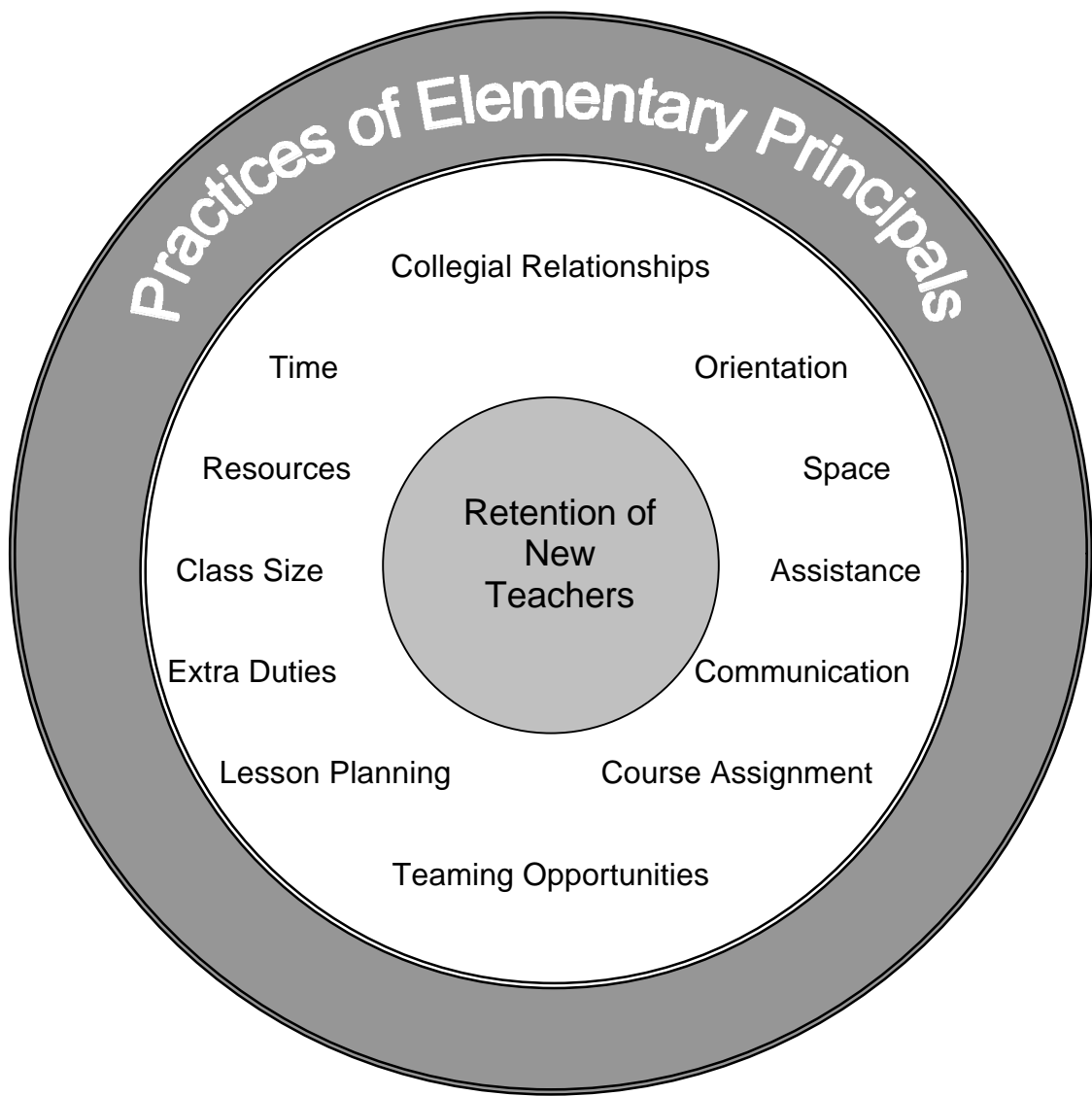


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

professional life they provide (Chapman & Greene, 1986). The interdependence of various aspects of the school as workplace and learning organization demonstrates how imprudent or shortsighted decisions may drive potentially accomplished new teachers from the field of education (Sclan, 1993; Yee, 1990).

### Summary

School context is an area that demands understanding and consideration when retention is the issue under examination. Although school context in and of itself does not drive a new teacher's decision to stay in teaching, it has been shown to influence the effectiveness, success, and job satisfaction of the new teacher. Principals can manipulate school context and create the climate within which teachers teach and students learn. The relationship they establish with a new teacher may be a major determinant in the positive or negative imprinting of a teacher's first year. Administrative practices that support a sense of efficacy, professionalism, and competence will affect new teachers as they make decisions to continue in their chosen career.

Sclan (1993) stated "the social organizational structure of too many schools today creates conditions that may diminish beginning teachers' willingness to exert effort in their work, to commit to their career choice of teaching, and to stay in teaching" (p. 31). Rather than controlling employees, administrators should facilitate opportunities for professional success (Yee, 1990). Consideration must be given to the process of assisting a teacher to choose and to stay in teaching.

Principals have been declared an influential component in this equation. This study will seek to develop a theory that explains the influence practices of elementary principals have in the retention of new teachers.

## Chapter Three

### METHODOLOGY

Researchers have examined mentoring and induction programs and found them to be beneficial to new teachers and career teachers alike. References have been made to the importance of building context as it concerns new teachers and their decision to stay or leave education. Included in the earlier discussion about building context was the role of the principal and how administrative decisions and actions influence the context. Additional information is needed to highlight the importance of principals' practices and how they influence new teachers' decision to stay in education beyond the first years.

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to develop the grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) explaining the practices of elementary principal in influencing new teachers to remain in education. This theory could offer insight into the practices of the principals, enhances the understanding of how new teachers respond to these actions, and potentially provides a meaningful guide to action for principals, leadership development teams, and human resource personnel.

#### Research Questions

The central question that guided this study was: What is the theory that explains the influence practicing elementary principals have in the retention of new teachers? Sub-questions for this study were: (a) What practices of elementary principals do new teachers identify as important to their decisions to



stay beyond their first years of their teaching career? (b) What practices do principals employ to support new teachers and encourage them to stay beyond the first years of their career?

### Procedures

The following sections of this chapter describe the rationale and design of the study, the data collection, and the data analysis. This study utilized the Strauss and Corbin (1998) grounded theory methodology. Strauss and Corbin noted that their “approach to theory building is one of emergence . . . the researcher will not be able to enter into the project with a set of pre-established concepts or with a well-structured design” (p. 33). In grounded theory, the design emerges during the research process.

#### Assumptions and Rationale for a Qualitative Design

Qualitative methods lend themselves to a research process characterized by discovery and exploration (Rossman & Rollis, 1998). Because this study focused on discovery rather than hypothesis testing, a qualitative design was selected. Participants were interviewed and observed in their work environment, which supports the premise of getting out into the field, talking with people, and seeking to understand what is seen and heard (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

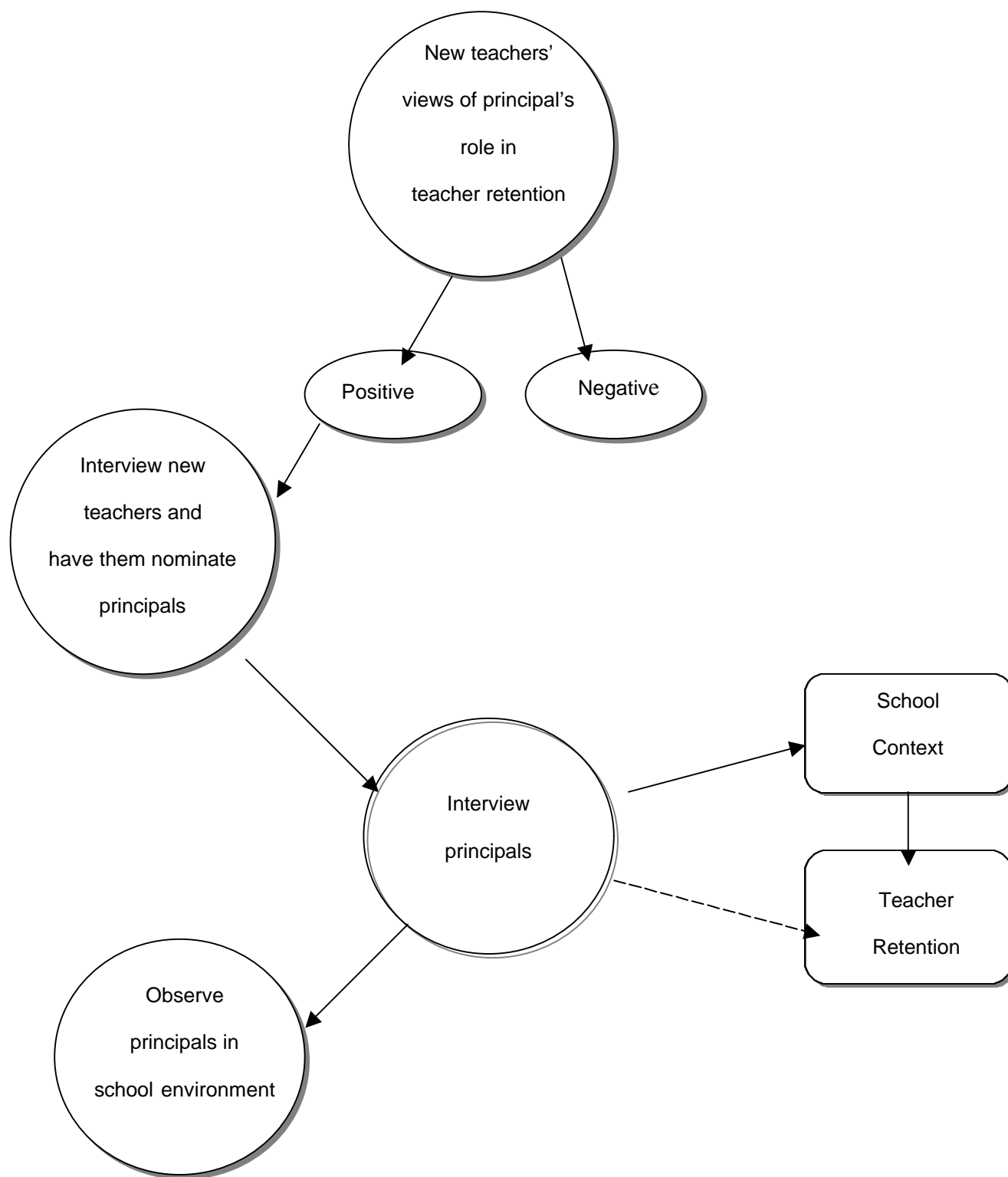
#### Type of Design

This study is a qualitative study utilizing grounded theory as explained by Strauss and Corbin (1998). The design may be considered fuzzy as “the researcher begins with an area of study and allows the theory to emerge from the

data” (p. 12) – thus, the term, “grounded.” In this particular situation, the topic of study is elementary principals and what practices do they employ, as perceived by “new” teachers and by themselves, to support new teachers and influence them to stay in teaching beyond the first years of their career.

A framework of the study design is displayed in Figure 2. Using a survey instrument, new teachers shared their views of principals’ practices as having either a positive or negative influence on their decision to remain in education. Selected teachers from those who claimed that a principal had positively influenced them to remain in education were interviewed. Principals who were nominated by these teachers were interviewed and shadowed. Information regarding principals’ practices and how that influenced school context and indirectly teacher retention was observed and reported. As the reader proceeds through this chapter, this diagram is intended to provide a visual of the study’s design.

A qualitative design was chosen for this study for two reasons. First, a qualitative study serves to extend the information already gathered through quantitative research studies by allowing for further clarification through the interview process. And second, it will give voice to the new teachers who have self-nominated their participation.



**Figure 2.** Framework of Study Design

## Researcher's Role

In qualitative research, “the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis” (Merriam, 1998, p. 7). The messiness of the real world is the field where the researcher gathers data while continuously and simultaneously searching for ways to systematically understand the lived experiences shared by the interviewees. Describing and interpreting the data shared through interviews, observations, and document analysis is a key role of the researcher. Developing a substantive theory required moving beyond the reporting of a set of findings into an explanation of a phenomenon (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Personally, my experiences afforded me many and varied opportunities to work with principals and teachers alike. Specifically, my experiences with leadership development, mentor training, and new teacher induction played a key role in the selection of the focus of this study. Some readers may consider these experiences as a source of bias. In fact that may be so; consider though, the explanation of objectivity provided by Strauss and Corbin (1998). “Objectivity does not mean controlling the variables. Rather, it means openness, a willingness to listen and to ‘give voice’ to respondents” (p. 43).

The perspectives I brought to the research were unique and were used to provide a framework from which to ask questions and seek understanding (Rossman & Rallis, 1998). Serving as a mentor while a classroom teacher provided me with some difficult and fulfilling experiences as I worked with and

supported a new teacher who was not happy in her assignment and was filled with self-doubt about her chosen career. In a different position, I had the opportunity to assist in the development, and later on the refinement of division-wide mentoring and induction programs. The development of the programs afforded me the liberty to assess the needs of the division, the schools, and the individuals. The refinement of the programs provided the unequalled opportunity to observe the differences in implementation at various locations. These opportunities served to create a deeper understanding of the uniqueness of individuals and the stories they had to share.

#### Gaining Access and Entry

My request to conduct a study focusing on what practices elementary principals exhibit and employ to assist new teachers in their decision to remain in teaching was met by division personnel with interest and support. In addition, a positive rapport with administrators and teachers had been developed over the past number of years, therefore, when initial and follow up contacts were made and interviews were scheduled, those who participated in the study were willing and supportive.

Upon university approval of the study, I requested formal approval and permission to conduct the study of the school division superintendent and his designee (Appendix A). As required, the letter contained the purpose and description of the study as well as the data collection procedures used.

The entry point was the director of human resources. This individual and his designee supplied the records needed to identify the new teachers who met the study criteria. Additional information regarding the selection process is described in the section titled Participant Selection.

### Setting and Selection

An ideal setting for conducting qualitative research must meet certain specifications (Rossman & Rollis 1998). Such a setting is where (a) one can gain entry; (b) a variety of potential participants exists; (c) the possibility of establishing strong relationships with participants can be realized; and (d) ethical and political issues are not overwhelming (p. 86). My experiences and contacts allowed for easy entry and access to participants, both administrators and teachers. Relationships and a level of trust were well established in most cases.

Due to the positive nature of the study, few ethical or political issues were expected to be of concern. Teachers were asked to self-nominate and share their success stories. Principals were nominated by participants in the study who viewed them as principals who had made a positive difference in their decision to remain in teaching. A consideration of this study was to look at what worked rather than what did not when it came to considering why teachers stay in the classrooms.

The school division under consideration comprised 245 square miles of urban, suburban, and rural development which border a city to the north, east, and west. There is diversity among the three regions with those areas closest to

the city experiencing many of the same needs and difficulties as urban schools, while those schools in the hinterlands resemble rural schools. At the time of the study, there were 42 elementary schools in the division, 40 of which served children in kindergarten through grade five. Potential participants were identified and selected from schools serving students in grade kindergarten through grade five.

### Participant Selection

A decision was made to include elementary personnel only in this study. Due to the size of secondary schools staff and students in comparison to those of elementary schools, it was determined that each level would have different issues and needs. For example, on the secondary level, assistant principals share the responsibility of supervising teachers along with the principals. Other factors that distinguish secondary schools from elementary include: teachers align according to content area and grade levels; the size of a secondary staff is generally much larger than that of an elementary school; and coaching responsibilities encumber a significant amount of after school hours. With these realities and the understanding that qualitative researchers generally work with small samples of people nested in their context (Miles & Huberman, 1994), the decision was made to limit the participant selection to the elementary level. According to Merriam (1998) if a researcher “wants to discover, understand, and gain insight” a sample of participants must be gathered “from which the most can

be learned” (p. 61). Therefore, a purposeful selection of participants was conducted for this study.

### Selecting the Participant Pool

Employment records for school years 1995-1996 through 1999-2000 were accessed from the Office of Human Resource. A database of elementary hires with zero years of experience was created from these records. The individuals’ name, year of hire, original work location, and identification number were included as fields in the database. Using a 2000-2001 county directory (D/1) and non-renewal of contract files (D/3) from the Office of Human Resource, I updated the database to include the individuals’ current work location or home address. Letters of introduction and explanation along with a brief survey (Appendix B) were sent via interoffice or regular postal mail to the 263 new teachers identified through the process explained above. Out of the original mailing, 97 were returned, 43 were returned marked un-deliverable due to no forwarding address or time for forwarding had lapsed, leaving 123 with no response. Further study of the 123 no response showed that two of the individuals had transferred to middle school, one had transferred to a K-2 school, two had become homebound teachers, and one was a substitute teacher. These names were stricken from the database and were no longer part of the study. Of the remaining individuals, 40 had been terminated, two were duplicates in my file (married), one individual returned the survey with the identification number marked out to make it illegible, and the last 19 were non-locatable through all files at my disposal. This total of



68 subtracted from the 123 no response left names of 55 individuals to receive a second mailing. The second mailing resulted in 44 surveys returned and 11 no responses. Table 3 displays the final results of the mailing.

As the surveys were returned, I added additional fields to the database. These fields reflected the information requested on the questionnaire: returning to the school district, principal played a role in decision to stay in elementary education, willing to participate in an interview, and other comments.

After the second mailing surveys were returned, I developed a database of potential teacher participants. The participants listed were those who “self-nominated” or responded yes to survey questions 1, 2, and 4. There were a total of 48 teachers who self-nominated representing 24 schools. Those schools that had three or more self-nominated teachers were identified as the pool from which the teachers to be interviewed would be selected. There were 6 schools that had 3 or more self-nominating teachers. Initially, one teacher from each of these schools was interviewed (Appendix C). At the completion of the first six teacher interviews, a second teacher from those schools where the principal was identified as one who demonstrated the characteristics that encouraged teachers to stay was interviewed. One additional school was added to the original list of six; a teacher interviewed had taught her first year there and spoke passionately about that particular principal.

Table 3

Summary of Survey Response

Total Surveys	Second	Not Usable or	Returned
Mailed	Mailing	Not Returned	
263	55	122	141

During the interview process, teachers shared information about the number of schools in which they had taught and the number of principals with whom they had worked. Table 4 displays this information. The variation of teachers' experiences in work locations and principals added to the information and insight provided by the teachers during their interviews. Four of the teachers had experiences with one principal in one school. Three teachers had experiences in one school but with two different principals. Three different teachers worked in two schools under two different principals. Finally one teacher reported working in three different schools with three separate principals. Those individuals who had experiences with several principals shared their reflections about each of the principals in response to the questions asked.

Of the 13 principals with whom the interviewed teachers worked, 9 were discussed in a positive light. When negative comments were made, credit for the teacher deciding to remain in education was given to another member of the administrative team, the grade level, or to the reassigning of the principal to another school. One individual resigned, reapplied, and was hired by another principal within the county.

Of the 13 principals represented, four received poor comments about their performance as principals, one was deceased, one left the district, three were in their first or second year of administration, and one had no other new teachers in the original pool of potential teachers to interview. The remaining three principals were selected as those to be interviewed and shadowed.

