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Angela G. Kennedy
May 2013

A STUDY OF DISTRICT HIRING PRACTICES AND TEACHER PREPARATION
BACKGROUND AND THE IMPACT ON TEACHER RETENTION

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

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my loving and supportive family.

To Mom and Dad, Roland and Deborah Kennedy - You have always encouraged me to pursue aspirations I never thought I could achieve. You saw my potential and sacrificed to help me realize my dreams. For your love and patience with me, I thank you.

To my son, Ryan Murphy – You inspire me to be the best role model that I can be. You bring joy and laughter to my life. Thank you for always being supportive and for making me the proud mom that I am because of who you have become.

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Abstract

Nationally, teachers leave the profession at rates of up to and beyond 50% after five years of service. Archival data from 2000 and 2005 was analyzed for a major suburban school district in Texas that hired 1,310 first year teachers from three routes to certification including 46% who completed a traditional route and already held a standard teaching certificate, 36% who were participating in the district's in-house Alternative/Accelerated Teacher Certification Program (ATCP), and 18% who were participating in external Alternative/Accelerated certification route programs. Although retention rates varied for each certification route after one to five years of service, teachers who were participating in the district ATCP had the highest overall retention rate at the five year mark with 60% of teachers remaining employed in the district. Teachers certified through the traditional route had a 54% retention rate at five years and teachers from external route programs stayed in the district at a 51% retention rate.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION	1
Brief Review	1
Statement of the Problem.....	5
Purpose of the Study	5
Research Questions	7
Definition of Terms.....	8
Limitations	11
II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE.....	13
The Teacher Shortage	13
Teacher Attrition and Retention.....	16
Costs of Teacher Attrition.....	28
Motivation to Teach.....	30
Alternative/Accelerated Teacher Certification	34
Alternative/Accelerated Teacher Certification and Teacher Attrition.....	40
Teacher Certification and Hiring Practices in a Large, Suburban School District.....	44
One District's Alternative/Accelerated Teacher Certification Program (ATCP).....	46
III. METHODOLOGY	52
Description of the Research Design.....	52
Research Questions	53
Setting	54
Subjects	54
Procedures	55
Instruments.....	59
Limitations	59
IV. RESULTS	61
Results of Each Set of Statistics.....	61
Description of Results in Terms of the Population Sample	81
V. DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS	87
Introduction.....	87
Discussion of Results	88
Implications for School Leaders	91
Implications for Further Research	97
Conclusions.....	100

REFERENCES	103
Appendix A. Approval from the University of Houston Human Subjects Research Committee	112

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
4.1 Teachers Hired 2000-2001 Who Resigned/% Retained After Each Year of Service	64
4.2 Teachers Hired 2001-2002 Who Resigned/% Retained After Each Year of Service	66
4.3 Teachers Hired 2002-2003 Who Resigned/% Retained After Each Year of Service	68
4.4 Teachers Hired 2003-2004 Who Resigned/% Retained After Each Year of Service	70
4.5 Teachers Hired 2004-2005 Who Resigned/% Retained After Each Year of Service	72
4.6 Overall Teachers Hired 2000-2005 Who Resigned/% Retained After Each Year of Service	75
4.7 Traditional/University Route Teachers Hired 2000-2005 Rates of Attrition	76
4.8 ATCP Route Teachers Hired 2000-2005 Rates of Attrition	77
4.9 External Program Route Teacher 2000-2005 Rates of Attrition	78
4.10 All Teachers 2000-2005 Rates of Attrition	79

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure		Page
2.1	Phases of First Year Teacher's Attitude.....	21
2.2	Student Ethnicities of a Major Suburban School District in Texas.....	46
4.1	New teachers hired 2000-2005 by Certification Route	62
4.2	Teachers Hired 2000-2001 % Retained After Each Year of Service	65
4.3	Teachers Hired 2001-2002 % Retained After Each Year of Service	67
4.4	Teachers Hired 2002-2003 % Retained After Each Year of Service	69
4.5	Teachers Hired 2003-2004 % Retained After Each Year of Service	71
4.6	Teachers Hired 2004-2005 % Retained After Each Year of Service	73
4.7	Overall Teachers Hired 2000-2005 % Retained After Each Year of Service	75
4.8	Overall Teachers Hired 2000-2005 % Resigned After Each Year of Service	79

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Research studies show that the most important influence on student performance is the effectiveness of the classroom teacher (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Carey, 2004; Stronge, 2007). Unfortunately, many teachers choose to leave the profession after only a few years of service; thus, making turnover high and creating a revolving door climate for students. One factor that influences teacher effectiveness is the educator preparation program in which the teacher participates in order to attain their state teacher certification. Yet, there is a dearth of research linking specific educator preparation programs to teacher retention. The purpose of this study was to explore ten years of data from a single major suburban school district in Texas in order to determine if teachers hired from one teacher certification route were more likely than those hired from other routes to produce teachers with higher rates of retention.

Brief Review

Increasing student enrollment, high teacher attrition rates and the large number of teachers reaching retirement age mean that the United States must attain and retain an increasing number of qualified teachers for our classrooms each year. Some estimates set the teacher shortage at approximately 200,000 to 210,000 per year (Patterson, Roehrig, & Luff, 2003; Feistritzer, 2003). Universities are educating an estimated 150,000 to 190,000 newly certified teachers each year; however, in addition to that number not being quite high enough to cover the gap, not all of the candidates are choosing to enter the profession, particularly in the toughest inner-city classrooms and highest needs teaching

areas such as math, science, and special education (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 2003). According to Darling-Hammond (2000), only 60% - 70% of newly certified teachers enter the teaching workforce upon graduation. Additionally, in 2002, statistics reveal that nearly 420,000 certified teachers lived in Texas and were not teaching (Patterson, 2003). Many certified teachers decline to pursue their careers in the classroom which, rather than signaling an issue of certified teacher shortages, this highlights a lack of willingness on the part of teachers to actually teach.

Teachers are also leaving the classroom quickly. Up to 50% of beginning teachers leave the classroom after five years according to national research (Suell & Piotrowski, 2007; Jorissen, 2002). And, almost one third of the baby boomer generation teaching workforce reached retirement age during the first decade of the twenty-first century (Fideler & Haselkorn, 1999). There are several important factors influencing the understaffing of teachers across the nation.

The state of Texas fares a bit better than the national statistics. Approximately 29.6% of alternatively certified teachers in Texas and 22.4% of traditionally certified teachers left their positions after four years for the 2006-2010 time period (Ramsay, 2011). In 1998, however, the Texas State Board for Educator Certification reported a 44,000 teacher shortage (Huling, 1998), while university teacher preparation programs in Texas educate and certify approximately 15,000 teachers per year (Linton & Kester, 2002). Hence, the need for hiring outside the traditional, university certification route is warranted to fill the staffing needs of school districts for teachers in the state of Texas.

Although the attrition and new hire rates for teachers in the state of Texas have fallen approximately 2.1% and 2.6%, respectively, since 2001, the number of new teachers hired in the state of Texas continues to rise (Ramsay, 2011). In 2006, for instance, there were 284,557 teachers hired in Texas, and that number increased each year to 317,826 by 2010. Of those hired, the number of teachers traditionally certified through a traditional route have declined by 6.6% (from 68.5% in 2006 to 61.9% in 2010), and the percentage hired from Alternative/Accelerated routes to certification, including post-baccalaureate programs provided by universities, have increased approximately 2% per year (from 22.1% of the teachers hired in 2006 to 30.9% in 2010). This trend shows that more and more teachers are being recruited and hired by school districts from the various Alternative/Accelerated certification routes in Texas.

Alternative/Accelerated teacher certification routes across the nation vary wildly from costly for-profit private programs; to post-baccalaureate university programs; to regional service center programs to school district-based programs. A few Alternative/Accelerated teacher certification programs are offered completely within an online environment. Currently, the State Board for Educator Certification's (SBEC's) online system lists a total of 244 educator preparation programs that are accredited by the state of Texas to certify teachers in the state. There are 70 listed as "University-Based," or "Teacher training offered by colleges and universities as part of an undergraduate degree program;" 73 listed as "Post-Baccalaureate," or "Teacher training offered by colleges and universities for individuals who already hold a baccalaureate degree;" and, 101 listed as "Alternative/Accelerated" programs, or "Teacher training offered by

education service centers, school district and other entities, as well as colleges and universities, for individuals who already hold a baccalaureate degree.” There are many routes to teacher certification and many of the colleges and universities in the state offer all three types of training on their campuses. The above combinations also highlight the fact that some of the program types overlap and the lines between them continue to blur.

The University-Based routes are typically intended for those students not currently working as classroom teachers. These candidates are usually underclassmen working toward a four-year Bachelor’s degree in the field of Education. The other two categories (i.e., Post-Baccalaureate and Alternative/Accelerated) offer on-the-job training in which teachers begin teaching in a classroom on a Probationary Teaching Certificate issued by the state of Texas and their first year is considered a paid “internship” year. According to state law section 228, interns must receive 300 hours outside the school day of foundational pedagogical education training in preparation for a Standard Teaching Certificate issued by the state upon a specified successful completion of their internship year.

For the purpose of this study, teachers hired in one major suburban school district from three routes to certification were studied. Some were hired already holding a Standard Teacher Certification after completing an undergraduate traditional, University-Based program. Others were accepted into the district’s internal Alternative/Accelerated program, which is also referred to as ATCP for Alternative Teacher Certification Program. The third group is comprised of all other routes to certification, which can include Post Baccalaureate, education service centers, for-profit and online companies

that are accredited by the state to offer training leading to teacher certification. There is little research to show which of these routes leads to the greatest teacher retention rates; therefore, a study of which teacher preparation programs, or routes to teacher certification, are most likely to produce teachers who choose to stay in the profession was warranted.

Statement of the Problem

Many factors contribute to a teacher shortage in U.S. classrooms each year. In their quest to find qualified teachers to staff the nation's classrooms, district leaders must hire teachers from many different types of educator preparation programs, including Alternative/Accelerated teacher certification routes, in order to fill their staffing needs. There is a limited amount of research focused on which of these educator preparation programs are more likely to educate and certify teachers who choose to stay in the profession longest. The focus of this study was to analyze the retention rates of teachers hired within three categories of educator preparation programs in one major suburban school district to discover if teachers from any of the three groups had a higher retention rate. This information has the potential to affect hiring practices of school districts who wish to hire those teachers most likely to stay in their classrooms longest as well as in the profession.

Purpose of the Study

The state of Texas has over 1,000 school districts. This study focused on one single district that is consistently in the top ten percent in size and has offered an Alternative/Accelerated route to teacher certification since its pilot school year in 1990-

1991. The purpose of this study was to examine from which of three certification routes the district was hiring beginning teachers most often, and, of the three groups, whether teachers from one group were more likely to continue employment in the district after one, two, three, four and five years. The three groups included (a) beginning teachers hired in this district from traditional University-Based programs, (b) those who were certified through the in-house Alternative/Accelerated teacher certification program (ATCP), and (c) those certified through external Alternative/Accelerated certification route programs.

This research provided the district with critical information about the three groups of teachers from which they typically hire new teachers. Understanding which of the three groups tends to promote the highest levels of teacher retention helps serve as guidance for recruitment and hiring practices. It also contributes to the body of knowledge in the field of education because “[d]ue to the high cost of teacher attrition in terms of discontinuity in instructional programs and the financial burden of preparing, recruiting, and inducting replacement teachers...” the “...identification of effective strategies to maximize the retention of qualified teachers represents a major policy issue” (Boe et al., 2006,p. 2).

If a district can choose to hire more often from the educator preparation programs that provide the highest retention rates of teachers, this decision can and will affect the budget bottom line for the district. The cost savings for recruitment, induction and mentoring of new teachers are increased. More importantly, students will benefit from lower teacher turnover and more experienced – and therefore more effective – teachers in

the classrooms. In addition, student achievement can be directly impacted by the results of this study.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. When analyzing district leadership hiring practices regarding the hiring of beginning teachers in a major suburban school district between 2000-2005, which group was hired more often – those who were traditionally certified through a university program, those who completed certification requirements through the in-house district Alternative/Accelerated teacher certification program, or those who became certified through external Alternative/Accelerated certification routes?
2. Do retention rates differ at one, two, three, four and five years among beginning teachers hired in a major suburban school district between 2000-2005 who were traditionally certified through a university program, those who completed certification requirements through the in-house district Alternative/Accelerated teacher certification program, and those who became certified through external Alternative/Accelerated certification routes?
3. Of the beginning teachers hired in a major suburban school district who were traditionally certified through a university program, those who completed certification requirements through the in-house district Alternative/Accelerated teacher certification program, and those who became certified through external Alternative/Accelerated certification routes, do the

teachers in the category hired most often have the highest overall retention rate for the time period studied?

Definition of Terms

The terms used in this study are defined as follows:

Alternative Teacher Certification or Alternative/Accelerated Teacher Certification:

This term represents teacher training offered by education service centers, school district and other entities, as well as colleges and universities, for individuals who already hold a baccalaureate degree. The district studied has its own in-house Alternative/Accelerated Teacher Certification Program (ATCP); however, district leaders also hire teachers from external Alternative/Accelerated programs as well.

Alternative Teacher Certification Program (ATCP): This refers to a specific program in a major suburban school district that is approved and accredited by the state of Texas to train teachers for state certification. This program has existed for 21 years and has led to the training of over 2,000 new teachers to serve the district. Interns in this program work only in this district.

Beginning Teacher: This term denotes a first year teacher with zero years of experience in the classroom as defined by the Texas Teacher Retirement System (TRS).

Certification: This term represents the formal state-mandated process that acknowledges that an individual is qualified and licensed to teach children in a public school classroom. Only state approved and accredited educator preparation programs can provide state certification training for teachers.

Educator Preparation Program (EPP): This term represents the entity that provides the training for teacher state certification. Texas recognizes three types of EPPs: University-Based, Post-Baccalaureate and Alternative/Accelerated.

External Alternative/Accelerated Certification Program: This term represents an accredited Alternative/Accelerated EPP from which teachers are hired in the district studied, other than the district's in-house Alternative Teacher Certification Program (ATCP).

Field Experiences: This term denotes part of the required 80 hours of pre-service training all interns must complete before entering the classroom as the Teacher of Record. Field experiences involve the intern observing in classrooms and assisting teachers with students as needed and prescribed by the classroom teacher.

Full-Release Mentor Program: This term denotes an induction design whereby mentors are hired to support beginning teachers and do not have their own teaching responsibilities for students. Their primary responsibility is to work with, support and coach new teachers to help them to be more effective with students.

Intern: This term represents a beginning teacher who is not yet certified with a Standard Teaching Certificate issued by the state. An intern holds a Probationary Teacher Certificate, which is good for renewal for up to three years while the individual completes the requirements for state teacher certification from an approved and accredited EPP.

Internship Year: This term represents the first year (or up to three years) during which an individual completes the requirements to attain a Standard Teaching Certificate from the state through participation in a state approved and accredited EPP.

Mentor: This term represents an experienced teacher assigned to an intern for support. Interns are required by law to be assigned mentors during their internships and are typically on the same campus and teaching the same grade level and/or subject area(s) as the intern, when possible.

Pre-service Training: This term stands for training that includes staff development time as well as field experiences in which the interns are on campuses working with students and totals the required 80 hours of foundational, pedagogical education training that all interns are required to complete before entering the classroom as a Teacher of Record.

State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC): This term represents the teacher certification organization that is part of the Texas Education Agency (TEA). SBEC is the teacher certification entity for the state of Texas. All teachers must meet SBEC requirements to attain teacher certification. SBEC holds all teacher certification records for all educators in the state of Texas as well.

Teacher Attrition: This term represents the number of teachers who leave the profession and are no longer employed in a district or state. Some reasons for teacher attrition include teachers who leave to go teach out of state, to retire or to leave the profession altogether.

Teacher of Record: This term represents the title for a teacher in the classroom who is accountable for student achievement and state exam scores. The Teacher of Record can

be on a Probationary Teaching Certificate or on a Standard Teaching Certificate. They are paid the same salary and their internship year, if they do not yet hold a Standard Teacher Certification, counts towards Texas Teacher Retirement requirements.

Teacher Retention: This term represents the number of teachers during a given year who stay in the profession for the following school year. They do not necessarily teach the same subject or in the same grade level.

University-Based or Traditional Certification: This term represents the teacher training offered by colleges and universities as part of an undergraduate baccalaureate degree program.

Limitations

The study focused on only one specific school district in Texas and the results may not be applicable to other states, districts, and programs because each program is created, managed and implemented differently.

The study was based a specific ten-year period, from 2000-2010, in one major suburban school district and may not reflect outcomes of similar future studies of the same nature due to changes in the economic climate and other factors affecting the hiring of teachers in the district, the state and the nation.

The data used for the study was presented from the Director of Evaluation and Research from the studied district and the researcher was not allowed to see raw data or live records. It is possible, although not probable, that the data could be incomplete, mislabeled or inaccurate in some other way. The researcher had no way to double check the information for accuracy.

In addition, the researcher was able to calculate retention rates for teachers hired by the district studied for the time period studied, but could not and cannot explain why teachers may have left the district, or why teachers may have remained in the district. The study was limited to a quantitative analysis of the years the teachers taught in the district, regardless of the reasons why they left or stayed. It also did not study whether teachers stayed in the profession when they left the district, or perhaps were promoted to administration in or out of the district.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

There are many studies on the national teacher shortage, teacher attrition and retention in general, as well as studies regarding Alternative/Accelerated teacher certification. However, there is very little research regarding district-based Alternative/Accelerated teacher certification programs and teacher retention. This chapter attempted to explore the research for these topics and, ultimately, link them to this specific research study regarding teacher preparation background and how it impacts teacher retention in one major suburban school district.

