A CASE STUDY OF THE INFLUENCE OF PROFESSIONAL FRIENDSHIPS

AMONG TEACHERS ON TEACHER RETENTION, SCHOOL CULTURE,

TEACHER PERFORMANCE, AND STUDENT PERFORMANCE

A Doctoral Thesis Presented to the
Faculty of the College of Education
University of Houston

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education
in Professional Leadership

by

Dominic Madrid

May 2016

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Abstract

The manner in which teacher friendships influence teacher retention, student performance, and the influence they have on the quality of the school's learning environment has not been studied in great depth. Many studies look at the teacher-principal relationship (King, 2001) and parent-teacher relationship to determine how quickly a teacher will "burnout" (Maslach, 1982; Lynn, 2013), or how successful the partnerships of a school may be in educating students (Epstein, 2011), but neglect the interaction of teachers among themselves. This study investigated the nature of friendship among teachers at one specific Houston-area Pre-K -8 private Catholic school and how those friendships influence the school culture, teacher retention, and student and teacher performance. The purpose of this study is to determine teachers' and administrators' perceptions regarding the manner in which professional friendship among faculty influence teacher retention, teacher performance, student performance, and the quality of the school culture. The study was limited to just one participant school, a Pre-K-8 private Catholic school. This qualitative study was conducted in two parts and consists of a focus group of teachers, followed by a semi-structured interview with the school principal. It was found that friendship influences teacher performance and student performance, teacher retention, and the culture of the school. The formation of friendships are the result of time and effort. The principal is a contributing factor to the formation of friendships within the school. Friendship strengthens the community as a whole by unifying the

personal and professional lives of teachers. It would be beneficial to conduct this same

study again in other contexts, especially those that are not religious in nature, to see how

friendship influences teacher retention, student and teacher performance, as well as

school culture.

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Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine teachers' and one administrator's perceptions regarding the manner in which professional friendships among faculty influence teacher retention, teacher performance, student performance, and the quality of the school culture. Professional friendship among teachers were explored from both the teachers' perspectives as well as the principal's perspective. Both perceptions were analyzed for similarities and differences. The power of friendship and camaraderie can be seen in many other walks of life, such as the military. In the Marines, for example, the fundamental qualities of friendship, such as trust and fidelity, are necessary for their functioning and quite literally the individual and collective survival (Sinek, 2014). Can these qualities of friendship that are so important to the Marines be found to exert a similar influence on the functioning and success of a school? A few of the key traits of friendships are friends must care for each other (Grunebaum, 2003), sociability, practical support, emotional support, and confirmation of identity (Allan, 1996).

There are certain elements that have been identified in other studies that impact teacher retention, such as salary, job satisfaction, and principal-teacher relationships (Hamburg, 2012), (Chapman & Green, 1986), and (Robichaux, Smith, & Guarino, 2006). Frequently what seems to be an obvious factor has no impact on a teacher's reason for staying or leaving a given school. It is important to recognize, though, that teacher friendships are not the only or most important tool available to principals, but rather one of many instruments that administrators might capitalize on to improve the school culture, teacher retention, the teachers' effectiveness, and ultimately student performance.

The researcher sought to determine how the qualities of friendship are manifested in one specific Houston-area private school, which was referred to simply as St X Catholic School. This school consists of a predominantly upper-middle class, Caucasian student body. It is a National Blue Ribbon School and is very sought after by parents and potential employees alike. St X Catholic School has retained the majority of the teachers for 15+ years. Since its foundation in 1988, St X Catholic School has had several different principals and the current principal has been in charge of the school for eleven years. It is during her tenure that the school has gone from being an average private school to what is arguably the most successful private, Catholic school in the Houston-area. In this study, professional friendship was examined in two different ways: the first being spontaneous friendships which develop naturally and critical friendships, which are structured relationships that help in the development and growth of teaching professionals.

Much of the recent research regarding teacher retention indicates that there are certain key determining factors. One important factor is the teacher – principal relationship. Another factor is teacher burn-out, which results from an excessive workload, emotional exhaustion, and depersonalization (Howard & Johnson, 2004) and (Janice Patterson, Collins, & Abbott, 2004). Other factors include compensation, collegiality, and support from administration and coworkers.

Background of the Problem

Friendship is important, not only to mitigate teacher attrition and reduce the associated costs but to improve teacher performance and ultimately student performance (Hamburg, 2012). In the American education system, there is a fundamental problem

where student performance is declining when compared to other countries of the world and teacher attrition is on the rise (Participant Media, 2010). "The single most important factor in determining a student's performance is the quality of his or her teachers," (The Alliance, 2005, pg.1). Low student performance and high teacher turnover rates create unnecessary burdens on the school system, whether financial, cultural, or academic, and in the long-run have a permanent impact on the nation as a whole (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2010).

Teaching is the profession that makes all other professions possible, (Slavin, 2010). Schools that experience high turnover have to invest considerably more time and resources into teacher training and integration with the school mission and vision. Unfortunately, in schools where finances are the bottom line in making decisions, the strain that attrition can put on budgets may stand in the way of hiring high-quality teachers or investing in the teachers that are currently employed there. Turnover can also lead to a decline in student performance and create a vicious cycle which can be very difficult to break. "Research shows teachers have a huge impact on how much students learn. Students who get the best teachers learn a lot, and students who get the worst teachers fall behind" (Hanford, 2014).

"Despite constant search for reform solutions, the future of school improvement depends on people, not programs. Schools must hire excellent teachers and strive to make all teachers as good as the best teacher in the school. Outstanding principals know that their primary role is to teach teachers how to provide a high-quality education for students (Whitaker, 2005, pg. 19).

Multiple studies suggest a relationship between teacher attrition and the quality of the school culture and support they receive. "Some recent conceptualizations consider early career teacher attrition as an identity-making process that involves a complex negotiation between individual and contextual factors. […] We suggest the need to shift the conversation from one focused only on retaining teachers, toward a conversation about sustaining teachers" (Schaefer, Long, & Clandinin, 2012, pg. 12). Some schools have cultures that inhibit the learning environment. These schools have an unclear purpose and reinforce negativity and reduced collaboration (Peterson, 2002). It has been found that social structures within a school are the primary variables associated with morale, career choice commitment, and planned retention and that the culture this creates can protect or drive teachers from their profession (Scherff, 2008).

Problem Statement

The manner in which teacher friendships influence teacher retention, performance, and the net effect it has on the quality of the school learning environment has not been studied in great depth. Many studies look to the teacher-principal relationship (King, 2001) or parent-teacher relationship to determine how quickly a teacher will "burnout" (Maslach, 1982), (Lynn, 2013), and (CYC Online, 2004) or how successful the partnerships of a school may be in educating students (Epstein, 2011), but neglect the interaction of teachers among themselves. Various studies have identified the traits of professional friendships among teachers (or the lack of) as primary factors in teacher burnout, retention, and effectiveness in the classroom (Howard & Johnson, 2004) and (Lynn, 2013). The importance of this study is that we need to know how teacher friendships may become a means of enhancing the school learning environment as well

as teacher retention, and instructional effectiveness. Earlier studies have shown that teacher retention figures can often be deceiving, since there are many good teachers who are satisfied with their jobs, but leave for factors such as relocation for spouse's job or health, while many unhappy teachers will stay on at a school for reasons such as a relatively high paycheck or fear of having to go through the hiring process again and justify their personal qualifications (Participant Media, 2010, Chapman & Green, 1986, and Elliott, 2013).

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine teachers' and one administrator's perceptions regarding the manner in which professional friendship among faculty influences teacher retention, teacher performance, student performance, and the quality of the school culture. Professional friendship among teachers was explored from both the teachers' perspectives as well as the principal's perspective. Both opinions were examined for similarities and differences. Professional friendship was analyzed in two different ways: the first being spontaneous friendships which develop naturally and critical friendships, which are structured relationships that help in the development and growth of teaching professionals.

Research Questions

1. How do teachers perceive the manner in which professional friendships influence teacher retention?

2. How does the principal perceive the manner in which professional friendships influence teacher retention?

3. How are the teachers' and the principal's perceptions similar and different regarding the influence of teacher friendships on teacher retention?

4. How do teachers perceive the manner in which professional friendships influence teacher performance?

5. How does the principal perceive the manner in which professional friendships influence teacher performance?

6. How are the teachers' and the principal's perceptions similar and different regarding the influence of teacher friendships on teacher performance?

7. How do teachers perceive the manner in which professional friendships influence student performance?

8. How does the principal perceive the manner in which professional friendships influence student performance?

9. How are the teachers' and the principal's perceptions similar and different regarding the influence of teacher friendships on student performance?

10. How do teachers perceive the manner in which professional friendships influence the quality of school culture?

11. How does the principal perceive the manner in which professional friendships influence the quality of school culture?

12. How are the teachers' and the principal's perceptions similar and different regarding the influence of teacher friendships on school culture?

Significance of the Study

The manner in which teacher friendships influence teacher retention, teacher performance, student performance, and the net effect it has on the quality of the school

learning environment has not been studied in great depth. Many studies look at the teacher-principal relationship (King, 2001) or parent-teacher relationship to determine how quickly a teacher will "burnout" (Maslach, 1982, Lynn, 2013, and CYC Online, 2004) or how successful the partnerships of a school may be in educating students (Epstein, 2011), but neglect the interaction of teachers among themselves. All this is in spite of the fact that various studies have identified the traits of professional friendships among teachers (or the lack of) as primary factors in teacher burnout, retention, and effectiveness in the classroom (Howard & Johnson, 2004 and Lynn, 2013). Simply providing a healthy salary, competent leadership from a principal, and students that are more or less respectful of their teachers doesn't necessarily translate into teachers that are happy, fulfilled, and hopefully maximally effective (Scherff, 2008).

If the goal of the American education system is to enhance the performance of students and teachers across the board in this country, then it is necessary to make use of every means available (Participant Media, 2010). Enhancing teacher friendships is a means of forming happy and successful teachers who are more likely to collaborate with others, innovate in their teaching methods, and stay at any given school longer. According to Brunetti (2006), a school's culture, as a function of friendship, can become an instrument for measuring the effectiveness of a school, because it encapsulates how well teachers collaborate for a common goal and to some degree if that goal is achieved. Just as students cannot be expected to learn properly if they come to school without food, proper clothing, or support from parents, teachers cannot be expected to perform at their very best unless certain criteria are met, such as the mutual trust, support, and collaboration of the local teaching community (Brunetti, 2006 and Hamburg, 2012).

Friendship has been linked with organizational commitment (Morrison, 2002), resource sharing during a crisis (Krackhardt, 1988), and career-related decision making (Kilduff, 1990; Krackhardt, 1992). It enables co-workers to discuss sensitive issues that they would not share with non-friends (Sias and Cahill, 1998), and it supports organizational subcultures (Krackhardt and Kilduff, 1990).

Research has shown that some of the key factors regarding teacher retention are burn-out (Lynn, 2013), a lack of support for teachers (Schaefer, Long, & Clandinin, 2012), negative and "toxic" cultures (Scherff, 2008) and (Peterson, 2002), teacher isolation (Sleppin, 2009), and distrust and micromanagement of teachers (Kowalski, 2008). Burnout is a problem that affects an organization and its employees when the employee's expectations do not align with what their job actually entails (Maslach & Leiter, 2008). Work related burnout stems from increased feelings of exhaustion, depersonalization, and a diminished sense of personal accomplishment (Maslach & Leiter, 2008).

Additional research has shown that there are three factors that show that the manner in which teachers relate to each other can lead to (or mitigate) burnout. The three factors are "academic optimism" (Lynn, 2013, pg. 22), "teacher socialization" (Lynn, 2013 pg. 37), and "teacher cohesiveness" (Lynn, 2013, pg. 39). Academic optimism promotes teacher efficacy, academic emphasis, and faculty trust that promotes a positive learning environment (Lynn, 2013). Teacher socialization refers to the process by which new teachers assimilate the objectives and perspectives of an organization (Rosenholtz, 1989). Cohesiveness is a sort of social cement for teachers that helps to inform them and assimilate the objectives of the institution (Rosenholtz, 1989).

According to Kowalski (2008), there are three measures for a strong school culture. The first measure is "strength." Strong school cultures promote the sharing of values by employees; weak cultures are fragmented and not as influential (Kowalski, 2008). In positive cultures, common values are aligned with the base of professional knowledge; for negative cultures this is not the case (Kowalski, 2008). In aligned cultures values and beliefs are the same for both members, as well as the organization at large (Kowalski, 2008).

Berman et al. (1977) found that teachers with very strong efficacy were able to improve student achievement, accomplish more of their objectives, more easily adapt to change, and persevere, whereas this was not as common among teachers with weaker efficacy. King (2001) identifies professional relationships with colleagues as one of the leading factors that determine a teacher's level of efficacy. It was found that teacher efficacy is directly related to teacher retention (Berman et al., 1977).

Senge (1999) notes that over the last 60 years of our nation's history, the American education system has declined sharply. American students used to be among the highest ranked in the world. Now we are at the bottom of the list for advanced countries, even in spite of the vast amounts of money that we spend each year (Senge, 1999). School reform has not lived up to expectations for these reasons: changes must be systematic; changes have to be guided by a shared vision with clear goals and benchmarks; all stakeholders must be involved; change must be the result of planning and incremental; change must address the needs of all stakeholders; and change should be a continuous process (Kennedy, 2003). Most of these failings are relational and could have been avoided by improving relationships in schools. If there is going to be an

improvement in student performance, there must be an increase in the quality of teachers and the relationships they have with each other.

Research Design

This study was a qualitative examination of one specific private, Catholic school in the Houston-area. It was referred to simply as St X Catholic School. The data required were collected using interview questions asked to a semi-structured focus group. This school is of great interest because it seems to have captured the recipe for a thriving, "successful" profile, which could potentially be replicated in other schools. St X Catholic School was chosen, because of its high teacher retention rate, its culture of joy and collaboration, and its reputation for consistently high levels of student achievement. Feedback regarding these friendships is confidential and was gathered via a focus group. The interview questions used can be found in Chapter Three.

This school was chosen because of the unusually high level of apparent teacher satisfaction (which translates into high retention rates) and student achievement. All data were collected by means of a semi-structured focus group which was conducted at St X Catholic School, followed by an interview with the principal. There were an audio recording and written transcript of the focus group, but no personal identifiers were used so that participant anonymity was protected. All of the data received were compiled into a spreadsheet which was used to answer the research questions.

Assumptions, Limitations, and Scope of the Study

Even though the study was conducted in a private, religious school setting and different from other school contexts, it is assumed that the data obtained are of interest to

various kinds of schools across the country. It is finally assumed that all participants have responded truthfully during the focus group interview.

The major limitation of this study is that there are relatively few participants. The study could be strengthened by sampling more schools, especially those that would fall into the category of being disadvantaged, yet having a highly cohesive and academically optimistic faculty. It would be useful to conduct this study in a variety of environments and contexts, but given the limited focus and resources for this study, it is important to avoid making it too big. It is also possible that not all of the teachers invited to participate actually responded. This could diminish the value of the data collected. The study was conducted within a Catholic school, which has a religious nature and is consequently influenced by specific religious teachings. This has the potential to limit the study's relevance to public schools or schools of other denominations. Regarding focus groups, there is always the possibility that because responses are given in a public forum that responses were not entirely honest or that responses were influenced by the thoughts expressed by other participants. It is also possible that participants chose not to speak up about the subject, because of the presence of co-workers.

Definition of Terms

1. **Successful School**: A simple interpretation of school success has been chosen. It is based on the combination of high academic achievement, student safety, overall health, happiness, and a measure of stability in the school community.

2. **Teacher Friendships**: Even though this term can be applied to various hues of relationships that a teacher might have, the researcher was using it strictly within the context of professional friendships that teachers have among each other.

3. **Spontaneous Friendships**: refers to genuine friendships that arise among two or more persons, regardless of the circumstances that brought these individuals together.

4. **Critical Friendship**: is a structured relationship that helps in the development and growth of teaching professionals. It is based on the friendship of two people but structured so that honest feedback can be provided to teachers in a safe and non-threatening environment.

5. **School Culture**: "refers to the beliefs, perceptions, relationships, attitudes, and written and unwritten rules that shape and influence every aspect of how a school functions, but the term also encompasses more concrete issues such as the physical and emotional safety of students, the orderliness of classrooms and public spaces, or the degree to which a school embraces and celebrates racial, ethnic, linguistic, or cultural diversity" (Great Schools Partnership, 2014).

Summary

There is a need for a better understanding of the ways in which friendships among teachers influence school culture, teacher retention, teacher performance, and student performance. Studies have shown that the academic performance of students in the American education system is falling behind those of other developed countries. There has also been a tendency for new teachers to be burned out quickly and leave the profession of education after only two or three years. Culture is one facet of a school that is based on the relationships and interactions of its members. These relationships can influence teacher retention and teacher performance for better or for worse. The study

examined the ways in which friendships among teachers influence school culture, teacher

retention, teacher performance, and student performance.

<center>**Chapter II**</center>

<center>**Literature Review**</center>

The Importance of the Principal

"Leadership is an essential ingredient for ensuring that every child in America gets the education they need to succeed," (DeVita, Colvin, Darling-Hammond, & Haycock, 2007, pg 2) and the principal is the leader of the school learning community (Van Beck, 2011). This is a reflection of the involvement and availability of school principals to the faculty. Even though the teacher is the primary determining factor in the success of students, the role of the principal is the second most important factor and accounts for about 25% of student achievement (Seashore, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010). This may include both direct and indirect influences a principal may exert. Rice found in his research that the greatest influence a principal can exert on a school's level of achievement is the establishment of a professional school community (Rice, 2010).

Van Beck (2011) indicates that perhaps the most important contribution that a school principal can make to student performance is by guaranteeing that the school environment will be centered on student learning and not other priorities. "It is this association between a principal's leadership values and behaviors and the school culture present on the campus that determines whether student achievement is the focus of the school day," (Van Beck, 2011, p.4). "In effective schools, the campus mission constantly reflects the classroom mission – and vice versa," (Van Beck, 2011, p.4). This must begin by developing a strong relationship of trust and respect between the principal and teachers (Van Beck, 2011).

One of the most important contributions a principal can make to the success of the school is to articulate and share a clear vision for the school. "Teachers are on the front lines of learning. But principals at the school level, and superintendents at the district level, are uniquely positioned to provide a climate of high expectations, a clear vision for better teaching and learning, and the means for everyone in the system –adults and children- to realize that vision," (DeVita et al., 2007, pg 2). The vision of the school principal provides teachers with a guide to their daily activities and helps keep everyone working together towards a common goal. It is suggested that schools cannot make serious progress of any kind if there isn't strong leadership. It is this leadership that unites all of the various factions within a school towards a common goal (DeVita et al., 2007). "We have learned that the right leadership can make a measurable difference – in schools," (DeVita et al., 2007 pg 5). Hoppey and McLeskey (2013) found that most principals see themselves as being the support of the "human machinery" at work in a school and that their primary role seems to come down to protecting the staff from external pressures related to accountability, providing opportunities for professional development, and providing teachers with opportunities for leadership in the school. Recent developments in public policy have exerted a great deal of pressure on both teachers and principals to improve student achievement or suffer punitive measures (Darling-Hammond, 2004).

As far as achievement goes, there is a great deal of emphases on a principal's role as the instructional leader within a given school. The school principal is key to school change and providing the support teachers need to meet the diverse needs of students in their classrooms, especially when disabilities are involved (Cherian & Daniel, 2008).

Various studies have shown that key traits of effective principal leadership include developing a culture that supports teachers in their work, developing teachers into leaders within the school community, collaboration, and building a professional learning community that will facilitate teacher training (Blase & Blase, 2004; Crow, Hausman, & Scribner, 2005; Keyes, Hanley-Maxwell, & Capper, 1999; Waldron & McLeskey, 2010).

It has been found that principals typically spend 60 to 90 percent of their time exclusively on school administration, rather than working with teachers in the classroom (DeVita et al., 2007). These figures are shocking and indicate that there is something wrong with the expectations that are being made of principals and that not all of the systems at work within a school are conducive to student achievement. "We're creating systems that do the opposite of what we want them to do. Micromanagement kills innovation. The system is designed to make people march in a straight line" (DeVita et al., 2007, pg 9). As a result, some schools have turned to alternative models by implementing instructional leadership teams that are intended to help develop teachers' skills, but remain under the guidance of the principal (Portin, Knapp, Dareff, Feldman, Russell, & Samuelson, 2009). This would free the principal to fulfill all his responsibilities, yet still support the teachers.

Another approach was to have a school administration team that would look after the administrative functions of the school while giving the principal more time to work directly with teachers and fulfill the role of instructional leader (Portin et al., 2009). "Even the most skilled, hardest working principal cannot turn a school around on his or her own," (DeVita et al., 2007, pg 11). In order to be successful, principals must collaborate with a wide variety of persons within the school. Principals typically count on

key teachers and other colleagues for their support. Delegation and shared leadership make the school principal much more effective (Seashore, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010). "Leading a learning improvement agenda meant working with and through a team of individuals, all of whom were engaged in instructional leadership," (Portin et al., 2009, pg 71).

The Importance of Teachers

Teachers are of utmost importance since they are the single largest factor directly involved with the success or failure of students (The Alliance, 2005). Objectively, teachers are the ones who create the learning environment. They have a direct impact on the behavior of students, the quality of the lesson delivered, and to some degree, the quality of the resources available to students (Hanford, 2014). The support that teachers provide to students can dramatically influence student attitudes towards learning, achievement, and the classroom environment (Jimerson & Haddock, 2015). Hattie (2009) indicates that teachers alone account for about 30% of variations in student performance. Some of the important qualities teachers must have to effectively influence student achievement for the better are positive relationships with students (Spilt, Hughes, Wu, & Kwok, 2012), strong classroom management skills (Slavin, 2010), data-driven instructional strategies (Cooper, Hirn, & Scott, 2015), and expertise (Coles, Owens, Serrano, Slavec, & Evans, 2015).

David (2011) found that one of the primary contributing factors to poor education for gifted and talented students is the attitude that teachers have towards "gifted" students. Often times other traits such as athleticism are valued more than academic ability. Approaching education with the right attitude can have a tremendous influence on

student performance (David, 2011). The value of a teacher may be quantified through test scores, teacher evaluations, and achieving curricular benchmarks. Subjectively the teacher is relevant in ways that are not always quantifiable. For example, a teacher who knows his / her students well is able to see the "potential" a student has to either do well or do poorly in spite of quantifiable data, such as test scores. "Teacher quality has a vital influence on student success or failure," (Jimerson & Haddock, 2015, pg 488). This could make the difference between passing or failing a student, promoting or retaining (Donaldson, 2007).