Table 4

Number of Schools and Principals within a Teacher's Career

Teacher	Number of Schools	Number of Principals
T1	2	2
T2	1	1
T3	1	2
T4	1	2
T5	2	2
T6	3	3
T7	2	2
T8	1	1
T9	1	1
T10	1	2
T11	1	1

Additional teachers from their schools were identified from the self-nomination pool and added to the interview list to reach saturation of data. A total of eleven teachers were interviewed, and three principals were interviewed and shadowed.

#### Assurance of Confidentiality

The recommendation for a researcher to contract with study participants was repeated several times by Miles and Huberman (1994). They recommended that several issues be shared, discussed, and agreed upon before participation in the study began. Therefore a consent form explaining the purpose of the study, the procedures for data collection, and the proposed use of the data was sent to all potential participants. This consent form (Appendix D) was submitted to the Institutional Review Board from the university for its approval, which was granted for one year beginning June 7, 2001.

#### Data Collection Procedures

Emergence is the foundation of theory building (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). As such, having a list of preconceptions, a theoretical concept, or a fixed design is not the mode of operation for the researcher. Instead, the researcher allowed concepts and design to emerge from the data. Evolving theory was the driving force of the methodology chosen for this study; the methods were the means to achieving this end.

In this study, the sources of data were in the form of interviews and shadowing, document analysis, and field notes. Initially, I proposed to interview nine individuals - six new teachers and three administrators. Note that the new

teachers self-nominated and the administrators were identified and nominated by new teachers as part of the interview process. Due to the nature of grounded theory and the need to reach saturation, “when no new information seems to emerge” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 136), the number of interviews conducted changed. Saturation of data was achieved upon completion of 11 new teacher interviews.

### Means of Collecting Data

The review of literature as well as my current and previous roles as specialist, staff development instructor, assistant principal, experienced classroom teacher, new teacher, parent, and a child of educator parents guided the construction of the interview protocols, the selection of processes for observations, and the selection of documents. Analysis of data, in grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), begins immediately after data collection. Emerging relevant concepts are then used to guide further data collection.

Interview procedures and protocols. Taped interviews, 45 to 60 minutes in length, were conducted with the new teachers identified as described in the participant selection section above. Initially, interviews were conducted with six new teachers. The final number of interviews increased to collect adequate data.

Upon identification of the participants, an introductory telephone call was placed to each person. The telephone call served several purposes: (a) to identify myself; (b) to explain the purpose of the study; (c) to request their participation; (d) to establish a date, time, and location for the meeting; and (e) to

ask each person to reflect upon what practices of the principal/s influenced them to remain in teaching. With principals, this last phrase was appropriately reworded. My intent for including this in the initial telephone conversation was to direct the participants to the positive nature of the study and to allow them time to be reflective before the actual interview.

Immediately after the telephone conversation, I mailed a copy of the informed consent form and the interview protocol to the participant. As with the telephone call, this advance mailing served the purpose of providing the participants an added opportunity to better understand the focus of the study and to reflect on their beginning teacher experiences.

The interviews were scheduled at a convenient time and location for the participants. Written consent for participation was obtained at the beginning of each interview. Two initial interview protocols, one for the new teachers and one for the administrators, are included as Appendix E and F. Demographic information regarding years of experience, grade taught, and work location were requested in the first moments of the interview. From there, questions were asked that focused on the issues related to the topic of the study, principals' influences on the retention of new teachers. Questions changed over time, as was necessary based on evolving theory. Open-ended questions were the hallmark of the initial interviews. As the research continued, questions became more specific focusing on acquiring additional information about specific

concepts (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Each interview, with permission of the participant, was taped and immediately transcribed for data analysis.

Shadowing Procedures. Gathering observation data occurred during visits to the school associated with the teacher interviews as well as during time spent shadowing the principals in their schools. Each principal's shadowing experience lasted for a day. The field notes taken during and made after the observation were transcribed following each session. These data were analyzed and compared to the categories and sub categories that emerged from the interview data.

Observing principals in their school setting permitted attentiveness to both formal and informal interactions with many individuals. Some examples of the various interactions noted were: bus duty, morning announcements, sick children, late arriving students, late buses, conversations with parents, hallway interactions with students and staff members, classroom observations, lunch duty, phone calls with central office personnel, parents, and fellow principals, dismissal, missing and late day care vans, and grade level meetings.

Document data collection. Documents are a ready-made source of data that do not depend upon human needs as to when or if they are available nor do they intrude upon an individual's comfort level (Merriam, 1998). They are materials that can be used to supplement the interviews and stimulate the researcher's thinking about concepts emerging from the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Both the new teachers and the principals had documents that were of



value to this study. Faculty and committee meeting agendas and minutes, grade level meeting notes, teacher handbooks, policy and procedure manuals, classroom schedules, and correspondence between principals and faculty members are examples of documents that were used as additional sources of data. The value of these documents had limitations and advantages. They did not completely match the focus of the research question yet they were unaffected by the research process and produced independently of the study; therefore, they were non-reactive. A complete listing of documents used in this study is contained in Appendix G.

Assessing the context. Each grade or class and school represented by the new teachers and principals as well as the school district is described in Chapter 4 in terms of demographics and contextual factors. Collecting and reporting this information resulted in thick, rich descriptions. Future readers of this report are then able to make judgments about the transferability to their specific situations (Siegle, 2000).

#### Data Analysis Procedures

Grounded theory is “theory that was derived from data, systematically gathered and analyzed through their research process” (Strauss & Corbin, p. 12). Procedures for developing grounded theory were utilized in this study. Initially, similar data were grouped and named according to a defined property. This process is called conceptualizing. These concepts are the building blocks of the theory. Concepts that share a common phenomena, “important analytic ideas

that emerge from our data” (p. 114), were then further grouped into categories. In the analysis process, the researcher developed the categories by identifying their properties and dimensions. This continual analysis allowed for the formation of patterns and variations. Following this process lead to the development of a grounded theory--specifically for this study--What is the theory that explains the practices of elementary building principals in influencing new teachers to remain in education?

### Basic Operations in Data Analysis

Development of grounded theory using the method of analysis relies on two essential operations, that of asking questions and that of making comparisons (Strauss & Corbin 1998). Questions asked serve a variety of purposes, both practical and theoretical. Practical questions may address the how issues of contacting individuals or using certain software programs. Theoretical questions such as who, when, why, where, what, how much, and with what results, assisted the researcher in examining the data and looking for variations, properties, or dimensions. The asking of questions along with the pursuit of their answers was key to the research and the development of grounded theory.

Making comparisons is the other stated essential component of grounded theory. Strauss and Corbin (1998) explained comparisons by providing an example of a sofa and a bed. The properties of each are compared and the

similarities and differences are noted. Comparisons in analysis are conducted in a similar fashion.

When we are confused or stuck about the meaning of an incident or event in our data, or when we want to think about an event or object in different ways . . . , we turn to theoretical comparisons. Using comparisons brings out properties, which in turn can be used to examine the incident or object in the data. (p. 80)

Open coding. Open coding is defined as “the analytical process through which concepts are identified and their properties and dimensions are discovered in data” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 101). Using this process or form of coding, I examined the data word by word, phrase by phrase, or line by line allowing for the generation of concepts. Key concepts or codes were written in the right margin and my questions were noted in the left margin. The recording of my analysis from open coding was written in memo format (a record of thoughts, questions, interpretations, and future questions). Once concepts were drawn from the data, those that were similar were grouped or categorized and labeled. Following the procedures established by Strauss and Corbin (1998), the categories were then developed according to their properties and dimensions. This more finite development assisted in differentiating the various categories and allowed for the development of subcategories as necessary.

Axial coding. The purpose of axial coding was to reassemble data taken apart in the open coding process relating categories (abstractions) to their

subcategories along the lines of their properties and dimensions. This process allowed for the formation of clearer and fuller explanations of phenomena. Axial and open coding are similar in that questions and comparisons were asked and made continuously throughout the process.

Selective coding. Integrating and refining the sought after theory for the study is the expected result when using selective coding. Categories and relationships among and between categories and subcategories were examined for a central idea or category. The development of a theory as a result of the study is understood from inception. It was a focal point given consideration from the initial writing of this document, carried through the initial data collection and continual analysis, validated by comparison to data, shared with participants, and finally written as theory.

### Data Management

The accumulation of large amounts of data was part of this qualitative research study. Organizing and managing the materials in every stage of the process was of great importance to the research as the potential for lost files or forms would have created hours of additional work and undue anxiety.

Sample framework. Tables were created that displayed information relevant to the study. One table summarized the information regarding the survey responses, including the total number of surveys mailed initially, the number sent in the second mailing, how many were not usable and the total returned. A second table included information associating the teacher with the number of

schools he or she had taught in and the number of principals for whom they had worked. Additional information about the teachers and administrators who were participants in the study may be reviewed and are included as Appendices H and I.

Transcripts and field notes. Because verbatim transcriptions of tape-recorded interviews provide a good source of data for analysis (Merriam, 1998), each interview session was tape-recorded and that recording was transcribed. Transcriptions were photocopied with the originals kept in color-coded files while the photocopies were used for margin notes, coding, cutting, and sorting.

During and after the interviews, in addition to the taped recording of the process, I kept notes of my thoughts, impressions, hesitations, body language, or other occurrences that I thought warranted my attention. These field notes were transcribed after each interview.

Keeping a journal of my research experience was a strategy suggested by Strauss and Corbin (1998). They suggested this as a useful way of keeping track of one's thinking during data gathering and analysis. Miles and Huberman (1994) suggested the use of a contact summary. This was described as a "single sheet with some focusing or summarizing questions about a particular field contact" (p. 51). Both the contact sheet and research journal were kept for the purposes of tracking my thinking, planning the next meeting, generating follow-up questions, reorienting myself to the information, and developing or revising codes. An example of the contact sheet used is shown in Appendix J.

Memos and diagrams. Memos are defined as written documents of analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). They are meant to be analytical, conceptual and code, theoretical, or operational notes that allow researchers to sort and sift ideas in their mind. I began the use of memos at the onset of my analysis and continued to the end of the research process. A straight word processing program was used in creating the memos.

Diagrams (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) or displays (Miles & Huberman, 1994), are generally one-page visualizations of words that might fill many pages and lose the reader in the process. They are used to view data, to describe and sort relationships, to create order, to show complexity, and to draw as well as to verify conclusions. The diagrams brought focus and clarity to the reporting of data and theory. Visual diagrams of the grounded theory were developed and are included in Chapter 4. The matrices of the final categories and sub categories are included as Appendices K, L, and M.

#### Addressing Quality

When using a methodology such as grounded theory, the purpose is to build theory. The theory developed from this study uses the “language of explanatory power” meaning “predictive ability.” Strauss and Corbin (1998) state, “the real merit of substantive theory lies in its ability to speak specifically for the populations from which it is derived and to apply back to them” (p. 267). To safeguard this study’s credibility, it must be trustworthy. Trustworthiness includes credibility, transferability, and confirmability (Siegle, 2000).

Credibility. Prolonged engagement, persistent observations, triangulation, peer debriefing, and member checks are ways of determining whether the study has credibility (Siegle, 2000). Job responsibilities over the past six years placed me in schools working with and supporting teachers and principals. Those experiences support prolonged engagement and persistent observations by having a first hand working knowledge of school division personnel. Periodically over the past six months, time in the schools was intensified by interviews with teachers and principals and day long shadowing of principals. This along with interviewing participants until data saturation occurred satisfied the requirement for prolonged engagement. It also served the purpose of limiting my biases as the researcher. Searching for different interpretations in a myriad of ways and using the constant comparative method of data analysis supported the need for persistent observations. Triangulation or the multiple methods of using interviews, field notes, and document analysis cross-checked my findings. Utilizing the services of peers to act as the devil's advocate and to assist in testing working hypotheses filled the requirement of peer debriefing. Finally, member checking took me back to the original source of information, the participants. Within a week of the interview, the verbatim transcript of the interview was returned to the interviewee with the request to read, change, delete, or clarify what was written as they deemed necessary. The teachers and principals returned the transcript of the interview to me with additional explanations and further documentation of their thoughts. Once the theory began

to take shape, I shared it with the participants in the study and asked for their input thereby providing another form of cross-checking.

Transferability. By using self-nominating sampling, I maximized the specific information obtained about principals and their practices which influence the retention of new teachers. In addition, the use of thick descriptions portrayed significant detail of the data to allow for readers of the report to make judgments concerning the transferability of the theory to their specific context.

Confirmability. In order to provide evidence of confirmability, interview transcripts, field notes, memos, journals, contact summaries, and diagrams were maintained and kept in an organized manner. These documents were used to build an audit trail to trace conclusions, interpretations, and the theory back to the source, thereby ensuring that the theory is the product of the focus of the inquire and not the bias of the researcher (Siegle, 2000).

Evaluation of research process. In addition to addressing the areas in trustworthiness, readers of research designed to build a theory (as in this study) ought to be able to judge components of the research process (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Included in the monograph should be information presented that provides answers to questions about the selection of the sample, the categories that emerged, and some of the indicators. Hypotheses and the grounds on which they were formulated should be reported as well. Including the core category and the grounds on which the final analytic decisions were made will add additional information and serve as a guide to support the adequacy of the research



process and point the reader through the process of the development of the grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

### The Qualitative Narrative

When writing theory, it is common for the theory to become more refined in the process (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). For this study, writing began with the first set of field notes, the first transcription of an interview, the first memo, and the first diagram. Early and continuous writing served to stimulate my thoughts about the topic --the principals' practices in influencing the retention of new teachers-- and provided necessary opportunities for frequent professional feedback from peers.

### Describing the Results

Research contributes both to theory and practice when it is communicated beyond the actual study. The final report was much like the entire process of conducting the study. Explanations and descriptions of how the population was determined, how the data were collected and analyzed, and how the concepts and categories were integrated and refined to develop the theory were shared. The use of interview and field note quotations was used judiciously to assist in the visualization of key points. Responding to the importance of the actual use of the theory to be developed, I addressed the criteria set forth by Strauss and Corbin (1998) to judge the research process and the empirical grounding of the study. And in the end, discussion about the implications of the theory and future research was addressed.

## PROLOGUE TO CHAPTER FOUR

It is the obligation of the researcher to provide the readers of this qualitative research a detailed description of the study's context to allow them to determine the "fit" to their particular situation (Merriam, 1998). The narrow focus of this study speaks specifically to the population from which it was derived and therein lies its strength (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

### Setting

Readers will find the descriptions of the school division, schools, and individuals included in this study helpful as they consider the transferability of the developing grounded theory to their individual situations. An overview of the characteristics of the division is shown in Table 5. A narrative description of the school division follows.

The school division has 63 schools that house a student population of 42, 486. The students are served by 3,011 teachers. There are 42 elementary schools with 19, 949 students in kindergarten through grade 5. Within that total, there are two schools that differ from the norm; one primary school serves students in kindergarten through grade two and a neighboring school completes the elementary level by serving those students in grade 3 through grade 5. There are 10 middle schools consisting of grades 6 through 8 with a total of 10,158 students. A total of 8 high schools serve 11,682 students in grades 9 through 12. Completing the schools in the division are two technical centers and one special education center. These schools serve 703 students. The pupil

Table 5

Characteristics of the Participating School Division

Type of School	Number of Schools	Number of Students
Elementary	42	19,949
Middle	10	10,158
High	8	11,682
Other	3	703

teacher ratio (based on full-time classroom teachers) in elementary schools is 21.4:1, in middle schools is 22.0:1, and in high schools is 21.3:1.

The school system's administrative structure includes the superintendent and three assistant superintendents. Directors support each of the three assistant superintendents in the following areas: elementary, secondary, exceptional, and technical and continuing education, staff development, leadership development, technology, budget, finance, transportation, food service, construction and maintenance, disciplinary review, human resources, public relations, and research and planning. Elementary schools with a student population less than 600 have a principal and a resource teacher. The principals of schools with a student population greater than 600 have the support of either an assistant principal or an additional resource teacher for a total of two resource teachers. The principal has the option of recommending either an assistant principal and a resource teacher or two resource teachers. The principal's recommendation is shared with the school division's Executive Committee, which makes the final decision.

Middle schools have a principal and one or two assistant principals depending upon student enrollment. The high schools have a principal who has the support of three or four assistant principals; the number again determined by student enrollment. The technical centers have a principal and one assistant principal.

The eleven teachers who participated in the study represent 7 of the division's 42 elementary schools. Characteristics of the schools are displayed in Table 6. Descriptions of the seven schools follow. All school names are fictitious.

#### School 1 – Greenside Elementary

Make a left off the primary road, travel one block, make a right, travel one block, make a left, travel two blocks and there on the right is School 1, Greenside Elementary. Built in 1955, it is quietly tucked away on the edge of a residential area currently undergoing major regeneration. The scene that greets a visitor meandering his way through the neighborhood is encouraging as the homes are new, banners are flying, bicycles and swing sets are visible, and demolition and building continues on various blocks. The one story, three building school is surrounded by a large open space with two playgrounds; one serves the upper elementary students and the other serves the lower elementary students. Although School 1 has the smallest student population of the seven schools included in this study, it is interesting to note the ethnic membership. Of the total student population of 315, 47% are White, 16.8% are Black, 11.1% are Asian, and 25.1% are other. Two English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers are full time employees in this school.

Three trips were made to Greenside Elementary, two for teacher interviews and one for a principal interview and observation. The teacher interviews occurred shortly after dismissal time. Each time I arrived, the principal, resource teacher, and various teachers were on the walkway talking with

Table 6

Characteristics of Represented Schools

	School 1	School 2	School 3	School 4	School 5	School 6	School 7
Number of							
Classes by Grade							
K	4	6	6	4	2	6	4
1	3	5	4	3	3	6	4
2	2	4	4	4	3	5	3
3	2	5	4	4	3	5	3
4	3	4	3	3	3	6	3
5	2	4	3	3	3	6	3
Total Student	315	542	483	398	368	676	398
Population							
% of Exceptional	18.5%	10.8%	12.4%	18.6%	14.5%	11.3%	12.1%
Ed. Students							
Pupil Teacher	21.3:1	21.3:1	22.7:1	19.5:1	20.5:1	22.4:1	21.4:1
Ratio (K-5)							
Economic	50.5%	11.9%	2.2%	40.3%	55.9%	53.6%	39.6%
Deprivation							
One Parent	27.6%	10.5%	5.2%	30.4%	39.7%	42.5%	21.4%
Family							
Ethnic Mix							
White	47%	75.6%	88.6%	57.8%	41.3%	6.7%	72.4%
Black	16.8%	12.0%	3.9%	41.0%	57.1%	90.4%	15.6%
Asian	11.1%	5.9%	5.8%	1.0%	0.5%	0.0%	6.5%

Table 6, continued

Characteristics of Represented Schools

	School 1	School 2	School 3	School 4	School 5	School 6	School 7
<u>Ethnic Mix</u>							
Other	25.1%	6.5%	1.7%	0.3%	1.1%	3.0%	5.5%
% of ESL	37.9%	8.6%	1.2%	.35%	2.1%	2.5%	28.27%
<u>Population</u>							

Note. Economic Deprivation is determined by eligibility for free or reduced lunch.