The Teacher Shortage

Teacher shortage estimates began in the 1980's with the publication of *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). Although the overall student population grew and more teachers retired from the profession during the 1990s, which are considered the two leading causes for the shortage forecasts (Snyder, Hoffman, & Geddes, 1997), the real teacher shortage impact began after the year 2000. Some estimates suggested that the U.S. would need an additional 200,000 to 210,000 teachers per year over the first decade of the twenty-first century (Patterson, Roehrig, & Luff, 2003; Feistritzer, 2003), which equates to approximately two million plus additional new teachers needed in the U.S. over a ten year time span. In 2003, according to The National Center for Education Statistics (2003), 70% of public secondary schools reported vacancies in math and approximately 55% reported vacancies in the sciences.

United States universities educate an estimated 150,000 to 190,000 newly certified teachers each year; however, in addition to that number not being quite high enough to cover the gap, not every candidate chooses to enter the profession, especially in the toughest inner-city classrooms and highest needs teaching areas such as math, science, and special education (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 2003). For a variety of reasons, up to 40% of newly certified teachers choose not to enter the workforce upon university graduation (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Berry, 2000). Therefore, "[t]he shortage lies in the distribution of teachers: there are not enough teachers who are both qualified and willing to teach in urban and rural schools, particularly those schools serving low-income students or students of color" (Voke, 2002, p. 1). This problem is expected to increase in that, according to the United States Census Bureau (2004), current minority populations are increasing such that Caucasians, who have historically represented the majority, will become the minority by the year 2050. Minority student populations are overrepresented in our lowest performing schools; therefore, this trend presents an issue of great concern for U.S. schools and it will most likely not be solved in the near future, but will continue to escalate.

Interestingly, despite the teacher shortage, some studies advocate for increasing the rigor for admittance into teacher preparation programs. For instance, Allen (2003) states, "Policymakers and educators have expressed doubts about the quality of some newly licensed teachers and have suggested raising the bar for admission to teacher preparation programs" (p. 5). However, he goes on to indicate that this practice may further reduce the number of teachers entering the profession and could contribute to a

lower number of minority teacher pool candidates. When programs increase their standards for entry into teacher preparation programs, they may essentially be contributing to the teacher shortage issue.

One Alternative/Accelerated program that holds the philosophy that teachers need to be more academically prepared, The New Teacher Project, has "...transformed teacher quality in the nation's largest urban district" of New York City (Mulhern, 2012, p. 3). The Teaching Fellows of the New Teacher Project receives over 33,000 applications each year and has an admittance rate of only 9% making it "comparable in selectivity to top U.S. universities" (What We Do, n.d., para. 2). These teachers, after ten years of The New Teacher Project partnering with New York City schools, comprise 11% of the teaching force and a full 20% of the math, science and special education teachers, and have narrowed the gap in teacher qualifications between high and low-poverty schools.

But do we really need the most academically gifted for the classroom? Darling-Hammond believes: "Some very smart people do not make great teachers. They don't have the interpersonal skills. They don't have the capacity to manage 55 things at once as teachers do in the classroom" (as cited in Scherer, 2012, p. 21). She adds:

We want in teachers a combination of strong academic ability and the capacity to be very alert and attentive, to care about kids, to be able to understand what kids are doing and what they mean by it, and to manage classrooms and support children. And, to be a good teacher, you have to care more about the performance of your students and how they learn than

about your own performance. Some very academically able people who go into teaching are used to getting rewarded for things they do by themselves. But it's a very different thing to help other people succeed. In teaching, your effectiveness doesn't depend on your own efforts alone. It depends on how well you can support and motivate your students to work at learning (Scherer, 2012, pp. 21-2).

There are multiple and sometimes polarized opinions regarding many of the aspects surrounding teacher preparation programs in general and alternative teacher certification programs specifically. In addition, different programs claiming to be "alternative teacher certification programs" can be vastly different in their approaches, philosophies, pedagogy, requirements and success rates for preparing teachers for the classroom. However, most agree that there is a teacher shortage in the United States and the main reason for that teacher shortage is the "...attrition of teachers in the first five years of practice" (Chapman, 2005, p. 34).

Teacher Attrition and Retention

To compound the teacher shortage issue, teacher attrition is high for two main reasons: (a) teachers choosing to leave the profession early in their careers and (b) older teacher retiring from the field of Education. Research indicates that 25-33% of all beginning teachers leave the profession within the first three years, and 40-50% leave by the five-year mark (Suell & Piotrowski, 2007; Jorissen, 2002). Such trends mean that up to one-half of all beginning teachers leave the classroom after five years, and even higher percentages leave disadvantaged, urban areas with higher student poverty and fewer

resources (Darling-Hammond, 2001). Attrition rates are highest in low-income urban schools (Ingersoll, 2003a), with the teacher turnover rates being 50% higher in high-poverty schools than in low-poverty schools. In addition, high-poverty schools employ a higher percentage of less-experienced, underprepared teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2000). These findings means that those American students with perhaps the highest academic needs are being taught by less qualified teachers who tend to leave the profession earlier than teachers who teach in more affluent, and typically suburban, areas. For this reason, "...it is imperative to gain an understanding about the formation of teachers' commitment, and ultimately on what leads them to teach and to remain teaching in schools largely populated by culturally and linguistically diverse students..." (Claeys, 2011, p. 10).

The Alliance for Excellent Education reported in 2008 that nationally each year, 232,000 teachers leave the schools in which they work for schools in wealthier and/or higher performing schools. Thus, the experience level of teachers in the higher poverty, lower performing schools is typically lower and the turnover rate is higher.

Teachers choose to leave the classroom for many reasons. Strong (2005) divides these reasons into two categories – namely, working conditions and personal factors. He states:

[W]orking conditions include school demographics (higher percentages of poor and minority students), administration (lack of support from the principal), low salary, few resources, teacher's level of control over decision making, and low student motivation (p. 1)"

In contrast, he defines personal reasons as “... starting a family, spouse’s job relocation, and poor health” (Strong, 2005, p. 2). Strong (2005) suggests that the higher number of specific supports are in place for a new teacher, including having an assigned mentor and planning time, new teacher training, and communication with administration, the more likely that a teacher will not leave after his or her first year of teaching. He contends that many of the factors that interfere with teacher retention can be overcome with consistent, available administrative and mentor support.

Low teacher pay is an often researched area of concern. While many contend that low teacher salaries contribute to teacher attrition rates (Ingersoll, 2003a; Strong, 2005; Harris, 2002), some researchers found that there are other factors that play a more important role in why a teacher chooses to leave the classroom. Hanushek (2004) found that female teachers are less likely than males to respond to lower salaries and that they make their decisions more on “family-dependent” variables, or how their family would be impacted by a career decision or change. His study found that Texas teachers tended to move to schools where student success rates were higher and the populations more affluent; thus, leaving more openings for teacher positions in the urban, lower-income areas (Hanushek, 2004).

Jeffery Goldhorn (2005) conducted a study of 537 Alternative/Accelerated certification teachers in Region 20 of the state of Texas to find out why they chose to leave the classroom. He found that of the examined factors – ethnicity and gender of the teacher, the grade level that the teacher is teaching and the socioeconomic level of the

students they were teaching – none had an effect on the retention rates of the teachers. However, he did discover that “[a] number of other variables were found to have an impact on the retention of teachers interviewed in the sub-sample: ...personal commitment to the field of education or the kids, a mentor, team support, administrative support, and new teacher induction programs” (Goldhorn, 2005, p. 98). Similarly, Ingersoll (2003a) found that inadequate support from the school administration was one of the main contributors to teacher attrition.

Some studies contend that not only do many beginning teachers leave the profession early in their careers, but that some of the most talented and creative teachers are the ones who leave the soonest and only the strongest, most committed stay (Colbert & Wolff, 1992). When asked by the researchers, many beginning teachers reported that they felt like failures during their first year as teachers (Colbert & Wolff, 1992). Some of the most academically gifted teachers left the classroom because they found teaching difficult and unrewarding and the conditions and parameters intolerable. Many teacher preparation programs try to recruit the best and brightest, and this may unknowingly add to the teacher attrition problem as these are the teachers who may be most unhappy with their first years in the teaching profession and, therefore, may be more apt to leave.

Borman and Dowling (2008) agree with this sentiment. In their meta-analysis on teacher attrition and retention, these researchers report that “...there is somewhat more evidence suggesting that it is the more talented rather than the less talented teachers – those who are better trained, more experienced, and more highly skilled – who tend to be lost to turnover with greater frequency” (Borman & Dowling, 2008, p.396). However,

they also state that the findings for this trend are mixed and that these teacher qualities do not always mean that the teacher has higher student achievement in the classroom.

Many beginning teachers are assigned to the most difficult positions. Chapman (2005) states that “[j]obs available to new teachers may well be the least attractive and the most stressful” (p. 6). Stronge (2007) also states, “[u]nder-qualified and least-experienced teachers are often assigned to the most difficult classes, and tend to be concentrated in special education, urban schools, and in schools serving students who are poor, minorities, and English learners” (p.13). The challenges that these teachers face are sometimes difficult – even for the most effective veteran teachers. Teachers hired under difficult teaching conditions are more likely to leave the profession and contribute to higher teacher attrition, especially in the more challenging teaching areas.

The research appears to reveal that beginning teacher support may be the most pressing factor that influences teacher retention rates. Many researchers (Darling-Hammond, 2002; Feistritzer, 2005; Strong, 2005; Villar & Strong, 2007) contend that a strong induction and mentoring program can lead to fewer teachers leaving the schools as well as higher student achievement. Freistritzer (2005) also reported, “One of the reasons given for the high attrition rate for new teachers in their first few years of teaching is that they receive very little support and professional development as beginning teachers” (p. 5). Olson (2000) found that if first year teachers do not participate in an induction and/or mentoring program, they are twice as likely to leave the classroom in the first three years. Well-designed induction and/or mentoring programs improve teachers’ self-efficacy, their attitudes and their instructional skills (Darling-Hammond, 2003).

Ellen Moir of The New Teacher Center, an organization dedicated to researching mentoring and induction and providing professional development for school districts across the nation and internationally, included the chart shown Figure in 2.1 in a 1990 article she published that describes the stages that all new teachers go through during their first year of teaching.

Moir (1990) says that the first year in a classroom is challenging and difficult for all beginning teachers. However, she does not designate from which certification route the new teachers are from, nor does she designate the grade level or content areas of the teachers. She contends that each and every new teacher, regardless of these variances, will journey through the phases on the chart although teachers will stay in each phase for different amounts of time depending on their unique situations and environments.

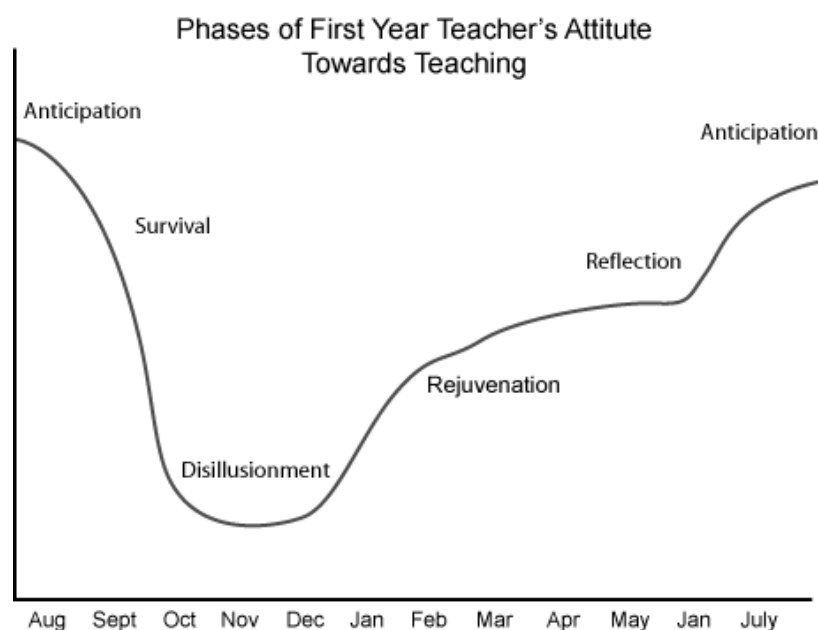


Figure 2.1 Phases of first year teacher's attitude. This illustration shows the cycle of a new teacher's attitude throughout their first year of teaching.

First, Moir (1990) says that teachers go through an Anticipation phase, wherein they are excited about teaching and "...romanticize the role of teacher and the position" (para. 2). They have a commitment to the job and the students. When teachers actually begin teaching, they quickly dip into a Survival phase, according to Moir. During this stage, teachers become overwhelmed with the responsibilities and demands of the job. The learning curve is steep. According to Moir (1990), they "...become focused and consumed with the day-to-day routine of teaching. There is little time to stop and reflect on their experiences" (para. 4). They spend long hours writing lessons and trying to keep up. They valiantly try to incorporate everything they have learned that is effective with students, but have trouble managing their time.

After "nonstop work and stress," new teachers experience the Disillusionment phase (Moir, 1990, para. 7). This is typically six-to-eight weeks into the school year when they are having a hard time trying to juggle all of the requirements of the job and balance this with the demands of their personal lives. Many teachers become sick during this time as they become run down and overtired. They also begin to question why they wanted to teach in the first place and they struggle, typically, with classroom management including student discipline, materials management and time management.

The Rejuvenation phase tends to occur around January. The winter break has given teachers a chance to rest and recover from the fall semester and they now realize that half of the school year is over. They begin to think they can make it to the end of the school year. They have usually improved in their classroom management; they have figured out rules, procedures and routines that work for their students; and, they have a

better grasp on the curriculum and lesson planning. At this point, they have begun to develop coping strategies for the stresses of the job. They begin to find balance between their professional and personal lives.

The Reflection phase occurs toward the end of the school year when teachers realize they have completed an entire cycle of teaching (one full school year). This is a time that is "...particularly invigorating..." for first-year teachers (para. 17). They begin to think about the strategies and activities that worked with their students, as well as the ones that did not. They begin to plan for the next school year and set professional goals for themselves.

Moir (1990) says that all teachers actually go through a variation of this process every school year, although new teachers feel the dips most acutely. This "framework" provides information about what types of support new teachers may need at what time during the school year.

Effective mentoring and induction programs take these phases into account when planning support services for new teachers. This chart magnifies for those in the field of educational support the critical needs of beginning teachers for consistent and varied professional development. Teachers who do not have support during these critical phases are much more likely to leave the classroom (Moir, 1990).

Not only do a new teacher's attitudes change during the first year of employment, their skill levels change as well. Tucker (2002) mentions the Conscious Competence model of William Howell in her First Year Teacher Academy materials, "[a]ny time a new skill is acquired, individuals go through developmental levels" (p. 2).

The first level, also called “unconscious incompetence,” is analogous to the statement “I don’t know what I don’t know.” When an individual is in this stage, she or he does not know what questions to ask to improve a skill. She or he may oversimplify the skill or think, “How hard can this be?” Tucker (2002) says the new teacher, at this level, may be thinking, “Summers off, 8 to 4, what’s the big deal? They have teacher’s editions with answers, don’t they?” (p. 20).

This stage comes to a close when the individual realizes that there is a world of knowledge that they do not know. At this point, the “conscious incompetence” stage begins, wherein the skills become difficult and a feeling of helplessness and defeat can occur. For a teacher, the act of teaching becomes exhausting; real students and real problems in the classroom have to be dealt with. At this point, teachers may be thinking, “What have I gotten myself in to?” They need training, support and their questions answered at this developmental level. Sadly, many leave the profession during in this phase (Tucker, 2002).

The next developmental level, titled “conscious competence,” is reached if an individual becomes proficient at a skill. He or she has confidence and knows where to find answers if he has questions. He or she can solve problems and has the energy to perform the skill well. If provided the right kinds of support, help, training and accessibility to answers, teachers can move into this phase. Tucker (2002) says that many teachers begin to move into the conscious competence stage by their second semester of teaching. It may take three-to-five years in the same grade level and content

area to move past this phase, and if a teacher changes assignments, he or she may slide back in to the conscious incompetence stage (Tucker, 2002).

The last developmental stage for learning a skill, according to Howard, is the “unconscious competence” stage. This stage occurs when the individual’s proficiency in performing the skill has become so automatic that he or she can perform almost without conscious thinking. He or she does not have to focus on each detail to perform the skill well. Teachers who move into this phase, typically after three-to-five years teaching the same grade level and content, may not be aware of how and why they do what they do. These master teachers are often asked to become mentors to new teachers. The problem lies in the fact that sometimes it is difficult for these teachers to verbally quantify how and why they do something and, therefore, it may be difficult for them to help a new teacher because what they do just works for them (Tucker, 2002).

Assigning a mentor, supporting teachers through the attitude phases identified by Moir and through the developmental skill levels of Howell are all important aspects for beginning teacher success; however, these are not the only components of an effective induction program. Using “the largest and most comprehensive data source available on elementary and secondary teachers and schools,” namely a combination of the National Center for Education Statistics’ national 2003-2004 Schools and Staffing Survey and the 2004-2005 Teacher Follow-up Survey, researchers found that “[p]edagogy was strongly related to teacher attrition. Beginning teachers who had taken more courses in teaching methods and strategies, learning theory or child psychology, or materials selection were significantly less likely to depart” (Ingersoll, Merrill, & May, 2012, p. 33). These

researchers found wide variances between certification route programs as to which ones included sufficient pedagogical components. In particular, they found that the of the teachers who received what they deemed “comprehensive pedagogy” in their preparation programs, regardless of whether the programs were alternative or traditional, there was a 9.8% attrition rate after one year (Ingersoll, Merrill, & May, 2012). Conversely, those new teachers who received “little or no pedagogy” left the classroom after one year at the rate of 24.6%.