Research shows that teacher effectiveness leads to student success and positive teacher – student relationships (Elledge, Elledge, Newgent, & Cavell, 2015). Positive teacher – student relationships have been shown to greatly influence student achievement (Jimerson & Haddock, 2015). "Teacher emotional support was significantly associated with higher academic achievement," (Jimerson & Haddock, 2015, pg 490). Students that feel emotionally supported by their teachers experience less inattention and hyperactivity; for girls, caring behavior from the teachers is highly important to student engagement (Jimerson & Haddock, 2015). David (2011) notes that when dealing with gifted and talented children the most important factor in engaging these students is not the classroom training that the teacher has received, but rather the individual's personal traits that make it possible to connect with students intellectually and emotionally. It is important that teachers have pedagogical training, but students found politeness, expertise in the subject matter, and creativity to be of much higher value (David, 2011). Gobel and Helmke (2010) found that when teaching English as a foreign language to students, the quality of their intercultural experience played a significant role in how lessons were

taught and how children learned the content. The personal qualifications of these teachers had great influence on student achievement and learning.

"I have come to the frightening conclusion. I am the decisive element in the classroom. It is my personal approach that creates the climate. It is my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher, I possess tremendous power to make a child's life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or humor, hurt or heal. In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated and a child humanized or de-humanized" (Ginott, 1972). This quote demonstrates the great influence teachers have on their student, even when examined from a merely emotional level. Everything the teacher brings into the classroom, starting with basic human emotion influences the behavior and performance of students (Becker, Goetz, Morger, & Ranellucci, 2014). Becker, et al. (2014) theorize that not only does a teacher's behavior and emotion influence the performance of students but that they are highly interconnected. This relationship between teachers and students can be an important determining factor of a student's academic achievement. Technical knowledge and expertise are not the only factors of importance regarding the makeup of an effective teacher. Personality and behavior must be considered as well.

Research on Teacher Retention

Research has shown that some of the key factors regarding teacher retention are burn-out (Lynn, 2013), a lack of support for teachers (Schaefer, Long, & Clandinin, 2012), negative and toxic cultures (Scherff, 2008) and (Peterson, 2002), teacher isolation (Sleppin, 2009), and distrust / micromanagement of teachers (Kowalski, 2008), among

other things. Studies have shown that there is a resulting crisis since an estimated twenty to thirty-three percent of new teachers leave the field within their first three years (Chapa, 2012) and that fifty percent of teachers will change careers within their first five years (Garcia, Slate, & Delgado, 2009). Chapa (2012) found that low teacher retention has a negative impact on schools due to loss of time and resource needed to train new hires. This cost is estimated to be seven billion dollars each year (Carroll & Foster, 2010); (Hershberg & Robertson-Kraft, 2009).

There are three factors that show how the manner in which teachers relate to each other can lead to (or mitigate) career burnout. The three factors are academic optimism (Hoy, Tarter, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2006), teacher socialization (Rosenholtz, 1989), and teacher cohesiveness (Rosenholtz, 1989). An article from the Journal of Applied Psychology identifies burnout as a problem that impacts an institution and the people that work there when employee expectations do not align with the actual conditions of their job (Maslach & Leiter, 2008).

Work-related burnout stems from increased feelings of exhaustion, depersonalization, and a diminished sense of personal accomplishment (Maslach & Leiter, 2008). Even though Lynn was considering the school structure as a whole, these categories are reflected in the way teachers relate to and support each other. Lynn goes on to define three categories that influence the probability of burn-out: academic optimism, teacher socialization, and teacher cohesiveness. Academic optimism (Lynn, 2013) is a construct made up of teacher efficacy, academic emphasis, and trust among teachers which fosters a positive learning environment (Beard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2010). The first facet is teacher efficacy which refers to the idea that teachers must act to the best of

their ability to improve learning and transcend obstacles to their education, such as poor

motivation and the absence of resources (Bandura, 1997). The second facet is academic

emphasis which can be defined as "the school's press for achievement" (Hoy, Tarter, and

Kottkamp, 1991, pg 87). Further, schools rate highly on academic emphasis when, "the

expectation of high achievement is met by students who work hard, are cooperative, seek

extra work, and respect other students who get good grades" (Hoy et al,. 1991, pg 87).

The third facet of academic optimism is faculty trust which can be defined as the

willingness of a teacher or group of teachers to be vulnerable to others based on belief in

their kindness, competence, and honesty (Hoy, Tarter, & Woolfolk, 2006a). Faculty trust

measures the teacher's beliefs that students can be relied on to do their work, and their

parents can be relied on for their support (Hoy et al., 2006a).

The two remaining factors that impact teacher burn-out are teacher socialization

and teacher cohesiveness. Teacher socialization describes of acquiring goals and

perspectives of the individuals in the school (Rosenholtz, 1989). According to

Rosenholtz, new teachers are uniformly welcome and directed towards the instructional

objectives when goals are agreed on by teachers in advance. This is not true of schools

that do not have uniform goals and implies a lack of leadership from the administration.

Consequently new teachers are left to figure things out for themselves (Rosenholtz,

1989). Teacher cohesiveness is found when "a school with agreed on goals sets the stage

for teachers to communicate about instructional matters and resolve any discrepancies

between practices and meeting these common goals (Rosenholtz, 1989). These teachers

form a cohesive unit. On the other hand, when school goals are not agreed on, teachers

are left to develop and create their own individual, independent styles and perspectives"

(Rosenholtz, 1989). Thus teachers become professionally isolated from one another. According to Rosenholtz (1989), cohesiveness is a sort of social cement that supports a teacher's information system and helps them to internalize the school's goals.

In her study of teacher retention, Chapa (2012) made several important points that are important to teacher retention. First, teachers that work in the same district where they were student teachers are likely to experience higher teacher retention. She also discovered that many districts today are starting the recruitment process much earlier in a teacher's formal training to avoid what Veenman (1984) refers to as "reality shock" which is the resulting shock of transitioning from an insulated university training program to a real classroom. By giving students greater time to build a relationship with school districts the adjustment is easier and improves the possibility of retention (Chapa, 2012).

Research on School Culture

Fullan and Hargreaves state that school culture can be defined as "the beliefs, values, habits and assumed ways of doing things among communities of teachers who have had to deal with similar demands and constraints over many years," (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992, p. 217). According to Grosemans, Boon, Verclairen, Dochy, & Kyndt (2015) the demands placed on teachers now-a-days continue to grow in breadth and complexity and, as a result, have a tremendous influence on the type of culture that exists among teachers. In order for teachers to adequately meet the demands of the changing school environment, they must engage in reflection, information seeking to keep professional skills up-to-date, experiment with teaching strategies in the classroom, and collaborate with other teachers (Kwakman, 2003). All of these factors influence the

quality of school culture (Grosemans et al., 2015). However important, these qualities

discussed by Kwakman (2003) are implemented differently by teachers based on their

level of experience. For example, experienced teachers do not feel the need to experiment

very much, since they have their routines down while novice teachers will experiment

much more. Experienced teachers will tend to read more professional literature to

develop their skills rather than turn to other teachers. The opposite would be true for

novice teachers (Grosemans et al., 2015). McKenzie (2014) notes that culture is

something that exists within relationships. "When you have two people, on site, at any

given time, there is a professional relationship. Staff culture lives in those microscopic,

every day, seemingly insignificant conversations and interactions." He goes on to say that

when it comes to any school culture, the "primary transmitters' are school leaders

(Mckenzie, 2014). The way principals behave sets the tone and expectations for everyone

else.

Fullan and Hargreaves (1992) describe different school cultures as a somewhat

static grouping that schools will tend to fall into. The first is a culture of individualism

where teachers work in a somewhat isolated environment within their classrooms. The

second is a culture of 'contrived congeniality' which means that relationships are the

result of intervention from the administration, such as new teacher mentoring programs.

The third culture is referred to as 'balkanization' because it involves dividing teachers

into smaller groups of influence that don't necessarily work in sync with the greater

whole. The fourth culture is a collaborative culture, where teachers work together and

learn from each other in a very spontaneous way. What is interesting about the different

groupings of school culture is that they can exist simultaneously within a single school

(Williams, Prestage, & Bedward, 2001). Ultimately trust and collaboration among teachers are the foundational qualities for any collaborative culture (Flores, 2004) since the exchange of ideas and encouragement is necessary in order to learn from each other (Clement & Vandenberghe, 2000). The most consistent predictor of the level of collaboration in a school is trust (Tschannen-Moran, 2001) and that "psychological safety is the most important and consistent predictor for learning to occur within teams," (Grosemans et al., 2015, p.159).

As helpful as categories may be, Williams, Prestage, & Bedward (2001) suggest that cultures should really be depicted as a continuum that ranges from highly individualistic to highly collaborative. One simple grouping will not accurately describe a culture. According to Kowalski (2008), there are three measures for a strong school culture. The first measure is "strength." Strength is defined in the following way: "School cultures fall along a continuum from strong to weak. In strong cultures, values and beliefs are shared by all or nearly all employees" (Kowalski, 2008, pg 77). "In weak cultures, they are fragmented and thus less influential" (Kowalski, 2008, pg 77). The second measure defined by Kowalski is "Value": "School cultures fall along a continuum from positive to negative. In positive cultures, shared values and beliefs are congruous with the professional knowledge base; in negative cultures, they are not" (Kowalski, 2008, pg 77). The final measure is "Alignment." "School cultures fall along a continuum from aligned to misaligned. In aligned cultures, shared values and beliefs are congruous with the values and beliefs espoused by the formal organization (e.g., by district policy and school philosophy); in misaligned cultures, they are not" (Kowalski, 2008, pg 77).

There exists a significant correlation between factors of a school's culture and how well students' academic achievement (Waters, Marzano, and McNulty, 2004). Not every school has a culture that breeds performance (Roby, 2011). Culture and personal investment make it possible to predict a teacher's level of job satisfaction and commitment to the school (Maehr and Braskamp, 1986). If students are to excel they must be taught in a culture that promotes teacher growth (Danielson and McGreal, 2000). McKenzie (2014) distinguishes between emotionality, which directs feelings at individuals and tears organizations down, and a solutions-oriented approach to problem-solving. The solutions-oriented approach does not look at individuals as the problem, but 'the problems are the problems'. This tends to build trust and security because teachers feel that they can make mistakes and it won't be held against them. Some teacher evaluation systems do not involve a two-way exchange of information and rely solely on the data collected from observation which are not reflective of a collaborative school culture (Danielson and McGreal, 2000).

Research on Teacher Performance

"Measuring teacher performance is one of the foundations of strategic management of human capital in education," (Milanowski, 2011). Berman et al. (1977) found that teachers with the highest levels of efficacy were able to advance student learning, adapt, and persevere better than teachers with lower levels of efficacy. Armor et al. (1976) defined teacher efficacy as "the extent to which the teacher believes he/she has the capacity to produce an effect on the learning of students" (Armor, Conroy-Osequera, Cox, King, McDonnell, Pascal, Pauly, & Zellerman, 1976, pg 34). Bandura and Schunk (1981) reported that a teacher's expectation of efficacy influences the way he

thinks and feels, as well as how much effort and persistence he exhibits. According to King (2001), "there are many variables that impact teachers' level of efficacy. Some of these variables include the teachers' attitudes and beliefs concerning the size of the school, the demographics of the students, the relationship with colleagues, the level of community support, the level of participation in decision making, and their relationship with the principal" (King, 2001, pg 17). Some of the factors that result in low teacher morale are poor salaries, few incentives, and disrespectful children (Boyer, 1983). Low morale has contributed to high levels of stress, anxiety, alienation, and 'burnout' in teachers. According to Ashton and Webb (1986), the teaching profession is in trouble because it does not protect the professional self-esteem of its members, and cannot retain the most talented people.

There has been much research into the relationship of the principal and teachers, as well as the impact of parent relationships on the success and retention of teachers. Several authors have identified professional relationships among teachers as one of the determining factors of teacher burnout. Ashton and Webb (1986) identify the professional esteem of teachers as a factor of burnout. King (2001) also identifies a teacher's "relationship with colleagues" (King, 2001, pg 59) as one determining factor of teacher efficacy. As indicated above, it was found that teacher efficacy is directly related to teacher retention (Berman et al., 1977).

Taylor and Tyler (2012) have done research into teacher evaluation as a means of improving student performance. Their research has showed that feedback to teachers from the administration was necessary for the growth and development of teachers, regardless of their education or experience. Teacher productivity is highest during the

years that they are evaluated and then performance increases at a slower pace for subsequent years. They were able to show that evaluation has a direct influence on student performance and that the students of teachers who are evaluated experience ten percent of one standard deviation increase in test scores over students who learned from the same teacher, though during years when the teacher was not being evaluated (Taylor & Tyler, 2012).

An important facet of their study is that evaluations that result in higher student performance could come from other teachers, as well as instructional coaches, not just administration. The teachers who were weakest tended to show the greatest improvement from evaluation, whereas the stronger teachers showed less improvement (Taylor & Tyler, 2012). Possession of an advanced degree seems to have very little influence on performance (E. A. Hanushek, 1986). The subject appraisals of the principal and fellow teachers seem to be one of the strongest predictors of a teacher's ability to improve student learning and achievement (Jacob & Lefgren, 2008). Weisberg, Sexton, Mulhern, Keeling, Schunck, Palcisco, and Morgan (2009) suggest that it is actually a lack of feedback to teachers about their individual performance that hinders their gains in productivity. Taylor and Tyler's study (2012) suggests that improvements in teacher productivity due to the evaluation of performance experience longer lasting improvement in their skills than if some other method of skill development were used. This includes not only feedback from administrators but also personal reflection and conversation with peers. Teachers are likely to be more responsive to peer evaluators than their supervising principal (Taylor & Tyler, 2012). It was also found that the higher the quality of

colleagues teachers have, the more their performance improves (Jackson & Bruegmann, 2009).

Research on Student Performance

Senge (1999) notes that over the last 60 years of our nation's history, the American education system has declined sharply. American students used to be among the highest ranked in the world. Now we are at the bottom of the list for advanced countries, even in spite of the vast amounts of money that we spend each year (Senge, 1999). School reform has not lived up to expectations for these reasons: changes must be systematic; changes have to be guided by a shared vision with clear goals and benchmarks; all stakeholders must be involved; change must be the result of planning and incremental; change must address the needs of all stakeholders; and change should be a continuous process (Kennedy, 2003).

Research tells us repeatedly that teacher productivity is the most important factor at school that influences student learning (Harris & Sass, 2014). In fact, a teacher's personality can be just as important to the learning process as their cognitive abilities (Harris & Sass, 2014). Teachers' classroom practices have been found to predict differences in student achievement (Kane, Taylor, Tyler, & Wooten, 2011). "Among students assigned to different teachers with the same Overall Classroom Practices score, math achievement will grow more for students whose teacher is better than his peers at classroom management," (Kane, Taylor, Tyler, & Wooten, 2011). It was also found that students had better reading skills when the teacher was relatively better than his peers at engaging students with discussion questions. It has been found that the most effective teachers are those that receive continuous support from their schools (Kirby, Stringfield,

Teddlie, & Wimpelberg, 1992). Teachers have reported that their own effectiveness comes from the support they receive from their school, even though some principals have reported that they have done very little to actually accommodate new teachers (Kirby, Stringfield, Teddlie, & Wimpelberg, 1992).

Teacher Motivation

What is it that causes teachers to change schools after just one or two years of teaching or leave the profession altogether after just a few years? What causes some teachers to leave teaching altogether in the middle of the school year? These questions can only be answered by studying the various motivational issues teachers experience each day. There are various motivational issues at work within every teacher and school. For example, the frustration associated with working outside one's area of expertise (Logan & Butler, 2013) and (Storey, 2013). Facing cultural challenges in the teaching environment (Storey, 2013), school climate or an atmosphere of distrust (Kowalski, 2008), oppressive school policies or principal micromanagement (Kowalski, 2008), teacher isolation due to disparity in cultural background and beliefs or inadequate induction and mentoring (Sleppin, 2009), lack of input regarding the objectives of the school curriculum (Harper, 2008), feelings of incompetence or inability to improve performance and success as a teacher (Harper, 2008), the need to integrate highly diverse faculties (van Swet, Smit, Corvers, & van Dijk, 2009), and coping with a principal's leadership style (Kowalski, 2008) are all possible motivational issues that a teacher may be dealing with on a daily basis.

"Much of literature has framed attrition as either a problem associated with individual factors (e.g. burnout), or a problem associated with contextual factors (e.g.

support and salary). Some recent conceptualizations consider early career teacher attrition as an identity-making process that involves a complex negotiation between individual and contextual factors. […] We suggest the need to shift the conversation from one focused only on retaining teachers, toward a conversation about sustaining teachers," (Schaefer et al., 2012, pg 106). There are schools that have very negative cultures that hinder the learning environment. These schools lack a clear sense of purpose and seem to compound negativity, discourage collaboration, and generate animosity among employees (Peterson, 2002). It has been found that social structures within a school, are the primary variables associated with morale, career choice commitment, and planned retention and that the culture this creates can protect or drive teachers from their profession (Scherff, 2008). There are various motivational issues at work within every teacher and schools.

External factors such as salary, titles, and coercion can motivate adults. The most effective, though, are internal motivators such as self-esteem, the opportunity to self-actualize, job satisfaction, and quality of life (Knowles, 2005). It is necessary for new teachers to learn to work with colleagues in their school environment in order to persevere (Scherff, 2008). Dedication and love for the students are not enough to pull an individual through the difficulties. This was eloquently expressed by one of Scherff's (2008) research subjects, "When a teacher must rely on only her students to push her through, she doesn't make it. Students are just kids … how can I rely on them to get me through the day? And when I couldn't take it anymore I just had to walk away," (Scherff, 2008, pg 13). In the book *Understanding and Facilitating Career Development in the 21st Century*, Brown and Lent make use of several categories to describe why individuals

choose their particular career. These are work as need fulfillment, work as an individual's public identity, work as personal identity or self-construction, work as normative expectation group identity and social contribution, and work as existential response and aid to mental health (Brown & Lent, 2013). These categories were used as headings to outline some possible motivational issues that teachers experience in the workplace.

 Work as need fulfillment. People must have their basic psychological needs met before they can develop self-determined motivation and personal interest (Muller & Louw, 2004). Some of these basic needs could be feelings of trust with co-workers and principal, the availability of help from co-workers, and a stable work environment. Satisfying basic needs make it possible to meet higher-order needs, such as friendship, intimacy, self-esteem, and personal growth (Brown & Lent, 2013). These factors were crucial to the development of this study. Work can also provide the context for fulfilling some of one's needs for security, social belonging, self-esteem, and self-actualization (Brown & Lent, 2013).

 Some of the reasons teachers offer for why they chose to stay in this profession include the desire to make a positive difference in the life of somebody else, the passion for learning, the desire to be surrounded by like-minded professionals, and many other reasons. What's important is that teaching provides a certain amount of reward to those who engage in it and is a way of fulfilling the higher order needs mentioned above. The citations made imply that certain basic material and psychological needs, such as adequate pay, must be fulfilled before a teacher is able to engage fully in work for fulfillment purposes. For example, in an American study, "55% of public school teachers who left teaching but continued to work in the field of education reported that they had

more control over their own work in the new position than in teaching, while 65% of public school leavers who worked outside the field of education felt that their workload in their new position was more manageable and that they were better able to balance their personal and work life" (Strizek, 2006, pg 3).

Some of the conditions teachers face related to the need for fulfillment that could be a factor in driving teachers away from their profession are having to work outside one's field of interest or competence, feelings of not being sufficiently trained for their job, a lack of support from the administration, or perhaps a lack of interaction with other teachers, among other things. This same study indicated that 38% of public school teachers 33% of private school teachers who changed jobs did so because of the prospect of a "better teaching assignment" (Strizek, 2006, pg 3). The same study indicated that 25% of public and 30% of private school teachers who left the profession reported that "pursuing a position other than that of a K-12 teacher as very important or extremely important in their decision to leave … teaching," (Strizek, 2006, pg 3). Scherff (2008) notes that novice teachers frequently refer to their first years of teaching as "unsupportive and lonely, with feelings of isolation and being overwhelmed" (Scherff, 2008, pg 3). "Of the private school teacher leavers who were either working in the field of education (but not teaching) or were working outside the field of education, 51% reported that the workload in their new position was more manageable than in teaching," (Strizek, 2006, pg 3). Teachers in urban schools are struggling to preserve their vitality in an environment of continuous change and also find it difficult to preserve their resilience. Teacher resilience is needed so schools can accomplish their objectives, especially for urban schools (Stanford, 2001).

Work as individual's public identity. "Fair or not, what one does for a living is often viewed as an essential part of who one is as a person," (Brown & Lent, 2013, pg 3). When it comes to teaching one of the fundamental perceptions people have is that teaching is "women's work" or a "women-only career" (Keck Frei, Bieri, Berweger, & Kappler, 2011). Regardless of whether this perception is accurate or not, it can still shape the way both male and female teachers perceive themselves and their career. According to Keck, Bieri, Berweger, and Kappler (2011) men tend to gravitate to content driven classes while women tend towards student-centered classrooms. As well, out of the few men who choose to teach as a career, a large number tend to move on to administrative positions, leaving fewer men for the classroom.

A possible explanation is that men may feel that "women's work" doesn't fit in with their view of self or perhaps it is necessary to move into administration because that image corresponds better to how they perceive themselves. When a school is poorly managed, teachers may be inclined to move to a different school to avoid having their reputation tarnished by bad school policies (Lindqvist, Nordänger, & Carlsson, 2014). Micromanagement or just simply mismanagement could infringe on a teacher's need to be perceived as a competent professional.

Work as personal identity or self-construction. "Work-as-identity can also be an expression of self-image, a means through which people implement a self-concept," (Brown & Lent, 2013, pg 3). According to Brown and Lent (2013), this typically refers to the way teachers use their work to build the image they have of themselves, such as an artist builds his reputation and career through self-expression. A Swedish study found that teachers who leave the profession within the first few years of employment had a more

negative outlook as regards teaching prior to entering the field than those who continue on as teachers after several years and that working conditions may be of less importance than an individual's perception of teaching (Lindqvist, Nordanger, & Carlsson, 2014).