Source: Research and Planning, School Division

students, and assisting with loading the school buses and day care vans. The principal and resource teacher enthusiastically greeted me by my first name, and we carried on a conversation about the weather and the pending weekend. On one occasion, I entered into an existing conversation with a child who was a member of the sidewalk greeting committee. For my first visit, I entered through the front door and the teacher I was to interview greeted me in the office where he was checking his mailbox. The second teacher I interviewed met me in the hallway immediately in front of the office. General welcomes were shared with the secretary and other teachers who were assembled.

#### School 2 – Oak Dale Elementary

School 2, Oak Dale Elementary, built in 1961, sits on the corner of a busy intersection; a four-lane road forms the front boundary and a private school, the back. Apartments are situated to the right and across the street. Additional neighbors include an assisted living center, a cemetery, and a busy shopping center. This school and the neighborhood are very familiar to me as I began my teaching career in Virginia at this school 13 years ago. Since my first year teaching there, the school has had five principals. The current administrator is a first year principal and is returning to the school having been a resource teacher there. The physical plant for this school differs from the others included in this study. It is a campus style school with seven buildings that house the office, gymnasium, cafeteria, library, and classrooms. The buildings are connected by covered and uncovered walkways. Students in this school are predominately



White making up 75.6% of the 542 student membership. Completing the student population are 12.0% Black, 5.9% Asian, and 6.5% other.

Two visits were scheduled at this school for the teacher interviews. On each occasion, the front office staff composed of the secretary, the office assistant, and the clinic attendant (an employee who cares for sick or injured students and staff) extended a warm welcome. For my first visit, the staff was involved in an after-school faculty meeting. The secretary picked up the phone to buzz the library in order to notify the teacher that I was there. I expressed my hesitation about interrupting the meeting. The secretary assured me that the practice in the school was if a teacher had a meeting scheduled that conflicted with a faculty meeting, had spoken with the principal, and had notified the secretary, then it was acceptable for the teacher to be released from the meeting to conduct other business. Grade level team members would inform the absentee teacher of the information he had missed.

### School 3 – Harbor View Elementary

School 3, Harbor View Elementary, is the newest elementary school in the district. It is the second year it has been open. Directly across the street, construction on the school system's ninth high school is in progress, with a fall 2002 opening anticipated. Approaching the area from the highway, one is struck by the newness of the shopping center, the local YMCA, the roads, and the plantings. The area library is still to be built. The neighborhood in which Harbor View Elementary is situated is one of the county's regions being newly developed

with homes still under construction. Many of the families buying these homes are “transplants.” Transplants are those who move from one area of the country to another. This is the third largest school in this study with a student membership of 483. The composition of the student body is 88.6% White, 3.9% Black, 5.8% Asian, and 1.7% other.

The administrator opened the school as a first year principal. He came to the position as a former health and physical education specialist and teacher. As he began his administrative career, he had the opportunity to be involved in the final building and finishing stages of the school. His delight in light and nature can be seen in the spaciousness, selection of colors, glass cubes, plantings, and other touches throughout the structure and grounds. Due to the newness of the school and the community it serves, the principal has been referred to as a “suit.” The explanation, he is constantly showing the school to potential customers and county or visiting dignitaries, and therefore, dresses in what has been described by two of his teachers as “very professional looking suits.”

#### School 4 – Pleasantsville Elementary

A drive to the far reaches of the school district takes one through the hubbub of the city, past the sprawling industrial parks, beyond the sweet smells of a cookie factory, and finally to a rural area of farms and subdivisions. School 4, Pleasantsville Elementary, is situated on a parcel of land with the parking lot in the front and student playground and outdoor activity area to the rear. The school was completed in 1995 and has an open and spacious floor plan. When a visitor

walks in the front door, he senses a feeling of airiness and light heartedness. School 4 has a student membership of 398. The student body in School 4 is composed of 57.8% White, 41.0% Black, 1.0% Asian, and 0.3% other.

Both visits to the teachers in Pleasantsville Elementary took place at the close of the school day. On each occasion, the principal and school secretary, both of whom were in the office chatting with several other staff members, greeted me. The principal called for the teachers over the intercom and notified them of my arrival. He made arrangements for us to use his conference room. There was an exchange of light banter, initiated by the principal, with the teachers just before the interviews.

The administrator who opened the school was at that time a first-year principal and remains the principal today. My visit with him began the start of my day at 7:30 a.m. We worked bus duty together. This is an every day occurrence for this administrator as he finds that greeting students first thing in the morning allows him to establish a relationship with the children. He senses by facial expressions, body language, and comments how the day will proceed for the children and their teachers. The principal believes that some problems potentially may be avoided because of a small exchange between him and the children.

#### School 5 – Magnolia Ridge Elementary

Built in 1951, with a multi-purpose building added and renovations completed in January 2000, School 5, Magnolia Ridge Elementary, is located on a dead end street in a subdivision of small, single family homes. Due to the

redesigning of the facility during renovations, what looks like the main entrance of the school is no longer the front or main entrance. Visitors to the building must follow the parking signs to the rear of the building and there find the main entrance into the office. The school's newly completed entrance has four steps and a ramp leading from the parking lot to the doorway. Just inside the door is a small foyer with another door leading to the main office. Immediately to the right is a door to a small conference room and on the left is a chair. On this particular afternoon, a child is halfway seated in the chair and he is being encouraged to sit completely in the chair as he waits for his parent. The office staff workspace, surrounded by a gray counter, is further down the wall to the right. I identified myself to the secretary and commented on the newness of the office and the soft gray color. She expressed her pleasure with her surroundings. The teacher I am to interview arrived and we adjourned to the conference room. The student population of School 5 totals 368. The ethnic membership is 41.3% White, 57.1% Black, 0.5% Asian, and 1.1% other.

#### School 6 – Pole Top Elementary

School 6, Pole Top Elementary, is located just off an exit of a busy highway and not far from city lines. It sits on a four-lane divided road with small single-family homes on two sides and train tracks and a gas station on the other. New, brightly colored playground equipment is located in a large open area inside an oval shaped running track. Children are running and walking the track with a teacher, and others are playing on the equipment. This is an older facility,

built in 1966, that serves a majority of minority students from low-income families. The school membership of 676 meets the school district's size requirement for an assistant principal or a second resource teacher. The principal has chosen to have an assistant principal as part of the administrative team. It is the only school in this study with an assistant principal. The ethnic membership of School 6 is 6.7% White, 90.4% Black, 0.0% Asian, and 3.0% other.

The administrative team at Pole Top Elementary is both new and old in terms of administrative experience and years at the school. The principal is currently in her second year at this school and as a principal. Previously she served as an assistant principal at a middle school in the division. The assistant principal is currently serving her first year in that position, having been internally promoted from the position of resource teacher. Of the administrative team, she has the most experience with the teachers, students, parents, and community. The current resource teacher is new to the position and new to the school this year, having been transferred from a neighboring elementary school this past fall.

There are several doors one might choose from to gain access to School 6. A new visitor may choose one immediately in front of the visitor's parking space (located on the side of the school building) and find a maze of hallways to maneuver while looking for the office. With classes in session, and no one to ask for direction, an unplanned tour of the facility is likely. If the front door (located on the front of the school building) is used for gaining entrance to the school, one must follow the signs to find the office. Upon entry of the office area, one is

greeted by a different use of office space. The desks and work areas of the secretary and assistant are inside a counter that forms a square in the center of the square room. Chairs, walk areas, and doors to smaller offices or conference rooms are on the perimeter.

On this particular day, the principal was out of the building on professional leave, the assistant principal and resource teacher were dealing with discipline issues, and students were seated in several of the chairs that lined the office walls. Several teachers had had a working pizza lunch meeting in the conference room. The remains were picked up to allow for a cleaner space in which to conduct the interview.

#### School 7 – Bluefield Elementary

Originally built in 1930, School 7, Bluefield Elementary, has had several renovations and is scheduled for another renovation in 2003. The school is located in an area that is on the fringe of office and commercial development. Travel across the shared parking lot and visitors find themselves at the neighboring middle school. With just a short walk or an even shorter ride in the car, one finds themselves at the local area high school. The three schools form a tight knit feeder pattern with the elementary students moving some of the shortest geographical distances in the county as they proceed from one level of schooling to the next.

As with School 4, the student membership is 398. With 72.4% White, 15.6% Black, 6.5% Asian, and 5.5% other, the ethnic membership is rather

different from that of School 4. For the past several years, the principal and staff have focused on the needs of the increasing ESL population. Currently the school reports the student population represents 31 countries and 21 languages.

Upon entering the office space of Bluefield Elementary, visitors are visually greeted by a corner grouping of large and small live green plants on the floor and on the office counter surrounding two statues of children. Beside the plants on the floor there is a blow-up vinyl chair in the shape of a baseball mitt and a tall white trash can with the top painted like a baseball. A “grand slam” mug filled with baseball bat pens sits on the counter and a basket of four well-thumbed photo albums sits on the coffee table. There is music coming from a portable radio/CD player in the waiting area of the office space. A bubbling sound comes from the fish tank in another corner of the room. The secretary is working with the student who will be delivering the morning announcements. All of this is caught in a flash as the office assistant greets me.

#### Participant Characteristics

There were 14 participants in the study--11 teachers and 3 administrators. Characteristics specific to each teacher are listed in Appendix H and for principals in Appendix I. All full years of regular teaching experience for the teachers occurred in the participating school district. Some teachers mentioned they had completed their student teaching and had been substitutes in other school districts or in other states. The teachers interviewed for the study have completed from two to five years of full time teaching. Seven of the 11 teachers

have their masters degree and 6 of the 11 worked in fields other than education before returning to school to get their teaching degree.

The three principals selected for an interview and shadowing were recommended by their teachers without reservation as principals for and with whom first year teachers would benefit from working during the first year in a classroom. Each principal holds a masters degree and certification as an elementary school administrator. Total years of administrative experience as an administrator ranged from 6 years to 21 years, with 4 years being the lowest number of years a principal has served in the current position.

### Summary

This prologue to Chapter Four was written to provide the reader with the characteristics of the school division, schools, and participants in the study. It serves the purpose of allowing readers to be cognizant of the characteristics of the sample as they read the study and consider the transferability of the study to their particular situations. The schools serve a variety of ethnic student populations that mirror the geographical location of each of the schools. Some schools serve a student population that is predominately white, others serve a predominately black population, while some have a large ESL student population. The age of the school facilities range from 2 years to 70 years, with the older schools having undergone one or more renovations. All of the teachers and principals are licensed according to state requirements. Keeping these



characteristics in mind will assist the reader as they continue with the chapters to follow.

## Chapter 4

### FINDINGS

This research attempted to develop theory that explains the practices elementary principals utilize in influencing new teachers to stay in education. This chapter presents the findings of the study in the form of a grounded theory that describes and explains how the practices of elementary principals establish the climate of the school to support new teachers. An overview of the grounded theory along with a diagram that shows the framework of the theory is presented first. Next, the major categories along with their subcategories are explained. The relationships are then presented which answer the research questions and provide an understanding of the grounded theory. Figures of the theory are provided to assist the reader in connecting the data to the understanding of the theory. Data are referenced throughout the report. The letters, T--interview transcript, O--observation, D--document, are followed by letters and numerals that identify the school, participant, and page number of the transcript, field note, or document. For example, (T/T10/3) indicates the data came from the transcript of the interview with Teacher 10 and it would be found on page 3 of the transcript.

#### The Grounded Theory: An Overview

Data collected through interviews, observations, and documents from 11 elementary teachers and 3 elementary principals in one school division contributed to the development of the grounded theory. The grounded theory

suggests that principals who create within a school a climate of trust, of mutual respect, and of service to children have teachers who state they feel successful, valued, safe, loyal, and professional and want to and expect to continue teaching. Figure 3 provides an illustration of the framework of the theory.

New teachers reported that they relied on many individuals to provide them with the various types of support they needed during their first year in the classroom. Grade level peers provided them assistance with planning and pacing of instruction. Mentors' and resource teachers' support of new teachers sometimes overlapped with the assistance provided by grade level peers. Most often the mentor was credited with teaching and reminding the new teachers about the extra job responsibilities that required their attention and their action each month. The resource teacher assisted them with acquiring necessary materials such as textbooks, ancillary teaching material, and furniture. Some resource teachers also served as a go between for the new teacher and the principal. In some situations where there was an assistant principal in the school, that individual served as a sounding board for the new teacher regarding his concerns about grading, parent communication, and connecting with the principal. Individual teachers noted that they felt comfortable asking any staff member for help and were confident they would receive any assistance they requested.

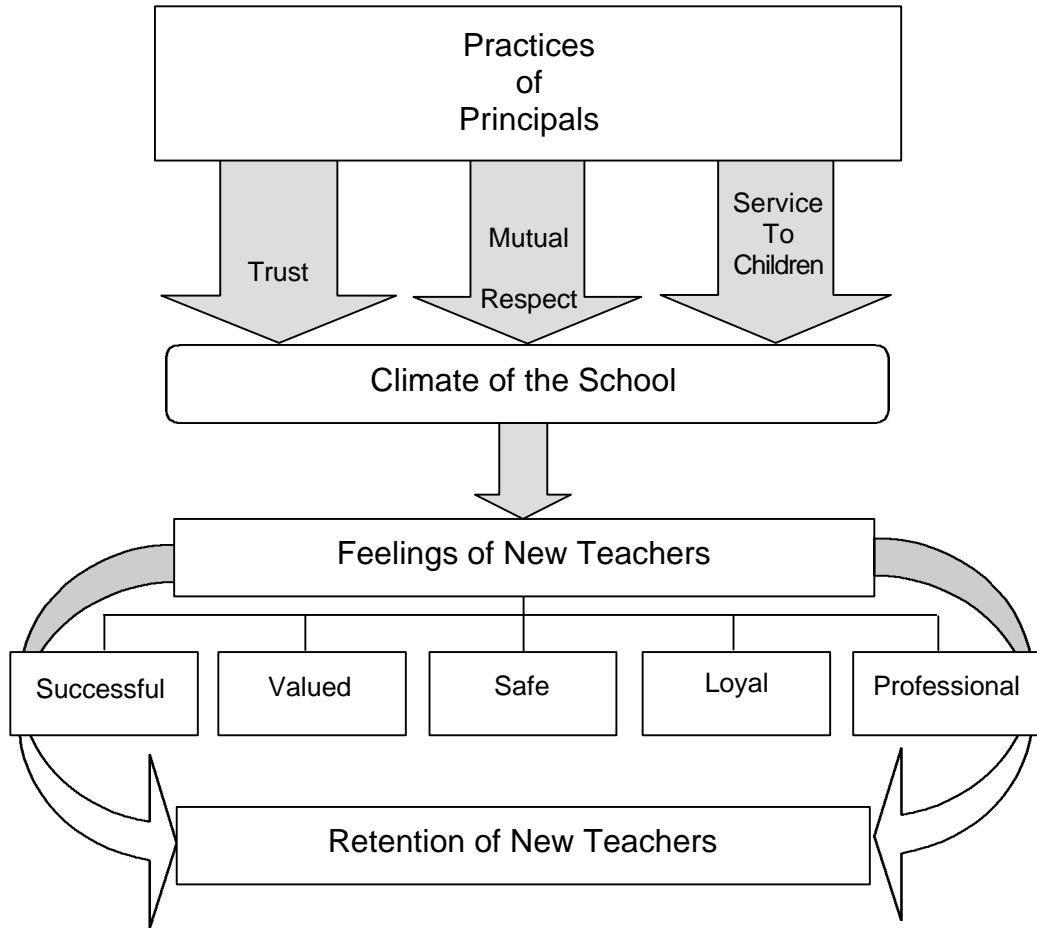


Figure 3. Practices of Elementary Principals

Principals, in most situations, were called upon to assist with parent conferences. New teachers credited principals with being there to listen and to guide them throughout the year. The positive, supportive, and communicative nature of principals was cited as evidence of their approachability.

In some schools there was a specific support structure in place and new teachers were successfully inducted and supported during the first year. In other situations, a structure was in place but those responsible for certain aspects of the structure did not follow through with their assigned responsibilities. As an example, in two situations a mentor was never appointed although assigning a mentor to all first year teachers is district policy. In a different situation, a teacher I interviewed stated that a mentor was assigned but did not perform any of the duties associated with that position. In that particular incident, someone else stepped up and unofficially took on the role of mentor. In yet another situation, based on the teacher reporting, there was no site-based support structure in place for new teachers.

New teachers reported feeling successful when students, parents, peers, and principals recognized their efforts. They felt valued, when their ideas were shared and accepted, when they were encouraged to participate in outside professional development opportunities, and when they conducted a parent conference in the presence of their principal. Teachers felt safe, when they approached principals with ideas, suggestions, difficult students, and testing results and were not criticized. Loyalty toward specific principals who exhibited

the types of concern and attitudes mentioned above was very high. Four teachers felt confident about the expertise of past principals with new teachers and staff. These teachers indicated that they were using what they had learned from past experience with previous principals to train their current, newly appointed, zero experience principals.

The three principals, who were nominated by the teachers shared the specific structures they had in place for the support of new teachers. Two of the principals stated that the structures were there for the benefit of all teachers, not simply novice teachers or teachers new to the district. They felt every teacher, regardless of his experience level, who was new to the school would benefit from support. Principals stated that veteran teachers who had been at the school for more than 15 years may have circumstances or events occur in their lives that would necessitate a need for support.

Service to the children of the school was a priority for each principal. Teachers were expected to be professional in their instructional delivery and in their working with the children and their parents. Each child was to be treated with dignity and respect. Teachers were encouraged to take informed risks, when they had suggestions for curriculum materials that they felt would serve their students better than what was currently being used.

The three principals commented on the importance of their communication with staff. Frequent, positive, and specific were the words mentioned. Formative communication occurred most often with new teachers after classroom

observations. Each principal acknowledged that he or she focused on the strengths of the individual in these conferences. New teachers and principals agreed that emphasis placed on the frequency and type of communication led to creating an environment where teachers felt appreciated and supported.

New teachers reported that support, professional development, communication, and student success during their first year in the classroom provided them with experiences that made them feel successful, valued, safe, loyal, and professional. They attributed this to a school climate of trust, mutual respect, and service to children. Principals reported practices they employed that lent themselves to creating a climate of trust, of mutual respect, and of service to children where new teachers feel comfortable and willing to take risks.

The description presented above represents an overview of the grounded theory that emerged from the data collected in interview with teachers and principals in the elementary setting as well as from documents and observations.

#### Theory Through Theoretical Sampling and Coding

This section of the chapter portrays the manner in which the theoretical sampling and coding proceeded in this study. Nine of the 11 teacher interviews were held in the teacher's classroom or the administrator's conference room at the teacher's school. In each of those situations, I interacted with the office professional staff, some of the teaching staff, and some students. In 8 of the 11 teacher interviews, I was greeted by and spoke with the principal. Two of the interviews were conducted in my office for the convenience of the teachers. Each

of my visits to the schools allowed me to observe interactions between staff members and be immersed in the climate of the school.