Findings by Amaris-Kinne (2011) concur with this approach and her study focuses on the perceptions of the teachers in their abilities to effectively teach students in the classroom. She says that “...teachers who report feeling better prepared are more likely to report plans to stay in teaching beyond five years” (Amaris-Kinne, 2011, p. 2). She also states, “[t]he odds of continuing in teaching for more than five years are 67% less for those teachers who reported feeling unprepared than for those who reported feeling prepared” (2011, p. 34). She urges for “...greater scrutiny of teacher education programs, particularly attending to characteristics of those programs that produce teachers who feel well prepared” (Amaris-Kinne, 2011, p. 36). In addition, she found that “...strong feelings of preparedness cause teachers to persist in the profession despite challenges...” (Amaris-Kinne, 2011, p. 36). And, her idea to focus on the educator preparation programs that create teachers who feel “well-prepared” is important so that other educator preparation programs can duplicate the efforts for increased teacher success and retention. Jorissen (2003) agrees that if a teacher feels career competence, which leads to higher self-esteem and more involvement in his or her career, he or she is

more likely to stay in the classroom. Amaris-Kinne (2011) contends that by studying those programs that are better at preparing teachers who feel prepared and competent and duplicating these efforts for use in other programs, "...fewer teaching vacancies would exist, resulting in a more competitive process of hiring, which would increase the likelihood that only qualified, effective teachers are hired" (p. 2). Therefore, supporting and building programs that produce well-prepared teachers is her answer to the teacher shortage and the teacher attrition problems that plague our country.

In addition to those who choose to leave the profession earlier in their careers, many of the Baby Boom generation are retiring from the profession. Those born after World War II between 1940 and 1960, up to one third of all current teachers, reached potential retirement age between 2000-2010 (Fideler & Haselkorn, 1999). Our teaching workforce has become younger. Feistritzer (2011) reported that in 2011, "26 percent of public school teachers had five or fewer years of teaching experience, up from 18 percent in 2005" (p. 19). In addition, Feistritzer (2011) also reported, "17 percent of public school teachers had 25 or more years of teaching experience, down from 27 percent in 2005 [and] 22 percent of teachers were under the age of 30, up from 11 percent in 2005" (p. 19). If this trend continues, school leaders must discover additional ways to support less experienced, younger teachers to be effective and successful in the classroom as they lose the teachers with the most experience, and possibly the most success with students, to retirement.

As dictated by necessity, therefore, an increasing number of younger and less experienced teachers must be hired to replace those who retire. Many of these new beginning teachers come from varying teacher certification routes.

Costs of Teacher Attrition

According to Harris (2002), teacher attrition adversely impacts the “...fiscal resources needed to provide quality education to all students” (p.19). High teacher attrition can also be attributed the direct costs for recruitment, hiring and professional development, as well as indirect costs, such as the effect on the campus culture and climate (Strong, 2005), and the inordinate amount of effort and time required for administrators to continually have to interview and hire new teachers.

The time administrators must expend to hire qualified teachers takes away from time they could be spending as instructional leaders and managers of their campuses. Hence, this time requirement can have a direct impact on student achievement.

Other costs associated with teacher attrition and retention include the costs for districts to provide adequate and effective induction and mentoring programs for beginning teachers. A study by Villar and Strong (2007) completed a benefit-cost analysis for such a program. The researchers evaluated the costs associated with comprehensive mentoring support for beginning teachers –a full-release mentor model in this particular case – and asked questions pertaining to whether the costs associated with a mentoring program provided a good return on investment, “...particularly when there are many competing demands for scarce (and declining) school district funds” (Villar & Strong, 2007, p. 2). The purpose of the study was to discover whether the cost of a

comprehensive mentoring program for beginning teachers made “financial sense to society” (Villar & Strong, 2007, p. 1). They were able to show that “...induction returns extend[ed] far beyond mere retention questions” and that “an investment in an intensive model of new teacher induction in a given district pays \$1.50 for every \$1 spent” (Villar & Strong, 2007, p.7). In addition, after five years, “...the induction program saw a fifty percent return to society” (Villar & Strong, 2007, p. 7). They reported that the most important benefit to induction, according to their study, was the impact on student achievement. And, beginning teachers who benefitted from the full-release mentor program quickly “... resembled fourth-year teachers, thus yielding a substantial return when expressed in salary differences” (Villar & Strong, 2007, p.7). Unfortunately, few school districts invest the amount of money necessary for full-release mentor programs, despite these encouraging and impressive results.

Attrition carries a high price in terms of a district’s ability to deliver quality education for students and affects not only teachers, administrators, students, parents and communities, but the field of Education as a whole (Harris, 2002). Tucker (2002) says it well:

I am completely convinced that is our moral obligation to provide a strong system of support, training, and encouragement to new teachers. When we don’t, we are not only setting up new teachers for failure, but we are condemning many of our children to ineffective classrooms of frustrated, negative educators. It just simply is not an option. We can invest in them now or pay later. We must. (p. 5)

Studies show that strong beginning teacher induction programs can minimize costs and are crucial to student achievement. And, strong beginning teacher induction programs provided by a school district can overlap with a strong Alternative/Accelerated teacher certification program, especially if the district is funding and providing that program specifically for the unique needs of its own beginning teachers, which is the case for the major suburban school district of this study.

Motivation to Teach

There are various reasons why people decide to choose a career in teaching. Three of the motivational reasons most often listed for becoming a teacher are altruistic motivation, intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation (Claeys, 2011). Altruistic motivation refers to the desire to “give back” or “serve.” especially in urban, low-performing schools that have students who need the most help. Intrinsic motivation is a personal drive to grow and develop oneself, and extrinsic motivation usually refers to external benefits such as salary or job security (Claeys, 2011, p. 16).

Altruistic motivation is often listed as a deep desire to contribute to society or to give back to the community. Yu (2011) states, “Some people are attracted to teaching because it provides the opportunity for satisfying altruistic needs, for example, serving others, making a difference in children’s lives, or making a contribution to the society” (p. 116). This motivation to teach has been linked to overall satisfaction in career choice, meaning that those who want to teach because they have an altruistic motivation to serve and give back to the community may be happier and more satisfied with their choice to begin teaching. This could also lead to staying in the profession longer (Watt &

Richardson, 2007). In addition, those who desired a teaching position and had altruistic motivation to teach tended to list extrinsic factors such as salary, benefits and job security as unrelated to their decision to enter the teaching profession (Reif & Warring, 2002).

Some alternative teacher certification programs also capitalize on this type of motivation for recruitment. For instance, the Ft. Worth Teaching Fellows website states, “As a Fellow, you will begin making a difference for students right away, joining a network of dynamic teachers working to end a legacy of educational inequality in Fort Worth” (Program Overview, 2013, para. 1). Thus, appealing to those who have an altruistic desire to help students, especially underprivileged students in urban areas who really need academic help, is the focus here. In addition, the national website for The New Teacher Project (TNTP) of which Ft. Worth Teaching Fellows is a part, states in their mission that the company is “...committed to ending the injustice of educational inequality. TNTP... works with schools, districts and states to provide excellent teachers to the students who need them most and advance policies and practices that ensure effective teaching in every classroom” (Our Mission, March 14, 2013, para. 1). This approach appeals to many who have an altruistic motivation to become a teacher.

Some people are intrinsically motivated by their “...love for children, love for subject, and love for teaching or learning” (Yu, 2011, p. 114). One survey of teachers in 1991-1992 and duplicated in 2000-2001 indicated that love of children was the number one reason for the teachers’ decisions to become teachers (Reif & Warring, 2002). The second most important reason from another survey indicated that prospective teachers “enjoy the subject and want to pass on love of the subject” (Jarvis & Woodrow, 2005, p.

31). Love of children and love for the content or subject area are two intrinsic reasons that some choose the career path of Education.

Another intrinsic motivation to become a teacher is a love for school and learning (Yu, 2011). A survey revealed that “love of going to school” and a desire to “continue personal learning” were just as important to future teachers as love of subject (Reif & Warring, 2002). Teachers who are intrinsically motivated have a need to “...increase an awareness and understanding not only of self, but also of their students’ culture and prior life experiences and how these might impact students’ motivation to excel academically” (Claeys, 2011, p. 20). These teachers have a need to understand their students holistically and to help them develop self-efficacy for personal academic growth, sometimes in parallel to their own learning and academic growth.

Extrinsic motivation is also described as a factor to choosing the teaching path. Yet, mixed results in this area of research have been found. Guarino (2006) states, “Individuals will become or remain teachers if teaching... [is] ...desirable in terms of ease of entry and overall compensation (salary, benefits, working conditions, and personal satisfaction)” (p. 179). Yu (2001) also states, “Some researchers suggest that external rewards, such as job security, time schedule, perceived social status, and salary, play an important role in drawing people into the teaching occupation” (p. 116). In addition to a desire to work with students, some prospective teachers comment that they are “...attracted to teaching by the schedule that would accommodate family demands and provide summers off” (Milanowski, 2003, p. 5). From this same study, focus groups revealed that of the participants who would not consider a career in teaching, one of the

main reasons for this view was the low pay. They also mentioned that the position of teacher was too demanding for the amount of pay. For some participants to be interested in a career in teaching, salaries would need to be up to 48% higher than the average teacher's salary (Milanowski, 2003).

Some studies reveal that even if teachers do receive additional compensation, as with the Teaching Fellows program in New York City that subsidized a Master's degree as part of the program, retention rates do not improve, which essentially means that pay may not always be a determining factor for people to choose a career in teaching. The Teaching Fellows program for New York City offers the same starting salary as any public teacher in New York City; however, fellows pay only a fraction of the cost for the Master's degree that they receive while attaining teacher certification. For example, in 2012, fellows in the program paid up to \$6,600 of their Master's degree and this cost was deducted from their paychecks. This cost is only a small part of the usual \$30,000 - \$40,000 for a Master's degree at a public university. However, although retention rates are much higher for fellows for the first couple of years of employment while teachers are taking classes for their Master's degrees, retention rates for these teachers are not higher than the national averages overall after five years of service. The New York Teaching Fellows website states that "... over half teach for at least five years" (A Resource for NYC Schools, March 14, 2013, para. 5). This corresponds to the research for the retention of all teachers in the nation; therefore, despite the subsidization of the graduate degree, New York Teaching fellows do not stay in the classroom longer than other teachers after five years.

Despite these studies and findings, it is possible that those who want to become teachers are reluctant to list extrinsic rewards as a motivation because they perceive that teaching is a service profession. They may be more likely to state that they want to teach for altruistic or intrinsic reasons because it seems like the “correct” answer. Perhaps Lortie (1975) said it best: “...such normative pressures make it probable that material benefits influence teachers’ decision more than their answers indicate” (p. 30). Perhaps this is still true.

Alternative/Accelerated Teacher Certification

The nation has increasingly embraced the notion of employing teachers certified through Alternative/Accelerated certification routes to fill the gaps caused by the shortage of traditionally trained teachers, as evidenced by the fact that, in 1983, only eight states reported offering any type of Alternative/Accelerated certification program (Feistritzer, 2005, p. 2). By 2005, 47 states were certifying teachers through varying types of Alternative/Accelerated teacher certification programs (Freistritzer, 2005). Today, each of the 50 states offer state accredited Alternative/Accelerated routes to teacher certification in order to help fill their classrooms with quality teachers, yet these programs can be vastly different in nature, scope and purpose.

The numbers of teachers hired from alternative teacher certification programs grows every year. Freistritzer (2011) states, “Whereas 95 percent of teachers with 25 years of experience came into teaching through university-based programs, a substantial 39 percent of teachers with five or fewer years of teaching experience in 2011 entered teaching through alternative teacher preparation routes” (p.21).

The teachers gaining certification through alternative teacher certification routes are more diverse as well than the ones graduating from university-based, traditional programs. Freistritzer (2011) reported, “Thirty percent of their [alternative routes] entering teachers are nonwhite – 15 percent are Hispanic, 11 percent are black, and 4 percent are from other ethnic backgrounds – and 22 percent are male, compared with only 16 percent of males among those entering through traditional programs” (p. 23). This variance more closely matches the inner-city, urban teacher openings that are most likely to occur during teacher shortages.

According to some research, there are specific and substantial benefits to a district that hires teachers from Alternative/Accelerated teacher certification routes. Some teachers in Alternative/Accelerated routes are fresh out of college; yet, many are not. They may be second, third, or more career changers who possess “...substantial life experience resulting from previous careers and raising children, which enables them to bring important assets, such as maturity and expertise to teaching” (Tigchelaar, 2008, p. 1531). The teachers who choose Alternative/Accelerated teacher certification routes many times have a real desire to teach students and are more open to instructional innovation (Freistritzer 2005; Tigchelaar, 2008). These teachers with more life experiences can bring with them “...problem-solving, coping, and communicating skills...” superior to other teachers (Tigchelaar, 2008, p. 1533). In short, teachers who choose Alternative/Accelerated routes to teacher certification many times bring a more mature and open-minded skill set to the classroom. The idea here is that they may be

more ready and willing to learn and try innovative ideas than their younger, traditionally certified counterparts.

Some teachers certified through Alternative/Accelerated teacher certification programs come to the table better qualified in their coursework than teachers who choose a traditional undergraduate university route. Sass (2011) states, “In general, alternatively certified teachers have stronger pre-service qualifications than do traditionally prepared teachers...” (p. 20). Sass (2011) also found that alternatively certified science teachers, specifically, have “...much more coursework in science while in college than traditionally prepared science teachers;” however, the same did not hold true for math teachers who had approximately equal hours of coursework to the traditionally prepared math teachers of this study (p. 1).

Benefits to individuals who already have a Bachelor’s degree and want to become certified teachers include the shortened amount of time for certification, immediate salaries, reduced financial costs, support services and assistance with the certification process. An undergraduate will typically complete four years of college before graduating and gaining certification to teach. Teachers who participate in Alternative/Accelerated certification programs already have a four-year university degree and are required to complete a set number of hours of training while working in a classroom to gain certification. In the state of Texas, the number of hours of professional development required for certification is 300. Teachers complete these hours in the summers, evenings and weekends while they are gainfully employed as teachers in the

classroom. Thus, as compared to a four-year university program, the length of training and the immediate salary may prove attractive.

Financial costs are reduced as a four-year degree can cost anywhere from \$25,000 to over \$100,000 to major in Education as an undergraduate and complete certification requirements to teach. And, individuals who choose Alternative/Accelerated routes to teacher certification have already accrued that same cost because they already hold a Bachelor's degree. However, costs for Alternative/Accelerated teacher certification routes vary in the state of Texas from \$1,500 to \$5,000, according to the Texas Education Agency website, as opposed to the idea of an individual returning to school to attain a second Bachelor's degree in the field of Education and teacher certification.

All educator preparation programs in the state of Texas are required to provide support for teachers in their programs, whether they are University-Based or Alternative/Accelerated routes to certification. And, all teacher candidates must complete field experience hours prior to entering the classroom. This is typically a 30-hour commitment and a part of the 300 total required hours of staff development for state certification.

The retention rates described and analyzed in the research typically lump all beginning teachers into the same group. They do not usually distinguish among the various routes to teacher certification that teachers have completed before entering the classroom. Scant research exists that focuses on the retention of alternatively certified teachers specifically. One reason for this is that the term "alternative certification" has varied meanings. Although all fifty states offer some form of Alternative/Accelerated

teacher certification, these programs can be very different in structure, process, curriculum, accountability and follow through, sometimes even in the same state. Some “...resemble traditional programs in content and pedagogy...” with the classes offered weeknights and weekends (Adcock et al., 2006, p. 9). In fact, researchers Walsh and Jacobs (2005) contend that “[e]ducation schools – brilliantly turning a threat into an opportunity – have themselves come to dominate this [alternative teacher certification] enterprise, blurring the distinctions that once made it ‘alternative’” (p. 9). Other Alternative/Accelerated route programs are more condensed, short-term training programs, with few requirements beyond the initial cost of the program. Emily Feistritzer (2005) of the National Center for Education Information admits “...there is a paucity of research on alternative certification routes – and with good reason...there is no clear-cut definition of alternative teacher certification...,” and that “...there are hundreds of different kinds of programs for the preparation of persons who already have at least a Bachelor’s degree and want to become teachers. Are they all ‘alternative routes?’” (p. 10)

In her interview with Scherer, Darling-Hammond (2012) agrees and explains that “[t]he challenge we have with alternative programs now is that they are all over the map. Some offer high-quality programs and include enough coursework and student teaching to ensure that candidates are truly ready to teach...”; however, some programs “... offer only a few weeks of training in the summer before the teacher is thrown in as the teacher of record in the fall, without enough background knowledge or practice teaching” (p. 20). The teachers in the second type of program often, in her words, “...struggle and flounder, and it hurts their students. Such routes also have very high attrition rates from teaching,

leaving a lot of chum in their wake” (Darling-Hammond, 2012, p. 21). No two certification routes that call themselves “alternative” are exactly alike.