The same study also found that many young teachers have the desire to be happy and to bring happiness to others, but do not feel that they can do that as teachers. These teachers do not want to have the responsibility for each student as an individual; just over the subject matter (Lindqvist et al., 2014). One young teacher went on to become a webmaster. She indicates that she still gets to teach and use her education skills, but without having to be in the classroom (Lindqvist et al., 2014). The same young lady wrote later on, "The great difficulties I experienced in my short career as a teacher were that it was conservative and hard to get other teachers to listen to new ideas. I also had some problems with gaining respect from the children. I guess that I thought that everyone should respect me instantly and felt very disappointed when they did not," (Lindqvist et al., 2014, pg 8). One final teacher who left the profession early in favor of a job at the airport indicated that he would return to the classroom "if the focus in teachers' work was more directed towards the actual teaching, the lessons. More time spent there and less on administration – then I would consider working as a teacher again. The payment is actually not priority one!" (Lindqvist et al., 2014, pg 8). "The notions of work as a calling (e.g. as a way to help others or to serve a higher power) or as an opportunity to construct and tell one's life story…capture the sense that work can play extremely valuable, self-defining roles in people's lives, regardless of social class and even when performed under difficult or harsh conditions," (Brown & Lent, 2013, pg 4).

Work as normative expectation group identity and social contribution. "This

normative aspect of work may be seen as a special instance of Maslow's social

belongingness need," (Brown & Lent, 2013, pg 4). Brown and Lent go on to describe two

types of approaches to life which impact the way individuals look at their employment.

This is through the hedonic perspective and eudaimonic perspective. According to these

gentlemen, the hedonist regarding employment (and in this case teaching) is the person

who is in it for the joy of teaching, while the person with the eudaimonic view would

teach for cognitive reasons, such as the nobility of teaching or to effect a positive change

in the lives of others (Brown & Lent, 2013).

Other professionals have taken the same ideas, but expressed it in terms of

intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. "Intrinsically motivated behavior is associated with

curiosity, exploration, spontaneity, and interest. An example of intrinsic motivation is the

student who goes to class because she or he is interested and finds it satisfying to learn

more about a certain subject. Extrinsically motivated behaviors are undertaken to attain

an end state that is separate from the actual behavior," (Muller & Louw, 2004, pg 2). The

following quotation demonstrates the intrinsic reward teachers experience from teaching.

"I absolutely love what I do. I love those "aha" moments when you can just see children

lighting up because they've learned a new word, they've learned how to read a book, or

they're gaining confidence in themselves – not only as readers or as learners. I don't

think there's any greater joy than teaching in a first-grade classroom," (Smoot, 2010, pg

10).

Another teacher expresses the intrinsic quality in the following way: "What I hope

to teach is pleasure… What I just want them to do is really see how literature is a way to

enjoy life, and to live a better life, because they're more sensitive to feelings and ideas and the depth of life," (Smoot, 2010, pg 3). Even though this quote is more about the teacher's style, than his own reward, the two really go hand in hand. The individual who works for extrinsic motivations tends to pursue teaching for reasons such as the opportunities it provides for personal development or growth, or it is somehow a step towards advancing their career (O'Connell, 2005). Interestingly enough, focusing on career development is a very common attitude for male teachers; teaching is a step towards administration (Keck Frei et al., 2011).

One interesting note is that several studies have found that women are more intrinsically motivated to become teachers, while men are more extrinsically motivated to become teachers (Keck Frei et al., 2011) and (Spittle, Jackson, & Casey, 2009). Referring back to the example of the gentleman who gave up teaching as a career in order to work at the airport we can see that teachers who are motivated by intrinsic values may find it difficult to teach in a school that is micromanaged or over regulated, because the job becomes about fulfilling rules or paperwork, rather than teaching (Lindqvist et al., 2014). This would fall under the category of burnout as defined by Maslach (1982).

Work as existential response and aid to mental health. Work as existential response and aid to mental health basically refers to the idea that teachers put great devotion into their work and perhaps even dedicate long hours to their career, because it gives them mental respite from other concerns, whether trouble at home, health or financial issues, or even difficulty with school policies (Brown & Lent, 2013). A study found that some teachers who tend to be more physically active choose physical education jobs because it allows them to dedicate more time to physical activities, such as

coaching sports, while they tend to tolerate their time in the classroom (Templin, Woodford, & Mulling, 1982). What that means is that these teachers tended to seek out a career that was most suitable for their kinesthetic personality, while balancing the less desirable factors, namely being in a classroom. Scherff's research subject Luke "cited his departmental colleagues as instrumental to his feeling successful and happy as a teacher, notwithstanding his conflicted emotions and values over the procedural issues (ie, student discipline, special education) at the school," (Scherff, 2008, pg 9). For her other test subject Toni, "the biggest issue was indifferent colleagues, which caused her to feel lonely and isolated. Without the camaraderie of her friends and former classmates, Toni desperately sought friends in her department only to find herself ignored," (Scherff, 2008, pg 10) or as Toni puts it in her own words "I guess my only real concern at this point is that at school I feel utterly alone," (Scherff, 2008, 10).

Collaboration and culture. In order to be an effective teacher, it is necessary to collaborate with a variety of people, starting with the principal and on to other teachers. It was found that few opportunities for collaboration are a significant reason for leaving the teaching profession early on (Schaefer et al., 2012). This is somewhat at odds with the research done by Scherff (2008), where real teachers who left the teaching profession have cited a lack of mentorship or guidance by colleagues and administration during their first year of teaching as a primary reason for their change in career. Johnson and Birkeland (2003) distinguished between "three types of professional culture: a) veteran oriented, b) novice oriented, and c) integrated. They found that beginning teachers were more likely to stay in teaching and be satisfied with their jobs if they were part of an integrated professional culture that encouraged all members to collaborate in a collegial

atmosphere," (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003, pg 26). Again, referring to Toni, Scherff (2008) cites Toni's feelings of being ignored and isolated from friends and colleagues as her primary reason for departure and that having good students cannot compensate for "the icy school culture she faced on a daily basis," (Scherff, 2008, pg 10). Elsewhere she states, "I don't think I am going to be able to get over not having friends in the department I teach with. It's just not normal, not cool. I think perhaps being alone ultimately did me in," (Scherff, 2008, pg 10).

This idea of integration and culture can also be tied back to Brown and Lent's idea of "work as normative expectation, group identity, and social contribution" (Brown & Lent, 2013, pg 4). "Teachers were more likely to stay in the profession if they were part of a collaborative group responsible for a common group of students and if the collaborative group positively influenced their desire to continue teaching," (Haun & Martin, 2004, pg 1). Regarding a school's culture, Billingsley (2004) found that teachers who feel that their school is a good place to work tend to stay in the profession longer than those who don't. One teacher was quoted as saying "I think the administration is the second most important thing to a school. I think when an administration is poor, it breaks the spirit of the teachers and breaking the spirit of the teachers affects their teaching," (Brunetti, 2006, pg 9).

Other factors contributing to teacher attrition are schools in high poverty areas and violence while higher teacher retention has been associated with fewer discipline problems and student-centered schools (Schaefer et al., 2012). Scherff (2008) points out that the "bureaucratic demands of teaching, like paperwork and special education accommodations, and the ensuing fatigue it caused, left little time to actually teach"

causing her research subject to look on teaching as a short-term, rather than a long-term profession," (Scherff, 2008, pg 10). "Teaching is too damn hard and draining. The teachers I see who stay for years and years are often the ones who are like 'sit down, shut up, read the chapter, answer the questions, watch this movie,' and so on," (Scherff, 2008, pg 10). It is important to point out that attrition is something that begins long before teachers leave the profession and that current teachers are often weighing their possibilities for exiting (Schaefer et al., 2012). Schaefer's final suggestion (2012) is to shift the conversation from focusing only on teacher retention toward sustaining teachers throughout their career.

There is an endless series of stories about teachers who abandon the profession after just a few years due to a lack of sustainment. One teacher wrote, "I'm walking away. I'm walking away from all the time I spent in school, all the files, and supplies I have, many sweet students, health insurance, all of it. Teaching is just not worth the constant stress and pain that crushed my very soul and being," (Scherff, 2008, pg 11). These are harsh words that indicate that by investing a little bit in sustaining teachers can help stop attrition. "Despite what we know about assisting, protecting, supporting, and nurturing new teachers it often is not done," (Scherff, 2008, pg 12). In Toni's case, she felt "it would be better to quit, than become what she detested (and saw around her)," (Scherff, 2008, pg 13).

Relevance of the Study

This theme, friendship, is important, not only to mitigate teacher attrition and reduce the associated costs but to improve teacher performance and ultimately student performance. Teacher quality is the single most important factor in determining a

student's performance (The Alliance, 2005). A recent publication known as Waiting for Superman describes a situation where the quality of teachers in the American public school system has been declining and that the need for high-quality teachers is greater than ever (Participant Media, 2010). "A good teacher is one who consistently evokes large gains in student learning while a poor teacher is one who consistently gets small gains in student learning. In other words, the quality of a teacher is best judged by performance in the classroom as reflected in the gains in learning" (Participant Media, 2010, pg 84).

Many recent papers show that good teachers are of utmost importance. The quality and effectiveness of a teacher can make or break a student's education (Hanford, 2014). Research shows that teachers are immensely important to student learning and achievement. The students with the best teachers have high achievement while those who get the worst teachers fall behind (Hanford, 2014). Consequently, it is necessary for teachers to be continuously improving their skills. The importance of teachers may appear to be obvious since students spend the majority of the day with teachers and most of a school's budget is spent on teachers. Teachers drive the education business (Hanford, 2014). Research shows that the quality of teachers is the single largest factor directly involved with the success or failure of students (Rothstein, 2010). Drs Marzano and Hanushek of Calder Research (2014) found that "having an above average teacher for five years running can completely close the gap between low-income students and others." Drs Sanders and Rivers (1996) also found that as teacher effectiveness increases, the lowest achieving students benefits first from that improvement.

Besides the impact on the success of individual students and their personal lives, there is a greater impact on American society as a whole. There are three facets of this: education can increase the human capital in the labor force, increase the innovative capacity of the economy, and facilitate the diffusion and transmission of knowledge needed to understand and process new information and to successfully implement new technologies devised by others…" (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2010, pg 2). "The accumulated evidence from analyses of economic outcomes is that the quality of education – measured on an outcome basis of cognitive skills – has powerful economic effects," (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2010, pg 8). Based on research, it becomes very evident just how important a high-quality school teacher is. They shape the lives of their students and families and impact the strength and direction of society as a whole. As discussed above, self-improvement is crucial for the improvement of American schools.

"An effective teacher receiving students from a relatively ineffective teacher can facilitate excellent academic gain for his / her students during the school year. Yet these analyses suggest that the residual effects of relatively ineffective teachers from prior years can be measured in subsequent student achievement scores" (Sanders & Rivers, 1996, pg 6). From this quote, we can see that it is not enough for students to be in the class of a skilled teacher most of the time if their performance is to improve. All their teachers need to be top notch teachers who are continuously improving. Teaching is the profession that makes all other professions possible, (Slavin, 2010). "Despite constant search for reform solutions, the future of school improvement depends on people, not programs. Schools must hire excellent teachers and strive to make all teachers as good as the best teacher in the school. Outstanding principals know that their primary role is to

teach teachers how to provide a high-quality education for students," (Whitaker, 2005, pg 19).

One facet that was explored in this chapter is that it is possible for teachers to improve their performance steadily through a self-reflective process known as critical friendship. Langlois and Zales (1992) identify 4 main characteristics that constitute an effective teacher. These are 1. Effective teachers try to maximize the learning. 2. They have established routines for many of the day's activities, such as starting and ending classes, and returning homework 3. These teachers create a supportive and collaborative atmosphere in the classroom. 4. They are able to provide praise and accountability to students. Their work is summarized in the statement: teachers bring learning, structure, and leadership (with praise / accountability as a subset of leadership). They go on to state that "the payoff of effective teaching is helping students become aware of how to use their cognitive abilities. In short, effective teachers produce independent learners," (Langlois and Zales, 1992, pg 4). This would have to be one of the foremost traits that good teachers bring to the American education system. Effective teachers are necessary to form students into problem solvers. Based on what Langlois and Zales (1992) indicate, we can see that teachers bring learning, structure, leadership, and praise / accountability to the students.

Teachers bring learning. Sometimes teachers have to bring to the students lessons that can be either fun or difficult, but in the end, should help the students to become better people. "What I really love is when kids at any skill level seem to have a fire lit under them and get excited about something and love it and really enjoy it. I love it when they come into class wanting to say something, wanting to ask something about

what we have read – something that isn't about getting a good grade, that isn't about how

to write the five-paragraph essay" (Smoot, 2010, pg 3). Sometimes the idea that *less is*

more is crucial for a student to learn. We live in a fast-paced, technological society which

frequently interferes with the learning process. Good teachers know when to introduce

new technologies to the learning process, but also, when to draw back from them,

because they are becoming an obstacle to learning (Smoot, 2010). "And then when kids

get more sophisticated, they can ask a question, and be intrigued by what they don't

understand, and enjoy that. I think that's another thing to teach – a kind of balancing act

in which you can learn to appreciate what you don't understand. Art is not an exact

science and it never will be. When it's taught like one, it's taught poorly," (Smoot, 2010,

pg 4).

   Teachers bring structure. The objectives and context of a lesson are not always

evident to students. Good teachers help students to see the big picture and maximize their

learning (Fisher, 2011). Good teachers are clear about the purpose of every lesson

(Fisher, 2011). "A clearly established purpose drives instruction. We don't ask students to

infer the purpose; we clearly state it," (Fisher, 2011, pg 2). As one teacher puts it, "If

you're not organized and if for one minute it looks like you're not prepared for what

you're going to do for that day, that week, that month, the kids will smell that you're not

on top of things and they will run away with it," (Howard & Johnson, 2004, pg 16). The

first step in having a structured classroom is to have clearly defined objectives. It is not

enough, however, to just have clear objectives, which exist only in the mind of the

teacher. The objectives have to be communicated to the students in a way that they can

understand and find purpose in the lesson (Fisher, 2011). According to Fisher (2011), due

to recent advances in neuroscience, experts are finding a great deal of overlaps between psychology, education, and neurology with each discipline providing new insights into the other. The cumulative effect has been that teachers have and make use of many more tools for preserving the structure of the classroom simply by applying psychological or neurological knowledge about how the human mind works. This leads to enhanced attention, learning, and retention. Teachers are becoming experts in shaping the human mind on various levels.

One final factor regarding the structure that teachers bring to the classroom is the need for behavioral discipline. "Establishing effective discipline practices is critical to ensure academic success and to provide a safe learning environment," (Luiselli, Putnam, Handler, & Feinberg, 2005, pg 3). In the study *Whole-School Positive Behavior Support: Effects on Student Discipline*, it is demonstrated that behavioral discipline in the classroom is necessary for learning. Teachers are required to employ various skills to shape the behavior of students, starting with social skills training, system-wide behavioral intervention, and academic curricula modifications (Luiselli, Putnam, Handler, & Feinberg, 2005). Melinda Gates (2013) says that "without teachers, a classroom is just a room." The discipline and structure that teachers bring to their classrooms set the tone for everything else that happens.

Teachers bring leadership. They create a collaborative, respectful environment that begins with their own example. Teachers are the ones who create the learning environment. They have a direct impact on the behavior of students, the quality of the lesson delivered, and to a large degree, the quality of the resources available to students (Donaldson, 2007). Without the guidance of a teacher to set the tone for the classroom

little to no learning takes place. Part of forming problem solvers is that teachers must guide students to the correct answers, without simply giving away the answer. Todd Whitaker (2004) says that effective teachers are also effective leaders and vice versa. Leadership is the heart of teaching, whether it means leading students to correct behavior or leading students to factual answers. In her article *Without Teachers, the Classroom is Just a Room*, Mrs. Gates (2013) describes a conversation she had years ago with a Houston-area teacher. The teacher said that after thinking about what it means to be a good teacher, he realized it was necessary to live the virtues he was asking the students to live. At that point, he stopped thinking about being a better teachers and focused on being a better human being.

Some of a given teacher's skills and qualities can be measured objectively through quantifiable test scores, teacher evaluations, and achieving curricular benchmarks, but there is much more to good teaching than just test scores. The teacher can also be effective in their judgments which are not always quantifiable. For example, a teacher who knows his / her students well is able to see the "potential" a student has to do well in spite of a low test score. Teachers are able to recognize and praise relative progress of a student even though assessments may indicate otherwise. An example of this could be the teenage student who can barely read when he gets to 9th grade, but with a teacher's help is able to improve dramatically over the course of a year, even if he is still below the level in June. The teacher's judgment is of vital importance because it could be the difference between a student advancing to the next grade or being held back. Perhaps one of the most important qualities that a teacher can bring to the classroom is

his example, which is "infectious and helps others learn more effective ways of working with their own students," (Donaldson, 2007).

Teachers bring praise and accountability to the classroom. "Recognition and praise are indeed high octane fuel for the soul. When we receive a genuine compliment, we experience an inner glow – it's a warm, magical feeling that makes us break into a smile. It makes us want to go the extra mile for the person who bestowed the sincere compliment," (Martinuzzi, 1999). When teachers apply this to their classrooms, praise translates into improved learning. Most experts recognize that not only do great teachers praise their students, but they do so in a way that is authentic and from the heart. Students can see through insincerity (Martinuzzi, 1999). Student achievement is limitless once they believe the teacher truly cares for them (Donaldson, 2007). Having effective accountability requires a specific disposition on the teacher's part (Linson, 2010). Like praise, it is rooted in an attitude of authenticity and doesn't have to be oppressive. Erasmus says that "humility is truth." This axiom can be applied similarly to accountability and praise. True accountability is simply acknowledging the moral content of student behavior; good behavior deserves praise and reward while poor behavior may require correction and discipline. "Effective teachers praise by stressing not only the student's accomplishment but the process the student used. As a result, students can accept responsibility for their work and improve their achievement because they know how they are doing and how to correct or enhance their efforts," (Langlois & Zales, 1992, pg 4).

Collegiality among Teachers

"Teacher collegiality is defined as "teachers' involvement with peers on any level, be it intellectual, moral, political, social and/or emotional," (Jarzabkowski, 2009, pg 2). Cooperation among teachers is necessary for creating an environment of learning and respect within schools (Alexandrowicz, 1997). This can be achieved through a spirit of collegiality among teachers. Collegiality takes teachers out of isolation and brings them into contact with other educators. Teachers become collaborators and share ideas with each other. The way teachers think and believe about their students has a tremendous impact on student achievement (Alexandrowicz, 1997). One approach to unlocking the many benefits of collegiality is through the use of peer coaching in schools (Sparks & Bruder, 1987). Collegiality has a tremendous impact on the way teachers relate to each other. Peer coaching has provided a means for exposing teachers to what their co-workers are doing in their own classrooms. "It's been great opening up to another member of the staff, I had never before explored teaching with another teacher, nor had I gone into depth regarding improving teaching," (Sparks & Bruder, 1987). Collegiality led to improved sharing, professional interaction, experimentation within the classroom, and student learning (Sparks & Bruder, 1987).

Collegiality shows a great deal of promise for improving teacher performance, however, it must be accompanied by a shift in behaviors and policy to be truly effective (Wallace, 1998). An important facet to developing collegiality is having the principal's involvement. Principals that are in the hallways and classrooms where teachers can see them is necessary for building trust and confidence among the faculty (Sparks & Bruder, 1987). Teachers that feel that the principal is part of the collegial community are more

likely to try new ideas in the classroom. Another important facet of collegiality stems

from opening one's door to other teachers and vice-versa. Growth occurs most when

there is intellectual stimulation from other teachers (Sparks & Bruder, 1987). "The most

important part is getting the chance to get into another teacher's room. My doors are now

open and will remain so," (Sparks & Bruder, 1987). Collegiality and sharing of ideas help

teachers shift from an attitude of complaints about kids to improving the quality of the

learning in a classroom. "Now people are talking more about their lessons and less about

individual kids. They are sharing techniques for motivation and active participation. They

are teaching and learning from each other," (Sparks & Bruder, 1987). Collaboration

among teachers is necessary for improved teaching and student learning (Ning, Lee, &

Lee, 2015).

Collegiality is necessary to preserve teachers from burnout and stagnation.

Burnout is highest in teachers that experience a lack of administrative support,

collegiality, and insufficient teaching resources (Alexandrowicz, 1997). Teachers tend to

isolate themselves from the rest of the faculty when they feel unappreciated

(Alexandrowicz, 1997). Collegiality can be used to diffuse feelings of isolation and draw

teachers back into the community. A collegial environment whereby teachers respect and

trust each other and provide constructive feedback to each other is necessary for a

teacher's learning and development as a professional (Ning, Lee, & Lee, 2015).

Friendships: Introduction

Some possible questions that stem from this study are the following: Does an

increase in the quality (and perhaps quantity) of teacher friendships result in higher

teacher retention and improved teacher performance? Given that no teaching environment

is ideal, are teacher friendships a relevant and even important instrument for mitigating dissatisfaction and ultimately attrition (Patterson, Collins, & Abbot, 2004)? Can teacher friendships be an effective means for improving classroom skills? Can teacher friendships lead to enhanced teacher evaluations or even new methods of evaluation? Do experienced teachers tend to form cliques that are difficult for new or novice teachers to break into?

The relevance of friendships. This theme is important, not only to mitigate teacher attrition and reduce the associated costs, but to improve teacher performance, student performance, and school climate. For Logan and Butler (2013), the first revelation of their critical friendship was that they both needed and wanted support in their work, which they had not received prior to the friendship. For others, friendship might be the only manner in which professionals can feel safe enough to admit their faults and make corrections as needed.

Friendships are effective means of implementing new ideas, building trust, solidifying institutional values held, improving productivity, and improving organizational commitment, among other things (Gibbons, 2004). "Two keys to retaining teachers are a positive sense of professional community and administrators' support," (Scherff, 2008, pg 13). As indicated by a novice teacher on several occasions, "she wanted and needed to belong to a collaborative group that shared knowledge and expertise," (Scherff, 2008, pg 13). Friendships are not the most important factor in teaching environments, but they influence structures the same way concrete supports the bricks in a house. Friendships are an important structure during organizational transitions within a school or other professional environment (Gibbons, 2004). One teacher was quoted as saying, "one of the things I loved about Presidio when I first got here was just

working with other teachers that were creative and interested in developing new things and thoughtful, and really also had great relationships with students and cared about them quite a bit," (Brunetti, 2006, pg 9). Another found that she had to give up her role as social studies chair, because she really wanted to work collaboratively with the teachers, but was hindered because of her position (Brunetti, 2006).