Interviewing and gathering of data began with Teacher 1 from Greenside Elementary. During this interview, a number of categories surfaced. Teacher 1 shared the importance of administrative support, peer support, open and professional communication, and the principal's constant and consistently positive approach to school matters and life in general. Administrative support was explained by this teacher as the gift of time, money for materials, follow through and support with student discipline, and knowledge of the teacher as a person with another life. Examples of faculty support shared by Teacher 1 were a sense of camaraderie and family, role models for organization, discipline, delivery of instruction, and initiating conversations. Being a cohesive team on grade level and school wide was mentioned as well. Communication was explained as professional and targeted communication from the principal, an open door policy or ready access to the principal, and a clear understanding of the mission and focus of the school. The word "trust" was mentioned frequently in this interview. When questioned further, the teacher explained trust in this situation, as the principal's realization that there are different teaching styles and a variety of ways to accomplish the job at hand. The principal "trusted" this teacher to go a different instructional route with his students and still get the necessary results.



I continued with teacher interviews and the immediate analysis of transcripts and my field notes. The focus of categories sharpened and sub categories became apparent. Analysis revealed support as a major category. Sub categories for support were delineated along the lines of who provided the support and what type of support was provided. Other categories revealed by analysis were the principal's style of conducting observations, professional development, leadership teams, and school climate. Every teacher mentioned that the trust they felt from their principal was critical to their feeling of being valued, being successful and being professional.

By the completion of the sixth teacher interview, I was consistently hearing the same information. I was able to formulate the beginning of the grounded theory. Categories and their relationships were established. Interviews continued and I probed for a sharper understanding of what specific practices principals exhibited which created the climate of trust, of mutual respect, and of service to children teachers reported as so important to themselves and their success as first year teachers.

In two situations, the teachers interviewed had experienced one year with a principal who exercised leadership responsibilities through "intimidation" (T/T10/2) and "isolation" (T/T7/1). Both teachers, when they spoke of their second and present principal, painted a picture that replicates what was shared by other interviewees. The principal knew them as individuals, provided them with positive and supportive feedback, placed them in leadership positions,

assisted them with difficult parental conferences, and treated them as professionals.

Two of the teachers interviewed were from School 3, Harbor View Elementary. They had previous teaching experiences with one and two other principals. When interviewed, they each independently shared how they were training their brand new principal, who came out of central office, how to be a building principal. Specific examples of prior principals' practices were shared. They felt that now, in year two, they were making headway with the training of their principal and they were pleased with some of the changes evident in his leadership style.

At the end of 11 teacher interviews, saturation of data had been achieved. It was time to interview and shadow the three principals who had been nominated by the new teachers interviewed. I began the interview by sharing with the principals some of the teacher comments about their administrative practices. In particular, I stated that teachers thought they, the principals, created a climate of trust, of mutual respect, and of service to children at their school. As new teachers, they felt successful, secure, and valued. They were loyal to their principal and wanted to continue to teach and to develop professionally. I asked the principals to describe what specifically they did to create a climate of trust, of mutual respect, and of service to children. If the principal did not address all of the areas or was not specific in his response, I asked additional probing and

clarifying questions. This process assisted in providing more detail and perspective on the developing grounded theory.

Upon completion of the interviews, I spent additional time in the school with the principal as well as on my own. This allowed me to be in the environment of the individual schools and to observe the principals and their interactions with teachers, staff, students, and parents. The added time spent in visits, conducting teacher interviews, and visits associated with work responsibilities assisted in making visible the statements and perceptions of the teachers and principals.

Following are the sections that describe the major categories and subcategories of the grounded theory. Discussion will demonstrate how the categories relate to one another. Vignettes are included in the discussion to illustrate various aspects of the theory. As the discussion progresses, an additional figure that illustrates the theory is presented to add detail regarding the categories and subcategories that emerged from the analysis of the data.

### Support

Early on, support of new teachers emerged as a major category for the theory proposed in this study. Teachers stated that if it were not for the support that was provided to them, their first year would have been more difficult, less satisfying, less instructionally successful, and many wondered if they would be in the classroom today.

As teachers I interviewed talked about support, it was apparent that support often meant something different to each of them. While the support of teachers came in various forms, it was manifested individually, based on the teachers' individual needs at any given time. Sometimes it meant the principal moved a room full of furniture and materials by himself over winter break so the teacher would have a larger space in which to teach. In another situation, support meant the principal followed a teacher to the auto repair shop and brought her back to school. As a result, she had an unexpected repair performed on her brand new car while she taught class that day. This allowed her to concentrate on her students without wondering how she was going to get back and forth to work or when she was going to be able to get her car into the shop for necessary repairs. Frequently, support was identified as the principal being there during difficult parent-teacher conferences or following through with the established school plan for disciplining students. Teachers mentioned the amount of paperwork that occupied much of their time. Credit was given to some principals for filtering and sorting the paperwork that inundated the teachers from the central office.

Sometimes the principal was not the support provider. In fact in three situations, the teachers reported that if it were not for a peer, there would have been no support provided in their particular situation. All teachers mentioned individuals, other than the principal, who provided them with support. Planning,

receipt books procedures, student discipline, organizational skills, and simply listening were a few examples of the specific support that was provided.

Sub categories of support are identified as the individuals or groups of individual who were credited by the interviewees with providing the support. In this particular school division in the elementary schools, an administrative team consists of the principal, the resource teacher, who frequently operates in the mode of an assistant principal with instructional responsibilities, and the guidance counselor. Leadership teams are composed of the administrative team, the grade level chairs (K-5), a representative from the specialty areas of art, music, physical education, and library, and one of the exceptional education teachers.

#### Principal

Overwhelmingly, the teachers in this study commented about the principals' support of them in dealing with parents, angry parents, over-involved or under-involved parents, non-English speaking parents, and verbally or physically abusive parents. Principals were credited with knowing when and how to take control of difficult parent situations.

I had some run-ins with some parents, some that scared me. He had those parents in his office the next day and he had them apologize to me. A couple (of the parents) were no longer allowed to contact me without his approval. So, I felt like he was extremely supportive. (T/T6/3)

Other teachers commented about how they discussed upcoming, potentially difficult parent conferences with their principals, and the principal sat in on the

conference with them. Teachers reported feeling professional and competent, when principals were present at the parent conference acting as silent supporters of the teachers.

We all came together and sat down and talked. He pretty much let me talk with the parent. He let me handle that situation but was there for the support and understood the situation and was there to back me up. So, I think he handled it very fairly. He let me do what I felt like I needed to do, and was very supportive of me. (T/T7/6)

Several teachers included in the study shared their opinions based on their first years with principals they considered to be non-supportive of new teachers. Of concern to two of the teachers was the principal's support of the parent rather than the teacher. One explained that probably due to inexperience, the principal talked and listened to the parent first and then approached the teacher as though he were wrong. The teacher believed that the principal should have listened to the teacher's explanation and then formulated an opinion and a plan. Another teacher shared,

There was an incident I had in my classroom, that first year, where a student complained to their parent, and their parent complained to the principal. And that was the only time I was ever observed. So, that was very discouraging for me too, and I felt like that whole situation was handled with scare tactics rather than problem solving. (T/T7/3)

Other areas of support provided by principals shared by the new teachers interviewed were: acting as an encourager and discussing problems together then coming up with potential solutions (T11), helping the custodians to move classroom furniture, rescheduling faculty meetings (T5), covering classes (T1), acting as a mediator (T11), creating a positive working environment (T7), listening (T2; T5; T11), participating in decision making (T8; T6), and observing in unofficial ways (T2; T10).

In response to the question, if you had any principal here today and could say anything to that individual about his role and the successes or failures of a teacher in his first year, what would you say, one reflective teacher in his response summed it up this way,

Unless the first year teacher has shown that in every way they are a failure, by all means, no matter what they do, you have to be there to support them, even if they do wrong. Point out the wrong, but be supportive the entire time, whether it is dealing with children, or whether it is dealing with the parents, whether it is dealing with other teachers, whether it is how they present their curriculum, whatever it is until enough is enough. But, until they reach that point you have to be supportive 100% of the time, because even though you want to break in a new teacher, they are still as fragile as anything. (T/T10/7)

### Administrative Team

Individual members of administrative teams were credited with providing support to the new teachers. In two cases, teachers recognized the guidance counselor as the individual who provided them with important student background information and strategies for handling discipline problems (T8; T3). Resource teachers were credited with supporting new teachers in many of the “nuts and bolts” issues. Classroom materials, textbooks problems, lesson plan questions, classroom management ideas, and procedural questions were directed to and answered by them (T2; T6; T7; T9; T10). Two new teachers directed their typical principal issues to the resource teacher and the assistant principal in their schools, because the principal did not “listen” to them. “If you went to talk to the principal, that person will cut you off and tell you what to do” (T/T9/6). In one situation, the resource teacher was given credit for helping the new teacher establish a relationship with the principal, thereby increasing the level of support and improving the communication the new teacher had with the principal after year one.

### Mentor

New teachers thanked their mentors for their assistance during their first year in the classrooms and credited them with being “lifesavers” or “angels.” The mentors were either assigned mentors or self-selected mentors. Of the six teachers who mentioned mentors, two had successful relationships with their assigned mentor, three were assigned a mentor but established a mentoring



relationship with someone they found, and one felt nothing but frustration with the lack of consistent responses to questions she asked. Five reported a continuing friendship both in and out of school with these assigned or self-selected mentors. Specific support provided was identified as planning together (T9; T5; T6), providing feedback, sharing information with the principal (T10), and sharing humor and a creative teaching style (T5).

### Grade Level

New teachers who shared their thoughts about their grade level team members used two words, relationships and friendships. “They have definitely become personal friends of mine” (T8). Additionally, grade level teams furnished support to new teachers similar to that provided by the mentors. Other areas mentioned were: organization and delivery of instruction (T1; T6), a sense of family (T1; T3), and listening (T11). One teacher shared that in her first and second schools there was no grade level planning. She asked the grade level in her second school if they wouldn’t mind planning together as help for her; they agreed and continue to plan as a grade level even though this person is no longer at that school (T6). At the third school, this same teacher and other members of the grade level started planning together on Day One. One individual summed up grade level support this way.

I am a firm believer in that it’s not what you’re teaching, it’s who you’re teaching with. I’ve been on a wonderful team that was just very cohesive and very in sync and was great at balancing each other’s strengths and

weaknesses, and, I've been on teams where no one wanted to work together. It's very, very frustrating. (T/T5/2)

### Entire Staff

New teachers had one response to different questions. When asked what is the nature of your interaction with the rest of the faculty, who calmed your fears and generally held your hand, why are you still teaching, what do you remember best about your first year, or what is it about your situation that helped you escape the statistic of first year teachers leaving the classroom, they responded, "the staff." "We're very much family here and everybody keeps an eye out for everybody else so you are automatically part of the faculty" (T/T2/2). "I feel and felt like, if I needed to, I could call on any grade for any support I might need" (T/T3/2). "It's a family here and that's how I would describe it. Some people I would consider them more like a sister or brother and some I would consider more like a mother" (T/T8/7). "I had tremendous support from the whole staff" (T/T7/1). "I had people coming and asking me what can I do for you, is there anything you need help with" (T/T7/7). "Everybody, I can't single one person out. I mean, I'll say, I needed a lot of hand holding in certain things" (T/T4/6). "The school was a family. It was absolutely wonderful. Kindergarten teachers knew what fourth grade teachers were doing. Academically and socially, everybody just knew what was going on" (T/T5/3).

## Summary

The data collected through interviews, documents, and observations revealed that support of new teachers came from different individuals and groups and covered a myriad of needs. Teachers who did not find support in the typical places or from assigned individuals proved resourceful in finding the support they needed through other individuals and in the case of one teacher resigning her position and reapplying (successfully) to the same school division in hopes of receiving another position. In schools where teachers credited the principal with creating a family, the teachers stated they found support from specific individuals as well as from the entire staff.

Teachers reported a sense of accomplishment and success at the completion of their first year in the classroom. They credited this to the support peers and principals provided. Some teachers have moved on to different schools due to being surplus or returning from completion of higher degrees. Others are working with different principals because the principal has been reassigned, left the county, or been newly appointed. Eight of the 11 teachers interviewed are now in leadership positions as grade level or specialty area chairs.

## Communication

New teachers asked that the lines of communication be kept open. Check on us, ask us how we are doing, tell us specifically how we are doing, and just

keep talking to us were some of the requests. One new teacher explained what he meant by a good communicator.

A communicator is somebody that understands the importance of the person speaking, understands the importance of listening, and of making sure they understand what is being told to them, and what is being asked of them before they go away, and try to figure it out on their own. (T/T4/10)

Communication and the lack of communication with principals and peers were credited with making a difference for new teachers as they taught that first year.

#### Principal

The school division had an evaluation system in place (D/12) that established a time line for observations and conferences with all staff. Principals were required to observe and conference with new teachers a minimum of four times prior to February 15 at which time principals must make a recommendation for continuation or non-continuation of contract for the new teachers for another year. This time line continued for three years at which time a teacher may or may not be offered a continuing contract.

According to the new teachers interviewed, some principals utilized the evaluation system as an effective and positive communication tool. The principal was in the classroom for the required number of visits; a note commenting on a positive aspect of the observation was left on the desk or in the mailbox and a conference time was established. One principal provided his teachers with a checklist for them to complete (D/4/4). Teachers would list what they wanted the

principal to look for during the observation as well as write a brief self-evaluation (D/4/3). The principal used that form and information as the focus for the observation and post conference.

Even though the required number of observations may not have occurred, four teachers commented on the level of respect and trust they had with their principals regarding observations and the way feedback was shared (T1, T2, T5, T6). Specifically, one teacher shared,

He never sat for 30 minutes. But he came through often enough and hung around and worked with the kids where I felt like he knew what was going on in my room. He had enough experience where he didn't need to sit down. (T/T6/3)

Some principals used the yellow pad (T9) or the laptop computer (T5; T6) as the tool for recording the observation. In both situations, teachers expressed a feeling of anxiety, even mentioning the irritating tapping on the computer keys. According to the teacher who worked with the "yellow pad" principal, communication after the observation took the form of simply stating what had been seen with no suggestions or comments, positive or negative. The laptop principal did provide feedback and suggestions.

Teachers' comments indicated that principals had a variety of communication styles and tools, some effective and some not. Having an open door policy was noted as being important to six of the new teachers. They felt that the principal cared about them, their needs, and their opinions. "You know its

not like we're meeting all the time, but it's just enough. I know that the door was always open if I need it" (T/T11/5).

Providing frequent and positive feedback were important components of the communication piece for new teachers. One teacher said, "I didn't have to ask for it (feedback) all the time, he would even come up out of the blue and give me feedback. It was very positive, even if I was having difficulty with something" (T/T2/2). This teacher stated that her principal had a positive outlook on life and it was exemplified by the words he chose to use with teachers, parents, and children. He was quick to point out an individual's strengths rather than his weaknesses. Along the same lines yet in another setting, a teacher commented on receiving positive feedback that included suggestions rather than criticisms (T/7).

Teachers reported that principals' communication took a variety of forms. Sticky notes were appreciated for their timeliness and spontaneity. Teachers reported having sticky notes left on lesson plans, on desks, in mailboxes, and on classroom and hall displays. The specificity of the contents of the notes was mentioned as being important to the new teachers as well. Rather than simply "good lesson," there may have been a comment addressing a particular behavior management or instructional strategy that was effective. With technology constantly changing and improving, email was noted as a communication tool used by ten of the thirteen principals mentioned. Some principals used email as a weekly communication tool with quotes and pictures for humor and inspiration,

others used it for daily updates. In one school, teachers noted that the use of email, a master calendar, a wipe-off board, a plan of the week, and the intercom were effective communication tools used by the principal to cut down on the number of faculty meetings. Other teachers reported on their principal's weekly newsletters that reminded staff of the highlights for the week.

Teachers commented on the principals' style of communicating. Some principals would join teachers in the faculty lounge to talk about both professional and personal topics. Other principals were identified as being more professional and business minded or thorough and thoughtful. One principal was criticized for passing teachers in the hall and not acknowledging them even though they had spoken to the principal.

### Peer

One new teacher in particular compared peer communication in the two different situations she experienced. In one location, "we did get together to vent, just do nothing but vent. There was very little sharing or doing positive, constructive things. There was very little of that" (T/T7/4). This teacher shared that she remembered being very discouraged and sad. There was an opportunity to work with children and provide them with something they really needed, an education. Yet she found no follow through, no constructive communication, and no support. Her second year, in a different setting, was much more successful and manageable. Here, peers griped on a rare occasion and then moved on to solutions. She received shared praise for what she was doing with students. It

was common practice at this school for teachers to share and to discuss with their peers across grade levels and content areas.

All teachers expressed the need to plan together as teams or grade levels. Strong communication was a key during these sessions. Instructional strategies, lesson plans, behavior modifications ideas for students, letters to parents, completing report cards, interacting with principals were some of the issues discussed.

### Summary

Initially, new teachers expressed a mild fear or lack of know how when communicating with their principals. Several teachers had someone to act as a go-between, until they felt more secure in their relationship with the principal. Some later became the go-between or spokesperson for their grade level. New teachers felt that open door and frequent formal and informal positive communication were important to their peace of mind and to their sense of safety and success in knowing they were doing a good job.

One new teacher summed up the importance of communication by saying, "just keep talking to me. Please help me now before I start an avalanche. I guess no news is good news, but I would much rather hear somebody say, you're doing fine you know. That takes two seconds" (T/T5/7).

### First Year Success Stories

When asked to talk about their first year in teaching, 7 of the 11 teachers interviewed in this study immediately talked about the teachers who made their



first year a great experience. Teacher 1 shared, “I went into it with three other teachers and good, solid, wonderful, organized teachers, just really good. I miss them to this day” (T/T1/1). Another shared that she was never alone. If her mentor was not there, her grade level team was. Someone was always there to answer her spoken and unspoken questions (T2). A male, fourth grade teacher remarked, “A wonderful first year with a terrific team here, very supportive administration, just a terrific, terrific experience” (T/T4/2). Three of the teachers commented on how much fun they had. This experience was credited to the teachers who worked with them and to their students. After talking about their peers, the new teachers’ conversations moved on to their students that first year.

Teacher 8 remembered best how she grew to appreciate the different learning styles of her students. Teacher 5 shared her joy in watching them grow in every respect and recalled how she saw one of her students at a Saturday football game. The child bragged to his friends that his teacher came just to see him play. Teacher 3, hired a week before school began, remembered how fast the year went. When May and June stared her in the face, she realized she had made it and how much she had enjoyed her students. Seeing their students as they progressed from grade to grade were other stories shared. Many commented on the pride they had in their former students especially when students greeted and chatted with them or returned to work in their classroom with current students.

In some classes, students were very difficult to manage. Teacher 7 recalled how totally isolated she felt during her first year. The feeling of isolation was compounded by difficult and unruly students, little to no parental contact, lack of support, no assigned mentor, and no one to turn to for information, all of which left her feeling out of control and frustrated. Sharing some similar feelings, Teacher 10 believed he “got dealt a raw deal” (T/T10/1). He had a very difficult class and thought the students had been grouped that way. The difference between his situation and that of Teacher 7 was the network of support he had on his grade level and with other peers. Teachers consistently asked him how he was doing and what could they do to help him.