Despite that fact that there are huge discrepancies as to the components of the myriad Alternative/Accelerated certification programs, there is little research “...to provide guidance as to the effectiveness of different teacher training strategies...” (Constantine et al., 2009, p. xvi). Further, Allen contends in his metanalysis of the research related to the question, “Are there ‘alternative route’ programs that graduate high percentages of effective new teachers with average or higher-than-average rates of teacher retention?” that it is possible that retention rates “...vary depending on the quality of the particular teacher preparation program” and “the research provides some support for the development of alternative route preparation programs, especially if they are designed to serve a particular school district need” (Allen, 2003, p. 4).

During the late 1980s, the school district studied chose this approach when it submitted its proposal to offer an in-house Alternative/Accelerated teacher certification program specifically suited to meeting the unique needs of the district. The program was designed not simply for certifying those who hold a Bachelor’s degree and want to become a teacher, or to make a profit of any kind for the district; rather, its intentions were to recruit, train and certify teachers in the understaffed areas of the district – that is, for the classrooms for which the district was having difficulty finding qualified teachers to hire. And, because “...alternative routes to teaching are bringing non-traditional populations of people into the teaching profession who want to help young people develop and teach where the demands for teachers are greatest” (Feistritzer, 2005, p. 2),

the idea to begin an Alternative/Accelerated teacher certification program was a reasonable and apt choice for the district when faced with a teacher shortage in certain staffing areas.

Alternative/Accelerated Teacher Certification and Teacher Attrition

There are several studies that focus on the attrition of teachers who were certified through an Alternative/Accelerated teacher certification route. Freistritzer (2005) reports that "...early data from several states indicate that individuals entering teaching through alternative routes have higher retention rates than those entering teaching from traditional college-based programs" and says that there are several reasons for this (p. 4). She says that teachers coming through Alternative/Accelerated teacher certification routes are "...generally older, more experienced and have a strong commitment to helping young people learn and develop. They are making a definitive decision to teach at that point in their lives" (Freistritzer, 2005, p. 5). Further, she says that they also stay because the Alternative/Accelerated programs that they go through provide "...intense field-based, in-the-classroom training and instruction" and they receive ample support from mentors on their campuses (Freistritzer, 2005, p. 5).

Chapa studied 738 newly hired teachers in a large Texas school district to "...determine if a relationship existed between various certification paths and teacher retention" (2012, p. viii). She found that: "...the retention likelihood of teachers from alternative certification programs was higher than teachers from university-based programs" and suggested that university-based programs were not effectively preparing teachers to work with the "...students of different cultural backgrounds" found in the

school district that she studied, thus increasing the likelihood that they would leave the district (2012, p. 74).

Chapman (2005) studied the U.S. government's Troops to Teachers (TTT) program, whereby those who have served in the United States military and are qualified are given the option to teach in high needs school districts, most often inner-city, urban districts, that are in dire need of teachers. Troops to Teachers identifies these districts as having "...a minimum of 20% of the student population receiving free or reduced lunch for three or more years" (Chapman, 2005, p. 31). Bonus stipends are also given to those Troops to Teachers participants willing to teach in schools that have at least 50% of the student population on free and reduced lunch. Troops to Teachers has a significantly higher number of male participants (up to 90%), as compared to other educator preparation routes including university-based routes and other alternative certification routes. The purpose of her study

...was to examine how successful one of the federal government funded programs (TTT) being used in conjunction with an alternative certification program compares to a traditional teaching program in educating and retaining new teachers to fill the critical teacher shortage areas. (Chapman, 2005, p. 39)

Chapman (2005) found that, when compared to participants of her study who had gained teacher certification through a traditional, university-based route, Troops to Teachers participants had no significant difference in attrition rates. Specifically, after conducting a Chi square with a contingency table to evaluate the data:

The researcher failed to reject the null hypothesis, which was that there was no difference in the attrition rates of those beginning teachers who participated in the TTT program and obtained alternative certification and beginning teachers who participated in a traditional certification program. (Chapman, 2005., p. 40)

In contrast, Harris (2002) compared attrition rates of teachers training in Alternative/Accelerated teacher certification programs, those trained in regional service centers and those from the traditional university routes. He found that although those trained through Alternative/Accelerated certification routes were hired at a higher rate, these teachers had a higher attrition rate than the other two groups of teachers (Harris (2002). He conceded, however, that the "...overall cumulative attrition rate of new teachers trained in these [alternative teacher certification] programs is not as pronounced as originally presumed" (Harris, 2002, p. 1). Teachers from the two certification routes had closer retention and attrition rates than he imagined when first designing his research study.

Other studies that compared the attrition rates of teachers trained through traditional University-Based routes and Alternative/Accelerated teacher certification routes have shown mixed results. Early studies (Andrew & Schwab, 1995; Lutz & Hutton, 1989; Stoddart, 1992) found that alternatively trained teachers had a higher attrition rate than those from the traditional University-Based programs. Others (Gerson, 2002; Zeichner & Schulte, 2001) found conflicting results. Gerson (2002) studied the attrition rate of alternatively certified and traditionally certified teachers in an urban

school district in Georgia and found no significant difference in the attrition rate of the two groups (Gerson, 2002).

Zeichner and Schulte (2001) reviewed 21 studies to mine the data collected from these research studies to reach their own conclusions about the conclusions others have made regarding alternative certification programs and who exactly is participating in alternative teacher education and what the profiles, or composite identities, of these teachers say about this trend [of alternative teacher certification]” (p. 267).

With regard to attrition rates of alternatively certified teachers, as compared to those who became certified through a traditional University-Based route, they report that the subject areas and level of teaching influence the attrition rates for new teachers and that no solid trends regarding all new teachers and attrition could be found (Zeichner & Schulte, 2001).

Few studies have been completed to analyze the attrition and retention rates of teachers that choose varying teacher certification routes, and it is evident that there are presently no hard and fast answers regarding which group stays longer in the profession. Most of the studies focus on the factors that might influence a teacher’s choice to stay or leave; thus, highlighting that there may be many issues at play regarding teacher attrition and retention.

Like these other studies, this study has a narrow focus as well and broad, general conclusions will most likely not be able to be drawn. One school district-based program and the three categories of teachers from which it hires – namely, those who are certified

through traditional University-Based certification routes, those who participate in the in-house Alternative/Accelerated teacher certification program, and those who participate in external Alternative/Accelerated teacher certification route programs were analyzed for attrition rates at one, two, three, four and five years of service.

Teacher Certification and Hiring Practices in a Large, Suburban School District

Although the district studied has offered its own in-house Alternative/Accelerated teacher certification program (ATCP) for 21 years, this program is specifically for filling gaps where traditionally certified teachers cannot be found. The district recruits and hires teachers already holding a Standard Teaching Certificate when possible. Then, if a certified teacher cannot be found, district leaders turn to ATCP for help. However, when Alternative/Accelerated certification teachers are needed to fill positions, principals are not required to hire only teachers from the district's ATCP. They can interview and hire teachers from any Alternative/Accelerated route program accredited by the state of Texas as they deem appropriate for their open positions. The goal is to hire the best teacher for the position, regardless of teacher certification route. As a result, this major suburban school district hires beginning teachers from three different categories: those traditionally trained through University-Based teacher training programs; those trained through ATCP, a district-based Alternative/Accelerated program; and, those trained by external Alternative/Accelerated routes to certification. And, prior to this study, administrators have not had evidence directly linked to the retention rates of teachers hired from these three categories. They have used their own professional judgment to decide whether or not to hire each teacher for their campus, regardless of teacher certification route.

In addition to hiring already certified teacher and teachers from the district-based ATCP from 2000-2005, this large, suburban school district hired teachers from the following external certification programs:

- North Houston Community College
- Region IV Education Service Center
- Region V Education Service Center
- Region VIII Education Service Center
- Region X Education Service Center
- Region XI Education Service Center
- iteAChtexas
- Kingwood ACP
- University of Houston – Clear Lake ACP
- ACT-RGV
- ATCP – St. Thomas
- LeTourneau ACP
- University of Houston – Post Bach Program
- ACP Pan American
- ACP Western Governor’s University
- Houston Community College
- University of Houston - Central
- Texas A&M University

One District's Alternative/Accelerated Teacher Certification Program (ATCP)

Few school districts across the nation fund their own district-based Alternative/Accelerated teacher certification programs. One of the three programs that is currently in operation in the state of Texas is in a major suburban school district and the focus of this study.

This district had a total enrollment of 52,919 students for the 2012-2013 school year. The ethnic breakdown of the student population by percentage is as follows:

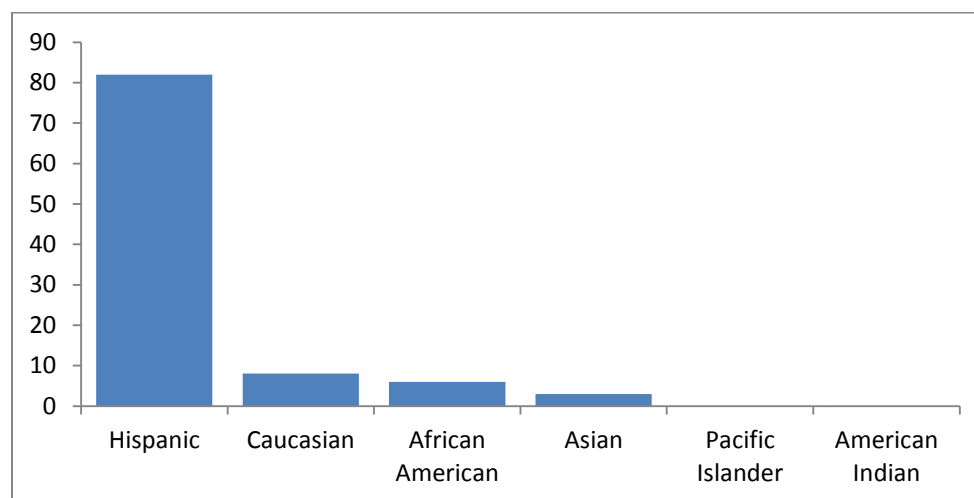


Figure 2.2 Student Ethnicities of a Major Suburban School District in Texas. This illustration denotes the ethnicity of students enrolled for the district involved in this study.

According to the school website, 82% of the students were considered economically disadvantaged during the 2012-2013 school year, and this district has a 77% graduation rate. For special populations, 11,279 students are Bilingual/ESL; 2,743

are Gifted and Talented; and, 4,064 are in Special Education. The district boasts 62 campuses, including five 5A high schools.

For the 2011 accountability ratings for the state of Texas, 41 schools in this district scored Recognized (over 80% of the students met or exceeded the state standards for the state standardized exams) or Exemplary (over 90% met or exceeded the state standards for the state standardized exams). Students from this district consistently score higher on state standardized tests when compared with other districts of the same size and demographic makeup.

Since its inception during the 1990-1991 school year, The Alternative Teacher Certification Program in the district studied, or ATCP, has produced over 2,000 state-certified teachers. The number of teachers accepted into the program varies each year based on positions available and forecasted areas of need from the Human Resources department. It is not unusual for this ATCP to receive over 1,000 applicants via its online application process per school year, although the number accepted may be as low as 50 or as high as 200 based on the needs of the district for that school year.

According to Freistritzer (2005):

Good alternative teacher certification programs are market-driven. The programs are designed specifically to meet the demand for teachers in geographic areas and in subject areas where the demand for teachers is greatest. Prospective teachers are recruited to meet those specific demands. (p. 4)

This is the purpose and focus of the ATCP of this major suburban school district.

The competitive and lengthy application and interview process includes an individual interview using the Ventures nationally-normed instrument and a panel committee or group interview with administrators from both the ATCP program as well as the Human Resources department. Applicants must score on both interviews above the standard score set by the district to be invited to training. In addition, the applicants' qualifications must match the needs of the district. Some applicants do well throughout the process, only to find that their qualifications do not match forecasted open positions for the district. They are not invited to begin training. Or, their qualifications match what the district needs; yet, they do not score well enough during the interview process to be selected for training. They are also not invited to begin training.

Select candidates are invited to begin pre-service training in the spring and/or summer before the school year in which the candidate will be hired to teach. During the time that teachers were hired for this study, there was no charge for this training. If a candidate was hired, he or she signed a three year waiver and as long as he or she served the district for three years, the cost for the training, which was valued at \$3,000, was waived. If a candidate left after one school year, he or she owed the district \$2,000. If he or she left after two years, the cost was \$1,000. Staying three years ensured that the intern did not have to pay for the ATCP program.

During and after the pre-service training, ATCP candidates are sent on a "Screened ATCP" list as hireable to principals; however, it is up to the candidates to interview well and to be hired by the principals for the positions. Some candidates complete training without being hired by a principal for a teaching position. The training

they complete is accepted for one year and they can continue to apply for positions as they become available during the school year. They are not asked to pay for any training if they are not hired by the district. Occasionally, a candidate is never hired by the district to teach. Some candidates become teacher aides or substitute teachers in hopes of attaining a future teacher position. However, many such candidates are eventually hired. All are invited to continue training until such time that they decide to stop.

Many of the teachers coming through the program are hired in critical shortage areas, such as elementary bilingual, Special Education, and secondary Math and Science. However, the ATCP is approved and accredited by the state of Texas to certify teachers PK-12 in many areas including the four core academic subjects, three foreign languages, as well as career and technology specialty areas such as Cosmetology, Health Science, Construction and HVAC. The purpose of the ATCP program is to serve the district in finding the best and brightest candidates to best meet the needs of the students in the classrooms in high needs and shortage areas, whatever they may be for the current school year.

Candidates in the ATCP attend the state required 300 hours of training in the mandated curriculum areas and topics required by Administrative Code 228 of the Texas legislature. This professional development is created and offered by the Instructional Specialists of the ATCP team, which double as staff developers and field supervisors for the interns in the ATCP program. The focus of all staff development is practical application and research-based best practices. A full 80 hours of foundational educational pedagogy, as well as 30 hours of field experience during which interns spend

time observing and offering assistance to teachers in summer school classrooms, are completed before the candidate/intern begins teaching. Those who are not hired are not required to pay for the training and can continue to interview for teaching positions for up to one year. Those who are hired officially become ATCP interns as soon as a teaching contract is offered by the campus administrator for the position for which they are qualified and hired to teach.

The first year of teaching is referred to as the internship year and staff development hours are accumulated during evening classes and one Saturday per month during the school year. Final hours to complete the required 300 total are finished the summer after the internship year. The process for certification, if the intern attends all training opportunities, is approximately a fourteen month process, although state law allows up to three years for interns to complete initial teacher certification. Occasionally, an ATCP intern will take an extra year or two to attain certification, as allowable by law, when life circumstances interfere with completion of training hours. Examples of this may be when an intern takes a maternity leave to have a baby or an intern who is in the armed services is deployed to serve in the military for any length of time.

The school district of this study hires approximately one third to one half of its new teachers each year from its internal Alternative/Accelerated teacher certification program. One third to one half are typically hired from traditional University-Based certification routes, and 10-25% are hired from external Alternative/Accelerated certification routes, although each year these numbers vary based on need and administrator preference. This study analyzed the retention rates of these three groups of

teachers, as employed as beginning teachers with zero years' experience by the district studied, to find out if one or any of them lead to higher teacher retention. Over 1,300 beginning teachers were studied for the years 2000-2005.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

The major purpose of this study was to analyze the retention rates at one, two, three, four and five years of newly hired, first year teachers in a major suburban school district in Texas from 2000-2005 from three certification categories including those who were already state certified before they were hired and completed a traditional university route for certification, those who were gaining certification through the district's Alternative/Accelerated teacher certification program, and those who were gaining certification from external certification route programs.

Description of the Research Design

This study is an analysis of an existing archival, quantitative data set. The design of this study was non-experimental and, through the use of percentages and categorical data, it sought to describe retention rates of teachers hired from 2000-2005 in one major suburban school district. Nominal scales were used to categorize three types of new teachers hired by this district in order to report percentages for study and analysis. The three categories are based on route of the teacher to certification and include those who were traditionally certified through a university program; those who completed certification requirements through the in-house Alternative/Accelerated teacher certification program of the district studied; or those who became certified through external Alternative/Accelerated certification route programs.

Research Questions

Three research questions were explored:

1. When analyzing district leadership hiring practices regarding the hiring of beginning teachers in a major suburban school district between 2000-2005, which group was hired more often – those who were traditionally certified through a university program, those who completed certification requirements through the in-house district Alternative/Accelerated teacher certification program, or those who became certified through external Alternative/Accelerated certification routes?
2. Do retention rates differ at one, two, three, four and five years among beginning teachers hired in a major suburban school district between 2000-2005 who were traditionally certified through a university program, those who completed certification requirements through the in-house district Alternative/Accelerated teacher certification program, and those who became certified through external Alternative/Accelerated certification routes?
3. Of the beginning teachers hired in a major suburban school district who were traditionally certified through a university program, those who completed certification requirements through the in-house district Alternative/Accelerated teacher certification program, and those who became certified through external Alternative/Accelerated certification routes, do the teachers in the category hired most often have the highest overall retention rate for the time period studied?

Setting

The setting for this study was one major suburban school district in Texas. This district is consistently in the top ten percent of the largest of over 1,000 school districts in the state, and maintained a total enrollment of 52,919 students for the 2012-2013 school year. This district was comprised of 62 campuses in 2012-2013 and, for the 2011 accountability ratings for the state of Texas, 41 of this district's schools scored Recognized (over 80% of the students met or exceeded the state standard for state standardized exam scores) or Exemplary (over 90% met or exceeded the state standard for state standardized exam scores).