Logan and Butler (2013) say that critical friendships are especially important for novice teachers since they foster reflection and help to navigate the teaching process. The same author also found that critical friendships can minimize the sense of being an outsider. They say that their critical friendship was essential to their pedagogical formation (such as responding to student behaviors, curriculum development, etc), affective formation (ie. Validation of feelings, dealing with the feeling of being an outsider, etc) and intellectual formation (personal rationale for teaching, providing structure and purpose to their work, etc) (Logan & Butler, 2013). Although they frequently overlap in organizations (Ibarra, 1992), friendship and advice networks perform distinct functions. Friendship has been linked with organizational commitment (Morrison, 2002), resource sharing during a crisis (Krackhardt and Stern, 1988), and career-related decision making (Kilduff, 1990; Krackhardt, 1992). It enables co-workers to discuss sensitive issues that they would not share with non-friends (Sias and Cahill, 1998), and it supports organizational subcultures (Krackhardt and Kilduff, 1990). In contrast, advice networks are closely related to organizational power (Brass, 1992: Ibarra and Andrews, 1993). They influence work-related knowledge (Morrison, 2002), job performance (Sparrowe et al., 2001), student performance (Baldwin, Bedell, and Johnson, 1997) and self-efficacy and attitudes towards technology (Burkhardt, 1994). Teachers are

"more likely to share unfamiliar information or beliefs with their friends that they receive from their advisors than the reverse," (Gibbons, 2004, pg 23). From these studies we can see that friendships are an integral part of healthy work environments, whether in schools or elsewhere, and can have a significant impact on the success of schools, teachers, and ultimately the students. Yang (2012) indicates in a study of nurses that employees who have friends at work are more likely to be engaged in their job, than if they didn't have friends.

"Workplace friendship is positively related to employees' job satisfaction, performance, team cohesion, and organizational commitment; it is negatively associated with employees' turnover intentions and negative emotions," (Yang, 2012, pg 1). Kostova and Roth (2003) indicates that interpersonal relationships are essential for effective team functioning since they promote behaviors that maximize individual and team efficiency. Butler and Logan indicate that "our critical friendship provided a space of support as we wrestled with such student concerns and our ensuing pedagogical decisions. We were able to have a space to ask questions, gather resources, and at times, simply have access to a sympathetic ear," (Logan & Butler, 2013, pg 13).

Gibbons (2004) says that public schools neither require nor prohibit friendships to exist among employees. When institutions combine the advisory and friendship structures, there tends to be a decrease in "the discussion of ideas that challenge existing practices" and change in values occurs slowly. As well, organizations that foster friendships among employees have greater homogeneity of values and beliefs throughout. Cultures that discourage friendships tend to fracture into cliques and smaller groups with varying beliefs and values (Gibbons, 2004). Gibbons (2004) goes on to say that

opportunities for "unmonitored conversations" as occur among friends can be crucial for the adoption and internalization of new values for example new policies or practices that administration might like to introduce. That's why managers who would like to bring about specific changes within their schools should either establish a friendly and trusting relationship with teachers or perhaps step back and allow others who have friendly and trusting relationships to introduce the new ideas and "facilitate the social process of redefining professional values," (Gibbons, 2004, pg 24). This paragraph is the key to this dissertation because in it Gibbons (2004) acknowledges that even though the principal might be the protagonist in how the school performs, it can be vital for the principal to act through other employees who may have a greater influence on their co-workers. Given that the principal is at the top of the advisory network, there is bound to be somewhat of a separation between principal and teachers. In this way, principals and school leaders are able to capitalize on the positive factors of spontaneous friendships as a way to improve all-around performance, enhance school culture, and promote growth.

The Difference between Spontaneous Friendship and Critical Friendship

  What is spontaneous friendship. Spontaneous friendship refers to friendships that naturally occur between individuals who work together or, at least, have the opportunity to spend time together. For practical purposes, this study only considered friendships that occur in the workplace, rather than elsewhere. According to Aristotle, genuine friendship consists of the following factors: friends must enjoy each other's company, they must be useful to each other, and be mutually committed to seeking what is good (Aristotle, 2004). This definition may sound odd by modern standards, especially the last two points regarding friends being useful to each other and committed to the

good, but it still has relevance (Doyle & Smith, 2002). In essence, true friends seek what is good or beneficial for the other. If this is true, then the friendship is mutually useful and there exists mutual commitment to the good. In teaching, this idea of doing what is best for your friend is necessary for improving skills and talents. When a teacher asks a friend for advice, he trusts that his friends do what is best for him and give him an unbiased judgment, regardless of whether he agrees with it or not.

Aristotle says, "And it is those who desire the good of their friends for the friends' sake that are most truly friends, because each loves the other for what he is, and not for any incidental quality," (Aristotle). In order for two persons to be friends they must both recognize that each wishes what is good for the other and not simply feeling of kindness towards each other (Grunebaum, 2003). Grunebaum (2003) uses Aristotle's notion of friends as being reflections of each other to show that a basic element of friendship is that if one friend benefits from something, then so does the other. If one friend loses in some way, then so does the other. This is because whatever is good for one friend produces good in the other (Grunebaum, 2003). "The good they do for each other duplicates back because of the identification with each other's ends," (Grunebaum, 2003, pg 34).

Friendship is sometimes portrayed through the lens of similarity, where two parties become friends due to a common interest (Doyle & Smith, 2002). This may be relevant to establishing a new friendship, but it is not friendship in itself. It would be difficult to say that Franklin Roosevelt and Joseph Stalin were friends, due to their common interest: defeating the Nazis. According to C.S. Lewis (1991) friendship stems from mere companionship, when two people find that they have a common interest or

taste that others do not share. One flaw that Grunebaum (2003) points out in C.S.Lewis's notion of friendship is that there is no element of caring for each other. It is true that friends tend to have common interests, but that is not always the case. Friends can be friends because they desire what is good for the other, even though there might not be an element of common interest. "Companionship is, however, only the matrix of friendship. It is often called friendship, and many people when they speak of their 'friends' mean only their companions," (Doyle & Smith, 2002, pg 9). Allan (1996) takes the notion of friendship one step further. He first identifies 4 facets of friendship, which are very relevant to spontaneous and critical friendships in the workplace. These are sociability, practical support, emotional support, and confirmation of identity. He goes on to say that friendship is also associated with broader social and economic factors. Friendship helps to draw people into society and can be viewed as a resource that helps them manage with life events more effectively (Allan, 1996). For the purposes of this paper, the classical interpretation of friendship was used.

Trust seems to be the all-important factor in developing deep friendships and is necessary for improved communication (Pahl, 2000). "It is the affect-based trust, tied to beliefs about mutual altruism between friends that creates a safe environment for sharing ideas that make one vulnerable to the actions of another. This same tendency to place faith in friends' good intentions probably increases willingness to consider their suggestions," (Gibbons, 2004, pg 5). "Because friendship is based on personal attraction and mutual positive affect, changes in professional ideas or practices are not threatening to the relationship. This unique combination of attributes enables friendships to support the creation or expansion of professional beliefs and values," (Gibbons, 2004, pg 6). As

the friendship grows deeper, co-workers are relaxed with each other and are able to discuss more effectively and in greater detail work-related issues (Sias & Cahill, 1998). "Friendship includes intimacy, emotional commitment, and personal trust that advisory relations lack. In new or changing situations, the friendship network provides comfortable opportunities to discuss uncertainties and concerns with peers," (Gibbons, 2004, pg 7). Friendship ties are stable, enduring, and more difficult to replace than are advice relations (Shah, 2000). Doyle (Doyle & Smith, 2002) makes use of an excellent description of friendship by Cicero, "Let this, then, be laid down as the first law of friendship, that we should ask from friends, and do for friends' only what is good. But do not let us wait to be asked either: let there be ever an eager readiness, and an absence of hesitation. Let us have the courage to give advice with candor. In friendship, let the influence of friends who give good advice be paramount; and let this influence be used to enforce advice not only in plain-spoken terms but sometimes, if the case demands it, with sharpness; and when so used, let it be obeyed," (Cicero).

Deep friendships cause both parties to grow and flourish and aims for psychological intimacy and freedom (Gardiner, 2008) and remember that in friendship, trust takes time to develop (Farrell, 2001). The term the ancient Greeks used to express the type of friendship is 'agape'. It is frequently translated in terms of familial love. This term has also been adopted by Paul of Tarsus to describe not only the relationship between individuals and God but especially the relationship that Christians must have among themselves (Paul of Tarsus). Even the author of the Gospel according to Matthew uses the word agape as the appropriate translation for 'love' mentioned by Jesus Christ in the Sermon on the Mount.

Freedman (2012) conducted a study on the nature of collegiality among librarians and through these surveys was able to extrapolate some basic definitions for collegiality. The two most highly ranked definitions consist of "treating each other with respect, fairly" and "working together effectively among individuals holding the same rank or power" (Freedman, 2012, pg 3). A few other definitions for collegiality that resulted from the same study are "working independently as well as with others," "working together effectively among all levels of individuals," "working effectively with individuals regardless of their rank," and "cooperative interactions among colleagues" (Freedman, 2012, pg 3). Even though all of these virtues are needed for the cooperation and effectiveness of a team, there is something lacking. It is possible to have cooperation and effective teamwork without friendship.

Equality is necessary for any friendship to be successful (Gibbons, 2004). In 2010, a film named *The King's Speech* was released. ("Creative - The King's Speech - Official Site," 2010) This film depicts a special friendship that developed between King George VI of England and Lionel Logue, an Australian Speech Specialist. The movie describes how the friendship develops in spite of the disparity in social status between these two men. The two are initially brought together for a common pursuit, ie developing the king's verbal skills. Right from the outset Lionel indicates that in order for the treatment to be effective, both Lionel and King George must consider each other equals. This was due to the need for familiarity and trust. Besides having improved speech, acknowledging equality between these two men resulted in a profound lifelong friendship. The moral of the story is that friendships are most effective among equals.

Even though King George and Lionel had a very different social status, the two men could meet as equals because they are both part of the same human family.

Kant (1996) describes this equality among men as a necessity for friendship: he writes that friendship is the union of two persons through equal love and respect. Grunebaum (2003) explains how equality of all men is a fundamental tenet of Christianity. He argues by examining the Golden Rule. Jesus Christ commanded his followers to love one another as themselves. This is reminiscent of the notion of friends being images of each other (Aristotle, 2004). Christianity also teaches that God loves all men equally. Any apparent contradictions between equality and preferential love in friendships is overcome by the fact that the Golden Rule commands us to "be friends" with all men, not just some men; ie have preferential love for all (Grunebaum, 2003). Some people see equality as a problem for friendship because it seems to negate the preferential love that friends have for each other over non-friends (Grunebaum, 2003).

The dark side of friendships is that friends can sometimes seek the good of the friendship, but to the exclusion and detriment of non-friends. This contradicts virtue as a basis for friendship and the ideal of seeking what is good, since harming others cannot truly be good for me (Grunebaum, 2003). As indicated in the citations above, that is not true, because exclusivity is not essential to friendship even though the two may occur together. Friendship should be viewed in terms of equality (Allan, 1996). Though there are differences between friendship and other professional relationships what is important is that friendship puts all the players on the same level, which encourages trust and growth in ways that mentoring or supervisory roles do not.

Professional and critical friendships are both very different from simple mentorship for a couple of reasons. The first and most obvious is that it is possible for someone to be a mentor and not like the protégé or vice-versa. There's no guarantee that there is friendship in that relationship. Second, mentorship implies inherent inequality between mentor and protégé (Storey, 2013). Mentoring typically consists of a teacher with greater knowledge and experience as well as an inexperienced teacher. The mentor is passing on knowledge while the protégé is attempting to grow from that knowledge (Storey, 2013). As previously discussed, it is difficult to build significant trust without equality. "It seems to me there is little doubt that friendship is at play in successful mentoring relationships but it is in tension with the need for objectivity in formal mentoring settings," (Gardiner, 2008, pg 21). "I define a professional friendship in mentoring […as] a 'care-full' mentoring relationship in a formal setting successfully involving an experience for learning and change in which mentor and mentee utilize a range of core components including honesty, trust, and respectful listening, etc," (Gardiner, 2008, pg 21).

While mentoring is a valuable tool, it can limit the range of possibilities that can be reached through friendships. Friendship implies equality, whereas mentoring implies inequality, because the mentor has greater knowledge and experience while the protégé has less (Allan, 1996). There is always the possibility that one's mentor could also be their direct supervisor, such as assistant principal or principal. This could further complicate the relationship. In order to avoid the hierarchical restrictions found in mentoring, many institutions try peer mentoring. Peer mentoring allows for equality among the members and draws its strength from their diversity (Storey, 2013). The pitfall

with peer mentoring is that the teachers involved tend to have trouble staying focused on the objectives at hand and there is little structure to the work sessions, which frequently are reduced to gossiping and reduce the level of commitment over time, among other things (McNicoll & Baker, 2008). Friendship versus assigned mentorship can be desirable in the sense that friends choose each other, whereas mentors are generally assigned. In the case of Toni, a research subject, she reported disinterest on the part of her mentor and a general feeling of being isolated and ignored by the person who was supposed to be supporting her (Scherff, 2008).

What is critical friendship. "Oh the comfort, the inexpressible comfort of feeling safe with a person, having neither to weigh thoughts nor measure words, but pour them out just as they are together, and a faithful hand will take and sift them, keep what is worth keeping and with a breath of kindness blow the rest away" (Craik, 2010). According to Valerie Storey (2013), critical friends usually provide constructive criticism that is intended to both challenge and support. Bobek (2002) says that new teachers must be lifelong learners who are ready to explore new areas that may challenge their point of views and practices.

"A critical friend, as the name suggests, is a trusted person who asks provocative questions, provides data to be examined through another lens, and offers a critique of a person's work as a friend. A critical friend takes the time to fully understand the context of the work presented and the outcomes that the person or group is working toward. The friend is an advocate for the success of that work," (Costa & Kallick, 1993, pg 2). Though the word 'critical' typically has a negative ring to it, it was used according to the original Greek meaning, which is to discern or separate (Farrell, 2001). Costa and Kallick

(1993) describe the role of a critical friend as something similar to that of an ophthalmologist. During an eye examination, the doctor adjusts the patient's vision by changing from one lens to another and then another and so on. Every time the lens is changed, the doctor asks "is it better or worse" and then any necessary adjustments are made. "It is only when you change the lens through which you view student learning – or your own practice – that you discover whether a new focus is better or worse. But if you never change the lens, you limit your vision." (Costa & Kallick, 1993, pg 1). He goes on to describe that the doctor can't simply write a prescription for glasses until he has forced the patient to look through all the different lenses to find the one that works best for him.

Critical friends behave in a similar manner. They help teachers to see past the "one size fits all approach to teaching" (Ramnarain & Modiba, 2013, pg 21) and to make improvements in teaching skill and methods based on subjective feedback. (Costa & Kallick, 1993). Most people tend to equate critique with judgment and consequently become defensive when faced with the prospect of negative feedback. In order to avoid that, critical friendships must be based on trust (Costa & Kallick, 1993). Comparing critical friendship with mentoring shows that critical friendship is based on a lateral relationship, rather than hierarchical, and critical friends don't have to have greater experience or knowledge than their co-worker (Swaffield, 2007). As Farrell (2001) puts it, his role was not to help my less experienced colleague type of situation, as if he were a mentor, but rather to take a proactive role and promote reflection within the friendship by acting as a catalyst for his friends teaching, though she was responsible for the changes that needed to be made. One of van Swet's (2009) tutors made the same point but from a different angle: "No matter how friendly and warm—hearted, I am the tutor. As a tutor, I

can show many aspects of a critical friend, but I am definitely not a critical friend," (van Swet, Smit, Corvers, & van Dijk, 2009, pg 14).

Perhaps the most important facet of critical friendships, which separates them from ordinary friendship is that they are highly structured. Critical friendship occurs between professionals who meet as friends, but with very specific objectives in mind, follow a schedule for meetings, and make use of very specific methods (Storey, 2013). Critical friendships make use of structured environments because without it a relationship may lose its objectivity and usefulness (Storey, 2013). Storey (2013) indicates that her consortium embraced the notion of critical friendships to move towards relationships characterized by trust, constructive criticism, and advocacy, instead of mere colleague interaction. "Not only do Critical Friends need to understand the importance of empathy, emotional intelligence, and technical intelligence to the development of effective Critical Friendships, but CFGs [ie Critical Friendship Groups] need to develop accurate listening, reflecting back, reformulating, challenging and confronting, at times soothing and smoothing," (MacBeath, 1998, pg 41). The primary focus of critical friendship is reflective practice (Storey, 2013). Logan and Butler (2013) describe this process as causing "us to reflect on our choices by hearing the other's perspective and receiving critical input. […] We found ourselves challenged and more reflective as a result of our critical friendship," (Logan & Butler, 2013, pg 15).

The process is fairly simple. Friends meet to discuss a situation or question that one friend may have. With the help of the other friend, both reflect critically on the outcome and whether any modifications to the behavior or environment can be made to produce better results (Storey, 2013). After discussing and implementing the changes, this

process is repeated to make sure the friends are on the right path (Storey, 2013). The feedback itself can be supportive (warm), distanced (cool), or challenging. In order to support greater learning it is necessary to provide constructive feedback that is descriptive and useful ("National School Reform Faculty[TM]," 2014). It is paramount to keep the time frame for reflection in mind, since reflection doesn't occur immediately, but rather progressively. "Since reflection takes time, the reflection period should be carried out over a longer rather than a shorter period of time. Secondly, having a fixed period in which to reflect allows the participants to know what period during the semester they can devote wholly to reflection," (Farrell, 2001, pg 6). Since this sort of friendship is geared towards change and improvement, both friends should start by acknowledging the individual's readiness for change. Change can introduce uncertainty and insecurity that the teacher may not be ready for. (Farrell, 2001).

In order for critical friends to be effective, there must be a structure based on group norms (Storey, 2013). Applying protocols helps the group to remain focused on the issue at hand. The purpose is to help small groups faced with a problem of some sort to overcome it by promoting creativity focused on developing and meeting strategic goals, building trust, overcoming conflict, and building consensus by giving all participants a say in what happens. (Todd & Hayter, 2003) The primary difference between charrettes and critical friends is that critical friends focus on continual self-improvement and don't necessarily begin with a problem or obstacle. As well, critical friendships tend to be more process-oriented. (Storey, 2013).

The critical friendship process is fairly simple. 1. Presentation of the issue or problem, 2. Probing session, 3. Warm, positive feedback, 4. Cool feedback, and 5.

Challenge. Challenge in this process is meant to be constructive and not adversarial. It is a cause for reflection and the consideration of other viewpoints (Storey, 2013). "One obvious starting place for a teacher is self-reflection. This involves teachers making regular assessments of what they are doing in the classroom by completing checklists, and / or making audio / videotapes of classes, and writing transcriptions of segments of class communication for analysis. However, such self-reflection is not easy to do alone, since teachers may find it difficult to confront themselves with any noted inconsistencies (if indeed they are noted) when they come to prepare their self-reports," (Farrell, 2001, pg 1). Some critical friendships have gone so far as to schedule classroom observations every two weeks, followed by a discussion which focused on the lesson objectives, adequacy of background information, assumptions the lessons were based on, investigative questions, lesson planning, etc. (Ramnarain & Modiba, 2013). Because of the informal, non-directive, free-wheeling nature of the discussions, the teacher was more relaxed and spoke freely with his critical friends. All discussions lasted an hour and were recorded (Ramnarain & Modiba, 2013).

In her research, Ponte describes the same methods in a slightly different manner. She uses the following categories: 1. Exploration is to ask critical of a colleague in a critical manner for the purpose of clarifying themes (Ponte, 2002). Exploration can encompass anything from evaluating professional relationships to assessing the quality of a teacher's instruction in the classroom, but the focus is always on improving oneself as a teacher with the assistance of a friend. The goal is for both friends to explore possible short-comings, but in a non-threatening way, which makes recognition of the issue and consequent improvement easier. 2. Informing each other means to provide guidance or

suggestions (Ponte, 2002). Again, the context of friendly trust is crucial, so that teachers feel they have the option to take or leave the advice. This is part of the obstacle that administrators face; when they make a suggestion, it is usually something you are required to follow. 3. Encouraging refers to providing colleagues with the motivation to keep moving forward, as well as to show appreciation for their effort (Ponte, 2002). Encouragement always goes a long way, especially when a teacher is in disagreement with an administrator or school policy. The cathartic effect friends can have on each other is a good way to dispel frustrations. Encouragement can also take the form of simply helping a friend to remain strong in the face of adversity, whether it be implementing a difficult classroom policy, teaching under less than ideal circumstances, or even just being brave when it comes to implementing new methods of teaching in the classroom. 4. Exchanging ideas refer to discussing experiences on neutral terms (Ponte, 2002). This is the fulfillment of the previous steps. After the areas of work have been identified and all necessary questions have been asked, the two friends can set about discussing possible strategies for improving on the given situation. 5. Modeling refers to learning from colleagues (Ponte, 2002). This can take many forms and doesn't have to be a formal classroom process.

Ponte's (2002) description defines the many facets of critical friendship in clear terms. Other researchers have noted that it is virtually impossible to separate a teacher's personal life from work (Staton & Hunt, 1992). Consequently, the facets of critical friendship that focus on encouragement and personal relationships continue to be very important. That is because they recognized the many facets of our lives and that teachers consist of much more than the skills they bring to the classroom.

The idea of spontaneous friendships, rather than critical friendships, is at the heart of this dissertation, because teachers naturally form friendships, regardless of their intelligence, skill level, or personal interests. Friendships can occur naturally and in every place of work, whereas critical friendships don't. This study investigates whether the fundamental structures and values that occur in both spontaneous and critical friendships can be linked to higher teacher retention, a positive school culture, improved teacher performance, and improved student performance.

Risk-taking as a potential benefit of friendship. In van Swet's (2009) study, it was found that it was important for teachers to choose their own critical friends whether from their immediate peers or individuals outside their particular work group (van Swet et al., 2009). This idea of being able to choose our own friends or critical friends is of utmost importance because the quality of the relationship has a tremendous impact on the range of possibilities for learning and growing (Staton & Hunt, 1992). One important facet of growth that stems from who we choose for friends, whether spontaneous or critical, is the notion of risk-taking. When discussing risk-taking within the context of friendships, frivolous or even dangerous issues are not being considered, such as a friend who encourages another to drink excessively or play chicken with a train.