### Summary

Peer support was a highlight in the memory of teachers and it was given credit for first year successes. Personal friendships that continue today even though no longer at same schools were the outcome for three of the teachers. Professional friendships resulted for eight of the teachers, again regardless of continuing to teach together on the same grade level or in the same school. Without peer support, two did not remain in the assigned school. For one, resignation was the answer; for the other, a transfer resulted due to a drop in student membership.

### Principal Interviews and Shadowing

As I analyzed the data collected from the teacher interviews, three categories consistently bubbled to the top. They were trust, mutual respect, and

service to children. In some situations, the teachers used those specific words and provided examples of what they meant. At other times, the stories shared exemplified trust, mutual respect, and service to children. Of the 11 teachers interviewed, 4 talked about the negatives experiences they had with their first principal. In those recollections, the teachers cited specific and painful incidents they had at the hand or voice of the principal. In three of the four situations, the teachers contrasted the negative experiences with their first principal with the positive experiences of their second, and, in one case, third principal. Again in either a negative or positive light, trust, mutual respect, and service to children were the categories that emerged from the data as being present or not.

With these categories in mind, I began the interviews and shadowing of the three principals nominated by the teachers I had interviewed. My intent was to discover how the principals established a school climate that had trust, mutual respect and service to children at the core.

### Trust

The new teachers interviewed cited examples of how they identified trust in their particular work situation and what it meant to them in addition to the examples discussed in the preceding categories of support and communication. The principal's expectation that teachers were professionals and would act accordingly was one way a teacher felt the trust factor was present in the school (T1). Several shared that principals had high expectations for the teachers and the trust factor came when principals did not constantly look over their shoulders

at the teachers (T11; T3; T10; T7; T6; T4). They had been told there was a job to be done and they were trusted to do it to the best of their ability. This was mentioned most frequently in reference to students passing the Standards of Learning (SOL).

Another example of trust shared was the inclusion of teachers on interview panels (T7; T6; T11; T7). As a result of having their opinions sought and considered, teachers felt valued as individuals and trusted as professionals. In addition, they had a stake in their school and in the success of the students. One teacher shared that her principal verbalized the fact that he trusted his staff (T7). He did this on a regular basis. Consistently, teachers expressed appreciation for the demonstration and verbalization of the principals' trust in them. They equated a positive self-esteem (T1), freedom to do the job expected of them (T7), and a sense of professionalism (T5) with the concept of trust.

When I shared with the nominated principals that the new teachers interviewed identified their ability to establish a relationship of trust in the school as a noteworthy quality, they were very humbled. Each of the principals credited his leadership team, teachers, staff, students, and parents with the positive atmosphere and success of the school. When asked to talk specifically about trust and what they did to instill trust in their staff, the principals repeated much of what the teachers had shared, then elaborated with further detail.

## Open Door Policy

Principal 1 of Greenside Elementary and Principal 3 of Bluefield Elementary talked at length about their “open door” policy. Teachers were encouraged to come and talk with the principal about any issues of concern, personal or professional. Both principals commented about the amount of time this takes from their other responsibilities and duties, but both felt that the benefits far outweighed the additional time they had to spend on completing their work. When asked how he encouraged the open door policy, Principal 1 said, “I tell them. I’m here. I’m at home. I have email, phone numbers, voice mail. I have an open door” (T/P1/9). He recalled his experiences as a first year teacher and how his administrators were unapproachable. As a result, he wanted his teachers to know he was approachable and encouraged them to let him know of their needs and concerns.

One of the physical evidences of the open door policy was the type and the arrangement of furniture in the principals’ office. When asked about the placement of furniture, Principal 3 talked about the need for no physical barriers between her and the teachers. She consciously pushed the desk to the corner of the room, added a rocking chair with a comfortable cushion (for teachers and students who needed to release some pent up energies) and incorporated a table with chairs for some conference space.

Principal 1 had no desk. He shared that when he came to Greenside Elementary, he was charged with improving the climate of the school. When

Principal 1 arrived at Greenside Elementary to begin his principalship there 10 years ago, the main feature of the office was the principal's desk in the middle of the space with two chairs facing where the principal would sit. He took the desk and chairs out and replaced them with a conference table. Principal 1 explained that he wanted the people who came into his office to realize that they are part of a team, a family, and all are in this together for the success of the students. He believes the table is more conducive to open conversations and sharing of thoughts and ideas which, in his mind, is one way of establishing trust.

Although Principal 2 from Pleasantville Elementary did not speak specifically to his open door policy, it was evident in the day-to-day operations of the school. In one specific situation, while the principal was on bus duty, a child was engaged in a battle of wits with a teacher. The teacher radioed the principal and requested his assistance. The principal found someone to relieve him of bus duty, apologized to me for the change in plans, and proceeded to address the child/teacher situation. Later, he explained to me that he has a commitment to his teachers. If they need him, they are to simply let him know and he will do everything in his power to assist them at the time they need him.

### Communication

Positive and frequent communication in a variety of ways was another strategy credited by the three principals as a way of establishing, building, and maintaining trust. During my visits to Greenside Elementary, the teachers were frequently seen talking with Principal 1. There were clusters of teachers and

students with him on the walkway during bus duty. While in the office waiting for my appointment, I noticed one teacher was in his office with another one waiting. Another day, while walking with me around the school, the principal was engaged in conversation by the speech pathologist, the social worker, the music teacher, the art teacher, a classroom teacher, the PTA president, and a secretary. Some conversations covered personal issues, some were about particular students, others were about facility usage, one was about a fund-raiser, and another was about a safety issue.

Principal 1 shared that he constantly used email for communication with the staff. This is one method he used to protect teacher time; more emails equals less faculty meetings. When questioned about some individuals not reading email, Principal 1 laughed. There had been a recent situation where a teacher was not checking email. Peers found out and began bombarding her with emails throughout the day and that afternoon they got together with that teacher and they all had a good laugh (T/P1/6). Communication, according to Principal 1, was all day, everyday, whenever it was needed by anyone.

Communication for Principal 2 took many forms. There were: (a) the monthly calendars hanging in the office with long range information; (b) the weekly calendar beside the sign-in book providing weekly updates; (c) the Monday morning email focuses for the week; (d) the emails for last minute reminders; and (e) the flyers in mailboxes if email was not working.

Of interest in Pleasantville Elementary is the small TV studio. The studio is located in a small auxiliary office and is equipped with a desk, two chairs, a video camera on a tripod, and a VCR. Students, under the direction of the library information specialist, deliver morning announcements in front of the camera. Teachers and students view the announcements in their classroom via a TV monitor. In addition to viewing the morning announcements which consists of the pledge of allegiance and birthdays, teachers may elect to keep the TV monitor on and view a different power point presentation each day depicting various school or classroom events. Children enjoy seeing their picture on TV and teachers are kept informed about each other as a variety of instructional practices from different grade levels and classes are showcased.

Attending grade level meetings monthly is common practice with all three principals. At these meetings, principals and teachers assess student progress, examine instructional strategies, and monitor curriculum pacing. Principal 2 says he finds these meetings invaluable as a form of communication. "Teachers know I'm paying attention . . . they have my undivided attention" (T/P2/7-8). As well as being a source of communication, the grade level meetings are seen by the principals as a strong structure of support for new teachers. The returning teachers know the curriculum and have procedures in place. A new teacher is not left to plan or conduct other teaching duties without the benefit of the knowledge and expertise of all members of the grade level team.



At Bluefield Elementary, Principal 3 starts communicating with her teachers before the school year begins. Each summer, a two- to four-day summer institute is held. During this time, teachers come together with the principal to plan the school year. Institute sessions include reviewing data, developing or refining pacing guides for instruction, fun activities, eating, and unveiling the school theme for the year. The theme approach is used because it creates a common sense of oneness, a sense that the staff is all about the same purpose (T/P3/4). Once the school year begins, Principal 3 explained that she continues her communication with staff. She constantly uses post it notes, tent notes (comments on index cards folded in half and placed in teacher mailboxes), notes to the class after an observation, conversations in the hallway, and email messages to share specific positive comments with teachers, students, and staff. The variety of communication strategies is used for several reasons. One reason, as Principal 3 explained, was because people all need the same things although “they might need it differently, some like public praise, some hate public praise, some like handwritten notes, some like email. So it’s figuring out what each person needs and then trying to give that to them. Whatever motivates them” (T/P3/7).

Principals 2 and 3 talked about using post observation conference sessions as a comfortable and effective opportunity for communicating with teachers. At School 4, Pleasantville Elementary, Principal 2 shared that he provided each teacher with a self-evaluation form (D/4/3) prior to the observation.

The teacher is to complete the form and to have it in the principal's mailbox before the post observation conference. The self-evaluation is used as a springboard for honest discussion. He finds that the teachers are really hard on themselves, therefore he is able to treat the observations as an opportunity for valuable, honest, and positive feedback. Principal 2 stresses to the teachers:

What you're doing is the most important thing in this school. The teacher student interaction process is why we have school. So anything that I can do to send the message that what you're doing is important becomes important to me. (T/P2/5)

In post observation conferences, Principal 3 says she is quick to point out the positives of the observation and the strengths of the individual. With new teachers, she finds that they need the extra confidence building. At this time she also shares specific communication strategies for parent conferences. Another technique used is "telling stories on myself, not the good ones, and what I learned from them" (T/P3/6). She finds that this lightens the mood and lets others see her as one who has had difficult times also.

### Leadership Teams

Principals 1, 2, and 3 talked about leadership teams in their schools. The teams were utilized to develop leadership skills of individual teachers in addition to those on the administrative team, to foster a sense of ownership in the success of the students, to create an environment of camaraderie and team spirit, and to further communication between principal and staff. Leadership

teams consist of the principal, the resource teacher (who commonly function as an assistant principal with instructional responsibilities), the guidance counselor, grade level chairs (representatives from kindergarten through fifth grade), a representative from the exceptional education staff, and a representative from art, music, physical education, and library services. In the schools included in this study, these teams meet once a week or more, as necessary.

Principal 1 shared that one of the responsibilities of a principal was supervision of teachers and staff. He explained his view of leadership with this responsibility to teachers by saying, “I’m a supervisor and not a snoopervisor” (T/P1/2). He uses his leadership team to foster the understanding that we are all co-workers. In one situation, Principal 1 remembered that the grade level chairs shared in a leadership team meeting that the teachers had been talking about him and they noticed how discouraged and uptight he looked. They wanted him to know that the teachers were doing their best and they would not let him down (T/P1/2). So rather than the leadership team supporting the teachers, they supported the principal which he credited to the teachers and their concern for everyone at the school without regard to position or job responsibility.

Although not strictly a function of the leadership team, Principal 1 talked about how the team plays a role in the new teacher support structure that is in place at Greenside Elementary. I include it here because it is an example of the principal’s shared leadership style and the fluidity of leadership roles assigned to and assumed by many within this school. The guidance counselor in this school

is also the coordinator of the mentor program. She and the principal confer regarding the assigning of mentors to new teachers. Generally the mentor is the grade level chair. She conducts the training for the individuals assigned as mentors and follows up with both the mentors and new teachers regarding their needs and responsibilities. The resource teacher is the individual responsible for textbooks and materials. She instructs the new teachers on how to request one or ten textbooks, desks, charts, novels, or whatever is needed. If there is a problem, new teachers know she will assist them. The clinic attendant is instructed to go to the new teachers' classroom to meet them on their own territory. She provides them with information about their class, in particular, the children with special needs. The secretary has a training session in beginning of the year. She instructs them on receipt book procedures, money issues, and student attendance regulations. A few weeks into the school year, the secretary arranges an individual appointment with each new teacher. At that time she comments to them that there is so much to learn they cannot possibly remember everything and she then reviews important procedures with them. There is a parent volunteer who comes in to make copies for teachers. She is introduced to the new teachers in the beginning of the school year and shows them how to run the copier machine as well as reminds them of her schedule so she can make their copies for them and they can save their time for instructional related duties.

At Pleasantville Elementary, Principal 2 shared that he wanted his grade level teams to be self-managed teams (T/P2/1). He opened the school and

established the tone by telling them they were the key teams at the school. He pronounced that the teachers are the leaders in their classrooms and empowered them to make the decisions they felt they needed to make.

One example that he shared to confirm this was the leadership role teachers assumed in developing a school wide behavior program. Approximately four years ago, two teachers expressed an interest in a workshop focused on positive behavioral support. They went for training and implemented the program on a small scale in their two classrooms. The following year, five or six teachers expressed an interest in the program and went for training. The third year, there were many more teachers interested and the principal said, “that’s when I got interested” (T/P2/4). Finally, the two-classroom positive behavior program became a school-wide program. This was the result of two teachers who were given permission to be leaders in their own classroom.

The principal credited construction problems with another show of team work and leadership qualities by the staff. The school was brand new and not ready for opening day. The wing that was to house the primary grades along with other spaces was uninhabitable. Teachers had to set up their classes in rooms in the elementary wing. Upon completion of the primary wing, they would have to move their classes into the intended primary space. When that time came, all hands were on deck, assisting the primary teachers with the moving of furniture, materials, bulletin boards, and decorations.

Principal 2 referred to his resource teacher as his right hand. Repeatedly throughout the interview, he stated, "I just think a lot of her judgment" (T/P2/2, 4, 5, 6). He credits much of the teacher and student success in the school to her. According to Principal 2, she knows the curriculum, understands instruction, and serves as the coordinator of the mentor program. She is the teachers' first line of defense.

At School 7, Bluefield Elementary, Principal 3 credited much of her awareness about leadership teams to her experience as a specialist. In that central office position, she traveled to six different schools, worked with six different principals, and interacted with over 200 teachers. Being in that many settings offered her many opportunities to see what worked and what did not.

When first assigned to Bluefield Elementary, the principal focused on committee assignments. In the past, she noted it had been . . .

Some people doing everything and some people doing nothing which in my experience tells me that some people don't do a good job of committee work because they don't want to serve and they don't want to have the responsibility. But that's not fair. (T/P3/4)

She asked teachers to indicate which committee responsibility they would like to have. Leading up to the assigning of committee membership was her explanation of individual strengths and professional responsibilities. She went into detail about the expectation that everyone would have a committee responsibility and fulfilling it well was a matter of pride in oneself. It was important that some

individuals no longer felt as though they were the ones doing all of the work and others were not contributing to the team. Everyone had an obligation to make the school a success and one way to create success was shared responsibility.

### Professional Development

As the principals shared their thoughts about trust, there were specific references to supporting the teachers' desire to learn and how supporting this desire increased communication between teachers on grade level and across grade levels. Principal 1 mentioned the multitude of opportunities that were offered through the school division, local universities, and other organizations. He maintained a binder in the teachers' lounge with announcements of various workshops, seminars, and classes. Each school is allocated a certain number of professional leave days by central office. He notifies the staff of the number of days and says he does not want them to go unused; his request is that they use them wisely (P1/10). In one situation, the entire first grade team asked to attend a conference geared toward their grade level. Substitutes were arranged and the team attended the conference together. Each teacher reported back about the instructional and personal benefits to themselves as individuals and to the collective team. A similar situation occurred with the English as a Second Language (ESL) conference. For this conference, Principal 1 encouraged any interested teacher to attend, rather than solely the ESL teachers, due to the large ESL student population in the school.

Principal 2 shared that communication and life connections are important issues for him. As part of teachers' professional development, he conducts yearly training sessions addressing communication skills. Relating this to life connections, he shared a situation that had occurred very recently. Although the situation did not occur with teaching staff, nonetheless, it reflected the importance the principal places on his staff and how each person is a member of the team working toward the success of the students.

The well-respected head custodian quit due to family problems. The custodian next in line at the school did not exhibit leadership skills and there were no individuals qualified as head custodians in the applicant pool. Principal 2 decided to place his trust in the current custodian, provided her with some leadership training, and hired a replacement for her position. The replacement "was all talk and no action" (T/P2/6). He shared that there was something wrong in every room, even the clinic bathroom was not being cleaned. The principal and newly assigned head custodian met, talked, and exchanged ideas and suggestions for how to handle the situation. The head custodian spent her own time after hours, made a checklist with the newly hired custodian every night and helped her plan her work. Each evening the checklist became smaller and smaller with chores that needed to be accomplished. In conclusion, the newly hired custodian had better organizational skills, the head custodian was pleased with her leadership skills, the building was clean, and the principal had shared his communication expertise.



The point is, I go to jump in there to try and rescue the thing. I would've just messed things up, and then my head custodian wouldn't have any confidence in herself. The lady would've quit. We'd have been short another custodian. So you play to their strengths, educate them, and give them the opportunity to put in place what they've learned. (T/P2/6)

Understanding and appreciating the time crunch teachers experience is something that Principal 3 is aware of at her school. She has found a way to promote professional development and be mindful of teachers' time. She purchased several copies of a book, Classroom Instruction That Works: Research Based. Each grade level chair was provided a copy of the book and was responsible for reviewing a chapter at a time, sharing that information with the grade level, and then discussion of various aspects of chapters were included in faculty meetings. Quotes from that book and others that caught her interest were always part of the staff weekly reminders or lounge topic talk. The quotes address something that was professional, something that prompted teachers to think about their instruction and about the success of their students (P3/8).

All three principals mentioned the support of division's central administration particularly through the office of staff development for professional development. Support came in various forms: tuition or workshop reimbursement funds for all permanent employees; year round institute course offerings; pay for teachers to participate in fall, winter, spring and summer institutes; workshops; individual teacher assistance; and funds for requested speakers or materials.

## Summary

Teachers shared their experiences of how administrators demonstrated trust in them. Those experiences were confirmed in conversations with and observations of principals. An open door policy was identified by Principals 1 and 3 as an important tool for creating trust with staff. Principals placed great emphasis on communicating the positive as often and in as many ways as possible. Structures were in place at each of the schools to ensure that new teachers had someone to talk to and get information from as the need arose. Participation in on- and off-site professional development was encouraged and expected.

### Mutual Respect

Three teachers shared their fears of interacting with three of their current and past administrators. Words and phrases such as intimidating, stress, overwhelmed, hurt feelings, and steer clear peppered conversations (T6; T9; T10). Those words and phrases were not used when these three teachers and others talked about principals with whom they enjoy working. Instead, Teachers 1 and 2, from a school with a high ESL population, talked about the principal's expectation that all teachers and staff would learn the correct pronunciation of all of their students' names. In addition, no one would ever make fun of a child's name because that is who they are and you do not take away from one's individuality. Another new teacher talked about his principal allowing him to grow into the job rather than having the job grow around him (T4). He was encouraged

to explore various methods for delivering instructional content rather than using what had been used by previous teachers or what was currently being used by the other teachers on his grade level. Support from everyone at the school, providing good mentors, and sharing good ideas were other areas that were mentioned by new teachers. These statements are certainly very different from those mentioned by Teachers 6, 9, and 10.