During the 2012-2013 school year, this district's student demographics were as follows: 82% Hispanic, 8% Caucasian, 6% African-American, 3% Asian, .08% Pacific Islander, and .02% American Indian. Many of the students (82%) were considered economically disadvantaged, and 11,279 students were Bilingual/ESL, 2,743 were Gifted and Talented and 4,064 were in Special Education. The graduation rate for the district was 77%. The district studied is one of only three school districts in the state of Texas during the 2012-2013 school year that supported and housed a district Alternative/Accelerated certification program for the purpose of training and certifying new teachers to staff high needs areas in the district.

Subjects

The subjects of this study were 1,310 newly hired teachers during the time period of 2000-2005 in one major suburban school district who had zero years of teaching experience. A number of the subjects – 603 to be exact – already held state teacher

certification and thereby had already completed a teacher certification program in Texas or from another state, typically as an undergraduate in a traditional university setting. Others, 471, were accepted into and participating in the district's in-house Alternative/Accelerated teacher certification program, or ATCP, and the last group of 240 new teachers were participating in one of 18 other external educator preparation programs, which included for-profit, stand-alone programs; university post-baccalaureate programs; education service center programs; and online teacher certification programs. Existing data on leadership hiring practices through the school year 2011-2012 were analyzed to determine years of employment for each new teacher hired from 2000-2005.

Procedures

A proposal for this research study was submitted to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the University of Houston. The researcher received final approval to begin the study on October 23, 2012. All signatures were collected for approval. See Appendix A for approval letter.

At the district level, permission to conduct this study was permitted on March 6, 2012 from Donna Summers, Director of Research and Evaluation for the district studied. There were three stipulations for approval. First, the data must be provided to the researcher from the Central Office personnel. Next, the data must be masked so as not to be identifiable by teacher. The request for a copy of the final study was also made by Ms. Summers. Data was provided from Ms. Summers in the form of an Excel document. Columns of information requested included Position, Assignment, On-Duty Date, Board

Date, Certification, Experience, Program, Type of Permit, Permit Information, Resignation, Reason and Years of Service, explained as follows.

The column titled Position describes the position for which the teacher was hired. For instance, it might read “Fifth Grade,” or “Science,” or “History.” The Assignment column, on the other hand, may give more detailed information. For example, after “Fifth Grade” in the Position column, the Assignment column might read “ELAR,” for fifth grade English Language Arts and Reading. Or, if a teacher’s Position is labeled “Science,” it might read “Biology” in the Assignment column to explain which science content the teacher was hired to teach.

The researcher then verified, to the extent possible, that every position listed was a teaching position. Any other positions that were listed were culled from the list as applicable. For example, there were several listings for “Speech Pathologists.” These were erroneously included in the teacher list and cut for the purposes of the study.

On-Duty date gave the day on which the teacher reported for duty and began receiving payment for the contractual position of teacher, whereas Board Date was the date that the district’s School Board approved the teacher for hire in the district. The Certification column explained under which certification area the teacher was hired. For instance, if they were already certified in Texas, a “TX” was listed in this column. Conversely, if they were certified in another state, that state’s abbreviation showed. If they were not yet certified and participating in an Alternative/Accelerated teacher certification program, the column read “CP” for certification pending, and listed the

program in which they were participating, or it listed “ATCP” for the district’s in-house Alternative/Accelerated teacher certification program.

The Experience column showed a “0” because only data for teachers with zero years of experience was requested, and the Program column, once again, named the Alternative/Accelerated certification program they were attending, if applicable. Type of Permit and Permit Information were typically listed as “Probationary” for those in Alternative/Accelerated certification programs as they were teaching under a state “Probationary Teaching Certificate” as approved by their respective programs. These columns remained empty if the teacher already held a Standard Teaching Certificate. Some teachers were listed as having a “Classroom Facilitator” permit, which means they were not yet accepted into an Alternative/Accelerated certification program or they were awaiting the conferral of their degree from a university program. In essence, these were long-term substitute teachers and, therefore, not counted as newly hired teachers of record for the purposes of this study.

The Resignation column gave the date that the teacher resigned from the district, if applicable. It said “Still Working” if they continued to be employed by the district. The Reason column gave information as to why they resigned, if they did, in fact, provide a reason at all. Such reasons might include such things as “personal,” “career change,” or “relocating,” among others.

The Years of Service column tallied how many years each teacher was employed by the district. If a teacher was hired in 2000, it is possible for this number to read 12 if they were still employed in the district at the time the data was collected.

Once this information was received, the researcher used nominal scales to categorize the entries of the document. The researcher assigned a number to each teacher depending on the certification route that was used by the teacher to gain teacher certification. If a teacher was certified by the traditional, University-Based route and had been hired already certified to teach, he or she was categorized with a one in a new column added by the researcher. If the teacher was participating in the in-house ATCP, he or she received a number two. If the teacher was in an external teacher certification program, a three was placed by his or her name. There was no numerical value inherent to these numbers. Their sole purpose was to sort the teachers into categories so that analysis and study could occur.

Once the nominal scales were entered into the new category column, the entire list was sorted by these three numbers – one, two and three. The researcher then counted how many teachers fell into each category. These lists were created separately for individual study of each group.

The researcher then looked at each of the three category lists to determine how many teachers in that category provided the district with one year of service, two years of service, three years of service, etc. The number of teachers that served for each number of years was counted and a percentage of the total were calculated. For instance, there were 599 teachers in the number one category, which signified that the teachers in this category were traditionally certified through a traditional, or University-Based program, and 114 of them left after one year. This meant that the percentage of attrition for this group after one year was 19%. Therefore, the retention rate was 81%. These percentages

were calculated for all beginning teachers hired 2000-2005, which is the length of time requested by the researcher for the data set. However, data expands for this group of teachers through the 2011-2012 school year in order to provide the researcher with retention years of service up to and slightly beyond the five-year target.

When the calculations were complete, the researcher used the data to describe the percentages of each group and to attempt to answer the research questions presented in the study. In addition to looking at each of the three groups of teachers hired based on route to certification, the researcher also looked at each group over time to ascertain trends and patterns for each group of new hires based on route to certification.

Instruments

The columns described and data for each of the 1,310 teachers hired between 2000-2005 in one major suburban school district were presented to the researcher in a Microsoft Office Excel document format. Each of the teachers were masked as to not be identifiable. The researcher was allowed to only work with said data for the study and is required to provide the Director of Evaluation and Research with a copy of the final document when complete. No other instruments were used.

Limitations

- The study focused on one specific school district in Texas and the results may not be applicable to other states, districts, and alternative teacher certification programs because each program is created, managed and implemented differently.

- The study was based on one five-year period in one major suburban school district and may not reflect outcomes of similar future studies of the same nature due to changes in the economic climate and other factors affecting the hiring of teachers in the district, the state and the nation.
- The researcher accepted the data from the Director of Evaluation and Research from the studied district as it was and was not allowed to see raw data or live records. It is possible, although not probable, that the data could have been incomplete, mislabeled or inaccurate in some other way. The researcher had no way to double check the information for accuracy.
- In addition, the researcher could calculate retention rates for teachers hired by the district studied for the time period studied, but could not explain why teachers may have left the district, beyond the reasons that some mentioned, nor why teachers may have remained in the district. The study was limited to a quantitative analysis of the years the teachers taught in the district, regardless of the reasons why they left or stayed. It is possible, and likely, that of the teachers who left the district, some of their employment was terminated or they may have been asked to resign in lieu of termination of employment. And, the data used for the study did not indicate whether teachers stayed in the profession when they left the district, may have been promoted to a leadership positions, or if they may have accepted another teacher or leadership position in another school district.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

In chapter four, the results of the study are presented. The purpose of the study was to examine from which of three certification routes the district was hiring beginning teachers most often, and, of the three groups, whether teachers from one group were more likely to continue employment in the district after one, two, three, four and five years. Three research questions were investigated and the results are organized to answer each question.

The researcher used nominal scales and descriptive statistics using archival data regarding new teachers hired in a large, suburban school district in Texas for the study and permission was granted from both the school district's Data Evaluation department and the University of Houston's Division of Research (Appendix A) to conduct the research.

Results of Each Set of Statistics

Research Question 1 read as follows:

1. When analyzing district leadership hiring practices regarding the hiring of beginning teachers in a major suburban school district between 2000-2005, which group was hired more often – those who were traditionally certified through a university program, those who completed certification requirements through the in-house district Alternative/Accelerated teacher certification

program, or those who became certified through external
Alternative/Accelerated certification routes?

In answer to this question, nearly early half (46%), or 599 of 1,310, of all new teachers hired from 2000-2005 were already certified to teach. They completed traditional, University-Based routes to teacher certification, most likely holding four-year Bachelor's degrees in the field of Education, and held Standard Teaching certificates in the state of Texas. The number in this group of teachers was the highest of the three groups for each of the five years studied, as well as for the five year group taken as a whole. This group was hired most often by the school district for the time period studied to answer research question number one. In addition to the teachers hired from this route to certification, there were 36%, or 471 of 1,310, hired who were participants of the district's ATCP program and the remaining 18%, or 240, were participating in an external Alternative/Accelerated teacher certification program.

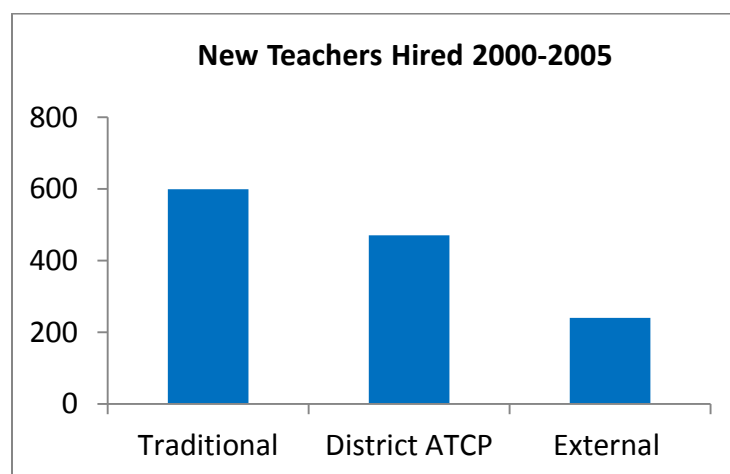


Figure 4.1. New teachers hired 2000-2005 by certification route. This figure illustrates the number of teachers hired from 2000-2005 by each of three routes to certification.

Research question 2 read as follows:

2. Do retention rates differ at one, two, three, four and five years among beginning teachers hired in a major suburban school district between 2000-2005 who were traditionally certified through a university program, those who completed certification requirements through the in-house district Alternative/Accelerated teacher certification program, and those who became certified through external Alternative/Accelerated certification routes?

The tables displayed below provide the 2000-2005 retention rates for the three categories of newly hired beginning teachers in a major suburban school district in Texas and show the results of the study for this research question. The three categories include those who already hold a standard teaching certificate and have most likely completed a four-year undergraduate degree in the field of Education, as indicated by “Traditional/University” on the table; those who held a baccalaureate degree in something other than Education and were accepted into the school district’s in-house Alternative/Accelerated teacher certification program, as indicated by “District’s ATP”; and, those who participated in other, external educator certification programs, or “External Programs” on the tables.

First, the results for each cohort group of teachers, as designated by hire year, are presented. There were five cohort groups. The first consists of all teachers hired with zero years’ experience in this large suburban school district from July 2000-February 2001. The second includes all teachers hired June, 2001-March, 2002. The third table

represents beginning teachers hired from July 2002-January 2003. In the fourth table, new teachers included were hired from July 2003-March 2004. The fifth, and last, table focuses on teachers with zero years' experience hired July 2004-March 2005 in this large suburban school district. A descriptive statistics narrative follows each table to explain the findings. All percentages have been rounded to the closest whole number percent.

Table 4.1

Teachers Hired from 2000-2001 Who Resigned % Retained After Each Year of Service

Certification Route	Hired	1 Yr.	2 Yrs.	3 Yrs.	4 Yrs.	5 Yrs.
Traditional/University	125	26/79	12/70	7/64	7/58	5/54
District's ATCP	53	3/94	5/85	7/72	3/66	7/53
External Programs	22	2/91	1/86	1/82	1/77	1/72

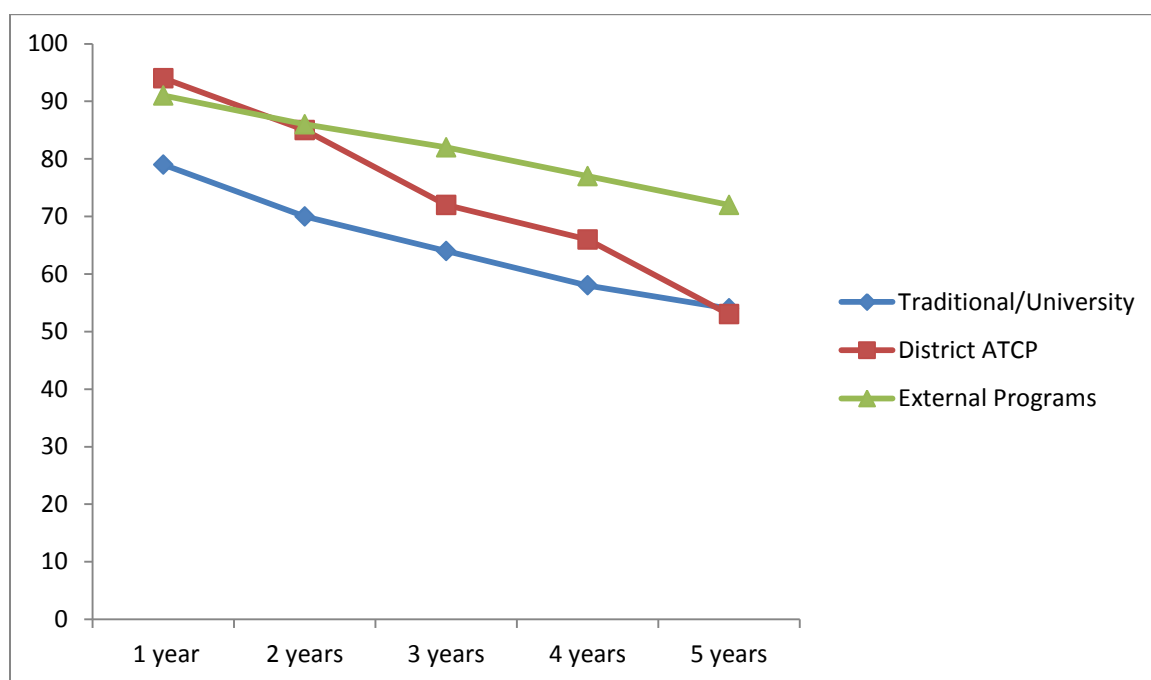


Figure 4.2. Teachers hired 2000-2001 % retained after each year of service. This figure illustrates the percentage of teachers hired 2000-2001 who were retained after each year of service.

Table 4.1 and Figure 4.1 represent new teachers with zero years' experience hired by a large, suburban school district between July, 2000 and February, 2001. A total of 125 who were certified by a traditional teacher certification route were hired, 53 were participating in the district's in-house ATCP program, and 22 were hired from external teacher certification programs. After one year of service, the traditionally certified teachers had a retention rate of 79%, as compared to the ATCP teachers' retention rate of 94% and the external programs' retention rates of 91%.

After two years of service, the retention rate for the traditionally certified teachers fell to 70%, while the ATCP teachers' retention rate lowered to 85% and the external programs were at an 86% retention rate. By year three, the first (or traditionally certified) teacher group reached a 64% retention rate, while the ATCP teachers' retention rate fell to 72%, and the external program teacher group had an 82% retention rate.

Year four had a similar pattern, with the traditionally certified teachers reaching a 58% retention rate, the ATCP teacher group retaining 66% of its teachers and the external program teachers holding at 77%. The traditionally certified teacher group had an overall five year retention rate of 54%, which is slightly above the national average of 50%. The ATCP teacher group ended the five year mark with a 53% retention rate, which is slightly above the national average as well. The external program group, for this year of new teacher hires, had a 72% retention rate after five years of service. This group was well above the national teacher retention rate average for the five year mark.