Personal development and improvement as a teacher are the focus within the context of safety. So, when it comes to taking risks in this context, this study referred to the possibility of trying innovative ideas that may not be mainstream; perhaps building (or rebuilding) a difficult professional relationship, or simply being more open to seeing, accepting, and correcting personal short-comings, that given different circumstances, an individual might not be ready or willing to face. "Research has shown that people tend to

take more risks when in the presence of their friends than when they are alone," (Chan, Tong, & Moh, 2012, pg 2). According to research, the most consistent predictor of risk-taking is the presence of friends (Jaccard, Blanton, & Dodge, 2005). This is especially true for close friendships, i.e. individuals are more likely to take risks in the presence of close friends rather than acquaintances (Jaccard et al., 2005). (Chan et al., 2012) "The physical presence of friends is associated with higher risk-taking. Most accounts of these findings center on the idea that friends provide either intrinsic (e.g. fitting into peer norms, perceiving social support, a feeling of safety in numbers, modeling) or extrinsic (e.g. coercion, persuasion) influences that compel the individual toward more risky behaviors," (Chan et al., 2012, pg 3). Fitting into peer norms, perceiving social support, a feeling of safety in numbers, modeling) or extrinsic (ex. Coercion, persuasion) influences that compel the individual towards more risky behaviors" (Chan et al., 2012). "People tend to take more risks when their friends are physically present and perceptually obvious," (Chan et al., 2012, pg 12). Hollingsworth (1989) even found that the student teachers who grew most as professionals were the ones that worked closely with cooperating teachers who held a differing opinion, yet were encouraged to test their beliefs and practices in the classroom. "So one of the things that's really kept me here and kept me excited […] is the idea that we're teamed. We're trying to do new things---advisory and all these interesting things. And I find them very stimulating," (Brunetti, 2006, pg 10).

The fundamental trust found in friendship that leads to risk-taking can become a powerful agent of change and improvement when applied to professional development (Staton & Hunt, 1992), especially if it means overcoming a personal defect of some sort.

It was also found that reflective practices were most effective in environments where teachers had the freedom and encouragement to try "various solutions to classroom problems" (Staton & Hunt, 1992, pg 21). If just the three areas of social judgment, goal-pursuit, and emotional experience can be improved on by engaging friendships, then the logical result would seem to be improved teaching and cohesion among teachers. Magliaro and Borko (1986) found that student teachers who imitate the practices of cooperating teachers are less effective than those who imitate the practices of teachers that have a similar style and set of personally held beliefs. One important facet of this is that teachers must challenge each other's beliefs to force individuals to reflect and defend their perspective, which leads to an improvement (Staton & Hunt, 1992).

  Friendships shape beliefs and cultures. Not taking into consideration cultural variety in the workplace may lead to conflict (cf. Stoffle 1975). People who can find little support for their opinions among their friends are likely to be in a state of discomfort or cognitive dissonance (Festinger 1957) because they hold two beliefs that are incongruous with each other, namely: "I like my friends," and "My friends dislike my opinions." This discomfort is likely to manifest itself in a number of ways, including a reduction in overall satisfaction with work. Staton and Hunt (1992) found that cooperating teachers have a greater influence on student teacher attitudes and practices than other agents within the school, such as administrators or mentors. The same authors mention that cooperating teachers can be a source of modeling, mentorship, and resources. However, it is important that these relationships be established naturally and voluntarily, rather than by assignment if they are to be truly effective (Staton & Hunt, 1992). They went on to discuss that supervisors really have a secondary role when compared to cooperative

teachers. Supervisors have limited contact with the student teachers they were guiding, which reduces the opportunities to build a "trusting, reciprocal relationship" and that their leadership was "neither useful nor inspiring" (Staton & Hunt, 1992, pg 12). Hollingsworth (1989) found that the beliefs student-teachers bring with them had a major impact on their performance. As the socialization process progressed, the original beliefs held by student teachers were modified. In order to maximize the benefit, recommendations to the teacher must be made as a suggestion, rather than something that has to be done (Kilgore, Ross, & Zbikowski, 1990), reinforcing the need for a trusting relationship. All of these studies point to the reality that friendships among teachers can lead to modification of culture and teacher behaviors over time, even in ways that cannot be achieved through the direct action of an administrator.

   Friendships strengthen schools by enhanced socialization. "Organizational socialization is the process by which an individual acquires the attitudes, behavior, and knowledge she or he needs to participate as an organization member," (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979, pg 3). Successful socialization includes "satisfaction, mutual influence, internal work motivation, and job involvement," (Feldman, 1976, pg 1). This process molds new employees to fit an organization's needs and clarifies the employee's understanding of his role within the organization and generally has lasting importance regarding the employee's behaviors and attitudes (Morrison, 2002).

   Relationships with diverse types of co-workers, including supervisors, leads to a clearer understanding of roles and functions within the organization, but friendships are important for establishing a personal commitment to the organization and building trust (Morrison, 2002). In order for the socialization process to be considered effective, new

hires need to feel like they are a necessary part of their immediate work group and must also be attached to their organization. This implies that employees have both an informational network that reinforces information regarding roles, duties, etc and the friendship network that provides employees with a sense of identity and belonging (Morrison, 2002). Research does support the notion that friendships do impact employee attitudes and feelings of being supported (Brass 1995). Others have argued that it is necessary for friendships to be strong and close-knit in order to provide adequate support and consistent social cues; the stronger the relationship, the greater the career support and development of trust (Ibarra 1995, Krackhardt 1992, {See Morrison 2002}). "In other words, by conveying support, identity, and acceptance, friendship networks made up of strong and interconnected ties will facilitate the development of social integration and organizational commitment," (Morrison, 2002, pg 3).

Morrison also found that the more diverse a friendship network within an organization, not just immediate peers but perhaps employees in other departments and hierarchical levels, provides greater support and foments stronger organizational commitment (Morrison, 2002). Individuals need both an informational and friendship network to acquire all the necessary information for socialization. Supervisors typically fall under the informational network, but not the friendship network. (Morrison, 2002). If this is true and friendships are necessary to build an employee's identity and sense of belonging, then it seems that the only possible way for school principals to directly impact the process of building friendships is to work with other people and create opportunities for teachers to build their own friendships. Krackhardt and Killduff (1990) found that employees who were in disagreement with their friends experienced decreased

job satisfaction. As discussed above, friendships among teachers seem to improve the socialization process and enhance the quality of teacher development.

Friendship leads to homogeneity of values and identity. In schools, the division of teachers into factions that are not integrated with the values or mission of a school can be disastrous. Consequently, friendships can be used as an effective means for homogenizing the beliefs and values of employees (Heuser, 2012). "New teachers thrive in environments where school personnel endorse collaboration, flexibility, nonjudgmental attitudes, and high expectations," (Bobek, 2002, pg 2). During his work in Indonesia, after the 2006 earthquake, Heuser found that "friendships became a central means by which values in work ethics and individual and group perceptions of 'good behavior' were practiced and negotiated," (Heuser, 2012, pg 2).

The friendships that were formed between foreign and local workers did not compromise professional integrity, but actually unified the organization and enhanced the performance of individual employees and the organization as a whole. This was true even to the extent that the smaller aid organizations that focused on developing friendships with locals, outperformed larger and better-funded organizations that did not encourage these relationships (Heuser, 2012). The disparity in cultural values between Westerners and Indonesians was great. Nevertheless, it was found that employees did not align themselves according to culture, economics, or ethnicity, but rather according to personal beliefs that were held in common (Heuser, 2012). The ultimate result was an alignment of both local and foreign aid workers into a homogenous and efficient body who held similar values and beliefs. "Friendships contributed to a professional profile that

highlighted the importance of cultural awareness and an interest in local cultural knowledge which most […] perceived as central to their jobs," (Heuser, 2012, pg 2).

He goes on to describe that disaster and hardship were catalysts for the formation of friendships among employees of various backgrounds and that it led to the formation of a group identity. "Friendship has been identified as one of the major instruments by which individuals construct multiple identities; it also fosters the establishment of social belonging and helps individuals to relate to society," (Heuser, 2012, pg 5). "Teacher identity involves teacher beliefs, values, and emotions about many facets of teaching and being and becoming teachers," (Goodnough, 2010, pg 2). "It is continually informed, formed and reformed over time and with experience," (Goodnough, 2010, pg 2). The 'double-agency' of friendship is a bridge between the private lives of employees, as well as their professional lives, which leads to the melding of personal beliefs and values into a group identity (Heuser, 2012). "Some of the friendships I observed were looser, others quite close and intimate, depending on individual sympathy and attraction, but all of them seemed to be based on the concept of homophily," (Heuser, 2012, pg 6).

It is pointed out that friendship promotes social integration and prevents disintegration (Allan, 1979), a view which is supported by the empirical data discussed here. Friendships […] functioned as mechanisms for social and professional integration—as well as for constructing identifications of belonging in an unstable physical environment. Cross-cultural friendships could thus be understood as social laboratories in which Indonesians and Westerners learned from and with each other how to create a form of communion both on a private and a professional level," (Heuser, 2012, pg 6). One case study Heuser (2012) refers to is a young, Australian woman named Anna

and her efforts to build professional friendships. "Her case is relevant because it exemplifies how personal relationships with locals strongly influence the individual identity construction of development workers, provide inclusion and belonging to a local community, and that these experiences bear fruitful consequences for professional interaction," (Heuser, 2012, pg 7). "Cross-cultural friendships functioned as highly important measures to cope with a situation of disaster—both privately and professionally. […] The focus on cross-cultural friendship put forward here reveals that locals, as well as Westerners, express needs for belonging and that they ascribe friendship a central role in meeting those needs. Friendship is directly related to the construction of individual and group identities, offering actors multiple identifications depending on context. Such construction of identity is causally connected to establishing social security," (Heuser, 2012, pg 13).

   Friendship builds teacher and community resilience. Patterson et al. (2004) define resilience in the following way. Resilience is "using energy productively to achieve school goals in the face of adverse conditions," (Patterson et al., 2004, pg 1), while Brunetti (2006) goes on to say that "resilience is defined as a quality that enables teachers to maintain their commitment to teaching and their teaching practices despite challenging conditions and recurring setbacks," (Brunetti, 2006, pg 2). Bobek's (2002) definition is similar. She says that resilience is the "ability to adjust to varied situations and increase one's competence in the face of adverse conditions [which] is a critical element in classroom success and teacher retention," (Bobek, 2002, pg 1). Even though in their work, they do not define friendship as one of the determining factors of resilience, there is a direct link through the need for professional development, mentorship, and

support from co-workers, as well as the friendly, professional relationships. All three of these qualities have been discussed by authors as contributing to the building up of the school community and the individual lives of the teachers, but within the context of friendship, it is most effective.

The importance of resilience as expressed by Howard and Johnson (2004) is that it focuses on defining the positive traits teachers have that lead to resilience and reduced attrition, rather than the negativity. Defining these traits makes it possible to help struggling teachers develop these qualities in their own lives (Howard & Johnson, 2004). Bobek (2002) says that individual, familial, and environmental resources buffer the negative effects of stressors and that those friendly resources could include co-workers, family, friends, etc. These resources can inform perspectives and decision-making; significant adult relationships being one of the most important resources.

Other resources cited are "a sense of competence, expectations, and goals, confidence, a sense of humor, and a sense of accomplishment" (Bobek, 2002, pg 2) all of which are either an objective or quality of friendship (critical or spontaneous) in the workplace. In her own studies, Stanford (2001) found that one of the top three reasons experienced teachers cited for their resiliency was the support of other teachers and the friendly relationships they share. Interestingly enough, the other factors cited were making a difference in the lives of the students and prayer. When asking a teacher who she turned to for help during adversities at school, she responded, "God first. Then some colleagues here," (Stanford, 2001, pg 9). "When asked whom they would turn to after 'having a bad day when they needed to renew their spirits,' several mentioned their fellow teachers," (Stanford, 2001, pg 8). "New teachers may enhance their resilience by

fostering productive relationships with people who understand the trials and tribulations of teaching, who reinforce the values of what teachers do, and who offer insight into various options available for dealing with a variety of situations. As resources, the relationships that new teachers cultivate provide networks of support that can ease the transition into teaching and help sustain teachers over time. " (Bobek, 2002, pg 2).

In Stanford's (2001) studies, when asking teachers to provide a one-word metaphor to describe what their experience at school is like and what it should be like, both being on a team and being in a family where the two most cited metaphors. Once again, even though the word friendship is not cited, both the terms used contain meanings that are closely linked with friendship. This need for adult friendship and companionship is especially true for teachers of younger students who tend to find themselves isolated from other adults and are frequently in need of more mature conversation. In her study, Patterson identifies 9 traits of resilient teachers. They are:

1. "Resilient teachers have a set of personal values that guides their decision-making.

2. Resilient teachers place a high premium on professional development and find ways to get it.

3. Resilient teachers provide mentoring to others.

4. Resilient teachers are not victims – they take charge and solve problems.

5. Resilient teachers stay focused on the children and their learning.

6. Resilient teachers do whatever it takes to help children be successful.

7. Resilient teachers have friends and colleagues who support their work emotionally and intellectually.

8. Resilient teachers are not wedded to one best way of teaching and are interested in exploring new ideas.

9. Resilient teachers know when to get involved and when to let go," (Patterson et al., 2004, pg 3).

The first few traits listed focus primarily on the students as a reason for persevering in teaching, but several others are directly related to the relationships teachers have with their colleagues, such as having friends that provide emotional and intellectual support, sharing knowledge and experience with others, proactively seeking help from others, etc. Highly resilient teachers report the importance of having high levels of collegiality, among other things, as crucial for developing resilience (Patterson et al., 2004). "Resilient teachers and teacher leaders recognized that much of their professional development comes from sharing and interaction with others. Some of them were lucky enough to be placed in schools with other like-minded teachers; others were not so fortunate and […] sought professional connections with others outside their schools and districts," (Patterson et al., 2004, pg 5).

Kyriacou (2001) says that individual teacher coping mechanisms for stress fall under the category of palliative action or direct action. Palliative action can be anything from excessive drinking to avoidance and usually focus on treating the symptoms of the problem (Howard & Johnson, 2004). Direct action is the other method and, as the name indicates, is aimed at resolving the root problem, rather than avoiding it. It may consist of seeking help from friends and colleagues, striving to be better prepared and, as a result, feel and appear to be more competent, controlling emotion, etc. (Howard & Johnson, 2004). What is important about this is that consulting others, whether friends, critical

friends, or mentors / administrators, and the pro-active strategies that friends and critical

friends use are primary means of overcoming the difficulties teachers experience and

directly links positive teacher relationships to resilience. "Resilient individuals have

strong connections with others and know that there are people who care about what

happens to them. […] What was particularly interesting in this group of teachers was

their unanimous claim of strong support from colleagues and school leadership,"

(Howard & Johnson, 2004, pg 14).

Having a proactive attitude is needed for resiliency. This is because a frequent

motivation for friendship, at least initially, is the idea that somebody can do something to

help me. One of the defining characteristics of truly resilient teachers is that they

proactively seek out other teachers to help, whether in the form of mentoring or simply

guiding new teachers through the mundane paperwork that occasionally has to be

completed (Patterson et al., 2004) and this is the truest meaning of friendship. "A teacher

candidate who gives evidence of resilience, of taking charge to solve problems and find

opportunities may add to the school in important ways that bolster student achievement

and school success," (Patterson et al., 2004, pg 1). Patterson et al. (2004) found that being

proactive in helping colleagues, as well as seeking help from them increased their

personal resiliency. These teachers have a willingness to learn and share what they've

learned with others. This results in a broader network of friends and associates. "Teachers

were waiting on the sidelines for someone to come take their hand and bring them to the

starting line. You need to identify who they are and give them mentoring. I used to say we

didn't need them in the profession, but now I know there's a huge need out there for

teachers and you can't leave them behind. We need to mentor them instead of having the

same teachers going through the same training and not gaining new knowledge that will help them in their classrooms. It's too expensive and takes too much energy to keep training new teachers," (Patterson et al., 2004, pg 6). Many resilient teachers realize that administrators come and go, but the hardest and most important work falls to those teachers who choose to stay and reach students.

Related to resilience and friendship is the notion of having a sense of humor. Having a sense of humor is one of the most valued qualities people look for in a friend (Bobek, 2002). Bobek (2002) refers to it as one of the primary sources of resiliency, and that it helps to overcome the monotony of daily routine and allows individuals to laugh at their mistakes. As one teacher puts it, "Other teachers in the school are [a source of support]. You can have a bit of a joke with them and I think that helps – laugh it off a bit. You can walk next door or to whoever you get along with at school and have a bit of a scream – 'I can't believe this happened!!' and have a bit of a joke and it does make you feel better," (Howard & Johnson, 2004, pg 15). Another teacher emphasizes the need to have a really positive outlook on life and that it is necessary to be able to laugh at things and deal with problems immediately (Howard & Johnson, 2004). There are many factors of resilience that draw from friendships. A few of the qualities that Howard and Johnson identify as being necessary for resilience are "a sense of agency, a strong support group (including a competent and caring leadership team), pride in achievements and competence in areas of personal importance," (Howard & Johnson, 2004, pg 15). When asked how they acquired resilience many teachers commented that it was through "quiet reflection on their practice" which happens to be one of the objectives of friendships among teachers.

Potential problems with friendships. As with anything good, friendships have the possibility of being unhelpful. School administrators have to judge how constructive personal relationships are and whether they are beneficial for the school at large or not. Listed below are just a few situations regarding friendships that could be an obstacle to the well-being of the school. They are keeping focused, objectivity, and negative friendships.

Keeping Focused: Staying focused can be a potential problem because friends must have a certain amount of discipline and be able to provide / receive guidance, without allowing the conversations to be reduced to mere gossip, slander, or idle chatter (Storey, 2013). Part of the beauty of critical friendships is that a structure is agreed on in advance so that the discussions don't become a waste of time or source of unproductive discussions. The focus must always be on personal improvement and as a result, it is very important to stay focused on the goal (Storey, 2013).

Objectivity: This is very much related to the goal of keeping focused on the good of the individual. Part of being a friend implies providing constructive advice that can help to improve the life of the one seeking help or guidance. Sometimes objectivity requires motivating or leading friends in a direction that may not be immediately desirable but leads to their well-being.

Negative Friendships: Not all friendships are healthy and the same methods that can be used to develop professionals and enhance the culture of a school can be used to damage individuals and hinder the progress of a school. There is the possibility that when a new principal or school policies are introduced, these friendships can divide teachers into factions which ultimately challenge the structure of authority.

Chapter III

Methodology

One of the factors this study is based on is the ever-present need to help students reach higher levels of learning and achievement (Participant Media, 2010). Another focuses on teachers who are the primary link between students and achievement. The principal does not have a direct impact on the learning of students (or at least not as much as the teacher) but does have the possibility of having a significant indirect influence on student learning (King, 2001). These factors were studied through the lens of professional friendship among teachers. Since teachers are the primary influence on the school regarding the academic success of students (The Alliance, 2005) it stands to reason that by improving the climate and culture of a school, student achievement also improves. If the goal of the American education system is to enhance the performance of students across the board in this country, then it is necessary to make use of every means available (Participant Media, 2010).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the teachers' and principal's perceptions regarding the manner in which professional friendship among faculty influence teacher retention, teacher performance, student performance, and the quality of the school culture. Professional friendships among teachers were explored from both the teachers' perspectives as well as the principal's perspective. Both beliefs were analyzed for similarities and differences. Similar studies have been conducted in other fields, namely in the private sector business field, but not in the school environment.

Research Questions

The research questions are as follows:

1. How do teachers perceive the manner in which professional friendships influence teacher retention?

2. How does the principal perceive the manner in which professional friendships influence teacher retention?

3. How are the teachers' and principal's perceptions similar and different regarding the influence of teacher friendships on teacher retention?

4. How do teachers perceive the manner in which professional friendships influence teacher performance?

5. How does the principal perceive the manner in which professional friendships influence teacher performance?

6. How are the teachers' and principal's perceptions similar and different regarding the influence of teacher friendships on teacher performance?

7. How do teachers perceive the manner in which professional friendships influence student performance?

8. How does the principal perceive the manner in which professional friendships influence student performance?

9. How are the teachers' and principal's perceptions similar and different regarding the influence of teacher friendships on student performance?

10. How do teachers perceive the manner in which professional friendships influence the quality of school culture?

11. How does the principal perceive the manner in which professional friendships influence the quality of school culture?

12. How are the teachers' and principal's perceptions similar and different regarding the influence of teacher friendships on school culture?

Prompts were used to encourage discussion. After each of the questions, teachers may be asked to "please elaborate," "please explain," "why do you think that is so," and so on.

Research Design

This study is qualitative in nature and is based on the results of a semi-structured focus group of teachers, followed up by an interview with the school principal. This method was chosen because the most effective method of study to understand a subjective situation is through interviews (Alhalaiqa, Deane, & Gray, 2013). As indicated by Lim, Hepworth, and Bogossian (2011), it is necessary to take a qualitative approach when researching the day to day experiences of professionals. Focus groups are very helpful for understanding the social perceptions of issues, but should be interpreted cautiously, because of the small sample size (Livingston, Bay-Cheng, Hequembourg, Testa, & Downs, 2013). In Livingston's (2013) study, it was necessary to use focus groups as the vehicle of research, since the goal was to understand individual perceptions, which is also the focus of this particular study. The interviews focused on teachers' beliefs and perceptions that are not easily quantifiable. The research explored teacher friendships and how they influence teacher retention, school climate, teacher performance, and student performance.

The study focused on one specific school in the Houston-area. St X Catholic School is a private, Catholic school that offers Pre-K – Eighth Grade. The school is privately owned and operated by a board of directors who provide the funding and resources for school operation. Although St X is a Catholic school, it receives no funding from the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston or any religious order for that matter. All funding for the school comes from the collection of tuition and fees and fundraising. Each year, the principal and teachers renew their contracts for employment. The board selects the principal, who in turn hires all school employees. The teachers at St X Catholic School seem to have unusually long tenures (fifteen years on average) and student performance is well above average. The researcher seeks participation from as many teachers as are willing. The teachers' responses were analyzed to determine themes that describe the nature of friendships. Responses were analyzed for the mention of qualities that exemplify friendship as described in Chapter Two and whether or not it has influenced the participants in any way regarding retention, performance, and school culture. The responses provided were compared to those of the principal to see if there are any similarities or differences in perception.