The principals interviewed believe respect grows, is nurtured, and is returned in environments where it is expected and lived. When questioned about how he created an atmosphere of mutual respect, Principal 1 immediately said, “the family has to come first” (T/P1/2). He went on to explain that he believed that teachers could not do their job, teaching children, if they were worried and preoccupied about their families or related issues. He believes that there are ways to be flexible about schedules and special needs and he and the staff will work with individuals to creatively meet those needs. Examples shared were: (a) providing dinners for as long as necessary for a family with a medical or personal crisis; (b) covering classes for someone who has to go for a blood test in the middle of the day; and (c) arranging for class coverage for a teacher to attend her own child’s school activity. When questioned about the class coverage, Principal 1 explained that the school division provides permanent substitutes. If that individual is not in a classroom substituting for an absent teacher, he is there every day to meet the needs of students, as the principal deems necessary. When necessary the permanent substitute, the principal, the resource teacher,

the clinic attendant, or teachers who have a free duty period will substitute for a teacher with an emergency. Questioned again about how teachers feel about sometimes losing their valuable class preparation time, the principal explained that it has been a process to get to this point.

It does take effort and cooperation, not just my effort; it's everybody's effort in cooperation. But once people began to see that it works, not just for my neighbor, but it also will work for me, everybody can do it and everybody is willing here. (T/P1/2)

Interview panels were mentioned by Principals 2 and 3 as a strategy that they used to build respect. Principal 2 explained, "People appreciate being in on decisions. I want these teachers to know that they are important" (T/P2/2). In both schools, the principal stated that the teachers on the interview panel realized the principal had the final hiring decision.

Another way Principal 2 felt he built mutual respect was by taking the heat for bad decisions or a bad outcome. Teacher 8 provided an example of this when she told the story about her personal angst for the entire grade level not passing the science SOL test two years ago. The teachers on that grade level departmentalized instruction and she was responsible for the science content. Teacher 8 found out the SOL scores in the early part of the day and was extremely upset with the results. She felt as though she had let down the students, the grade level team, the school, and the principal. In conferencing with the principal later in the day, he talked her through her concerns. They compared

the school scores and district scores. They talked about the difficulty of the test and how during the summer they would spend additional time examining the scores and planning for next year. At no time, did the teacher feel that the principal was blaming her for the grade level not passing the SOL. Rather, he encouraged her to look at what had been accomplished.

During the beginning of the school year at Bluefield Elementary, teachers know to expect an additional planning period. The principal and the resource teacher will be in their classroom teaching for 45 minutes to an hour. Although this is not the only time the principal is in the classroom teaching, Principal 3 explained that she has several reasons for this particular practice at this time in the school year. One is for the children to know her and for her to work with the children in an instructional setting. Another reason is the free planning period for the teachers, a gift of time. A third reason is, early on the teachers see the principal as an instructional leader, someone not far removed from the classroom. The principal feels this strategy of being in the classroom adds to her credibility with teachers and students.

Bluefield Elementary, School 7, is an older facility and there are areas of the plant that could use sprucing up. Each year the staff looks at the facility and makes a list of what they would like to see changed short of a major renovation. Principal 3 reviews the list and works on one item on the list that falls within her capabilities and pocketbook. One year it was painting and papering the faculty lounge and bathroom. Another year it was the clinic space that received

attention. The front office, cafeteria, and hallway are spaces that have been worked on as well. Follow through and improving the workspace are two ways Principal 3 feels she builds respect.

Principals 1, 2, and 3 talked about valuing people as individuals. Principal 3 shared the importance of working through difficult situations so that in the end, everyone walked away with their dignity intact. She referenced both teacher and students in this part of the conversation. Her general experience has shown Principal 3 that, "if people feel good about what they're doing, they do better work, they're more productive, particularly if teachers feel like they have self worth" (T/P3/7). Principal 3 works with teachers to make this same connection when dealing with children. She works with the teachers to reach them on the human side first and then asks them to apply the same principles to what children experience.

### Summary

In summary, recognizing and showing respect for teachers as individuals with needs was important to each of the three principals interviewed. They shared ways they work to show respect by: (a) having teachers participate in decision making; (b) working through difficult situations together; (c) providing support for each other; (d) establishing procedures for collaboration; and (e) respecting students.

## Service To Children

The new teachers included in this study spoke about their feeling of excitement and fulfillment at the end of their first year due to what their students had accomplished. Those teachers who had completed three or more years of teaching talked about seeing their students from their first class now in the “upper” grades and how proud they felt when those students spoke to them about being in their class so long ago. As the principals talked about the teachers with whom they worked, students and students’ needs were never far from the conversation. As a note to the reader, all three schools passed the SOL for the 2000-2001 school year.

As discussed earlier, Principal 1 expected his teachers to know and to correctly pronounce the children’s names. Substituting in the classroom for the purpose of not losing instructional time was a priority for Principal 1. Principal 3 taught in each classroom. One reason was for her to get to know all of the children in an instructional setting, not simply to know the ones who come to the office for disciplinary reasons. Principal 2 shared, as did the teachers from School 4, that there were only two types of people on staff, those who teach or those who support the teachers. Both were there for the success of the students.

Principal 1 credited his teachers with knowing the parents and community better than anyone at central office. He stated they are the people to listen to and believe in when making instructional decisions for the students at that school. They will take the time to evaluate the programs and materials that are

recommended for division-wide use and offer recommendations about what will work best for their student population. Implementation may look different at this school due to the high ESL population. Principal support encourages teachers to feel free to make recommendations about delivery of instruction and work diligently to ensure student success. (T/P1/5)

The student population at Bluefield Elementary is the second largest ESL population on the elementary level in this division. Principal 3 shared what she tells teachers about the importance of making a difference in a child's life everyday. "Someday these young people will speak with adult voices, will you be ready to hear what they have to say" (T/P3/9)? She encouraged her teachers to focus on the humanization of instruction. She modeled this with her staff and expected them to practice it with the children.

Principal 2 shared the economic situation of the children attending Pleasantsville Elementary. The range included children who live on wealthy farms to those who live in government subsidized housing developments. Regardless of where a child may begin or end his day, Principal 2 stated "all kids can learn" (T/P2/3). He tells his teachers, "all these kids are our kids as we get them" (T/P2/3). He supports teachers through his knowledge of the students. Performing bus duty every morning and afternoon allows him to keep a pulse on the children and how they begin and end their day. His commitment to the teachers for the past two years has been if they send a child to the office for a



behavior issue, he will address that issue with the child and call the parent. This commitment to the teachers is an important part of his every day.

At Pleasantville Elementary, parental understanding for the concept that all students can learn is evident in their response to the statements that follow. (The numbers represent the percentage of parents who agree with the statements.) The statements are: (a) I feel welcome when I enter the school (93%); (b) the school holds high academic standards for all children (92%); (c) this school prepares students for the next grade (91%); (d) this school provides a safe environment for learning (95%); (e) this school provides programs that challenge my child (91%); and (f) students and parents are respected and treated fairly (87%). (D/4/7)

### Summary

The teachers in this study report satisfaction from working with their students. "You know the children make it all worth it, just the little things that they say at the end of the year, I knew the hard work was worth it" (T/T9/3). Students' instructional needs drive principals' decisions for teacher hiring, professional development, and teacher support as educating children is the business of schools.

### Summary of Practices of Elementary Principals

The grounded theory emerged from data gathered through interviews, observations, and documents and then analyzed. Eleven teachers representing experiences with thirteen principals and eleven schools were the sources of data.

A central category that emerged from the data was the importance of a school climate to new teachers that is composed of an atmosphere of trust, of mutual respect and of service to children. The practices of those principals to whom the new teachers referred, when exercised consistently with staff, developed a school climate exemplified by trust, mutual respect, and service to children. Sub categories that are examples of administrative practices that teachers credited with their perceived sense of feeling successful, valued, safe, loyal, and professional are constant communication, positive feedback, leadership roles, professional development, support structures, decision making, collaboration, and child centered instruction and behavior expectations.

In some situations where principals did not exhibit the described behaviors, teachers credited their peers with providing them the needed support. In other situations, where there was neither principal nor peer support, teachers reported feelings of discouragement and dissatisfaction.

As DePree (1997) suggested, it is the leader's responsibility to move groups of people in the direction of maturity as a community. In the schools teachers identified as having a strong sense of community, cultivating the climate was assumed to be everyone's responsibility. Teachers readily credited the principal for setting the tone. They quickly expressed their comfort at approaching any member of the staff for assistance and were certain they would receive what was needed.

Figure 4 depicts the grounded theory in a conceptual format. Chapter 5 contains a discussion of the grounded theory, the conclusions, and implications for future researchers.

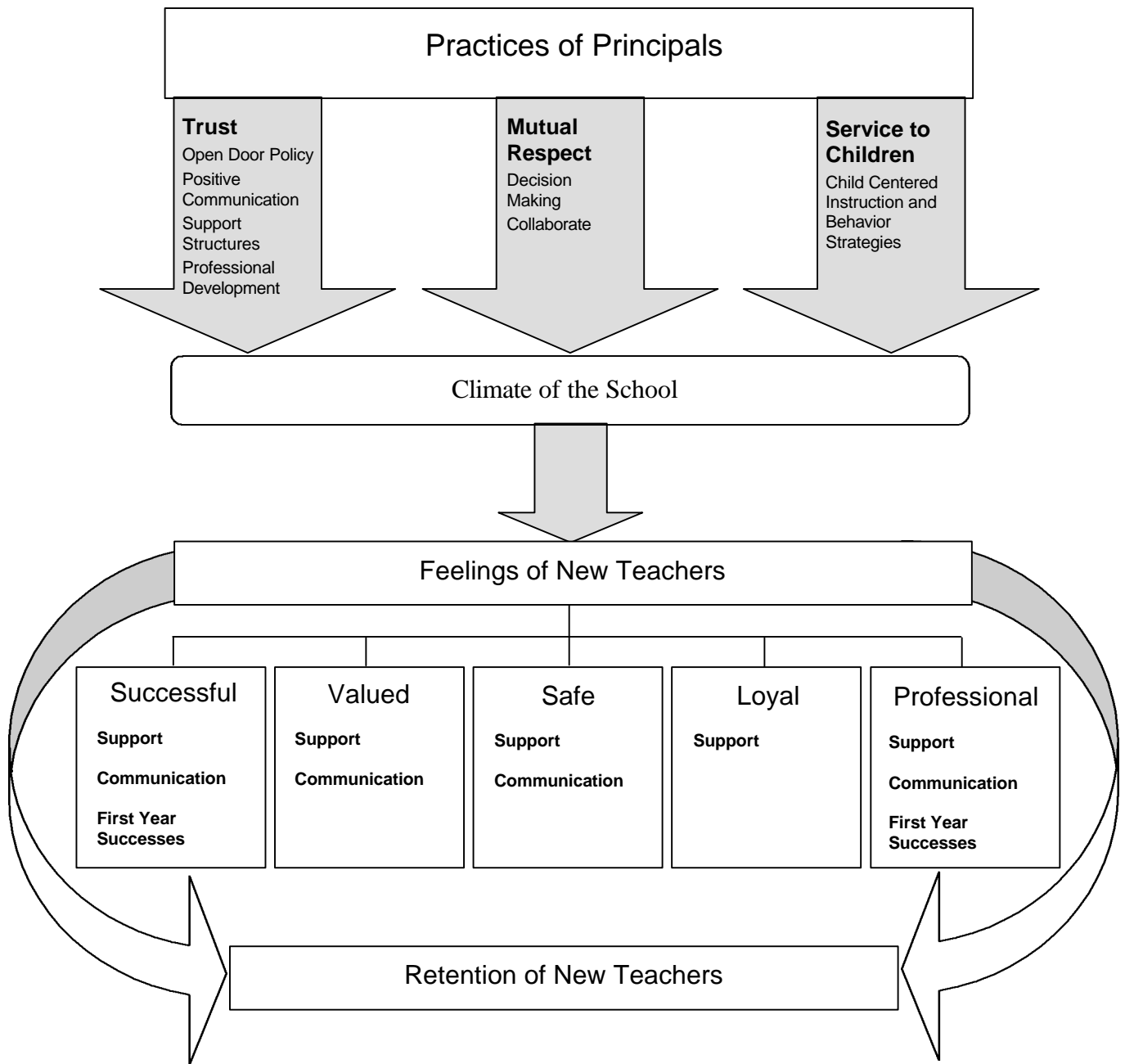


Figure 4. Practices of Elementary Principals In Influencing New Teacher Retention

## Chapter 5

### DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this study was to develop a grounded theory that described the practices elementary principals use in influencing new teachers to remain in education. This study involved the collection of data through a survey issued to elementary new teachers in the selected school division between the years of 1997 through 2000, as well as through interviews, shadowing opportunities, and documents. Individual teachers self-nominated for potential participation in the study through their survey response.

Elementary principals, nominated by the participating new teachers, were then interviewed and shadowed. Documents from principals, teachers, and the central office of the school division were included as data in the study. These documents provided physical evidence that supported teacher and principal reportings. Eleven new teachers, representing experiences with 13 principals in 11 schools, and 3 elementary principals were the participants in this study. Data analysis began with the initial collection of data and continued through the study until completion of the final report. Each interview transcript was analyzed prior to the next interview. This allowed me to build and add to the previously collected data and the analysis. From this analysis of data, a grounded theory emerged that explains how the practices of elementary principals influence new teachers to remain in education. Relationships among the categories and subcategories were explained.

A summary of the theory and a discussion of my interpretation of the findings are included in this chapter. The conclusions of the study and the implications of the theory for practitioners are shared. And last, are my personal reflections on this research study.

### Discussion and Conclusions

The overall grounded theory that emerged from this study is this: Elementary principals who create a climate of trust, of mutual respect, and of service to children within a school have teachers who state they feel successful, valued, safe, loyal, and professional, and want to and expect to continue teaching. New teachers reported three areas, support, communication, and first year success stories that created their sense of success, value, safety, loyalty, and professionalism. Principals stated they employed a variety of practices to create the climate identified by the new teachers. They established and maintained an open door policy, positive communication, and support structures. They provided opportunities for teachers to participate in decision making and professional growth opportunities. They encouraged and expected peer collaboration and a child-centered instruction and behavior program.

### Trust

According to the data gathered and analyzed in this study, principals exercised certain practices that created and developed trust which new teachers identified as an important element of a school climate. These practices are an

open door policy, positive communication, support structures, and professional development.

### Open Door Policy

Where principals were reported to practice an open door policy, the message to new teachers was that the principal was available to them whenever they thought it was necessary. The matters to be discussed could be professional or personal, there was no distinction when it came to the availability of the principal. When employed, an open door policy was one method of providing support to new teachers as discussion topics ranged from materials and supplies needed, to instructional decisions made, and to personal leave requested.

According to the research studies reviewed in Chapter 2, supporting new teachers was important to their success. Support was identified using a variety of terms. Billingsley and Cross (1992) found that school context or workplace conditions contributed to an individual's job satisfaction. One of the school context factors or workplace conditions identified by these researchers included assistance. An open door policy as practiced by the principals in this study provided access to assistance for new teachers.

The importance of supportive workplace conditions to a teacher's sense of career and achievement was a major theme that emerged from Yee's (1990) analysis of data. Again, as with Billingsley and Cross (1992), the terms used to indicate what created a supportive workplace were similar though not identical.

One of the terms used by Yee (1990) was administrative policies and practices. In this study, establishing an open door policy and following through with what it involved supports Yee's findings of administrative policies and practices that created a supportive workplace.

The elements of a helpful and cooperative administration and staff were reported by newly hired teachers as 8 times more helpful than other school building items (Greenberg & Erly, 1989). Though not as high on the reported "helpful" list, in the same study, materials and supplies, and administrative logistics (space and schedules) were noted as areas important to the study participants. When reporting school-building items as hindrances, some items that one would consider indicative of support were scored high; meaning support was not present. In this category, some of the terms used were, administrative logistics (space, schedule), administration and staff (uncooperative, threatening, negative), materials and supplies (inadequate), and time demands (interruptions, too many meetings) (Greenberg & Erly, 1989). The explanation of what constituted helps and hindrances in Greenberg and Erly's study are examples of topics new teachers stated they discussed with their principals' when an open door policy existed.

When comparing the terms used by Billingsley and Cross (1992), Greenberg and Erly (1989), and Yee (1990) to the principals' practice of an open door policy in this study, even though the language is not identical, connections can be made. Principals who practiced an open door policy and communicated



with their staff were viewed as supportive and helpful. Teachers felt successful, valued, safe, and professional.

### Communication

Communication in a positive manner (as demonstrated by an open door policy) is a form of assistance and is an administrative practice. Ubiquitous and positive are the words that best describe the communication that was reported by the participants in this study, both new teachers and principals alike. As illustrated in the comments and question responses, communication that is positive and ongoing is important to new teachers and to their success. Teachers and principals reported that communication took a variety of forms. The importance to new teachers though, was not the form of the communication (email, hand written notes, observation feedback) rather it was the positive tone, the consistent occurrence, and the ongoing nature of the communication.

In Sclan's (1993) research, communication was viewed as a form of support. Sclan reported that principals provided support to teachers by communicating clearly and by recognizing a job well done. Teacher participants in the study reported being more inclined to commit to their work and to remain in teaching when communication was strong.

In Greenberg and Erly's (1989) study, communication was viewed by new teachers as a means of support. In this study, it was a practice that worked hand-in-hand in creating a sense of trust with the principals' practice of having an open door policy. When teachers were supported by the principals' practice of

communication they expressed feeling successful, valued, safe, and professional.

### Support Structures

Having formal and informal support structures in place and operational was identified by new teachers as a practice that strengthened trust. They knew to whom they could go for either important or incidental and instructional or procedural information. By having this knowledge, having questions answered, and having needs met, the new teachers felt safe in asking for information and assistance. Having the information they needed to properly perform their duties allowed them to be successful in the performance of their day-to-day responsibilities.

### Professional Development

Feeling valued as a professional was viewed by the new teachers as a form of support. Being notified of the numerous and varied opportunities for professional development and being encouraged to attend the workshops or conferences were examples of principal practices that teachers provided.

Principals had established procedures in place for notifying teachers of available opportunities. Teachers knew that substitutes would be provided and that registration fees would be reimbursed. Opportunities for attending such events as grade levels or as like groups was another practice teachers reported that made them feel as though they were being treated as professionals.

Findings that parallel the importance of professional development opportunities and the corresponding administrative support to teachers were substantiated by Yee (1990). She reported that most teachers wanted and sought opportunities for professional development. Administrative support was described by Yee as allocation of time for workshops and exchanging ideas, and financial support.

### Summary

New teachers credited a school climate where they felt trusted as being important to them as they considered their decision to remain in teaching. Practices of principals that were identified and confirmed by both new teachers and principals were open door policy, positive communication, support structures and opportunities for professional development. When principals used these practices while conducting their day-to-day interactions with new teachers, the new teachers felt supported. They shared examples of specific events that made them feel successful, valued, safe, and professional. Many expressed strong feelings of loyalty to their principals because of how the principals treated them.

### Mutual Respect

Mutual respect is the second of the three areas identified as important elements of a school's climate. Principals reported that they respected the teachers and new teachers reported that they respected their principal and their peers. Examples of principals' practices that fostered this mutual respect are participation in decision making and collaboration.