Table 4.2

Teachers Hired 2001-2002 Who Resigned/% Retained After Each Year of Service

Certification Route	Hired	1 Yr.	2 Yrs.	3 Yrs.	4 Yrs.	5 Yrs.
Traditional/University	97	19/80	9/71	13/58	2/56	2/54
District's ATCP	112	3/97	11/87	8/80	7/74	7/68
External Programs	19	3/84	1/79	2/68	0/68	0/68

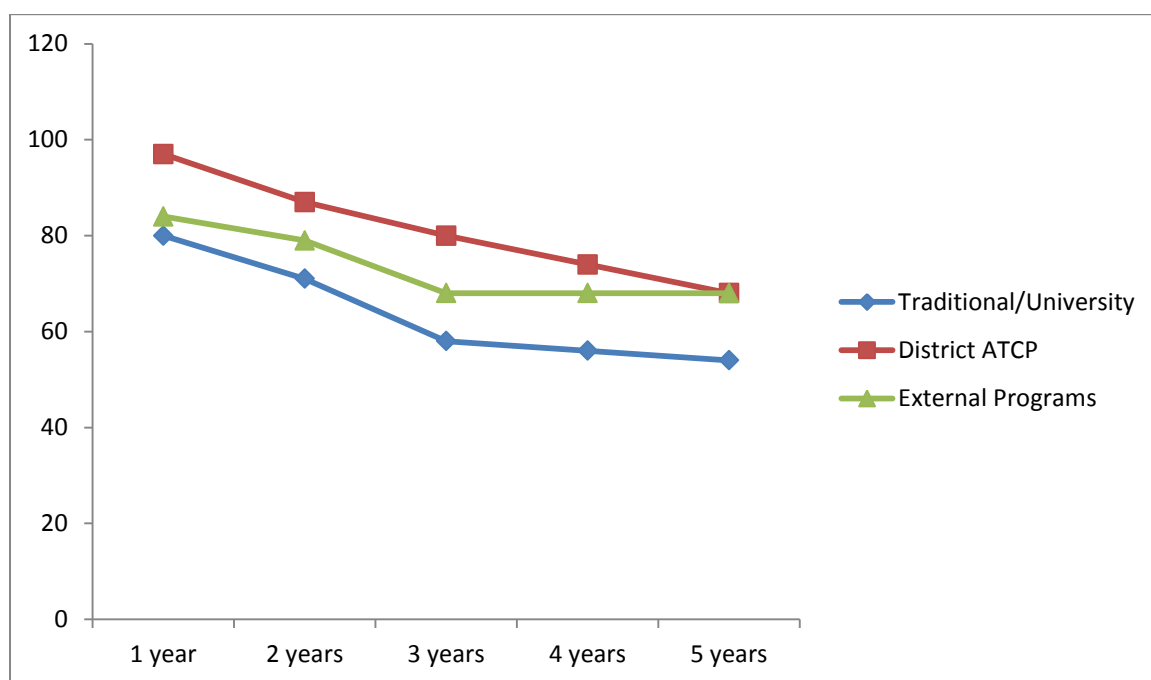


Figure 4.3. Teachers hired 2001-2002 % retained after each year of service. This figure illustrates the percentage of teachers hired 2001-2002 who were retained after each year of service.

Table 4.2 and Figure 4.2 represent new teachers with zero years' experience hired by a large, suburban school district between June 2001 and March 2002. A total of 97 who were certified by a traditional teacher certification route were hired, 112 were participating in the district's in-house ATCP program and 19 were hired from external teacher certification programs. After one year of service, the traditionally certified teachers had a retention rate of 80%, as compared to the ATCP teachers' retention rate of 97% and the external programs' retention rates of 84%.

After two years of service, the retention rate for the traditionally certified teachers fell to 71%, while the ATCP teachers' retention rate lowered to 87% and the external

programs were at a 79% retention rate. By year three, the first (or traditionally certified) teacher group reached a 58% retention rate, while the ATCP teachers' retention rate fell to 80%, and the external program teacher group had a 68% retention rate. Year four had a similar pattern, with the traditionally certified teachers reaching a 56% retention rate, the ATCP teacher group retaining 74% of its teachers and the external program teachers holding at 68%.

The traditionally certified teacher group had an overall five year retention rate of 54%, which is slightly above the national average of 50%. The ATCP teacher group ended the five year mark with a 68% retention rate, which is significantly above the national average and the external program group, for this year of new teacher hires, also had a 68% retention rate after five years of service. The second and third groups were well above the national teacher retention rate average for the five year mark.

Table 4.3

Teachers Hired 2002-2003 Who Resigned/% Retained After Each Year of Service

Certification Route	Hired	1 Yr.	2 Yrs.	3 Yrs.	4 Yrs.	5 Yrs.
Traditional/University	167	26/84	12/77	17/67	11/60	4/58
District's ATCP	62	3/95	6/85	9/71	4/65	7/53
External Programs	23	5/78	3/65	1/61	4/43	1/39

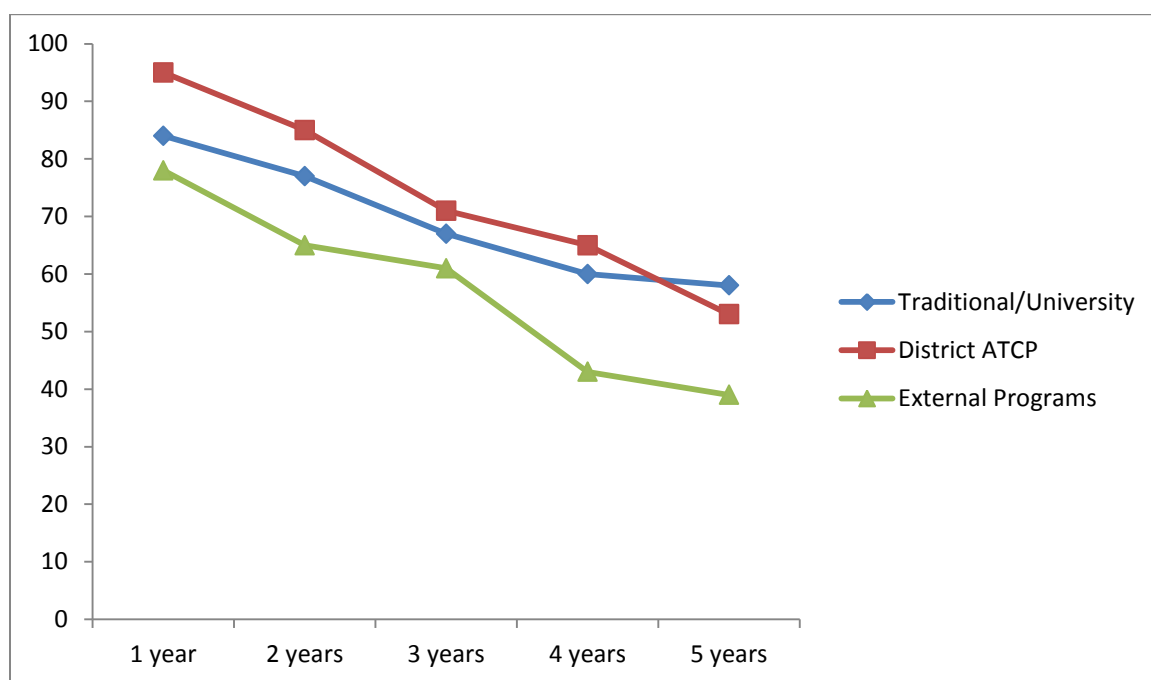


Figure 4.4. Teachers hired 2002-2003 % retained after each year of service. This figure illustrates the percentage of teachers hired 2002-2003 who were retained after each year of service.

Table 4.3 and Figure 4.3 represent new teachers with zero years' experience hired by a large, suburban school district between July 2002 and January 2003. A total of 167 who were certified by a traditional teacher certification route were hired, 62 were participating in the district's in-house ATCP program, and 23 were hired from external teacher certification programs. After one year of service, the traditionally certified teachers had a retention rate of 84%, as compared to the ATCP teachers' retention rate of 95%, and the external programs' retention rates of 78%.

After two years of service, the retention rate for the traditionally certified teachers fell to 77%, while the ATCP teachers' retention rate lowered to 85%, and the external

programs were at an 65% retention rate. By year three, the first (or traditionally certified) teacher group reached a 67% retention rate, while the ATCP teachers' retention rate fell to 71%, and the external program teacher group had a 61% retention rate. Year four had a similar pattern, with the traditionally certified teachers reaching a 60% retention rate, the ATCP teacher group retaining 65% of its teachers, and the external program teachers holding at 43%.

After four years, the traditionally certified teacher group had an overall five year retention rate of 58%, which was above the national average of 50%. The ATCP teacher group ended the five year mark with a 53% retention rate, which is slightly above the national average as well. The external program group, for this year of new teacher hires, had a 39% retention rate after five years of service. This group was well below the national teacher retention rate average for the five year mark.

Table 4.4

Teachers Hired 2003-2004 Who Resigned/% Retained After Each Year of Service

Certification Route	Hired	1 Yr.	2 Yrs.	3 Yrs.	4 Yrs.	5 Yrs.
Traditional/University	63	12/81	8/68	2/65	6/56	6/46
District's ATCP	115	8/93	10/84	10/76	8/69	5/64
External Programs	53	7/87	9/70	1/68	4/60	6/49

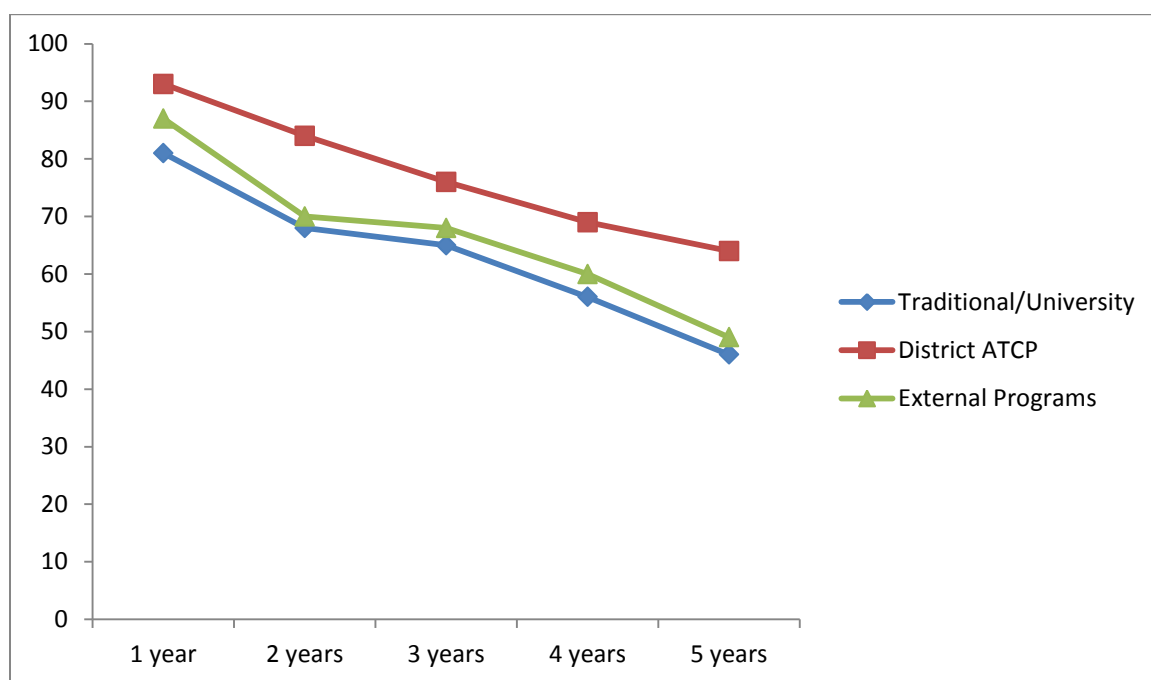


Figure 4.5. Teachers hired 2003-2004 % retained after each year of service. This figure illustrates the percentage of teachers hired 2003-2004 who were retained after each year of service.

Table 4.4 and Figure 4.4 represent new teachers with zero years' experience hired by a large, suburban school district between July 2003 and March 2004. A total of 63 who were certified by a traditional teacher certification route were hired, 115 were participating in the district's in-house ATCP program, and 53 were hired from external teacher certification programs. After one year of service, the traditionally certified teachers had a retention rate of 81%, as compared to the ATCP teachers' retention rate of 93%, and the external programs' retention rates of 87%.

After two years of service, the retention rate for the traditionally certified teachers fell to 68%, while the ATCP teachers' retention rate lowered to 84% and the external

programs were at a 70% retention rate. By year three, the first (or traditionally certified) teacher group reached a 65% retention rate, while the ATCP teachers' retention rate fell to 76%, and the external program teacher group had a 68% retention rate. Year four had a similar pattern, with the traditionally certified teachers reaching a 56% retention rate, the ATCP teacher group retaining 69% of its teachers and the external program teachers holding at 60%.

The traditionally certified teacher group had an overall five year retention rate of 46%, which is slightly below the national average of 50%. The ATCP teacher group ended the five year mark with a 64% retention rate, which is significantly above the national average. The external program group, for this year of new teacher hires, had a 49% retention rate after five years of service. This group was just below the national teacher retention rate average for the five year mark.

Table 4.5

Teachers Hired 2004-2005 Who Resigned/% Retained After Each Year of Service

Certification Route	Hired	1 Yr.	2 Yrs.	3 Yrs.	4 Yrs.	5 Yrs.
Traditional/University	147	29/80	18/68	12/60	9/54	2/52
District's ATCP	129	12/91	8/84	14/74	16/61	7/56
External Programs	123	28/77	16/64	8/58	9/50	4/47

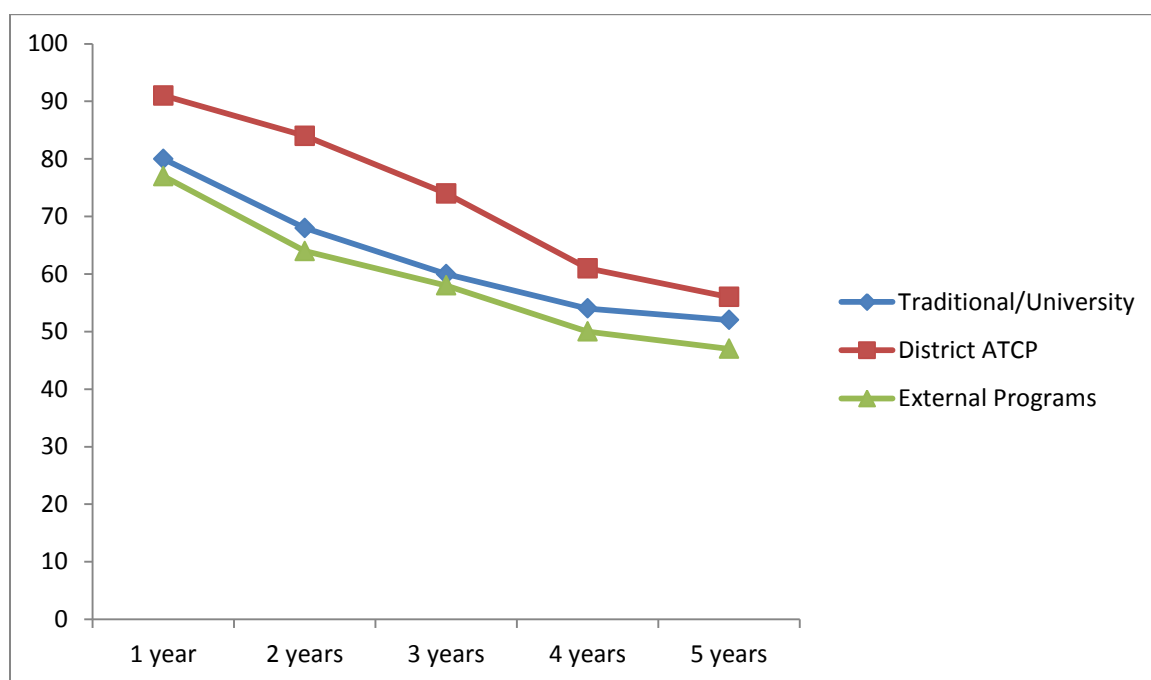


Figure 4.6. Teachers hired 2004-2005 % retained after each year of service. This figure illustrates the percentage of teachers hired 2004-2005 who were retained after each year of service.

Table 4.5 and Figure 4.5 represent new teachers with zero years' experience hired by a large, suburban school district between July 2004 and March 2005. A total of 147 who were certified by a traditional teacher certification route were hired, 129 were participating in the district's in-house ATCP program, and 123 were hired from external teacher certification programs. After one year of service, the traditionally certified teachers had a retention rate of 80%, as compared to the ATCP teachers' retention rate of 91%, and the external programs' retention rates of 77%.

After two years of service, the retention rate for the traditionally certified teachers fell to 68%, while the ATCP teachers' retention rate lowered to 84%, and the external

programs were at a 64% retention rate. By year three, the first (or traditionally certified) teacher group reached a 60% retention rate, while the ATCP teachers' retention rate fell to 74%, and the external program teacher group had a 58% retention rate. Year four had a similar pattern, with the traditionally certified teachers reaching a 54% retention rate, the ATCP teacher group retaining 61% of its teachers, and the external program teachers holding at 50%.

The traditionally certified teacher group had an overall five year retention rate of 52%, which is slightly above the national average of 56%. The ATCP teacher group ended the five year mark with a 47% retention rate, which is above the national average. The external program group, for this year of new teacher hires, had a 49% retention rate after five years of service. This group was just below the national teacher retention rate average for the five year mark.

If all zero experience teachers hired between 2001-2005 are lumped into one cohort group, the following data results are found. Data from years 2000-2010 were included in these results to find out if the teachers hired as late as 2005 did or did not continue employment in the district for five years or more.