Research Setting

St X Catholic School is a private, Catholic Pre-K through Eighth Grade school in the west Houston-area. The school was founded in 1988 with 56 students and currently has 715 students. There are fifty-three full-time teachers and three administrators, not including support staff. There are three classes for each grade. This school has been recognized twice as a National Blue Ribbon School of Excellence. The Blue Ribbon is not only an indicator of school achievement, but it sets the tone for the admissions

process to the school. Parents recognize prior to being admitted that the level of academic excellence is very high. As a result, it may be a cause of exclusion for different groups of children. The school serves families in a higher socio-economic region of Houston. The vision for the school is to encourage students to be self-directed learners who can develop their personal skills and fulfill their maximum potential. Tuition for elementary students is $6,830 per year and for middle school, the tuition is $7,920. There is no free lunch program. The student population consists of fifty-eight percent Caucasian students, twenty percent Hispanic, eleven percent Asian, one percent African-American, and ten percent Native American / Pacific Islander / Multi-racial. The ratio of female to male students is approximately 1.037:1. The ratio of female teachers to male teachers (this number includes staff and administration) is eleven to one. An entrance exam is required for admittance to the school. New students are expected to be at the sixtieth percentile or higher on a nationally normed standardized test. The principal was a founding parent of the school twenty-seven years ago. She has been principal for twelve of those years. The faculty and staff are comprised of seventy-eight females and six males. The teachers' ages vary from the early twenties to late sixties. The population being studied consisted of all the teachers of St X Catholic School that were willing to participate, as well as the school principal. The focus group interview is voluntary and identities are kept confidential.

St X Catholic School was chosen to participate in this study for various reasons, but the most important of which, is that it has an unusually high retention and satisfaction rate for teachers. Most of the teachers indicated that they had been at St X Catholic School for fifteen years on average. This also coincided with the fact that academically the students are among the highest performing within the Catholic school system. Years

ago, the current principal adopted a philosophy to guide the school which is known as Love and Logic, developed by the Love and Logic Institute®. Some of the basic principles of the program focus on affirming the dignity of students while allowing them to make their own choices and experience the logical consequences of their choices as a way to modify behavior. There are some important parallels between this program and the subject of this study, starting with a fundamental appreciation for the value of each person and who they are. Specific retention data were obtained during the study and results provided in Chapter Four.

Procedure

The research for this study was conducted via focus group. The focus group was comprised of teachers who voluntarily chose to participate. All teachers were invited to participate. Ten out of fifty-three teachers volunteered to participate. The investigator provided the school principal with a generic invitation to participate in the study (See Appendix). She emailed the invitation to the teachers. Those that chose to participate formed the focus group. There was only one focus group. Demographic information regarding the teachers was collected at the time of the focus group. Teachers were asked to describe their job satisfaction, their level of education achieved, satisfaction with salary and benefits, years of experience, and the approximate amount of time spent on work outside of school hours.

Teachers were initially asked to provide their own definition of what they consider to be true friendship in the workplace. After their definition had been provided, teachers were given a verbal explanation of the study, followed by the definition of friendship that is used for this particular study. Clarification of terms was a necessary

step so that the teachers knew exactly how words such as friendship were supposed to be used. Questions were asked to the group as a whole and teachers were able to comment as they felt inspired. The responses were recorded electronically, but no personal identifiers or video were used. Participation was voluntary and confidential. Teachers were categorized as elementary or middle-school teachers, but their particular grade was not recorded. No other personal identifiers were used. The focus group consisted of twenty-five questions that delved into the perceptions teachers and the principal have regarding professional friendships, school culture, and climate. The focus group was estimated to last for about one hour. The second stage was an interview with the school principal to provide additional context for the focus group results. All subject information is to remain confidential and anonymous. Approval for this study has been given by the Superintendent of Catholic schools for the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston, as well as the principal of the school. It is important to note that St X Catholic School is a private school and consequently falls outside the jurisdiction of the superintendent of Catholic schools though there is a great deal of collaboration between the two parties.

Participants

   School principal. The school principal has held her current position for the last fifteen years. Her relationship with St X Catholic School began as a parent when she was putting her own children through school when St X first opened. She was later hired on as a secretary and gradually became a teacher, then assistant principal, and finally principal. She has a Master's Degree in Education.

   Focus group. The focus group consists of ten teachers, all from different grade levels, ranging from Pre-K through Eighth. Their level of experience, education, and

other demographic data are depicted in the following table. Of the teachers sampled, the average length of tenure is over nineteen years. Two teachers indicated that they had six to ten years of experience. One indicated eleven to fifteen years' experience. One indicated sixteen to twenty years' experience. Two indicated twenty-one to twenty-five years of experience. Four indicated that they had more than twenty-six years of experience. Nine out of ten of the teachers sampled had a bachelor's degree, while one out of the ten went on to get a graduate level degree. On a scale of zero to ten, with ten being the highest level of satisfaction with their jobs, four teachers rated their satisfaction as a nine, while five rated their satisfaction as a ten. Only one chose not to respond. The teachers were also asked to indicate how many hours are spent on school work, outside of the usual school day. Two teachers indicated zero to five hours. Six teachers indicated sixteen to twenty hours of work, while only two teachers experience more than twenty-one hours of work outside of school hours. The average level of satisfaction with current salary and benefits is 7.8 on the scale of one to ten, which represents above average satisfaction for the group. Three teachers rated their satisfaction as a five. Only one rated her satisfaction as a seven. Four teachers rated their satisfaction as a nine and two teachers rated their satisfaction as a ten.

Vignettes

School history. The story begins when St X Catholic School was founded in 1988 in the city of Houston. The school started in a series of five temporary buildings with fifty-six students. Some of the teachers involved in the focus group have been with St X since the very beginning. This is a story of friendship, hard work, and faith. The current group of teachers and administrators started out as strangers, but over the years

and with personal effort, life changing friendships were formed. "Workplace friendship is positively related to employees' job satisfaction, performance, team cohesion, and organizational commitment; it is negatively associated with employees' turnover intentions and negative emotions," (Yang, 2012, pg 1).

Teacher Interview Questions

1. Is it essential to the quality of your work environment to know that others value you and your opinion?

2. Are your co-workers' opinions important to you?

3. How do you and your co-workers express your respect for each other?

4. Is it ever necessary to worry about co-workers speaking badly about you behind your back?

5. Are you ever tempted to withhold your thoughts or opinions from others, out of fear that it will not be well-received? Is it ever necessary to fear "rocking the boat"?

6. Do you find cliques exist among teachers?

7. Do you ever find any teachers that may be somewhat isolated from the school community?

8. If you didn't feel valued would anything stop you from changing jobs?

9. Do the people you work with contribute to your job satisfaction?

10. Would you say that you and your co-workers work well together as a team?

11. Do co-workers go out of their way to make other teachers feel like part of the team?

12. Can you say that some or all of your co-workers are personal friends?

13. Is it common for co-workers to socialize on a regular basis at non-school activities?

14. Do teacher friendships play a role in the success of the school and your class in particular?

15. Do teacher friendships have any influence on the quality of your teaching?

16. Can you say that you are a more effective teacher now than when you started, because of the influence of your co-workers?

17. Would you prefer to discuss your shortcomings as a teacher with a co-worker or administrator?

18. Do co-workers make it easier to see your mistakes and improve your teaching skills as a result?

19. Do your co-workers have any influence on your willingness to try new methods of teaching?

20. Do your professional friendships have any influence on how you see yourself?

21. Do your professional friendships influence the way you feel about your career as a teacher?

22. Do you feel that it is within your capability to improve student learning / performance?

23. Are your co-workers willing to invest both time and energy in helping you complete a project you may have?

24. Has a co-worker ever helped you to work through at least one problem that could have prompted you to quit your job?

25. How does the support and encouragement of teacher friends influence your ability to cope with difficulties at school?

Principal Interview Questions

1. Is it essential to the quality of the work environment for the teachers to know that others value them and their opinion?

2. Do teachers find that their co-workers' opinions important to them?

3. How do the teachers demonstrate respect for each other in the workplace?

4. Within any particular classroom can you see something specific where friendships have helped that class to either grow or not grow?

5. Are teachers ever tempted to withhold their thoughts or opinions from others out of fear that they will not be well-received?

6. Do you find that cliques exist among the teachers?

7. Do you ever find any teachers that may be somewhat isolated from the school community?

8. If there was a teacher who didn't feel valued by her co-workers would it possibly lead that teacher to look for a different job, or do you think it is something they could work through?

9. Would your teachers say that the people they work with are an important factor in their job satisfaction?

10. Would you say that friendships just occur naturally here at school or do you actively do something to develop the relationships among teachers?

11. Do co-workers go out of their way to make other teachers feel like part of the team?

12. Is it possible to say that teachers here consider each other to be personal friends, not just work friends?

13. Is it common for teachers to socialize on a regular basis at non-school activities?

14. Do teacher friendships play a role in the success of the school and their class in particular?

15. Do you think that these friendships can improve the quality of the teaching?

16. Can you say that teachers are more effective now than when they started, because of the influence of their co-workers?

17. Would teachers prefer to discuss their shortcomings as a teacher with a co-worker or administrator?

18. Do co-workers make it easier for teachers to see their mistakes and improve their teaching skills?

19. Do your co-workers have any influence on a teacher's willingness to try new methods of teaching?

20. Do the professional friendships of teachers have any influence on how they see themselves?

21. Do the professional friendships of teachers influence the way they feel about their career as a teacher?

22. Do teachers feel that it is within their capability to improve student learning / performance?

23. Are teachers willing to invest both time and energy in helping each other complete any projects they may have?

24. Has a co-worker ever helped a teacher to work through at least one problem that could have prompted them to quit their job?

25. Do you think there's ever been a situation where somebody has been going through burnout, but was able to work through it with the help of a friend and continue on here as a fruitful teacher?

All data for this study came from either the focus group or interview. The questionnaire has been custom designed for this particular research. The focus group questions were read orally for the teachers in a dialogue format. The ensuing discussion was recorded electronically and transcribed. Teachers were asked to fill out a very short survey about their demography. No names or personal identifiers were used. It is simply for the purpose of understanding the context of the subjects to be interviewed.

The focus group questions for teachers focused on professional friendships and how they influence teacher retention, performance, and school culture. The results were gathered and examined by the researcher alone. The interview questions for the school principal were similar to the questions for the teachers. All interviews were recorded electronically and transcribed by the researcher only.

The interview questions are designed to explore how friendships influence teacher retention, school culture, teacher performance, and student performance. Even though the focus group was conducted in a dialogue format, teachers were encouraged to expound on their answers as much as possible. By applying a systematic approach to qualitative data, it is possible to draw out conclusions that were not previously apparent (Flemming, 2007) and (De Pinho Campos, Norman, & Jadad, 2011). Flemming (2007) describes the synthesis of qualitative data as being applied to various individual studies from which

conclusions are drawn. The advantage of qualitative research is that there is the possibility of exploring the gray areas in research and draw conclusions that are not easily quantified (Dixon-Woods, 2001).

When the interview and focus group were finished, the investigator had the content of the discussion transcribed. The investigator then looked through both transcripts to see if there were any common themes that reoccurred. These themes were grouped together according to type. The results of this analysis were used to compare the teachers' perceptions of friendship with those of the principal. The investigator checked to see in what ways the perceptions were similar and different.

Ethical Considerations

In order to protect the privacy and identities of all human subjects, pseudonyms were used to identify teachers when names are necessary. The only personal identifier that was used was the label "Early Childhood," "Elementary Teacher," or "Middle-School Teacher." Ages were recorded as a range, rather than a specific number. The content area of teaching and similar identifiers were not relevant to this study. In addition to this, participants in the study were given the opportunity to not answer any question they did not wish to answer. This was true for both the focus group and administrator interview. The study was entirely voluntary in nature.

Limitations of the Study

There are several limitations to this study. The major limitation of this study is that there are relatively few participants. The study could be strengthened by sampling

more schools, especially those that would fall into the category of being disadvantaged, yet having a highly cohesive and academically optimistic faculty.

It would be useful to conduct this study in a variety of environments and contexts, but given the limited focus and resources for this study, it is important to avoid making it too big. It is also possible that not all of the teachers invited to participate actually responded. This could diminish the value of the data collected. The study was conducted within a Catholic school, which has a religious nature and consequently influenced by specific religious teachings. This had the potential to limit the study's relevance to public schools or schools of other denominations. Regarding focus group, there is always the possibility that because responses were given in a public forum that responses were not entirely honest, or that responses were influenced by the thoughts expressed by other participants. It is also possible that participants chose not to speak up about a particular subject, because of the presence of co-workers.

<center>**Chapter IV**</center>

<center>**Findings**</center>

Introduction

      Chapter IV is presented in five distinct sections. The first section is a brief
discussion of what friendship means to the focus group participants. These sections are
arranged according to themes as subsets of the research questions. An in-depth
examination of teacher and principal perceptions provided a basis for answering the
research questions. Friendship related themes identified by other researchers were
identified in the teacher and principal responses to provide answers to the research
questions.

Findings

Regarding Teacher Retention

      "Two keys to retaining teachers are a positive sense of professional community
and administrators' support," (Scherff, 2008, pg 13). As discussed in the previous
sections, St X Catholic School possesses both a positive sense of a professional
community as well as significant administrator support. Through the following
discussions with principal and teachers, it is clear that there are other factors at work,
regarding teacher retention. Some of these factors are the quality of the relationships that
teachers have with each other, the possibility of open and honest communication, and
opportunities for teamwork.

      The principal's perspective. The principal of St X Catholic School identified
several factors that lead to teacher retention. The first is the sense of being in a family
environment where employees have an above average level of commitment to the people

that they work with. Employees have the opportunities to be frustrated with others and then work out their differences together. "There's been maybe one or two people that felt like they just couldn't get past a relationship. I say it's like a family because in a family you can get mad at one another and then makeup and everything's fine again and ninety-nine percent of the time that can happen here. My husband always says, I can't believe you have eighty women working in that school and everybody gets along so well. So part of it is that I keep telling them that we lead by example and if we can't get along here and we're a Catholic school, then there's a problem. So I'll talk to them and there will be times when somebody will get mad at somebody else about something. I try to make sure they understand each other's perspective and say this is not how we act and this is what we need to be doing. There's been a few."

The investigator went on to ask whether the people that worked at St X were a genuine factor contributing to the high level of teacher retention. Her reply was, "Definitely. Yes. I've had other people that worked at other schools in past years and they always say you just don't know what it's like until you work here. It's been a long time since I've worked anywhere else but from my previous experience, it's a different environment and they… I've got a new gal that's coming from public school this year and she's like oh my gosh, almost tearing up this morning, she said we had Friday off after accreditation and so she went back to her old school to meet up with some of her friends there. I just couldn't explain to them what this place is like and she's tearing up as she's telling me this and she said I'm just so grateful I'm here."

Ultimately it was necessary to ask if the principal felt that there were, in fact, genuine friendships among the teachers and whether or not it contributes to the high

teacher retention rates, high performance of teachers and students, and the quality of the

school culture. She remarked, "Yes. They go on trips together. They go out together.

They go shopping. We go painting. You know, play golf; all kinds of things. There's

quite a variety," meaning that teachers saw each other as personal friends, not just people

they go to work with.

When pressed about the quality of the friendships that were present, namely are

there teachers who would say they have a "best friend" among their co-workers here, the

principal responded, "I would say it's true for the majority. Again, it probably wouldn't

be true for the ones who have been here for just a year or something. Yeah, I know they

hang out and do things. The two ladies in development took me out shopping one time

because I was trying to find an outfit for something special. 'Come on, we know where to

go.' We hung out for the day and stuff. They're like that all the time. Athletics, after they

win, 'Oh come on everybody, let's go out and eat.' They will go out and socialize. They

do a lot of things together outside of work." "The things that they go above and beyond to

do for one another when there's something going on an issue or a family going through

difficult time." "I think that having these friendships and relationships, they enjoy getting

to come to work with their friends. It's an enjoyable environment here. Have a good time

and share what's working and they can communicate back and forth with each other and

get ideas off of each other. They help each other out. They come together as one great

mind."

Building these friendships was the result of teamwork and sharing their personal

lives with others. "Some of them have been here so long when we were so small and,

gosh, just we've had to work so hard to go from five temporary buildings to this that we've been through a lot together. We've shared each other's tragedies and celebrations." In the end, it was found that from what the principal can see, the teachers have no desire whatsoever to go work someplace else. They would prefer to work at St X in a diminished capacity than to have to work as a teacher elsewhere. "Actually, the second-grade assistant is a teacher, because she wants to work here and would rather do that and be here as an assistant than to work somewhere else." "I know there have been a few people who left that couldn't figure out how they wanted to get along. I have some subs and things that have come back after leaving and they may have left a little bit upset or not happy with the situations, but they came back and subbed and volunteered and participated." Sometimes departure from the school is the result of burnout, but even after the teachers move on, they tend to come back and still participate in the school community. "Like I said they ask if they can come back to sub; is it ok if I sub or help out. Most of the time they leave on a somewhat positive note and come back and are still part of the community here."

The principal felt that friendships do in fact influence teacher retention for the better. Greater job satisfaction, coming to work with friends, and the quality of mutual support from co-workers are all influenced by friendship among teachers. During the interview, she expressed wonder at how teachers who either quit, retired, or were terminated all seek to continue helping at school, though in a more limited capacity. The principal never explicitly identified her support for teachers as one of the factors leading to teacher retention, however, she did comment that she continuously tries to remind the

teachers of "who we are (as a school); where we're at; why we're here; and what God expects of us."

Ultimately, the principal describes the school as a family, where there is a greater level of commitment to personal relationships within the school when compared to other schools or professional environments. It is possible to have disagreements, yet still work harmoniously. The principal does recognize that friendship is needed for teacher perseverance and ultimately teacher retention. Friends are viewed as an aide for overcoming burnout. The principal even went so far as to say that there are teachers' aides who are certified as teachers but opted to work in a reduced capacity as aides rather than not have a job at St X at all. The turnover is so low that out of eighty employees, only one or two positions have to be filled each year and sometimes this is due to the creation of an entirely new position.

The teachers' perspectives. Regarding teacher retention, the teachers felt that there were many factors involved, the most important of which are the co-workers. When asked whether co-workers were an important part of the teachers' job satisfaction, the response was a resounding "absolutely yes." According to one teacher, "you can love teaching in a lot of places. The job is the job at a lot of places, but it's the people that make you stay. That's sort of the bonus."

When asked if any of the teachers could envision themselves leaving St X Catholic School for any reason, the following responses were presented: "I think some people will move on. Somebody younger. I told Suzie that I found a nice place in the garden where she can spread my ashes." Another replied, "If I chose to go teach someplace else, all I would do is compare and contrast what I have here. I would be

missing it too greatly. So, when I leave here, I'm finished. I'm retiring." Another

responded, "This is the last stop for me. I've taught like my husband's job, where you

move around. This is my sixth school and this is it." Finally, the youngest of all the

teachers replied, "Well, this is the only school I ever taught at. I'm straight off the boat

from college. I'm happy compared to my sister. Right now I don't have a reason to want

to leave. Unless somebody gives me a really good one, then I'm content where I'm at.

Not just content, but happy."

In order to see how deeply this attitude went, teachers were asked to describe the

conditions under which they might be willing to leave their current job to work

someplace else. One teacher responded in the following way, "Well, maybe if somebody

decided to double my salary and I only had to work three days per week. But I have a lot

of friends that work at different schools and in different environments and I definitely

don't get the same feel from where they're at. I don't know if it would be worth it to

leave what I have here for something else. On the other side, the grass isn't always

greener. It's greener where you water it and we water our grass."

Teachers were also asked how much of a decrease in salary they would be willing

to consider before deciding to quit their current job. The investigator suggested decreases

as much as $15,000 to $20,000. The response provided was "Well, I'd have to think of

survival. I think it would be different for every one of us. You've got to pay bills." These

responses seem to indicate that salary and benefits are important, but not the defining

factor in teacher retention, but rather the relationships that teachers form with each other.

The investigator probed to see if there were other conditions under which teachers

might quit their jobs. The investigator asked if mutual appreciation and value played any

part in staying at their current job. The teachers responded, "I'd be out of here. If I didn't have their support; if there was a lack of that caring, which is valuing, I don't think I would have lasted this long. This is my family. My family is far away. These women have been here in my darkest hour, or I would be six feet under. I can put my hand on the Bible and say that with no fear."

The investigator probed to see if friendship was a key factor for helping teachers work through any difficulty they may have at work. The response was an absolute "yes" from all teachers. "I almost quit last year. I had a very difficult class and I think that every time Julie saw me she thought I was coming in to quit. I had a very hard group of children and a lot of times I went home and wondered what I was doing this for. But I got through it. The chapel really helped a lot. Really, I went and spent a lot of time in there. I'm doing a lot better this year. I'm glad I stayed." Another commented, "I almost quit twice my first year. The first was at the beginning of the year when I was told the students don't go to recess. I was quite in shock that fifth graders don't go to recess. We do go, but at the time weren't going to recess, except for Friday. So that was like maybe within the first couple of weeks of school. Then in December, there was a situation that happened and I felt I did the right thing by calling the parent. The principal at the time, I think wasn't feeling well and I went in all proud, thinking I did the right thing and I kind of got fussed at. And I almost quit again and I had a person that I talked to that helped me through. So, that was twice in one semester." "I hung in there. Yeah, I actually had the thought I'd hang in here for one year and then I'm leaving. But, if we didn't have each other through some of those times a few of us would have [quit]." "If I didn't have some

time or places to vent, I might have said I don't need this. You can find somebody else to replace me."

The qualities identified by teachers that make resilience possible are reassurance, comfort, and commiseration. "I also felt like I wasn't alone. I felt like I'm the only one that was having problems. As I got to know people and talk to people I realized that I'm not the only one that has these feeling at times." From these comments, it is possible to see that friendship definitely leads to resilience and higher levels of retention.

Teachers were asked if they ever experience burnout, a leading factor in teacher attrition. The response was yes. "That is where we really keep each other going. I think so too. Support each other, cheer each other up. It's just the typical things everybody deals with when you work hard and get tired." The friendships that the teachers have at work carry over into their personal lives. There is no distinction for these teachers between their lives at school or away from school. In order to do this, it is necessary to be vulnerable to co-workers and let them into their personal lives. "There always seems to be somebody remembering or sticking their head out and looking in for us. I know a lot of us keep in touch with each other and have relationships outside of school. So that sort of carries over. We talk to each other after we leave and on the weekends, or we hang out or vacation together."