## Decision Making

Teachers reported they had opportunities to be involved as decision-makers at their schools. Principals corroborated this in their reporting. Teachers were placed in positions of responsibility by principals, as grade level chairs, as mentors, as leadership team members, and as members of interview panels. These positions involved opportunities for the teachers to provide input into decisions that were important to the running of the school.

The inclusion of teachers as leaders and decision-makers made a difference when teachers considered and made decisions about remaining in teaching (Sclan, 1993). Similarly, Yee (1990) identified opportunities for input and organizational choices as context factors that created supportive workplace conditions that were important to a teacher's sense of career and achievement. Her findings indicated that schools that empowered teachers to have a voice in decisions contributed to teachers' sense of satisfaction. On the other hand, in schools where teacher input on decisions was reported as low or nonexistent, feelings of stress and dissatisfaction were reported.

In two of the three schools, principals reported and teachers confirmed that they regularly participated as interview panel members in the hiring of their peers. Some teachers initiated plans for a school-wide positive behavior plan. Others assisted in the development and implementation of yearlong themes for their school. Being involved in the decision making at their schools added to a

teacher's sense of professionalism. They reported that they felt their ideas and suggestions were considered and accepted.

The practice of involving teachers in the decision making process resulted in teachers feeling respected by the principals. Respect was an important consideration for teachers as they thought about staying or leaving teaching.

### Collaboration

Teachers planning, teaching, assessing, and evaluating together as grade level teams, cross-grade level teams, administrative teams, and leadership teams was consistently mentioned as a form of support that lead the new teachers to feel successful, valued, professional, and ultimately respected by their principal and peers as professionals. Teachers saw membership in the grade level and cross-grade level teams as directly related to what they did on a daily basis in the classroom with their students. When these teams worked well together, new teachers identified them as powerful sources of support. Materials were shared, instructional strategies were demonstrated, curriculum pacing was examined, and classroom management and behavior plans were discussed. In some situations, grade levels did not meet as a group and teachers in this study who experienced this situation reported feelings of ignorance, isolation, and frustration.

These findings are in agreement with those of Yee (1990) who identified collegial interactions or relationships as one of the school context or workplace factors that contributed to an individual's job satisfaction and a teacher's sense of

efficacy. Yee reported that “opportunities for collegial interaction are teachers’ most valued form of professional stimulation” (p. 113). Participants in her study indicated that the opportunities for collaboration were not adequate. Principals, in this study, who provided the structure of teams and the expectation of collaboration, were recognized by the new teachers as being respectful of their professional needs and the needs of the students.

### Summary

In a school climate where teachers expressed feeling successful, valued, and professional, they found an atmosphere of respect. A school climate which had evidence of mutual respect between principals and teachers was identified by new teachers as being important to their decision to remain in teaching. Practices employed by principals that fostered the sense of mutual respect were participation in decision making and collaboration with peers. The importance of these practices to teachers job satisfaction is supported by previous research.

### Service to Children

When teachers in this study discussed their success, one area they mentioned was their students. They were successful when their students were successful, in learning course content, in solving peer problems, in passing the SOL tests, and in moving to the next grade. As 6 of the 11 teachers in this study had previous work experience and chose teaching as a second career, they felt particularly pleased and successful when their students met with success both in and out of their classrooms.

Children are the center of this, the last of the three categories identified as important to the climate of a school. Practices that focused on a principal's belief in children were modeling expectations, expecting a child-centered school, and providing support for their high expectations for strong instruction and positive behaviors.

### Child Centered

Where principals were reported to have a child-centered school, their message to teachers was, know your children. Principals modeled this by their practices. Humanization of principal/teacher interactions was practiced and teachers were specifically told to model similar behaviors in their teacher/student interactions. Talking to children, calling them by their name, pronouncing their name correctly, and taking an interest in the children as people were important issues for principals. Their actions were observed by me, and were reported by the principals, themselves, and by the teachers interviewed.

Previous researchers did not report this category (child centered) in their analysis of data about retention of new teachers. Support for teachers in the area of students, as they made their decisions about remaining in education, focused on student behaviors and parent conflicts. I make a distinction between student behaviors and child centered in this study because, in my initial interviews with teachers, they commented on the importance of treating the children with respect, kindness, and consideration and, of having high expectations for them. The teachers verbalized that this was an expectation placed on them by their

principals and, the expected behaviors were modeled for them by their principals. The teachers reported that the success of their students was important to them as they considered their decision to remain in education.

### Strong Instruction and Positive Behavior

Teaching in classrooms, participating in grade level meetings, expecting teachers to plan together, providing opportunities for teacher sharing and planning, rescheduling meetings, sharing responsibility, and supporting teacher requests for instructional materials are examples of principal practices that targeted the strong instructional expectations of the principals in this study. Having a principal teaching classes for teachers served several purposes. One specifically was the realization for teachers that principals did more than administrate; they also taught. When principals were members of teams meetings, they modeled instructional leadership and shared expectations. Teachers who had the opportunity to plan together reported feeling supported and successful. When meetings were rescheduled, a feeling of professionalism was mentioned. As suggestions were made about different textbooks, instructional programs, or ancillary materials, teacher reported feeling valued.

While Yee (1990) does not comment directly on the practices mentioned above, parallels may be drawn. She addressed the positive and negative aspects of induction programs; a component of induction programs was teacher support. Teachers who reported positive experiences during their first year, especially the support provided by colleagues, were more likely to develop competencies and



skills for teaching. Those teachers who reported negative experiences during the induction period were more likely to have a low commitment to staying in teaching.

A principal's commitment to providing structured and numerous opportunities to support new teachers as they developed their instructional expertise does make a difference in the first year experiences of the teachers. Gold's (1996) assertion of the importance of first year imprinting and its influence on a teacher's decision to remain in education supports this statement.

Researchers were more likely to mention student behavior and a principal's lack of support in that area as a negative factor in a teacher's decision making process about staying or leaving (Greenberg & Erly, 1989; Yee, 1990). In this study, positive comments about principal practices in the area of discipline were common. Principals knew the students before disciplining them became the issue. Principals followed through on their promises to support teachers with discipline issues. Principals encouraged teacher input on and implementation of school-wide discipline plans. Principals provided teachers with conferencing tips prior to parent conferences. And, principals participated in parent conferences as a support rather than as the deliverer of information.

While Sclan's (1993) study did not specifically reference discipline, conclusions drawn support the positive practices of principals in this study. Her findings linked teacher participation in school decision making with their view of school leadership. Sclan reported the connection between a teacher's

participation in decision making and his perception of school leadership, as playing a role in making a decision about remaining in education.

### Summary

Principals who set specific positive expectations and modeled them in the areas of focusing on children, instruction, and behavior have teachers who report feeling successful, valued, safe, and professional. Teachers who have principals who encourage collaboration and provide opportunities to be involved in decision making express loyalty to those principals and expect to continue in education.

#### In Summary

During the early stages of conducting teacher interviews and continuing throughout the analysis of data, I was struck with the dynamic interrelationships illustrated in the responses to the questions asked. Teachers described support and what it looked like in their situation and related it to mutual respect. At another point, support was credited as evidence of trust. A sense of family was related to trust and mutual respect. Teachers reported that communication was essential to feeling successful, valued, safe, and professional. In addition, both teachers and principals reported communication as critical to establishing trust and mutual respect. Service to children was an expected priority and one that teachers felt they accomplished, as they believed they were trusted and respected by their principal and peers.

Parallel connections exist between research findings presented in Chapter 2 and the findings of this study. In particular, is the importance of support to new

teachers as it relates to their success and willingness to remain in education. Findings parallel or interface with those of Greenberg and Erly (1989), Sclan (1993), and Yee (1990). The findings of this study add the important focus of principal practices that create a climate characterized by trust, mutual respect, and service to children.

### Implications for Practice

The recommendations provided in this section are based on the grounded theory that was developed through this research. First, university and district-level principal preparation programs should include as part of the required training a course on administrative practices that support new teachers. An understanding of the importance of the “imprinting” of the first year for new teachers and its potential consequences should be included in the content. In addition to the importance of the issue are the what and the how. What specifically do principals provide new teachers and how do they provide the support that new teachers claim they want and need should be defined and discussed with new administrators. Existing principals and central office staff would benefit from professional development that had a similar focus.

Second, as communication emerged as a theme that was frequently discussed by both teachers and principals, it warrants attention. New teachers valued the positive and frequent communication from both principals and peers. Principals and teachers, both new and those in support roles, would benefit from focused training on communication skills and strategies. Division-wide and

school-based activities would provide opportunity for further developing an important skill not only in dealing with new teachers but also with supervisors, peers, students, and parents.

Third, as mentors were mentioned by new teachers in both a positive and negative light as providers of support, school divisions and individual schools would do well to evaluate the existing mentor program or establish a mentoring program. In situations where a mentor program is mandated, examination of the implementation of the program at the site level should be considered, as it is in the daily living of the teacher's day that mentoring is most valuable and effective not at the division or state level.

Fourth, in the schools represented in this study where teachers felt completely supported and successful, the belief, "it takes a village to raise a child" was evident. The family mentality was mentioned frequently. Peers, on grade level and off, and staff members were credited with providing material, verbal, and emotional support whether requested or not. Providing opportunities for working, playing, and celebrating together were strategies shared by teachers and principals in this study. Recognition of exemplary teaching strategies or lessons and sharing them with peers was another practice discussed by principals and new teachers as being effective in creating confidence. It is suggested that principals examine current support practices and align them with the philosophy that it is the responsibility of all staff to induct new teachers into the existing family.

Fifth, individual schools should have a new teacher support structure in place. The multitude of principals' responsibilities is certainly a reason why they should not shoulder the full and sole responsibility of providing support to new teachers. Where specific roles were assigned to named individuals, new teachers and veteran teachers had many individuals to whom they could turn for assistance. There was a school-wide commitment of support to each other in both the professional and personal arena.

#### Recommendations for Further Research

This study developed a grounded theory that describes the practices elementary principals use in establishing the climate of the school which new teachers have reported as important to their retention in education. Its key findings point to the importance of establishing and maintaining a climate of trust, of mutual respect, and of service to children. Individuals interested in conducting future research are encouraged to replicate this study in their individual school or school division to test the theory's applicability in that setting. The potential for identifying additional practices of principals as they support new teachers would serve to add valuable information to the discussion of teacher retention.

This study addressed elementary schools only. Research on the middle school and high school levels is recommended. The larger size of the middle and high schools multiplies the number of principals, teachers, and students in each school setting. Larger schools bring with them different issues. Future studies

could produce descriptions of practices principals use to support the new teacher on the secondary level.

Alternative schools and exceptional education teachers comprise another group that would benefit from a separate study. Although teachers included in this study served students with disabilities, predominate class membership consisted of regular education students. Again, potentially valuable information would be gathered regarding the support of exceptional education teachers and it would add insight to the needs of the exceptional education teachers and the practices of their supervisors.

#### Personal Reflections on the Research Process

Perhaps individuals who want to conduct a similar study may benefit from my experience. With that in mind, I recommend hiring a professional transcriber. Having a transcriber other than myself afforded me the opportunity to spend longer amounts of valuable time focusing on initial analysis and memoing. For me, the importance of memoing and coding for the development and refinement of the theory outweighed the expense of hiring a professional transcriber.

The teachers and principals involved in this study expressed their pleasure at being participants in the study. Both groups were articulate and reflective. Using the survey results as a self-nomination method thrust new teachers who expressed a desire to tell their story and to be heard into the limelight. The principals were honored and humbled when told new teachers had

nominated them to be included as participants in the study. With their words and actions they reinforced and gave clarity to what teachers shared about them.

### Concluding Statements

The validation of the grounded theory that emerged shows that the practices elementary principals use in creating a school climate of trust, of mutual respect and of service to children is important to the retention of new teachers. Principals do not fulfill this responsibility on their own. In fact, in some situations, the principal was a negative influence and another individual or individuals stood up and filled the void created by the lack of administrative support. Having a support structure in place with identified individuals assigned to certain stated roles, freed the principal to address the many other demanding responsibilities that occupy their daily schedule. In this time of increased student enrollment and reduction in the current teaching force, it is imperative that administrators, both central and site-based, examine their practices of supporting new teachers.

## References

Billingsley, B. S. (1993). Teacher retention and attrition in special and general education: A critical review of the literature. The Journal of Special Education, 27 (2), 137-174.

Billingsley, B. S. & Cross, L. H. (1992). Predictors of commitment, job satisfaction, and intent to stay in teaching: A comparison of general and special educators. The Journal of Special Education. 25 (4), 453-471.

Brock, B. L. & Grady, M. L. (1998, January-February). Beginning teacher induction program: the role of the principal. The Clearing House, 71 (3), 179-184.

Chapman, D. W. (1984). Teacher retention: The test of a model. American Educational Research Journal, 21 (3), 645-658.

Chapman, D. W. & Green, M. S. (1986). Teacher retention: A further examination. Journal of Educational Research, (79), 273-279.

Commonwealth of Virginia, Department of Education. (1999). One-year internship for first year teachers. House Document No. 33. Richmond, VA.

Darling-Hammond, L. (1984). Beyond the commission reports: The coming crisis in teaching. CA: Rand.

Darling-Hammond, L. (1999). Solving the demands of teacher supply, demand, and standards: How we can ensure a competent, caring, and qualified teacher for every child. Columbia: National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (On-line) Available:  
<http://www.tc.columbia.edu/~teachcomm/CONFERENCE-99/SOLVING>



Gayles, A. R. (1989). Effective in-service techniques for promoting teacher retention. In A. M. Garibaldi (Ed.), Teacher recruitment and retention: With a special focus on minority teachers (pp. 61-68). Washington, DC: National Education Association.

Gold, Y. (1996). Beginning teacher support: Attrition, mentoring, and induction. In J. Sikula, T. J. Buttery, & E. Guyton (Eds.). Handbook of research on teacher education (pp. 548-594). NY: Macmillan Library Reference USA.

Greenberg, J. D. & Erly, M. C. (1989). School-building-level variables and the induction of new teachers. In J. Reinhartz (Ed.), Teacher induction (pp. 34-41). Washington, DC: National Education Association.

Herzberg, F. (1966). Work and the nature of man. OH: The World Publishing Company.

Huling-Austin, L. (1992). Research on learning to teach: Implications for teacher induction and mentoring programs. Journal of Teacher Education, 43 (3), 173-180.

Merriam, S. B. (1998). Qualitative research and case study applications in education. CA: Jossey-Bass Inc.

Merrow, J. (1999). The teacher shortage: Wrong diagnosis, phony cures. Education Week, October 6, 1999, 64, 48.

Miles, M. B. & Huberman, A. M. (Eds.). (1994). An expanded source book: Qualitative data analysis. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

National Center for Education Statistics. (1993). School enrollment expected to surpass historic all-time high. Washington DC: United States Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, NCES.

National Center for Education Statistics. (1997). The impact of the baby boom echo on United States public school enrollments. Washington DC: United States Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, NCES.

Odell, S. J. (1989). Developing support programs for beginning teachers. In Assisting the beginning teacher. (pp. 19-38). Reston, VA: Association of Teacher Educators.

Odell, S. J. (1990). Mentor teacher programs. Washington, DC: National Education Association.

Odell, S. J. & Ferraro, D. P. (1992). Teacher mentoring and teacher retention. Journal of Teacher Education, 43 (3), 200-204.

Pennington, S. (1998). Fanning first year fires: Veteran educators provide year-long mentoring to guard against new-teacher burnout. NEA Today, 17 (2), 23-24.

Recruiting New Teachers, Inc. (1998). The essential profession: A national survey of public attitudes toward teaching, educational opportunity, and school reform. Belmont, MA: Author.

Rossman, G.B. & Rallis, S. F. (1998). Learning in the field: An introduction to qualitative research. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Schaffer, E., Stringfield, S., & Wolfe, D. (1992). An innovative beginning teacher induction program: a two-year analysis of classroom interactions. Journal of Teacher Education, 43 (3), 181-192.

Sclan, E. M. (1993). The impact of perceived workplace conditions on beginning teachers' work commitment, career choice commitment and planned retention. Paper presented at the annual meeting of The American Educational Research Association, Atlanta, GA.

Siegle, D. (2000). Trustworthiness. [On-line]. Available: Internet, <http://coehp.idbsu.edu/siegle>

Strauss, A. & Corbin, J. (1998). Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Tellez, K. (1992). Mentors by choice, not design: Help-seeking by beginning teachers. Journal of Teacher Education, 43 (3), 214-220.

Theobald, N. D. (1990). An examination of the influences of personal, professional, and school district characteristics on public school teacher retention. Economics of Education Review, 9 (3), 241-250.

Varah, L. J., Theune, W. S., & Parker, L. (1986). Beginning teachers: Sink or swim? Journal of Teacher Education, 37 (1), 30-34.

Virginia Board of Education, Annual Retreat. (2000). Teacher quality: Enhancing the professional to improve student achievement. Irvington, VA.

Vonk, J. H. C. (1993, April). Mentoring beginning teachers: development of a knowledge base for mentors. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Atlanta, GA.

Wildman, T. M., Magliaro, S.G., Niles, R.A., & Niles, J.A. (1992). Teacher mentoring: An analysis of roles, activities, and conditions. Journal of Teacher Education, 43 (3), 205-213.

Yee, S. M. (1990). Concerns in the classroom: When teaching is more than a job. NY: Teachers College Press.

## Appendix A

### Permission to Conduct Study

#### Memorandum

To: Superintendent of Schools

From: Thelma D. Palermo, Doctoral Candidate  
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

Date: May, 2001

Subject: Permission to conduct a research project

My name is Thelma D. Palermo and I am a doctoral student at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. All of my course work is completed and I am at the next step, securing a location to conduct my study.

The purpose of my study is to go beyond the reasons for new teacher attrition by explaining what influences elementary administrators have on new teacher retention. After the expenses incurred in attracting and hiring new teachers, retaining those same teachers is of considerable interest and importance to school administrators and policy makers. Determining what it is that made a difference in the first years of teaching and, in particular how the building administrator influenced the decision to stay will provide necessary information on the increasingly important topic of new teacher retention.

I am enclosing the first three chapters of my study. The information contained in these chapters will provide you with a statement of the current problem, the purpose of the study, a literature review, as well as the proposed

methodology. I am requesting to interview teachers and administrators on the elementary level. There will be no involvement of students. In addition, I plan to conduct the interviews during the summer thereby not taking away from instructional time.

Because this study is being conducted from the point of view of what is working, the population for the study will self-select. A brief survey will be sent to elementary new teachers who have completed two or three years of teaching and have a contract to return for the next academic year. A copy of the survey is attached. Those who respond positively to the questions asked and state they will be willing to participate in the study will be selected as teacher participants. On the survey, there is a place for teachers to name the administrators who influenced them to remain in teaching. These named principals will be selected for the interview process. At this time I anticipate interviewing six new teachers and three administrators. As I continue the study if there is a need to increase the number of participants, I will contact you for permission.