Table 4.6

Overall Teachers Hired 2000-2005 Who Resigned/% Retained After Each Year of Service

Certification Route	Hired	1 Yr.	2 Yrs.	3 Yrs.	4 Yrs.	5 Yrs.
Traditional/University	599	112/81	59/71	51/63	35/57	19/54
District's ATCP	471	29/94	40/85	48/75	38/67	33/60
External Programs	240	45/81	30/69	13/63	18/56	12/51

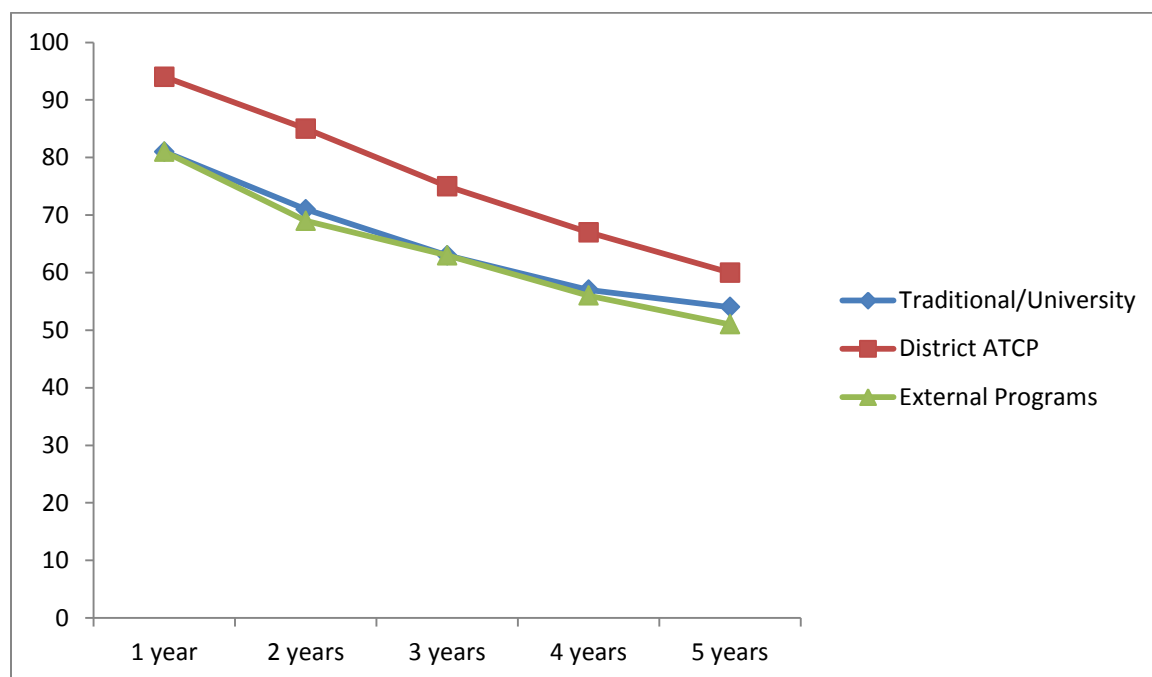


Figure 4.7. Overall teachers hired 2000-2005 % retained after each year of service. This figure illustrates the percentage of teachers hired 2000-2005 who were retained after each year of service.

A general pattern can be seen in the data tables and the charts. The number and percentage of teachers who left after each year of service up to five years who were participating in the district's ATCP were least likely to resign after each year of service. The retention rates for this group were consistently higher than for the other two groups. Although all three groups remained above the national average of 50% at the five year mark, the ATCP group was significantly higher at 60%, while the other two groups were closer to the national average of 50%, with the traditionally certified at 54% and the external programs at 51%, respectively.

Table 4.7

Traditional/University Route Teachers Hired 2000-2005 Rates of Attrition

Year Hired	1 Yr.	2 Yrs.	3 Yrs.	4 Yrs.	5 Yrs.
2001-2001	-21%	-10%	-6%	-6%	-4%
2001-2002	-20%	-9%	-13%	-2%	-2%
2002-2003	-16%	-7%	-10%	-7%	-2%
2003-2004	-19%	-13%	-3%	-10%	-10%
2004-2005	-20%	-12%	-8%	-6%	-1%
Averages	-19%	-10%	-8%	-6%	-3%

A consistent pattern in the data for the traditionally certified route teachers can be observed over the five year period studied. On average, 19% of these teachers resign after year one. At year two, approximately another 10% resign. Then, about another 8% resign after three years; then another 6%; then, approximately another 3% after the five

year mark. The trend is that these teachers have a higher attrition rate in the first two years; subsequently, fewer and fewer leave the district as they stay longer in the district. The attrition rate slows down each year and the percentage of this group who stay increases each year.

Table 4.8

ATCP Route Teachers Hired 2000-2005 Rates of Attrition

Year Hired	1 Yr.	2 Yrs.	3 Yrs.	4 Yrs.	5 Yrs.
2001-2001	-6%	-9%	-13%	-6%	-13%
2001-2002	-3%	-10%	-7%	-6%	-6%
2002-2003	-5%	-10%	-7%	-6%	-6%
2003-2004	-7%	-7%	-9%	-7%	-4%
2004-2005	-9%	-6%	-11%	-12%	-5%
Averages	-6%	-8%	-11%	-7%	-8%

For the ATCP group of new hires, the trend or pattern that emerges is that the attrition rate is very low after year one – specifically, an average of 6%. After two years, the attrition rate rises to 8%. The highest attrition rate for the time period studied for this group occurs after the three year mark at 11%. After four years, approximately 7% leave and after five year another 8% leave. The percentages are not consistent over time and vary from year to year. The rates are almost stable after each year of service with a slight spike after three years of service.

Table 4.9

External Program Route Teachers 2000-2005 Rates of Attrition

Year Hired	1 Yr.	2 Yrs.	3 Yrs.	4 Yrs.	5 Yrs.
2001-2001	-9%	-5%	-5%	-5%	-5%
2001-2002	-16%	-5%	-11%	-0%	-0%
2002-2003	-22%	-13%	-4%	-18%	-4%
2003-2004	-13%	-17%	-2%	-8%	-11%
2004-2005	-23%	-13%	-7%	-7%	-3%
Averages	18%	-12%	-6%	-8%	-5%

The group of new teachers hired from external alternative teacher certification programs had an average attrition rate of 18% after one year of service. This number decreased to 12% after two years and 6% after three. A slight increase in the attrition rate occurred after year four with 8%. After five years of service, the attrition rate of the group was 5%. The general trend is for the attrition rate to decrease each year for this group, although at four years of service a small upward trend took place.

Table 4.10

All Teachers 2000-2005 Rates of Attrition

Certification Route	1 Yr.	2 Yrs.	3 Yrs.	4 Yrs.	5 Yrs.	Total
Traditional/University	-19%	-10%	-8%	-6%	-3%	46%
ATCP	-6%	-8%	-11%	-7%	-8%	40%
External Program	-18%	-12%	-6%	-8%	-5%	49%

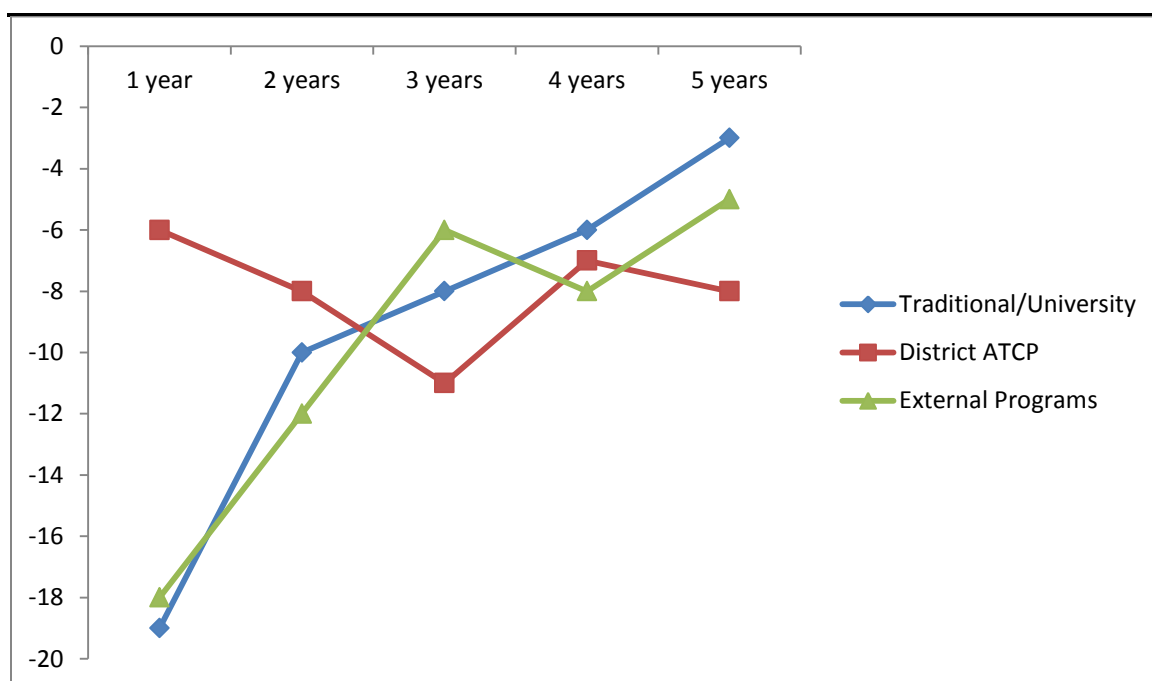


Figure 4.8. Overall Teachers hired 2000-2005 % resigned after each year of service. This figure illustrates the percentage of teachers hired 2000-2005 who resigned after each year of service.

Overall rates of attrition decreased over time for two of the groups of teachers, those certified through traditional, university-based routes and those certified through

external program routes, while the attrition rate for teachers certified through one route, the district-based ATCP group, increased for the first three years, then decreased, then increased slightly once again. As compared to 6% for the ATCP group, those teachers certified through a traditional, university-based route and the teachers certified through external Alternative/Accelerated programs both began with rates of attrition more than double that of the ATCP group, 19% and 18%, respectively. However, the rates of attrition fell significantly (9% for the traditional route teachers and 6% for the external program teachers), while the attrition rate for the teachers certified through the ATCP group increased by 2% after the second year of service. Attrition rates for the traditional group and the external program group continued to decrease by 2% each year for the traditionally certified group and more erratically for the external program group with one exception of an increase by 2% after year four.

The district-based ATCP group followed a different trend. That group began with a very small attrition rate of 6%, then increased by 2%, then by 3%, then decreased by 4%, then increased by 1%. This group had an upward and downward trend for attrition; yet, after five years of service, the attrition rate for this group was the lowest at 40%.

Research question 3 read as follows:

3. Of the beginning teachers hired in a major suburban school district who were traditionally certified through a university program, those who completed certification requirements through the in-house district Alternative/Accelerated teacher certification program, and those who became certified through external Alternative/Accelerated certification routes, do the

teachers in the category hired most often have the highest overall retention rate for the time period studied?

The group most often hired by this major suburban district was the traditionally certified teacher group. This group did not have the highest retention rate of the three groups of teachers studied, although retention rates improved for this group each year for the five year period. At the five year mark, this group of teachers had a 54% retention rate. This was 6% lower than the ATCP route group teachers and 3% higher than the external teacher certification route group.

Description of Results in Terms of the Population Sample

The population sample size for all first year teachers hired in a major suburban school district 2000-2005 included 1,310 teachers total. These were all teachers who had zero years of experience in the classroom. Of these, 599 teachers (or 46%) were hired already holding a standard teaching certification. These teachers had completed a traditional, University-Based route for certification. Next, 471 (or 36%) of the new hires were participating in the district's in-house Alternative/Accelerated teacher certification program, and the remaining 240 teachers (or 18%) were participating in external Alternative/Accelerated certification route programs.

The retention rate for the ATCP teachers was 94% after one year of service, which means that 6% of the total hired in this category left the district at this time. This rate was 13% points higher than the other two groups. The traditionally certified and external program groups both had an 81% retention rate; thus, indicating that 19% of the teachers in these groups resigned after one year in the classroom.

More of the traditionally certified teachers remained in the classroom than the external program teachers after two years of service – specifically, 71% of the traditionally certified were still employed as to 69% for the external program teachers. Nevertheless, the ATCP teachers continued to have a higher rate of retention at 85%. By year two, 15% of the ATCP teachers were gone from the district, as opposed to 29% of the traditionally certified teachers, and 31% of the teachers in external certification programs.

The retention rate for the traditionally certified and external program teachers returned to be the same number – 63% after three years of service in the district. The ATCP teachers were retained at 75% for this same time frame, which is 12% higher than both other categories of teachers. By this time, 37% of the traditionally certified and external program teachers had resigned and left the district, while 25% of the ATCP teachers had as well.

After four years, the traditionally certified teachers' retention rate was 57%, while the external program teachers stayed in the district at a rate of 56%. Once again, the ATCP teachers remained at a higher rate of 67% after four years. By this time period, 43% of the traditionally certified teachers had left the district and 44% of the external program teachers had as well. The ATCP teachers had an attrition rate of 33% at the four-year mark.

At the five-year mark, the ATCP teacher retention rate was 60% (10% points above the national average of 50%), as opposed to 54% for the traditionally certified teachers and 51% for the external program teachers, which are closer to the national

average rates for retention. For the traditionally certified group of teachers, the highest percentage left the district after one year of service. There were 19% who left after one year; however, fewer and fewer left after each subsequent year of service in the district. Only 10% left after two years, 8% after three, 6% after four, and 3% after five. The percentages resigning consistently decreased over time. The longer a traditionally certified teacher stayed in the district, the less likely he or she resigned. The attrition rate decreased and the retention rate increased with each year of the study.

The ATCP group of teachers was not as consistent in its rates of attrition. Although only 6% left after one year, this rate increased to 8% after the second year and increased again to 11% after the third year of service to the district. After four years the rate decreased back down to 7% who resigned from the district, then increased again to 8% after five years.

As for the external program teachers, the attrition rate varied as well. A full 18% left after one year and a substantial percentage (12%) left the second year. After three years, however, only 6% decided to resign. This number increased to 8% after four years and then decreased back to 5% after five years of service. The majority of the external program teachers who left the district in the first five years did so after the first one and two years of service. Not as many were likely to leave after three years of service to the district.

Another way to look at the data reveals some interesting facts. During the first two years of service, the traditionally certified and external program attrition rates were much higher than the ATCP group at 19% for the traditionally certified and 18% for the

external program certified after the first year and 10% for the traditionally certified and 12% for the external after the second year. In comparison, the ATCP group was at 6% and 8% attrition for the first two years. However, after this two year period, , the trend does not continue. In fact, it reverses. After the third year of service, the ATCP group has the highest attrition rate at 11%, while the traditionally certified group is at 8%, and the external program group is at 6%.

This trend could possibly be explained by the three-year waiver that was signed by all ATCP teachers. If they left after one year of service, they paid a fee of \$2,000 for the training. If they left after two years of service, they paid \$1,000. If they stayed for three years of service in the district, they paid nothing for their certification training. This policy could have influenced the teachers of this group to stay in the classroom for at least the first three years and this waiver could affect the retention rate of the ATCP teachers for the first three years of employment. In addition, it makes sense that the ATCP teachers may not have resigned after their first year of service because most wanted to finish their standard teacher certification. This process generally takes approximately fourteen months and those who resign may not be able to finish certification requirements; thus, they stay at least one more contract year to finish the process. This should, however, hold true for the external program teachers as well, and it apparently does not hold for this group as evidenced by their higher attrition rates after one year of service in the district.

At the four year mark, the traditionally certified teachers had the lowest attrition rate, at 6%, while the two Alternative/Accelerated certification route groups were at 7%

and 8%. And after five years, the traditionally certified teachers had the strongest retention rate, losing only 3% of the teachers, while the external program group had an attrition rate of 5% and the ATCP group had the highest attrition rate at 8%. When looking at attrition rates after year five, the ATCP group had the highest rate.

It appears that after an initially higher attrition rate for the traditional and external program groups, as compared to the ATCP group, the three groups become more in line with each other over time and both the traditional and external route groups have slightly better retention rates than the ATCP group after four and five years of service.

Although the results of this study are encouraging regarding the district's ATCP program retention rates, and the rates found equal or are better than the national teacher retention rate averages overall, the district does not fare as well as the state for overall teacher retention. Approximately 29.6 percent of alternatively certified teachers in Texas and 22.4 percent of traditionally certified teachers left their positions after four years for the 2006-2010 time period (Ramsay, 2011). By comparison, if one takes the average of the ATCP and external alternative certification route program retention rates of this study after four years of service, approximately 62% were retained at this point in time. The state had a retention rate 9% higher for all alternatively certified teachers combined. And, for traditionally certified teachers, the state's retention rate of 78% after four years was almost 21% higher than those of the district.

This large, suburban district compares close to national averages for two groups of teachers that they hire, those who are certified through traditional, university-based routes and those who are certified through external Alternative/Accelerated route

programs. The district fares a full 10% better than the national averages in retaining the teachers that gain teacher certification through their in-house, district ATCP program.

However, when compared to the state averages for retention, the district falls significantly short of the state averages for retention for all groups of teachers regardless of route to certification. Approximately 9% more teachers certified through Alternative/Accelerated programs and 20% more traditionally certified teachers leave the district, as compared to the state rates, during their first four years of employment.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Increasing student enrollment, high teacher attrition rates and the large number of teachers reaching retirement age mean that the United States must attain and retain an increasing number of qualified teachers for our classrooms each year. Unfortunately, though, many teachers choose to leave the profession after only a few years of service, making turnover high and creating a revolving door climate for students. The purpose of this study was to explore ten years of data from one major suburban school district in Texas to determine if teachers hired from one teacher certification route are more likely than those hired from other routes to produce teachers with higher rates of retention.

Introduction

Archival data from the district was obtained and analyzed using a descriptive statistics method. Nominal scales were used to categorize the 1,310 teachers hired from 2000-2005 in a major suburban school district into three different routes to certification: (a) those who already held a standard teaching certificate and were certified through a traditional University-Based route, (b) those who were participating in the district's internal Alternative/Accelerated teacher certification program, and (c) those who were participating in external Alternative/Accelerated certification programs. It was found that teachers participating in the internal Alternative/Accelerated teacher certification program produced teachers that were more likely to stay in the district after five years than teachers from the other two routes. Teachers in the other two certification routes

had high rates of attrition initially, but the number of those leaving the district decreased over time.

Discussion of Results

Research question number one reads as follows:

1. When analyzing district leadership hiring practices regarding the hiring of beginning teachers in a major suburban school district between 2000-2005, which group was hired more often – those who were traditionally certified through a university program, those who completed certification requirements through the in-house district Alternative/Accelerated teacher certification program, or those who became certified through external Alternative/Accelerated certification routes?