Teachers definitely consider their friendships to be one of the most important reasons for staying at St X Catholic School, rather than changing to some other job. Not only do friendships help employees through dark and confusing times, they are also a reason to stay on, even when a job with better benefits might be available. Data regarding teacher retention for St X Catholic School is listed below. The data show the retention

rate for the last ten years. This data were calculated by subtracting from one-hundred

percent the number of existing teaching positions that have been vacated each year

divided by the total number of teachers.

Table 1

Teacher Retention Rate for Ten Years

Year	2005 - 2006	2006 - 2007	2007 - 2008	2008 - 2009	2009 - 2010	2010 - 2011	2011 - 2012	2012 - 2013	2013 - 2014	2014 - 2015
RR	91%	93%	91%	91%	94%	95%	99%	88%	91%	94%

Note. RR is Retention Rate

Similarities and differences. In the end, there was a great deal of agreement

between the perceptions of the principal and the teachers. Friendship has a two-fold value

regarding teacher retention. Both parties see friendship as a positive incentive to stay and

also as an instrument for resolving the difficulties that lead to burnout and attrition.

Teachers and principal alike felt that the school really is a family environment, where the

teachers' personal level of commitment to each other is greater than if they worked at a

different school or professional environment.

In spite of the fact that teachers and principal were in almost complete agreement

on the issue of friendship and teacher retention, the teachers tended to put more emphasis

on their personal initiative and effort as the catalyst for the formation of friendships and a

welcoming community. The principal, on the other hand, tended to put greater emphasis

on policies that have been implemented as the main catalyst for developing friendship

among teachers. A couple of the policies and practices cited are the teacher mentoring

program, the teachings of Harry Wong, the Love and Logic program, and the constant

communication of the vision for the school to the teachers.

Regarding Teacher Performance

According to King (2001), "there are many variables that impact teachers' level of efficacy. Some of these variables include the teachers' attitudes and beliefs concerning the size of the school, the demographics of the students, the relationship with colleagues, the level of community support, the level of participation in decision making, and their relationship with the principal" (King, 2001, pg 17). Throughout the discussion regarding teacher performance, it is quite evident that all of these factors play a role in retaining and developing the teachers year after year. Authentic friendship facilitates professional growth for all employees and improves the likelihood of mutual support, sharing ideas, and collaboration. Ultimately this trickles down to the students and influences their performance.

The principal's perspective. The principal's perspective seemed to center on the sharing of ideas as a consequence of friendship that enhances teacher performance. She sees the school community very much as a hive where teachers collaborate on initiatives, exchange ideas, discuss their mistakes, and learn how to improve on ideas that may or may not have worked out in the past. Working with friends seems to imply that there is a very high level of comfort with co-workers, as well as the absence of any barriers between teachers. This makes it possible for information to flow freely among employees. It also allows teachers to discuss their struggles and shortcomings in a friendly environment so that they can grow as professionals. "I think it keeps them energized and excited about what they're doing. They're not the type that just goes to the lesson plan book from previous years and keep repeating what they're doing. They take it and tweak it. They look at somebody else's idea and "oh, I'm going to try a little piece of

what that person was doing in mine." So, it keeps everyone motivated and moving in a positive direction."

The principal invests a lot of resources into professional development. This increases the intellectual stimulation of teachers. When coupled with friendship it leads to an intense synergy and excitement among the faculty. "Yeah, I think because everybody is so open about what they're working on and what they want to achieve and we put so much value here on professional development. They try to brainstorm with one another and go to workshops together to learn and come up with some ideas; how to do some things differently; how to challenge themselves and what they're teaching students. I've seen a huge improvement in technology and how much they use technology in their classes. Right now it's like they're on fire with the excitement. Middle school now has their own devices. They had a bring-your-own-device policy for the past couple of years in seventh and eighth grade, but this year sixth on up have Chromebooks and the eighth graders have their own devices that they brought last year. So, we're letting that fizzle out. But that freed up two Chromebook labs for the fourth and fifth grade. Third grade asked for ten iPads over the summer. We gave them ten and now they're asking, 'Can we have ten iPads in each classroom?' But that's because they're sharing their ideas and sharing their excitement about look what this can do and I did this. They do. They love sharing all their new ideas as they come and some of these are teachers that have been teaching for a long time. They're excited to share or even ask, 'How did you do that? You know I want to try something like that. That sounds really neat.' So, it's been amazing to see some of the older generation get really excited about this new technology that's going on out there."

The idea of being excited to try new methods came up various times during the discussion with the school principal. She too was amazed at how age didn't even seem to factor into how the teachers collaborated and learned from each other. "They kind of ignite excitement and the idea of trying new things in each other. One goes to a workshop and they come back and they share and then, oh I want to do that. The perfect example is first grade. We've got a very young teacher, a teacher kind of middle aged, and then we've got a teacher about my age or more. I'm not really sure how old they technically are, but there's a difference in age of about ten to fifteen years. They get along beautifully together. They go out to lunch during our in-service days and they collaborate on activities and they share what they're doing and, of course, the one that's been here for many years, shares what she's doing to help those that are newer. She's also very willing to accept ideas on what the others are doing and they all have to work together with their schedules, because usually one teacher teaches the religion, so the other two have to teach one particular subject to all three classes while the other teacher is teaching religion. So, they all have to work together anyways and they just do a beautiful job of that. They have a lot of fun working together."

It is worth noting the level of intentionality on the principal's part to influence the opportunities that are available for teachers to grow. Professional development is a requirement at St X. The principal has also gone to great lengths to implement a mentoring program for new teachers. This isn't just to build relationships, but to help develop the teachers' skills.

Regarding teacher performance, the principal believes that having a high teacher retention rate has a strong positive influence for two reasons. First, the initial investment

of time and money to send teachers out for training is not lost. Teachers that stay on for many years are able to implement their training at a single school environment and consequently improve their use of this knowledge year after year without the disruption of changing schools. Second, high teacher retention makes it possible for synergy with other teachers to take place over an extended period of time. This improves an individual teacher's opportunities for shaping the school as a whole and potentially making a significant contribution to the quality of learning throughout the school. The higher retention rate improves the overall efficiency of the school.

Ultimately, for the principal, friendship improves teacher self-efficacy. Friendship destroys barriers that restrain the growth of teachers as professionals and provides them with the energy and support to move forward in their careers with confidence and excitement. When the principal was asked about whether teachers believe in their ability to improve student learning and performance, she replied, "Yes, they feel that is their main responsibility here, the learning. We just had accreditation last week. One of the things that the accreditation teams commented on and we got rated very, very high was student services, because they can see that teachers try very hard to address all the different needs and learning issues of the children. Not that we have a lot of extremes, but we do have some kids that have some needs and they do their best to provide differentiated instruction and provide whatever basic accommodations we would ask of them to do. It's all very important to them to make sure that their children are successful. And we've been telling them that teaching is not just getting up there and throwing information at them. Your job as a teacher is to make sure they take that information and learn it. That's kind of been our guidelines from the beginning. That's your job and

everybody learns differently and so you have to figure out how to make that happen. That's why we value professional development so much is that every teacher's in a different place with those skills and those needs and with the different abilities of the children. So we try to make sure they get the professional development they need to accomplish that goal."

The teachers' perspectives. There's a basic principle at work at St X Catholic School which is that if teachers are happy, then there will be a happy environment and they will tend to perform their best on a continuous basis. When asked if friendship plays a role in a teacher's success within the classroom the response was, "Yes, I do think so. If nothing else, we're happy. We genuinely like our jobs. You've worked with people that are miserable and really hate their jobs. It's hard, but we do enjoy what we do."

There are cultural qualities that stem from the friendship and happiness that make it possible for teachers to have a higher level of performance. When questioned further about whether or not they were more skilled teachers because of their friendships, the response was, "I am. I know I am. We learn from each other. There's no competitiveness. We're willing to help each other. Sandy repeatedly does things to keep me from looking stupid." "If there's a good idea we share. We're not locked into "That was my idea. You came on board; I didn't have a teaching credential. I would have been lost without Betsy. She taught me Bloom's taxonomy so that I could do a Madeline Hunter lesson plan. So, yes, I would have been lost. I had great mentors here that were thrilled and willing to help and always helping."

One important quality that the teachers identified as being fundamental to their success is the feeling of being completely comfortable with each other and that there's no

need to place barriers between teachers, unlike at other schools. "There's a security here. I feel so very secure here, in my position here and in my friendships with other people, that when a new person comes in, there's no competition and I am able to be as fully welcoming as I choose to be, because there is nothing to lose. It can't hurt me. Before Suzie had a mentor-mentee program, we were doing that. We were looking out for the new person to make sure that he or she fit in." "I'm going to go back to what I said a minute ago; there's no competition."

"A hundred years ago I taught at public school and there's competition between teachers in public school; competition to get your kids to have a higher test score than the other person; competition to hang onto your job and you just don't share as easily. You're much more isolated and protective or your ideas and your things. I've been in a Catholic school where people don't share. When I lived in Baton Rouge it was like you against me. I didn't feel that way, but the other person felt that way. So I see a big difference, even though that was a Catholic school also."

Part of this willingness to share and not feel competitiveness stems from the role of the administrator in the building. Teachers commented, "There was a lot of tension (one particular year). I don't know enough to really speculate, but maybe the administration didn't feel as secure. Our administration … they make us feel very secure. They make us feel a little cocky. We are such good teachers because they tell us we are. That year, I don't think we had that. That year there was a little tension. There was a lot of doubt, because then we started second guessing, well if she goes, what's going to happen." The perceived insecurity on the part of administration impacted the performance of the teachers. "It really wasn't that we were disgusted with our jobs. We

were sad that our family needed help. We were dysfunctional that year. We were

dysfunctional; we were sad. We didn't like it."

Years after this, when the current principal was hired there was a shift. Teachers

realize that support from the administration is necessary for their success. They

commented, "Well, like Sandy says, our administrators are our friends too. They're real

supportive anyways. They make themselves available to help us. They even tell us, 'How

more can we help you? What more do I need to do, or how more can I be of assistance?'

They'll say it and they mean it. They will, but I think at the same time, our administrators

recognize that in some areas we are the experts and they come to us and say 'Hey, this is

what's going on with this kid. What have you seen in your classroom? Can you help me

figure out how to handle him?' And so I think there's a lot of give and take in that sense.

There are times when they come to ask our assistance and so it only seems natural that

you will go back to them when you need help as well." Something very enlightening in

this comment is that these teachers consider the school administrators to be within the

circle of friends and not just the boss.

The teachers feel that being comfortable with your co-workers and the absence of

competitiveness makes it possible for them (the teachers) to take risks and try new things

in their classrooms. "We also feel very comfortable that we're not afraid to try something

new. Like, if it doesn't work, then you know that there's always going to be somebody

that can help you. Someone who will say 'here's what I used last year. I have extra of

these.' We're very much if you send out an email and ask for something and within

minutes the entire staff is responding way more than you need, because we're all willing

to lend a hand and help out. So I think you just feel more comfortable doing your job and doing it well because you know you have the support of your peer."

When questioned about how administration supports teachers the response was, "Well, we have saints praise each month at the faculty meeting where people thank each other for the things they've done for each other. [They support us] verbally and with kind gestures. We get bonuses for Christmas. Lots of things. I get lots of verbal thank yous. And just cheerfulness. It also helps that they're in and out of classrooms or up and down the halls. They're recognizing what we're doing; they're making comments later. It's a reassurance to know that they're paying attention; they're visible." There are other elements of friendship that have influenced the performance of the teachers, such as the exchange of ideas, improved student assessment, and simply driving each other towards excellence. "Sometimes it's not directly, but I'll see somebody doing something and it will give me an idea for what I can do. It will spark an idea. It just gets me thinking in another direction. So it's very helpful for me to see what other people are doing. Or we'll discuss how we're assessing a concept and that may lead one teacher to change the way she was going to question of how she was even going to present it because I can apply it in my subject differently than you're applying it." "I think we all push each other to do better and when one of us is maybe feeling the pressure, we do whatever we can to help them along. […] If there's a problem, then we're pretty comfortable coming to each other."

In the end, the teachers felt that the friendships they have with each other did influence their performance for the better as teachers. They find that friendship destroys

barriers between them and not only facilitates the learning of new skills, but it also multiplies the effectiveness of the teachers.

      Similarities and differences. The principal and teachers recognize that they are better professionals as a result of their friendships. There is a homogeneity among the faculty and administration so that all employees fall within the circle of friendship and trust. There is a recognition of the respective expertise that both teachers and administrators have. This creates reciprocity and allows both parties to rely on each other and seek help from each other as needed. There do not appear to be any differences of opinion between the principal and teachers, based on the information obtained through the focus group and interview. However, teachers and principal tended to place greater or lesser emphasis on certain traits. Teachers and principal alike feel that professional development combined with an environment of friendship and open communication make it possible for teachers to become more effective. The teachers did explain in great detail how the principal's support makes it possible for them to operate in a very trusting environment. The teachers seemed to have a more keen awareness of the support the principal provides, than the principal herself seemed to indicate. The principal also seemed to place greater emphasis on professional development as one of the key instruments for improving teacher performance, than the teachers did.

Regarding Student Performance

      The principal's perspective. One of the main reasons why friendship influences student performance, from the principal's perspective, is that teachers end up staying in their jobs for many years. As a result, teachers can improve their methods year after year and administration does not have to devote extra resources to hiring, training, and

developing new teachers. As both teachers and principal have identified, it is the friendships that really make staying at one school for many years a possibility.

"One of the things that the accreditation teams commented on and we got rated very, very high was student services, because they can see that teachers try very hard to address all the different needs and learning issues of the children." Great emphasis is placed on professional development and becoming more skilled teachers. As noted above, friendship drives the teachers to share information, try new methods, and simply be excited to perform at a higher level. As a result, lessons have increased differentiation and students with any disabilities are given the extra help they need. "It's all very important to them to make sure that their children are successful. And we've been telling them that teaching is not just getting up there and throwing information at them. Your job as a teacher is to make sure they take that information and learn it. That's kind of been our guidelines from the beginning. That's your job and everybody learns differently and so you have to figure out how to make that happen."

The teachers' perspectives. One of the most important factors regarding the influence of friendship among teachers on student performance is that the teachers have a heightened level of self-efficacy and confidence in their ability to improve student learning and performance on standardized tests. When asked directly about whether or not it was within their scope of possibilities to improve student learning, there was a resounding "yes" from all the teachers.

Administrators actually influence the teachers' level of self-efficacy by being very demanding with them about their performance, though it's done in a nice way. The teachers feel proud of their level of achievement and it pushes them to greater levels of

excellence that trickle down to the students. "I told the accreditation people that I think this is a challenging school and I mean it in a good way. Our administration demands a lot from us, in the nicest possible way, but they do. […] I moved here from a little tiny school in Corpus Christi. Little tiny Catholic school and it was a great school, but when I got here I was like ok, this is up a level; this is the big leagues. It's a good thing. I think we take a lot of pride in it. We created this community. We're proud that people come to us and they want to see how we do it and I think it makes us even better because we love each other and we love doing it."

Teachers feel the influence of friendship on student performance is subtle but still important. The influence stems from at least two qualities: communication among teachers and the example they provide to the students. Communication among teachers leads to consistency in teaching methods and policy. "Oh, they [students] know we talk, because, in sixth grade, I mentioned even this morning about "I don't think you all made the right inference based on the timeline that you were doing in Mrs. Wilson's class this morning. How did you know we were doing timelines? I guess Mrs. Wilson and I were discussing that this morning. Let me help you with what inferences are and how you can figure this out." "We compare notes that way as well. The kids now that we're friends and I think that tells them that we're supposed to be friends and we're supposed to be a family. I think our kids are very tight in terms of how they operate as well." "They see continuity also. They're seeing a healthy friendship relationship; the way adults should behave." "We're all on the same page regarding certain things. So, they know that this is the way it is whether they're in this room or that room. One teacher doesn't get to be the ogre and everyone else is the favorite."

The chart below is based on the Iowa standardized skills test. It shows how over time student achievement has remained consistently high. The national average of American students is the fiftieth percentile. Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Galveston – Houston have an average composite score of the seventieth percentile. St X Catholic School has a 10-year average of the eighty-third percentile composite score.

Table 2

Composite scores of the Iowa test for St X Catholic School

Grade	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth	Sixth	Seventh	Eighth	Avg
2006	78	80	79	82	81	81	85	85	81.4
2007	82	78	76	83	82	82	84	85	81.5
2008	82	79	76	79	85	85	84	87	82.1
2009	83	79	83	80	81	86	86	86	83
2010	83	85	82	79	81	82	85	85	82.8
2011	78	84	87	87	84	83	85	88	84.5
2012	84	84	84	86	87	85	87	86	85.4
2013	81	81	79	84	90	82	86	87	83.8
2014	75	84	78	73	80	79	81	84	79.3
2015	76	83	78	82	80	80	85	85	81.1

Note. The average (Avg) for each year is equal to the sum of the composite scores for each grade in a given year divided by eight.

Similarities and differences. Teachers and principal seem to be very much in agreement regarding this issue that friendship seems to have more of an indirect influence on student performance. Friendship seems to boost the teachers' classroom skills, which improves the learning environment. They did feel that one direct influence friendship has is that students are presented with examples of cooperation, teamwork, joy, enthusiasm, and hard-work; all of which help students to grow academically. The teachers provide students with an example regarding how they should behave and the expectations they should have for themselves. The teachers went on to say that since teachers talk with each other, it is possible for them to carry over concepts that need reinforcement from one

period with a given teacher to a subsequent period with another teacher. As a result, there is a compounding effect of influence the teachers have on their students. Teachers also admitted that the principal's friendly way of maintaining high expectations both challenges and motivates the teachers to do better. The principal cites the high retention rate as a direct influence on student achievement. This is due mainly to the fact that it is not necessary to spend time and money retraining teachers. As a result, any investment in professional development is compounded since it can be applied year after year and teachers have more opportunities to share their knowledge and experience with each other. Ultimately, the principal seemed to feel that one of the most important influences of friendship on student performance is an increase in differentiation, which allows teachers to reach a greater number of students. There don't appear to be any differences of opinion, however the teachers and principal alike stressed different factors that influence student achievement.

Regarding School Culture

    The principal's perspective. The school culture begins with the principal's leadership. The principal chooses to lead by example and strives to provide the best example possible of how teachers should behave towards each other. One of the most important themes for the principal of St X Catholic School is the need to be continuously communicating the vision and mission for the school to teachers. According to the principal, the few times that teachers have experienced difficulties at work, it was due to forgetting what the purpose and mission of the school are and how each teacher fits into that mission. Communicating that mission keeps everyone working towards the same

goal and for the same purpose. Friendship reinforces the message and helps integrate new teachers into the mission and life of the school.

The school principal places a great deal of emphases on the teachings of Pope John Paul II regarding human dignity and valuing the people encountered each day. The goal is to treat people as ends in themselves and avoid treating people as a means. This is reminiscent of Aristotle's definition of friendship which stresses the need to seek the good for every person. This promotes a spirit of mutual respect and trust within the community that leads to all the subsequent qualities of friendship that influence the growth of the school.

The ideal of valuing individuals for who they are flows beautifully with the work of Harry and Rosemary Wong, who have influenced school traditions and policies that lead to the creation of a welcoming atmosphere at the school. Due to the welcoming environment, teachers feel very much as part of the team. Everyone has an important part to play and all employees are on equal footing. Age, tenure, position, or any other distinguishing factors do not interfere with the contribution each teacher is expected to make. The principal seems to think that age may be a factor in the way teachers relate to each other, but discussion with the teachers affirms the opposite. The willingness of employees to be inclusive and respectful of their co-workers facilitates the development of trust and openness that is prevalent at St X. It helps to remove barriers and encourages the sharing of ideas, experience, and resources.

On many occasions during the interview, the principal referred to the school as a family. One of the most important characteristics of this family is the possibility of expressing frustration with other employees and then working through it. This stems from

an above average level of commitment teachers have towards the friendships they have built at the school. This family environment is the result of intentional hard work, time, and collaboration.

The teachers' perspectives. Perhaps the most important factor in the school culture is that there is a very welcoming spirit among the teachers. When asked about the prevalence of cliques among teachers the response was, "We're all of us quite a cliquey group and well they fit (referring to new hires). It's like there's one more piece of the puzzle. So, maybe there's something she (the principal) looks for in the people she hires. But if Wilma is just hired, most of us are going to make sure that she feels wanted and that you are not the new girl for very long, because we are going to make sure you are part of the group."

The welcoming spirit doesn't depend on the age of the teachers or how new somebody may be. It does, however, depend on the level of personal willingness to form and develop friendships with other teachers. "Even though there are different ages, I just find we are all here for the same purpose. We all tend to get along. This (age) doesn't seem to matter." "We actually talk to each other and listen to each other. […] I guess at some schools, faculty members just don't find the time for each other." "You really have to decide if you are going to reach out and make those relationships yourself or if you're just going to … it's not automatic. It's not easy. It's hard, but in doing that, I have very good relationships with, I feel like, everybody in this room. I know them all very well and now I'm in a position where I'm part of a team. There is a little bit more of a camaraderie with the people that I work directly with, just because I see them the most.

But I think it has to be mutual on both parts. We have to be receiving and they have to be open to us."

"This was my first job out of college. I felt like I really had to make an effort, because I had no experience and I knew nothing. I had to be the one to make the effort to really make it work and I was either going to give it one-hundred and ten percent or I could have very easily worked for a year and then gone somewhere else. But it was kind of a conscious effort of, ok I really want to make this work. But it was also that everyone else was so welcoming and inviting that it was easy. It really wasn't work, you know." "So it really wouldn't matter what kind of a person showed up here, for the most part. Whoever shows up manages to work into the system. They're a product of the system."

"I know some librarians at other schools and there's fear and there's people who go in their rooms and close the door and don't go outside their rooms. We just don't have that." Very often the teachers referred to their school as a family. Because of this family spirit, there is consistency in the lives of the teachers and no need to separate their professional life from personal lives. "People don't feel the need to separate their professional life from personal life and the friends you have here are the friends you're going to have at home and vice-versa." "Sometimes it's like there's an overflow. I'm sure all of us have other things that we do outside of work too. I would invite all of these same people to any party that I would have. That's a good point because I have taken personal friends to events that were mostly school related and it always seemed to work." These friendships are so close that various teachers had no trouble saying that their best friends are among their co-workers. Several teachers even indicated that they go on trips together and take vacations together throughout the year.

Early in the history of the school when temporary buildings were used as classrooms some of the teachers experienced isolation from the community and this strained their relationships. The teachers feel their friendships took time and personal effort to develop. New teachers must make the effort to integrate while current teachers must go out of their way to make the new teachers feel welcome. The qualities of friendship found at this school are reinforced by Catholic teachings, but not necessarily the result of Catholic teachings.