Thank you for considering my request to conduct the study in your school district. I believe the results of the study will be beneficial to your district as well as to others in the state. Please do not hesitate to contact me with questions or for further clarification.

attachment

c Director of Research and Planning

## Appendix B

### Potential Participant Letter and Survey

September 17, 2001

Dear Colleague:

It is a generally understood and agreed upon belief that the education of a nation's youth is critical to the successful continued development of society. With new teachers exiting the classrooms of America in alarming numbers in their first 5 years of teaching and baby boom generation teachers retiring, attention must be given to retaining quality teachers. Here in XXXX, it is understood that new teachers require assistance in the transition from student to teacher and that administrators have a responsibility to assist in this transition. Additional information is needed regarding the actions of administrators and how their assistance is a necessary component for the transition from student to teacher. More importantly, knowing how that assistance contributes to an individual's decision to remain in teaching is crucial as we study ways to retain quality teachers.

This study, being conducted by myself, Thelma Palermo, will examine the assistance provided by administrators to new teachers as it supports the decision of the new teacher to stay in the profession of teaching. Information gleaned from this study will offer insights to educators who are charged with assisting new teachers and with providing training to administrators.

You are receiving this letter and survey because you began teaching at least two years ago as a new teacher here in XXXX and your feedback is valued. You are requested to take the few minutes necessary to complete the attached survey and return it to me, Thelma Palermo by Monday, September 24, 2001. You may contact me with questions.

To:

From: Thelma Palermo

Jennifer Sughrue, Ph.D., Assistant Professor  
Educational Leadership and Policy Studies  
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

Date: September 17, 2001

Subject: New Teacher Survey

Teachers leave the profession at high rates in the first years of their career. School context factors are explanations some teachers give when asked the reason for their departure from teaching. Listed below are those factors most frequently mentioned:

#### School Context Factors

- **orientation** – induction arrangements, introduction to the school facility, faculty, staff, instructional program expectations, and general expectations
- **space** - size, location, permanent or temporary classroom
- **time** – planning, staff meetings, professional development
- **course assignment** – same as one's licensure or what was stated at hiring
- **resources** - classroom and instructional supplies, professional opportunities
- **class size** – fewer or the same as grade level peers
- **student performance** – cooperative nature of students and parents, support for discipline from administrator and peers
- **assistance** –mentor, teacher buddy, administrator, other staff members
- **administrative duties** – additional responsibilities over and above classroom
- **lesson planning** – reasonable workload
- **extra duties** –committee and other work assignments
- **collegial relationships** – opportunities for peer exchanges, social and professional interactions, participation in decision making,
- **communication** – regular, formative, constructive, positive, and informational

As mentioned, this study is being conducted to better understand how administrators facilitate or inhibit the retention of new teachers based on how they exercise their leadership with the school contextual factors they can control. Please take a few minutes to consider the contextual factors listed and explained above and respond to the survey questions. Your responses to this survey **will be kept confidential**.



Please return this survey to Thelma Palermo by Monday, September 24, 2001 using the attached envelope. Do call 741-8554 or email [tpalermo@erols.com](mailto:tpalermo@erols.com) if you have any questions. Thank you in advance for your participation.

1. Are you returning to teach in XXXX during the 2001-2002 school year?

Yes                      No

2. Did your principal/s play a role in your decision to stay in elementary education?

Yes                      No

3a. If you are staying to teach in XXXX, then list the contextual factors (see list on cover memo) you think your administrator effectively controlled or manipulated to support you during your first years of teaching.

3b. If you are leaving teaching, then list the contextual factors (see list on cover memo) you think your administrator could have controlled or manipulated to support your during your first years of teaching but did not.

4. If you are staying in XXXX as a teacher and if you are selected, are you willing and interested in participating in this study? If so please print your name and school below. As a participant, you would participate in one 60-minute interview to be held at a time and location that is convenient for you.

Yes                      No

---

Your Name

---

Your School

Appendix C  
 Self-Nominated New Teachers  
 and  
 Schools Represented

School	Number of New Teachers who Self-Nominated	Schools Selected For Participation
S/A	5	School 6
S/B	1	
S/C	2	
S/D	2	
S/E	3	School 1
S/F	3	School 5
S/G	1	
S/H	4	School 4
S/I	2	
S/J	1	
S/K	3	School 2
S/L	2	
S/M	1	
S/N	2	
S/O	3	School 3
S/P	2	
S/Q	1	
S/R	2.5	
S/S	2	School 7
S/T	2	
S/U	1	
S/V	1	
S/W	.5	
S/X	1	

## Appendix D

### Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

#### Informed Consent for Participants

#### In Research Projects Involving Human Subjects

**Title of Project:** How Do Elementary Building Administrators Influence New Teachers to Remain in Education

**Investigator (s):** Thelma D. Palermo, Jennifer Sughrue (faculty advisor)

#### **I. Purpose of this Research Project**

The purpose of this study is to examine the perceived support provided by elementary administrators to new teachers by their admission and that of the new teachers as it supports the decision of the new teacher to stay in the profession of teaching. Information gleaned from this study will lead to the construction of a substantive theory which will offer insights to educators who are charged with assisting new teachers, with providing training to administrators, and with educating school division leaders. The resulting grounded theory will be useful to future researchers as the critical issue of the retention of new teachers will continue to require further study and understanding.

#### **II. Procedures**

The procedures for this study include audio-taped interviews, collection of school documents, and observations. Interviews will be conducted with a minimum of 6 teachers who have completed two to three years of teaching. The administrators to be interviewed will be determined based on those reported by

new teachers to have influenced them to remain in education. If you agree to be a participant in this study, you will be contacted to schedule an interview at your convenience for both time and location. The interview will be audio-taped and last for approximately 60 minutes. Questions to be asked in the interview will be shared with you in advance. Upon completion of the interview, if clarification of something contained in the interview is needed, you may be contacted for further explanation. You will have the opportunity to review the transcript of your interview and to add hand-written comments to the contents.

Permission to examine documents such as teacher handbook, minutes from faculty meeting, or teacher/administrator written communication may be requested. In addition, permission may be requested to observe the participants, teachers and administrators, in their daily work environment for a portion of a school day.

### **III. Risks**

There are no known risks to the subjects of this study.

### **IV. Benefits**

No promises or guarantees of benefits have been made to encourage you to participate. Benefits of this study include the development of a grounded theory which will offer insight into the actions of administrators, enhance the understanding of how new teachers respond to these actions, and potentially provide a meaningful guide to action for building administrators, leadership development teams, and human resource personnel. At the conclusion of the

research project, participants may contact the investigator for a summary of the research results.

#### **V. Extent of Anonymity and Confidentiality**

Neither the name of you, the participant, nor the school where you are employed will be mentioned in the study. A pseudonym will be used in the presentation of the findings. If a direct quote is to be used, then permission will be asked of the participant. Again though, a pseudonym will be used for the quote.

Audiotapes and transcripts of the interviews will remain in the possession of the primary investigator with the exception of when being transcribed by a professional transcriber. The tapes will be stored in the home office of the investigator and will be destroyed within one year of the completion of the project.

#### **VI. Compensation**

There is no monetary compensation for participation in this study.

#### **VII. Freedom to Withdraw**

Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary and in no way will your participation or lack-there-of influence your current position at this time or at any time in the future. If you decide to be a member of the study and then at a later date want to withdraw, that is certainly your option and, again, in no way will you be penalized. You have the right to withdraw from this process at any time. In

addition, you are free to refuse to answer any question in the interview process or to not participate in observations or provide any school documents.

### **VIII. Approval of Research**

This research project has been approved, as required, by the Institutional Review Board for Research Involving Human Subjects at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, by the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies, and by the participating school division.

June 7, 2001

IRB Approval Date

June 7, 2002

Approval Expiration Date

### **IX. Subject's Responsibilities**

I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I have the following responsibilities:

- to participate in a 60 minute audio-taped interview
- to potentially be observed by the primary investigator during a school day
- to provide documents that would substantiate information shared during the interviews (examples: teacher handbook, minutes from faculty meeting, teacher/administrator written communication)

### **X. Subject's Permission**

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

---

Subject name and signature

Date

Should I have any pertinent questions about this research or its conduct, and research subjects' rights, and whom to contact, I may contact:

Thelma D. Palermo

804-741-8554/tpalermo@erols.com

Investigator

Telephone/e-mail

Jennifer Sughrue

510-231-9707/jsugh@vt.edu

Faculty Advisor

Telephone/e-mail

David M. Moore

[540-231-4991](tel:540-231-4991)/[moored@vt.edu](mailto:moored@vt.edu)

Chair, IRB

Telephone/e-mail

Office of Research Compliance

Research & Graduate Studies

This Informed Consent is valid from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_.

**Subjects receive a complete copy of the signed informed consent.**

## Appendix E

### Interview Protocol – Teachers

Interviewee: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Demographics: \_\_\_\_\_

Years of experience in education: \_\_\_\_\_ Years of experience in current school: \_\_\_\_\_

---

#### Initial question guide:

- When you first started teaching, how long did you think you would stay in teaching? Why?
- Tell me about your first year in teaching.
- What do you remember best about it?
- What was the most difficult thing about that year?
- Did you have a chance to observe other teachers that year?
- How often did your administrator observe you and provide you with feedback?
- What was the nature of your interaction with the rest of the faculty?
- At the end of your first year, how did you feel about your success in teaching?
- How does teaching fit what you want in a job?
- What do you see yourself doing in five years?
- If you were to leave teaching, under what conditions would you leave?



- What kind of feedback did your administrator give you about your work as a teacher? Was it helpful? Why?
- So often a new job, a new boss, new co-workers can be overwhelming and you were probably expected to be an expert as you walked through your classroom door. Who answered your questions, calmed your fears, found materials for you, and generally held your hand?
- Please share the working relationship that developed?
- How would you describe the administrator's communication style with staff?
- Did you feel supported by the administrator? Please share some examples of incidents or situations that would paint a picture about the administrator's support. (space, time, interruptions, assignment, resources, class assignments, extra duties, teaming opportunities, collegial relationships, professional development)
- What, if any, interaction did the administrator initiate with you?
- What, if any, interaction did you initiate with the administrator?
- If you had your principal or any principal here with you today and you could say anything to that person about your first years and their role in the success or failure of that year, what would you say?
- What were your thoughts that first day of class, first week, first month, by December/January, May, June?
- Think about the worst day/moment since you began teaching, we all have had them, describe the situation.

- How did it make you feel? What did you do about it? How did you react, respond, or process your thoughts and actions?
- Think about the best day/moment since you began teaching, we all have had those too, describe the situation.
- How did it make you feel? What did you do about it? How did you react, respond, or process your thoughts and actions?
- Why are you still teaching?
- What is it about your situation that has helped you escape the national statistics of leaving the classroom in the first few years of teaching?
- Is there anything else you would like to share about the practices, habits, and strategies of your administrator/s that influenced you to remain in education?
- Would you nominate your administrator as a potential participant for this study? If yes, their name? If no, why?

## Appendix F

### Interview Protocol – Principals

Interviewee: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Demographics: \_\_\_\_\_

Years in education: \_\_\_\_\_ Years of experience in administration: \_\_\_\_\_

Years in current school: \_\_\_\_\_

Certification areas: \_\_\_\_\_

---

Initial question guide:

1. Teachers have nominated you as a principal who creates an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect in your school. How do you do that?
2. You have been identified as a principal who takes the responsibility for setting a tone for good instruction, collegial support, and student success. What do you do on a day to day basis that ensures these things happen?
3. Tell me about the culture you have established and the structures you have put in place to support the culture you have established.
4. How would you describe your communication style?
5. If you had your new teacher/s here with you today and you could say anything to that person about the support you provided them, what would you say?

## Appendix G

### Documents Collected

- D/1 School District Employee Directory
- D/2 School Board Minutes/Recommendations for Appointment of Instructional Personnel for School Years 1995 – 2000.
- D/3 School Board Minutes/Request for Release from Contract of Instructional Personnel for School Years 1995 – 2000.
- D/4 School 1 Fact Sheet
- D/5 School 2 Fact Sheet
- D/6 School 3 Fact Sheet
- D/7 School 4 Fact Sheet
- D/8 School 5 Fact Sheet
- D/9 School 6 Fact Sheet
- D/7 School 7 Fact Sheet
- D/8 Just The Facts - School District General Information
- D/9 Welcome - School District General Information
- D/10 Licensure Records
- D/11 Professional Staff Development Opportunities
- D/12 District Teacher Observation and Evaluation Handbook
- D/13 Mentor Program Handbook
- D/14 Standards of Learning
- D/15 Yearly Summer Institute Brochures
- D/16 Fall/Winter/Spring Institute Records
- D/17 Post-It Notes for Specific Individuals
- D/18 Mentor Program Evaluations from Mentors, Mentor Coordinators, and Mentees
- D/19 Tuition Reimbursement Records
- D/20 District SOL Results

### School 1

- D/1/1 Instructional Pacing Guides
- D/1/2 Grade Level Meeting Agenda
- D/1/3 Parent Newsletter
- D/1/4 eMail Memos
- D/1/5 Faculty Meeting Agendas
- D/1/6 Faculty Hand Book
- D/1/7 Informal Observation Form
- D/1/8 Sample Interview Questions
- D/1/9 Daily Schedules
- D/1/10 Annual Staff Development Plan

## School 4

- D/4/1 Instructional Pacing Guides
- D/4/2 Plan of the Week
- D/4/3 Classroom Observation/Self Evaluation
- D/4/3 Classroom Observation/Principal Check List
- D/4/4 Classroom Observation/Final Form
- D/4/5 Grade Level Meeting Agenda
- D/4/6 Parent Survey Results
- D/4/7 Positive Behavior Support Plan Information Packet
- D/4/8 Sample Interview Questions
- D/4/9 Annual Staff Development Plan
- D/4/10 Faculty Handbook

## School 7

- D/7/1 Instructional Pacing Guides
- D/7/2 Grade Level Meeting Agenda
- D/7/3 Faculty Meeting Agendas
- D/7/4 Quote File
- D/7/5 Faculty Hand Book
- D/7/6 eMail Memos
- D/7/7 Informal Observation Forms
- D/7/8 Sample Interview Questions
- D/7/9 Theme Files
- D/7/9 Photo Albums
- D/7/10 Annual Staff Development Plan
- D/7/11 Parent Newsletter

Appendix H

Participating Teacher Characteristics

Teacher / School	Position	Certification	Degree	Prior Work Experience	Years Teaching	Number of Schools	Years at Current School
T1/S1	Third	NK-4	MA	Yes	5	2	2
T2/S1	Third	NK-3	MA	Yes	2	1	2
T3/S2	Kindergarten	NK-4	MA	Yes	3	1	3
T4/S2	Fourth	NK-4	MA	Yes	2	1	2
T5/S3	Kindergarten	K-8	MA	No	3	2	1
T6/S3	First	NK-4, Mid Ed 4-8	MA	Yes	4	3	1
T7/S4	LD	LD	MA	Yes	5	2	4
T8/S4	Fifth	NK-5	BA	No	2	1	2
T9/S5	Fifth	NK-5	BA	No	5	1	5
T10/S6	Fifth	NK-6	BA	No	2	1	2
T11/S7	Kindergarten	NK-6	BA	No	2	1	2

Appendix I

Participating Principal Characteristics

Principal/ School	Certification	Degree	Previous Experience	Years as Administrator	Years in current position
P1/S1	General Science I, Biology, Elementary Principal, Secondary Principal	MA	Assistant principal, Classroom teacher	21	10
P2/S4	NK-4, Elementary Guidance, Administration & Supervision Pre K-12	MA	State Department of Education, Guidance Supervisor, counselor	6	6
P3/S7	NK-4, 5-8, Elem. Principal, Middle School Principal, Elem. Supervisor, Middle School Supervisor	MA	Educational Specialist, Classroom teacher	9	4

Appendix J

Contact Summary Form

For

Interviews and Observations

Contact:

I  
O

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Today's Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What are the main themes, categories that appeared in this contact?
2. Write a brief summary of the information from each of the questions asked.
3. What other important, interesting issues or thoughts occurred during this contact?
4. List any other questions for the next contact.



Appendix K

Data Source Matrix

Major and Sub Categories

Data Source	Support	Principal	Administrative Team	Grade Level	Resource Teacher	Mentor	Entire Staff	Communication	Principal	Peer	School Climate	First Year Success	Trust	Mutual Respect	Service To Children	Professional Development
Interviews																
Teachers		8	5	11	6	5	8		9	7	7	8	9	7	8	5
Principals		3	3	3	3	3			3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Observations		3	1	2	3				3	3	3		3	3	3	
Documents		2	1	3		1			11	3	1		4	3	6	7

\*The numerals in each cell indicate the number of teachers, principals, observations, or documents that mentioned or supported a specific sub category.

Appendix L

Data Source Matrix

Major and Sub Categories for Teachers

Data Source	Support	Principal	Administrative Team	Grade Level	Resource Teacher	Mentor	Entire Staff	Communication	Principal	Peer	School Climate	First Year Success	Trust	Mutual Respect	Service To Children	Professional Development
Interviews																
Teacher 1		X	X	X			X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Teacher 2		X	X	X			X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Teacher 3		X		X		X	X		X			X	X		X	
Teacher 4		X	X	X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X		X	
Teacher 5		X		X			X		X		X		X	X		X
Teacher 6		A		X	X				X			X	X	X	X	
Teacher 7		A	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X	X
Teacher 8		X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X
Teacher 9		X		X	X					X		X				
Teacher 10		A		X	X	X				X						
Teacher 11		X		X		X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

A = Indicates supportive administrator from the second or third year of these individuals experiences  
 The X in each cell indicates the mention of the sub category by the teacher interviewed.

Appendix M

Data Source Matrix

Major and Sub Categories for Principals

Data Source	<b>Support</b>	Principal	Administrative Team	Grade Level	Resource Teacher	Mentor	Entire Staff	<b>Communication</b>	Principal	Peer	<b>School Climate</b>	<b>First Year Success</b>	Trust	<b>Mutual Respect</b>	<b>Service To Children</b>
Interviews															
Principal 1		X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X		
Principal 2		X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X		
Principal 3		X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X		

The X in each cell indicates the mention of the sub category by the principal interviewed.

## VITA

Thelma D. Palermo

Currently, I am serving my 24th year in education. Eleven of those years were spent in K-8 schools in New Jersey; four of which were spent serving simultaneously as a classroom teacher and as an assistant principal. The remaining 13 years of educational experience have taken place in Virginia, 3 years as a classroom teacher, 2 years as a resource teacher, 2 years as a staff development instructor, and 6 years as a specialist in the office of staff development.

My undergraduate degree is from Saint John's University in Queens, New York and my masters degree in Educational Administration and Supervision is from Saint Peter's College in Jersey City, New Jersey. Certification endorsements include NK-4, Middle Education 4-8, Elementary and Middle School Supervisor, and Elementary, Middle and Secondary School Principal.

More recently, several of my professional responsibilities have centered on the support of new teachers through the development, implementation, evaluation, and continuation of induction and mentoring programs. Working with new teachers as they acclimate themselves to the realities of the classroom has served to increase my interest in understanding the practices of principals in the retention of new teachers particularly on the elementary level.