Nearly half (46%), or 599 of 1,310, of all new teachers hired from 2000-2005 were already certified to teach. They completed traditional, University-Based routes to teacher certification, most likely holding four-year Bachelor's degrees in the field of Education, and held Standard Teaching certificates in the state of Texas. The number in this group of teachers was the highest of the three groups for each of the five years studied, as well as for the five year group taken as a whole. This group was hired most often by the school district for the time period studied to answer research question number one. In addition to the teachers hired from this route to certification, there were 36%, or 471 of 1,310, hired who were participants of the district's ATCP program and the remaining 18%, or 240, were participating in an external Alternative/Accelerated teacher certification program.

Research question number two reads as follows:

2. Do retention rates differ at one, two, three, four and five years among beginning teachers hired in a major suburban school district between 2000-2005 who were traditionally certified through a University-Based program, those who completed certification requirements through the in-house district Alternative/Accelerated teacher certification program, and those who became certified through external Alternative/Accelerated certification routes?

Retention rates differ at one, two, three, four and five years among teachers who completed various routes to certification – namely, the traditional, University-Based certification route, as well as the internal district Alternative/Accelerated teacher certification program and external Alternative/Accelerated certification programs.

For the time period studied from 2000-2005, the ATCP group had much higher retention rates for the first two years, as compared to the other two groups, and had the highest overall retention rate after five years of service to the district. The reason for the high rate of retention after one year of service for the ATCP program teachers may be that they are working on and completing their state teacher certification during that first year of teaching. Because that year is a paid internship year, many of them are committed to finishing the program in order to receive their state teacher Standard Teaching certificate. These teachers have invested time and money and many hours of training and are dedicated to seeing it through to completion. Another reason may be that they receive many hours of support from both mentors on their campuses and specialists from the internal district ATCP program staff.

Although the ATCP teachers held the highest retention rates overall, this group had the highest attrition rates (at approximately 11%) after year three. The explanation for this may lie in the fact that these teachers signed a waiver when they were employed. That is, they agreed that if they left the district after one year of service, they owed the district \$2,000 for the ATCP training. If they left after two years of service, they owed \$1,000. If they stayed three years, they never had to pay for the ATCP training. Year three of the study yielded the highest attrition rate of any other year, which could mean that some teachers stayed for the three years before resigning in order to complete the waiver requirements and avoid paying for their ATCP training. The attrition rates of 11% at year three, however, are the highest attrition rates for this group. The highest attrition rates for the other two groups are significantly higher than for the ATCP group: at 19% after one year for the traditionally certified group, and 18% after one year for the external program group.

Another trend that showed in the data was that the longer the traditionally certified teachers stayed, the lower their attrition rate. In other words, the retention rate improved each year of the study for the traditionally certified teachers. This same decrease in the attrition rate was found for the external program teachers as well with one exception after year four.

The external Alternative/Accelerated certification route teachers' attrition rate decreased throughout the years of the study, except at the four year mark. It increased slightly after four years, and then returned to 1% lower than its three year rate. A higher percentage of teachers left after the first and second years, and then the attrition rate

became lower than that of the ATCP group. It appears that of the external Alternative/Accelerated route teachers, retention rates increased dramatically over time. The attrition rate was highest in the first two years; however, teachers who stayed beyond that mark were less likely to leave than the other two groups hired.

Research question number three reads as follows:

3. Of the beginning teachers hired in a major suburban school district who were traditionally certified through a University-Based program, those who completed certification requirements through the in-house district Alternative/Accelerated teacher certification program, and those who became certified through external Alternative/Accelerated certification routes, do the teachers in the category hired most often have the highest overall retention rate for the time period studied?

The group most often hired by this major suburban district was the traditionally certified teacher group. This group did not have the highest retention rate of the three groups of teachers studied, although retention rates improved for this group each year for the five year period. At the five year mark, this group of teachers had a 54% retention rate. This was 6% lower than the ATCP route group teachers and 3% higher than the external teacher certification route group.

Implications for School Leaders

The results of this study could affect school leaders in their hiring practices, especially in the district studied. If the teachers in the ATCP program are more likely to stay in the district, which saves the district time for recruitment and staff development of

new teachers and, therefore, money, then principals may be more likely to hire teachers who are a part of this program. Other school districts may use this information to consider proposing to have their own Alternative/Accelerated teacher certification route program because the costs for implementation may outweigh the costs for additional teacher recruitment and training. A cost-benefit analysis would be in order for other districts to consider this option, and they may find that they, as this major suburban district, could save personnel recruitment time, effort and money by having their own in-house teacher certification program.

Simply implementing a teacher certification program is not enough to ensure higher retention rates of teachers. The program must follow all state mandates for the preparation and support of new teachers. Legislative code for this endeavor is complex, lengthy and audited every five years by the state for quality control. In order for a program to be successful, it needs to adhere to best practices, as noted by the Council of Chief State School Officers. They contend that high quality programs have “...several characteristics that make a difference in the candidates that they produce for the teaching profession” (CCSSO, 2012, p. 10). They lump all educator preparation programs into one category, not separating out those who were once considered “alternative” or “accelerated.” All programs must adhere to high standards to prepare effective teachers, according to this group.

Characteristics that effective educator preparation programs follow may include the following. First, “[t]hey are designed such that school districts have a significant role in the design and implementation of the program” (CCSSO, 2012, p.10). Close

communication with local school districts is important so that the districts can articulate the skills and knowledge that successful teachers in their district must possess. In the case of this study, while following the state mandated curriculum, the pedagogy of the training is geared toward the needs of the district and the unique characteristics of the students in the district. Therefore, those designing and implementing the program are part of the district itself.

Another characteristic of a successful educator preparation program is in the selection of high quality candidates for the program. And, they have "...transparent and rigorous criteria for program completion" (CCSSO, 2012, p. 10). Gone are the days when course completion and taking a state test and passing it are the only prerequisites for certification. All educator preparation must be selective and choose only candidates who can both learn the pedagogy for effective teaching and put it into practice in a way in which students will be successful. The ATCP program of this study is highly selective in candidate selection for the program. As many as 1,000 applications are typically received each year with only 50-200 of the best applicants selected for the program.

Knowing how the candidate can apply rigorous knowledge and skills in a classroom setting before a program recommends licensure, or certification, is a must according to this report. The "...nature and quality of the candidate's experiences during their clinical practice..." is also important (CCSSO, 2012, p. 12). This period of time may be called student teaching or pre-service and it must "simulate the actual practice of teaching that candidates will encounter in their first job" (CCSSO, 2012, p. 12) In an Alternative/Accelerated program, the internship year is the candidate's first job.

Teachers must show proficiency with students on day one of the school year. For this reason, the pre-service training is the period when teachers in these programs must have field experiences and opportunities to practice the skills and knowledge they need to become proficient in the classroom. In the case of this study, teachers in the in-house ATCP program spend 30 hours in summer school classrooms assisting the teachers of record before they step into their own classroom. They watch and discuss videos of effective teachers using research-based instructional strategies that have been proven to be successful with students. They write lesson plans and teach “students” in simulated practice. They receive feedback for improvement as well. All of these items need to be in place for any teacher preparation program in order to prepare the teachers to be effective with students on the job.

Another characteristic of effective teacher preparation programs that the Council of Chief State School Officers mentioned is the inclusion of a strong induction program driven by master teachers, or mentors. The Council of Chief State School Officers (2012) says, “States should consider requiring the training of mentors as part of the program approval process” (CCSSO, 2012, p. 13). The state of Texas requires that every beginning teacher hired in the state have a mentor and that every alternative/accelerated teacher preparation program provide an experienced mentor for every beginning teacher hired.

Therefore, close communication between districts and educator preparation programs, highly selective admission criteria, opportunities for application of effective knowledge and skills and strong mentor programs are all characteristics of quality teacher

preparation programs. For the district studied, these ideas already exist within policy, are being implemented consistently, and may account for the higher retention rates of teachers in the program after five years of service in the district.

Although all educator preparation programs are held to the same standards in the state of Texas, the researcher does not know the extent to which each of these characteristics is in place in the traditional/university-based routes or the external teacher certification program routes from which teachers are hired by the district. It could be that all of three routes prepare teachers in a similar way, but that those in the in-house ATCP program have the benefit of having all of their training in the district in which they will teach. The training is laser-focused on the unique issues, demographics and philosophies found within the district. Therefore, perhaps the teachers who go through the district ATCP program are better prepared to teach in ways which have proven effective for the students of that district because all data analyzed, all instructional strategies taught, and all issues discussed are directly related to the district and its students.

The idea of a closer link between the university programs, alternative certification programs and specific district needs is important. Cohen (2004) found "...that preservice training in the preparation and coursework of pedagogical skills and knowledge are needed by both traditionally and alternatively certified teachers to achieve positive first year teaching experiences" (p. viii). In addition to providing a solid pedagogical foundation for the field of education, if an educator preparation program can prepare teachers during the required pre-service hours to be effective specifically with students in the districts in which they will be hired, this could have a positive effect on the retention

rates of the teachers. It should not matter whether those training hours are part of an undergraduate program degree plan or in the summer before a teacher's internship year if they are in an alternative certification program.

Chapa's study supports this view in that of the 738 teachers involved in the study, the ones most likely to be retained were the teachers who had student taught in the district before they were hired (2012). They were already indoctrinated and well aware of the processes and procedures of the district, and, most importantly, of the needs of the students in that district. Therefore, they were better prepared for the positions for which they were hired in the district (2012).

School and district leaders who may be considering creating a district-based alternative certification program for their districts would do well to consider a creating a strong partnership with local university-based programs. Mungal (2012) found that the university faculty members of his study "... pointed out that it would be in their best interests to partner with the alternative programs" and that these partnerships benefit both entities because "[a]lternative programs needed the legitimacy of professionalized [university-based] programs to have their teaching-degree candidates certified as highly qualified teachers, and professionalized programs needed the enrollment numbers to maintain their programs..." (p. 167). More importantly, these partnerships can prepare new teachers to be more effective with the specific students they will teach. It is a win-win situation for all and can help to alleviate the teacher shortage problem by providing school districts with committed teachers who know and understand the districts and

students they serve and will hopefully, therefore, stay in the districts, and the profession, for longer periods of time.

Implications for Further Research

This study was limited to one specific major suburban school district. Similar studies must be completed for other school districts that also offer an in-house Alternative/Accelerated teacher certification programs to understand if the results are replicable. Because no two Alternative/Accelerated teacher certification programs are exactly alike, a closer look into the operations, procedures, curricula and support is warranted. A study to find out exactly why this particular program produces teachers with higher retention rates may shed light on characteristics that contribute to making an Alternative /Accelerated teacher certification program effective.

Another interesting study would be to research other historic economic or budget happenings during the years of the study to find reasons for the patterns of retention and attrition. For instance, the following question could be examined: Were there any reductions in force put into effect during the years of the study? Many times when a reduction in force occurs, the beginning teachers are the first to lose their positions. If that happened during 2000-2005, it most likely would affect the number of teachers resigning from the district because the data did not always reflect the reasons for resignation.

Teachers' reasons for resignation themselves could be explored. Of the teachers who resigned during the years of the study, how many were deemed ineffective and asked to resign in lieu of termination? This information is not included in the data. Also,

it would be interesting to find out if of the teachers who resigned, how many stayed in the profession? How many quit teaching altogether and how many transferred to other school districts? Another common happening in this particular district is that teachers who resign often return a couple of years later. Sometimes this district is referred to as “the boomerang” district for this reason. It is said that teachers find out that “the grass is not greener” in a close by school district, so they leave the district only to return later because they find out the work may be more difficult elsewhere. A study about this “rumor” would be very interesting. If it was found that this does, indeed, occur, research into what makes the teachers return to the district would be warranted.

Studying retention rates beyond the five years may yield different results. Despite much higher attrition rates at one and two years of service for the traditionally certified and external Alternative/Accelerated certification route program teachers, retention improves at the four and five year mark. Would this pattern continue after five years? What would the numbers look like for years 6 through 10? Over a larger period of time, would the patterns hold up? In the long run, say ten years or more, which group has the highest retention rates?

This study did not explore the positions held by the teachers in the study. It would be interesting to examine which teachers were more likely to stay in the district and which ones were more likely to leave. For instance, do math and science teachers stay longer than, say, social studies teachers? Do those teachers hired to teach a particular subject tend to stay longer in the district? What about the beginning teachers hired who had more than one subject preparation assigned to them? What about the ones

hired for Special Education or to teach English Language Learners? Some teachers are hired as “floating” teachers. Hence, they do not have their own classrooms and must “float” in and out of other teachers’ classrooms. Do these teachers have higher attrition rates due to the greater physical demands of the job? There are many ways to look at the positions that new teachers are hired to fill and to study the retention rates of these teachers to find out which ones stay longer in the district.

What about the teachers who are promoted to administrator positions? Many teachers who have completed this particular district’s ATCP have moved on to be Counselors, Assistant Principals, Principals and Directors. Two of the five current high school principals during the 2012-2013 school year completed the in-house ATCP. A study regarding how many in each group are more likely to continue their education and move in to administration would be interesting and could account for some of the attrition because it is not known if the teachers resigned from the teacher positions for promotions, whether they just transferred to other districts, or whether they quit teaching altogether. A study that delved into these issues would be interesting.

A study of alternatively certified teachers in Florida conducted by Williams (2001) revealed areas of improvement for the program based on survey results from teachers participating in the program. Williams (2001) stated, “Based on the results, the areas of the program needing improvement were the mentoring component, subject-area content for instruction, and timeliness of receiving information” (p. 118). The program in this study would do well to offer a similar survey to find out areas of improvement according to the needs of the teachers in the program. The retention rates could possibly

be increased further by using this type of information to strengthen the program; therefore, this could be an important future study as well.

Conclusions

The American education system does not have a teacher shortage problem as many have stated in the research. Rather, we have a teacher retention issue. Statistics show that, in 2002, nearly 420,000 certified teachers lived in Texas and were not teaching (Patterson, 2003). Many certified teachers decline to pursue their careers in the classroom, which indicates an issue not of a shortage of certified teachers, but of a willingness of certified teachers to actually teach. Due to this trend, school leaders must discover ways to find the right highly qualified people for classroom teacher positions – that is, people who are committed to the profession and committed to remain in the profession.

One way to do this is to focus on retaining the best teachers. A study by The New Teacher Project (2012) found that even when school districts know who the good teachers are, they generally do not do anything to encourage them to stay. They contend that the “...solution is to improve retention, not to blindly increase it” (The New Teacher Project, 2012, p. 6). Because it takes eleven new hires to replace a high quality teacher who leaves a low performing school, as opposed to six potential replacements in an average school according to the study, school leaders need to focus on keeping the best of the best “...while simultaneously raising expectations for teachers and retaining fewer of those who consistently perform poorly” (The New Teacher Project, 2012, p. 4). The solutions for retention found in the report include first and foremost for school leaders to

“...use evaluation results and other performance information to make smarter, more deliberate decisions about the teachers they hire, develop and retain – and they need to see this as one of the most important parts of their job” (The New Teacher Project, 2012, p. 29).

A part of the process for determining who to hire is for school leaders to find out which teachers are more likely to remain in the classroom so that they can know who will most likely stay in the classroom longer. This study used existing data to reveal that in one large suburban school district in Texas, the teachers in the district’s in-house alternative teacher certification program were more likely to stay employed in the district after five years of service than were teachers who are hired already certified through traditional university routes or teachers who are participating in other external teacher certification routes. This information could sway school leaders to support and hire from the in-house teacher certification program more often in hopes of increasing teacher retention rates on their campuses.

Chapman (2005) states, “Alternative teacher certification programs will continue to supplement our teaching force through shortening of the pre-service requirements for entering new teachers” (p. 53). And, these programs may continue to increase the number of minority and male teachers entering the profession to better reflect the populations of the communities in which they serve.

President Barack Obama stated in his State of the Union speech that “...teachers are known as ‘nation builders’” (Obama, 2011). He emphasized the staggering

responsibly of school leaders to find quality teachers and the amazing opportunity that affords those who choose the profession. He also stated the following:

In fact, to every young person...who's contemplating their career choice:

If you want to make a difference in the life of our nation; if you want to make a difference in the life of a child - become a teacher. Your country needs you. (Obama, 2011).

This plea is admirable and, hopefully, influential to those who may consider teaching as a career option. Nevertheless, if we do not improve in the way we address the reasons that teachers leave the classroom so early in their careers, as well as study and duplicate the specific characteristics of educator preparation programs that produce effective teachers who are committed to serving in the profession for more than five years and incorporate stronger partnerships among educator preparation programs, traditional university-based teaching programs and alternative teacher certification programs combined will not be enough to halt and reverse the rates of teacher attrition in the United States of America.

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APPENDIX A

APPROVAL FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON HUMAN SUBJECTS

RESEARCH COMMITTEE

Appendix A

Approval from the University of Houston Human Subjects Research Committee

UNIVERSITY of HOUSTON

DIVISION OF RESEARCH

October 23, 2012

Angela Kennedy
c/o Dr. Angus MacNeil
Curriculum and Instruction

Dear Angela Kennedy,

Based upon your request for exempt status, an administrative review of your research proposal entitled "A Study of District Hiring Practices and Teacher Preparation Background and the Impact on Teacher Retention" was conducted on October 11, 2012.

At that time, your request for exemption under Category 4 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 **October 1, 2017**. 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: 13062-EX