Similarities and differences. The perceptions of teachers and principal alike are that friendship has transformed the culture of St X Catholic School. This is due to the personal effort teachers exhibit to do what is good for co-workers, their willingness to spend time, energy, and resources for the benefit of others, and valuing each other as an end, not as means. The principal feels that the family environment is both the result of teamwork, as well as implementation of policies that encourage friendship and the teachers' willingness to be open and support each other. The teachers feel that having to work together as a team to overcome obstacles helped develop the present culture. They also feel that administration directly influences the culture by helping employees to feel secure in their jobs. They find that the support the principal provides is necessary for being at peace and willing to be vulnerable to co-workers.   The teachers also feel that the school is very much a family. No differences of opinion were found.

Chapter V

Summary, Implications, and Recommendations

Summary of the Study

It was most appropriate to take a qualitative approach to this study, especially for the sake of understanding the perceptions and feelings of the teachers and principal regarding friendship between teachers. The qualitative approach makes it possible to draw out responses that are not easily quantified. Data for the study were collected by means of a one-on-one interview with the principal of St X Catholic School and through a focus group of ten teachers, all from various grade levels within the same school. Both the principal interview and focus group followed a flexible format that was guided by specific instrumentation outlined in Chapter Three.

The study was conducted after school was released at St X Catholic School. The investigator interviewed the school principal first for about thirty minutes in her office. This interview was followed by the focus group, which was held in an adjacent meeting room and lasted one hour. Both the interview and focus group were conducted in a semi-structured format, making it possible for the participants to share their experience while permitting the investigator the possibility of probing more deeply when necessary. All participants signed the agreement to participate freely in the study. The entire study was audio-recorded and transcribed.

In addition to the interview, the school principal also provided data regarding teacher retention rates and composite test scores for the last ten years. The test scores provided are based on the Iowa Standardized Test. The Iowa scores don't show any

causal link between teacher friendships and student performance; however, it does show that academic standards have remained very high over the years.

Analysis

Friendship is an end in itself that keeps teacher coming back year after year. It also provides teachers with opportunities to confide in others, vent when needed, seek guidance from trusted co-workers, and be encouraged by others. Friendship is not the only factor that influences teacher retention, but it is a bonus. Friendship prompts teachers to continue working through less than desirable circumstances, as well as be willing to sacrifice the benefits they could get at another school, such as a higher salary, in order to continue working with their friends.

The factors that lead to the creation of this environment start with the principal's leadership, which continuously brings struggling teachers back to their mission and the reasons why they are at that school. It is also the result of the teachers' deliberate action to support each other, which takes place over many years and through a variety of struggles and victories.

St X Catholic School invests a great deal of time and resources into professional development. The professional development leads to intellectual stimulation of teachers and a subsequent synergy of new ideas throughout the faculty. When teachers return to school, they share what they learned with their co-workers. The influx of new information as well as the availability of new resources "ignites excitement" among the teachers. The excitement towards using new ideas and technologies also extends to very experienced teachers who have been around for a long time. Age doesn't appear to be a barrier to sharing or excitement, though. Through the exchange of information, teachers

are able to build on the successes of their co-workers and consequently improve the quality of learning for all students. This is made possible by friendships among teachers, which removes the barriers that stifle communication and creativity.

Friendship acts like a hive for teachers, providing them with a forum to discuss issues freely and learn from each other. As a result, friendship has a compounding effect on the investment of professional development. For every teacher that goes out for training, that knowledge can be shared among various teachers on return and used to improve their skills. These teachers proceed to customize this knowledge and skills to the needs of their students. Friendship also provides these teachers with a forum to go back and discuss how the new ideas have worked in each classroom and further build on that exchange of knowledge and experience.

Based on the interviews of the principal and teachers, it is apparent that friendship influences student performance though indirectly. This doesn't diminish the value of friendship on student performance. Friendship makes it possible for teachers to provide students with the very best learning environment and strategies that they are capable of though this is not a guarantee that learning actually takes place.

Communication is an important facet of friendship among teachers and facilitates collaboration to overcome any difficulties students may be experiencing, as well as differentiation to accommodate gifted students or those with special needs. Communication among teachers makes it possible for lessons from one class to carry over into another. Problems that students encounter in one class can be resolved and improved on in other classes. Open communication among teachers also improves

uniformity for all classes. St X has three classes for every grade. Communication among grade level teachers facilitates uniformity of teaching and policies in all of these classes.

Perhaps one of the most important ways teacher friendships influence student performance is the example that teachers provide to their students regarding how to live in a peaceful and cooperative environment. The teachers demonstrate for the children through their own relationships what it means to work in a collaborative environment and that optimal growth and learning requires help from the people around them. This contribution, though subtle, can shape the learning environment and facilitate collaborative learning among students.

Creating this environment is the result of intentionality, inclusive, and collaborative work. The result is a family-like community where it is very difficult to break the relationships that unite each of the members. This also has the effect of removing competitiveness from the work environment, which allows people to live and communicate openly and freely with each other.

Summary of the Findings

The findings of this study were presented in vignette format and arranged according to themes. The vignettes were the result of teachers and principal reflecting on questions presented by the investigator. The study was based on research into the influence of friendship among teachers on teacher retention, teacher performance, student performance, and school culture conducted in Chapter Two. The perceptions of the teachers and principal were very much in agreement with each other, as well as the research, however, the teachers were able to provide much greater detail about these relationships and their consequences.

Analysis of the data from the study indicates that both teachers and principal consider friendship to be both a primary factor in the development of their school culture, as well as being a consequence of the school culture. This is true in the sense that teachers have to make a special effort to develop their friendships with each other, but once they have been formed, new teachers are easily integrated into the friendships and culture. It is very interesting to note that teachers very much considered administrators to be within their circle of friends and not merely supervisors.

Conclusions

The first conclusion is that there appears to be a relationship between teacher friendship and the flourishing of a school, although the friendships may not be perfect. It appears that as friendships are formed teacher retention, student performance, teacher performance, and the quality of the school culture improve as well. For the principal, the notion of friendship and cooperation seems to be more of an application of good ideas and policies at school. For the teachers, however, the friendships are an essential and tangible reality of their lives. Due to the specific demographic of this population, the influence friendship has on teacher retention, student performance, teacher performance, and school culture may be different in other environments.

One important observation is that friendships among teachers are something that require personal effort and time. Although teachers can be friendly to each other as soon as they meet, true friendship seems to require personal commitment on behalf of the teachers. There has to be a willingness to invest time and effort in co-workers. School policies and structures that reinforce employees' willingness to invest in relationships influence the number and quality of friendships. Some of the policies that inhibit the

formation of friendships are basing raises and contract renewal on standardized test performance, allowing parents to choose their child's teachers, providing preferred duties to favorite teachers and undesirable duties to the least favorite teachers, etc.

It can be concluded that the principal is instrumental in the development of the quality of the school culture. The principal sets a tone of security and concern for one another that trickles down to the teachers and community. The principal is considered to be within the friendship network and not just a supervisor. The principal plays a vital role in the formation of friendships at school. Consequently, principals should be aware of the breadth of their influence as well as the possibility of collaborating with teachers as friends on equal footing and the benefits this brings to the school. Friendship strengthens the community as a whole by unifying the personal and professional lives of teachers. It fosters greater commitment among teachers to each other and to the school they are employed at.

Implications for Policy and Practice

Principals have the possibility of encouraging the formation of friendships through their example, making resources available, being present in the school hallways where they can be seen, and investing in the professional development of teachers. Part of the principal's influence is the ability to take employees that may be struggling in one way or another and help them to refocus on the mission and vision for the school and how each employee fits into that picture. Reminding teachers of their purpose seems to help draw teachers back into the community and work through personal obstacles.

Although the culture of friendship is reinforced by Catholic teachings, they are not a guarantee that any kind of friendship will develop among teachers. Friendship can

develop in many different circumstances and do not require religion as a basis for occurring though religion (in this case Catholicism) seems to reinforce the quantity and quality of those friendships. The goodwill that teachers have for each other helps the school to progress.

All teachers noted that there aren't barriers of any kind between them, but instead an atmosphere of collaboration. The teachers feel that the spirit of competition seems to be one of the most important factors that hinder authentic collaboration and working towards the well-being of others. Schools would likely benefit if principals took steps to eliminate barriers that separate teachers from each other. There may be structures within a school that promote division and should be eliminated, such as obtaining a teaching contract or increase in salary based on test scores or something as simple as a principal having a favorite group of teachers. This study implies that the predominance of friendship among teachers influences the individual and group psychology of teachers and how they interact with their students. The influence of friendship among teachers seems to be indirectly related to student performance.

The relationships that teachers have with each other are exemplars for students to follow. The introduction to peaceful relationships makes it possible to learn in a more natural state. Friendship encourages the exchange of ideas and experience as well as encourages enthusiasm for one's job. The net effect on student and teacher performance is significant. The friendships that teachers established at St X Catholic School were not simply friendships at work that were segregated from personal friendship and activities. For the teachers at St X Catholic School, there is an integration of personal and professional life through friendships. This creates consistency in the personal lives of the

teachers and strengthens the school community as a whole. Teachers experience greater commitment and are less likely to seek employment elsewhere if they feel like they belong to a loving family and not simply a great place to work.

This study helps leaders in the education field to access other tools at their disposal to increase student achievement, as well as bringing down the multi-faceted cost associated with having to hire and train large numbers of teachers each year. The prevalence of friendship among teachers seems to be greatly influenced by the principal's policies and practices. The elimination of structures that lead to individualism and create barriers between employees, while implementing policies that foment friendship would likely improve the quality of education provided to students. This could take the form of increasing opportunities for social engagements outside of school hours, creating opportunities for collaboration and sharing of ideas, allowing teachers to go to professional development and then share what they learned with other teachers, etc.

The presence of principals in the school hallways and classrooms is essential to teachers' feelings of being supported. Schools would benefit from increasing the presence of administrators throughout the school and not just remaining in the school office. Professional development and introducing new resources into classrooms contributes to the intellectual stimulation of teachers, providing a basis for friendly, mutual exchange and innovation. Schools would benefit from offering professional development opportunities throughout the year to encourage this. The vision for the school is essential to keeping teachers focused on their jobs as educators. Teachers would benefit from a frequent discussion of the school mission and vision.

Recommendations for Future Research

The first recommendation would be to conduct this same study at a variety of different schools, especially those that are public or have no religious affiliation. Even though love and friendship are natural phenomena in all parts of the world, they are reinforced by Catholic teachings. It would be helpful to observe how friendships are made and maintained in a non-religious environment. It would also be helpful to conduct this same study at a school with a high turnover rate to see if there are differences in culture, teachers' beliefs, and student performance.

It is recommended that the same study be conducted at schools where admission is open to anyone, particularly those which have lower achieving students. St X Catholic School has the luxury of requiring that all students meet a certain minimum level of achievement before being admitted to the school. This may influence the overall student achievement, as well as the culture of the school. It would be helpful to know if teacher friendships can influence the achievement of underprivileged students in a variety of school contexts.

It was somewhat unexpected that the teachers would so easily consider the principal of the school to be their friend. This is in part due to the authority role of the principal which often leads teachers to either mistrust or be defensive towards the principal. It would be helpful to study more carefully how principals can cross over into the friendship circles of teachers, yet still remain effective leaders within the school. Based on this study it seems that inclusion of the principal as a friend to the teachers has only enhanced her effectiveness as the school leader.

Final Reflection

St X Catholic School confirms the research conducted in Chapter Two. It also reveals some of the intricacies of friendships that were not previously studied. While mentoring programs are helpful, they cannot replace the more far-reaching influence of friendship. Mentoring lasts for a specific period of time and generally occurs during business hours. The friendships at St X Catholic School have removed the separation between personal and professional lives of the teachers. Teachers often build barriers, such as rivalry and cliques, that are intended to protect them from misfortune but, in reality, are a hindrance to their personal well-being and satisfaction, as well as the well-being of their students. Educating students implies selflessness and self-giving. As demonstrated in this study, teachers must make a conscious effort to collaborate with their co-workers if they are going to see the number and quality of friendships grow. It appears from the study that friendship is the most important reason (though it is not the only one) these teachers have for staying at their current job. Without friends, the job would just be a job.

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Appendix A

Institutional Review Board

IRB Letter of Approval

UNIVERSITYof **HOUSTON**

DIVISION OF RESEARCH

September 4, 2015

Mr. Dominic Bernard
c/o Dr. Steven Busch
Dean, Education

Dear Mr. Dominic Bernard,

Based on your request for exempt status, an administrative review of your research proposal entitled "A CASE STUDY OF THE INFLUENCE OF PROFESSIONAL FRIENDSHIPS AMONG TEACHERS ON TEACHER RETENTION, SCHOOL CULTURE, AND STUDENT PERFORMANCE" was conducted on August 5, 2015.

At that time, your request for exemption under **Category 2** was approved pending modification of your proposed procedures/documents.

The changes you have made adequately respond to the identified contingencies. As long as you continue using procedures described in this project, you do not have to reapply for review. * Any modification of this approved protocol will require review and further approval. Please contact me to ascertain the appropriate mechanism.

If you have any questions, please contact Alicia Vargas at (713) 743-

9215. Sincerely yours,

Kirstin Rochford, MPH, CIP,
CPIA Director, Research
Compliance

*Approvals for exempt protocols will be valid for 5 years beyond the approval date. Approval for this project will expire **September 3, 2020**. If the project is completed prior to this date, a final report

should be filed to close the protocol. If the project will continue after this date, you will need to reapply for approval if you wish to avoid an interruption of your data collection.

Protocol Number: 15543-EX

316 E. Cullen Building   Houston, TX 77204-2015   (713) 743-9204   Fax:

(713) 743-9577 COMMITTEES FOR THE PROTECTION OF

HUMAN SUBJECTS.

Teachers' Invitation to Participate

Distribution via email

09/07/15

Dear teachers,

A gentleman from the University of Houston would like to conduct a study of our school. He will be investigating the influence of friendship among teachers on school culture, teacher performance, and student performance. We would like to hold the study during the first week of October after school one day. It will be conducted in a focus group format and is expected to last 1 hour. Approximately ten volunteers will be needed. If you are interested in participating, please let me know before the end of the week. This is not a required activity. Participation is on a volunteer basis. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Principal

Principal's Consent Form

![University of Houston logo - A Carnegie-Designated Tier One Public Research University]

UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

PROJECT TITLE: A CASE STUDY OF THE INFLUENCE OF PROFESSIONAL

FRIENDSHIPS AMONG TEACHERS ON TEACHER RETENTION, SCHOOL

CULTURE, AND STUDENT PERFORMANCE

You are being invited to take part in a research project conducted by Mr Dominic Madrid

from the Department of Education Leadership at the University of Houston. Mr Madrid is

a doctoral student, conducting research under the guidance of Drs Stephen Busch and

Angus MacNeil. This study is a requirement for the completion of his dissertation.

NON-PARTICIPATION STATEMENT

Taking part in the research project is voluntary and you may refuse to take part or

withdraw at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise

entitled. You may also refuse to answer any research-related questions that make you

uncomfortable.

<u>PURPOSE OF THE STUDY</u>

The purpose of this study is to determine teachers' and administrators' perceptions regarding the manner in which professional friendship among faculty influence teacher retention, teacher performance, student performance, and the quality of the school culture. The study is expected to last between about 30 minutes.

<u>PROCEDURES</u>

You will be one of approximately _5 - 10__ subjects invited to take part in this project. As principal, however, your interview will take place separately from the focus group participants.

The study will take place in an interview format, which means that you will be provided with questions related to school culture, teacher retention, and student performance. You will be asked to discuss your answers. There will not be any follow-up questions or materials of any kind.

<u>CONFIDENTIALITY</u>

Every effort will be made to maintain the confidentiality of your participation in this project. Your name will be paired with a code number by the principal investigator. This code number will appear on all written materials. The list pairing the subject's name to the assigned code number will be kept separate from all research materials and will be available only to the principal investigator. Confidentiality will be maintained within legal limits.

RISKS / DISCOMFORTS

There are no foreseeable risks to your participation in this focus group.

BENEFITS

While you will not directly benefit from participation, your participation may help

investigators better understand relational factors that can enhance school culture,

teacher retention, and student performance.

ALTERNATIVES

Participation in this project is voluntary and the only alternative to this project is non-

participation.

PUBLICATION STATEMENT

The results of this study may be published in scientific journals, professional

publications, or educational presentations; however, no individual subject will be

identified.

AGREEMENT FOR THE USE OF AUDIO/VIDEO TAPES

If you consent to take part in this study, please indicate whether you agree to be audio

taped during the study by checking the appropriate box below. If you agree, please also

indicate whether the audio tapes can be used for publication/presentations.

☐ <u>I agree</u> to be audio taped during the interview.
    ☐ I agree that the audio tape(s) can be used in publication/presentations.
    ☐ I do not agree that the audio tape(s) can be used in publication/presentations.
☐ <u>I do not agree</u> to be audio taped during the interview.

If you do not agree to be taped, you may opt to provide your responses to the discussion

questions in writing, however omitting any personally identifiable data.

_____

SUBJECT RIGHTS

1. I understand that informed consent is required of all persons participating in this project.

2. I have been told that I may refuse to participate or to stop my participation in this project at any time before or during the project. I may also refuse to answer any question.

3. Any risks and/or discomforts have been explained to me, as have any potential benefits.

4. I understand the protections in place to safeguard any personally identifiable information related to my participation.

5. I understand that, if I have any questions, I may contact Dominic Madrid at 713-674-5832. I may also contact Dr Stephen Busch, faculty sponsor, at 713-743-2255

6. **Any questions regarding my rights as a research subject may be addressed to the University of Houston Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects**

(713-743-9204). **All research projects that are carried out by Investigators at the University of Houston are governed be requirements of the University and the federal government**.

SIGNATURES

I have read (or have had read to me) the contents of this consent form and have

been encouraged to ask questions. I have received answers to my questions to

my satisfaction. I give my consent to participate in this study, and have been

provided with a copy of this form for my records and in case I have questions as

the research progresses.

Study Subject (print name): _____

Signature of Study Subject: _____

Date:_____

I have read this form to the subject and/or the subject has read this form. An

explanation of the research was provided and questions from the subject were

solicited and answered to the subject's satisfaction. In my judgment, the subject

has demonstrated comprehension of the information.

Principal Investigator (print name and title):_____

Signature of Principal Investigator: _____

Date:_____

Teachers' Consent Form

UNIVERSITY of
HOUSTON
A CARNEGIE-DESIGNATED TIER ONE
PUBLIC RESEARCH UNIVERSITY

**UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH**

PROJECT TITLE: A CASE STUDY OF THE INFLUENCE OF PROFESSIONAL

FRIENDSHIPS AMONG TEACHERS ON TEACHER RETENTION, SCHOOL

CULTURE, AND STUDENT PERFORMANCE

You are being invited to take part in a research project conducted by Mr Dominic Madrid

from the Department of Education Leadership at the University of Houston. Mr Madrid is

a doctoral student, conducting research under the guidance of Drs Stephen Busch and

Angus MacNeil. This study is a requirement for the completion of his dissertation.

NON-PARTICIPATION STATEMENT

Taking part in the research project is voluntary and you may refuse to take part or

withdraw at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise

entitled. You may also refuse to answer any research-related questions that make you

uncomfortable.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to determine teachers' and administrators' perceptions regarding the manner in which professional friendship among faculty influence teacher retention, teacher performance, student performance, and the quality of the school culture. The study is expected to last between 1 and 1.5 hours.

PROCEDURES

You will be one of approximately _5 - 10__ subjects invited to take part in this project.

The study will take place in a focus group format, which means that participants will be provided with questions related to school culture, teacher retention, and student performance. Participants will be asked to discuss their answers. There will not be any follow-up questions or materials of any kind.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Every effort will be made to maintain the confidentiality of your participation in this project. Each subject's name will be paired with a code number by the principal investigator. This code number will appear on all written materials. The list pairing the subject's name to the assigned code number will be kept separate from all research materials and will be available only to the principal investigator. Confidentiality will be maintained within legal limits.

RISKS/DISCOMFORTS

There are no foreseeable risks to your participation in this focus group.

BENEFITS

While you will not directly benefit from participation, your participation may help investigators better understand relational factors that can enhance school culture, teacher retention, and student performance.

ALTERNATIVES

Participation in this project is voluntary and the only alternative to this project is non-participation.

PUBLICATION STATEMENT

The results of this study may be published in scientific journals, professional publications, or educational presentations; however, no individual subject will be identified.

AGREEMENT FOR THE USE OF AUDIO/VIDEO TAPES

If you consent to take part in this study, please indicate whether you agree to be audio taped during the study by checking the appropriate box below. If you agree, please also indicate whether the audio tapes can be used for publication/presentations.

□ <u>I agree</u> to be audio taped during the interview.
> □ I agree that the audio tape(s) can be used in publication/presentations.
> □ I do not agree that the audio tape(s) can be used in publication/presentations.

□ <u>I do not agree</u> to be audio taped during the interview.

Teachers who do not agree to be taped may opt to provide their responses to the discussion questions in writing, however omitting the participants name and personally identifiable data.

<u>SUBJECT RIGHTS</u>

7. I understand that informed consent is required of all persons participating in this project.

8. I have been told that I may refuse to participate or to stop my participation in this project at any time before or during the project. I may also refuse to answer any question.

9. Any risks and/or discomforts have been explained to me, as have any potential benefits.

10. I understand the protections in place to safeguard any personally identifiable information related to my participation.

11. I understand that, if I have any questions, I may contact Dominic Madrid at 713-674-5832. I may also contact Dr Stephen Busch, faculty sponsor, at 713-743-2255

12. <u>Any questions regarding my rights as a research subject may be addressed to the University of Houston Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (713-743-9204)</u>. All research projects that are carried out by Investigators at the University of Houston are governed be requirements of the University and the federal government.

SIGNATURES

I have read (or have had read to me) the contents of this consent form and have been encouraged to ask questions. I have received answers to my questions to my satisfaction. I give my consent to participate in this study, and have been provided with a copy of this form for my records and in case I have questions as the research progresses.

Study Subject (print name): _____

Signature of Study Subject: _____

Date:_____

I have read this form to the subject and/or the subject has read this form. An explanation of the research was provided and questions from the subject were solicited and answered to the subject's satisfaction. In my judgment, the subject has demonstrated comprehension of the information.

Principal Investigator (print name and title):_____

Signature of Principal Investigator: _____

Date:_____