THE PRINCIPAL'S ROLE IN TEACHER RETENTION: LEARNING THROUGH REFLECTIVE ANALYSIS

A 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

by

Karen Turner Matt

May 2015

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THE PRINCIPAL'S ROLE IN TEACHER RETENTION: LEARNING THROUGH REFLECTIVE ANALYSIS

An Abstract
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Abstract

High rates of teacher attrition are costly – not only in dollars and cents, but in terms of student achievement and organizational health (Keigher, 2010). Years of research conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics from 1988 - 2013 indicate that teachers move to a different school or leave the profession for a number of reasons including retirement, family concerns, poor working conditions and overall job dissatisfaction. The most impactful of these working conditions is principal leadership. Principals must create the most ideal circumstances for the teachers if they want to avoid replacing these professionals within a few short years.

One critical way principals can support teachers is through quality instructional leadership. Communication, availability, teacher placement, empowerment, and leadership style are all essential to quality leadership. A second impactful step includes comprehensive new teacher induction which includes orientation, continued professional development and a well-chosen, appropriately trained mentor.

This study is a mixed-methods reflective analysis guided by Schön's model of reflective practice (1983) and Kolb's model of experiential learning (1984). Numerous studies conducted through organizations such as the CALDER Institute, MetLife and the National Center for Education Statistics have explored reasons for high rates of teacher attrition, and a few additional studies have explored the principal's role in teacher retention. These results, however, are often difficult for principals to make specific to their work. School leaders may feel the data simply does not translate to their schools, or

they may have inaccurate perceptions of how they are perceived by the teachers they supervise.

Data sources for this study include (1) descriptive statistics from the School and Staffing Teacher Follow-up Survey, which is available in the public domain, (2) summaries from an individual school district's exit interviews, which is archival data from the school district, (3) case studies from teachers no longer in the profession, which are published works in the public domain, and (4) personal reflections regarding my own history and practices.

Exploration of the perceived discrepancy between my intent and accomplishment followed by an investigation of alternate ways of thinking and acting, provide the knowledge needed to transform the way I support teachers with the intention of encouraging them to continue in the profession. Ideally, this study will not only change my personal practices and the school I lead, but it will also impact others who are currently leading schools or plan to do so in the future.

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Chapter I

Introduction and Background

As a way of introducing ourselves on the first day of class, one of my undergraduate education professors asked each of us to share about a teacher who impacted our decision to enter the field of education. My mind immediately began to sift through the scores of teachers who had touched my life. I thought about my middle and high school English teachers who helped me to develop a skill and love for writing. I considered my high school band directors who took a huge chance in accepting me into their program as a sophomore with no formal music training. I smiled as I thought about my high school Spanish teacher who always made us laugh as we learned. There was also the fourth grade teacher who made me feel loved – and was a welcome change from my third grade teacher. It didn't take long, however, to recognize that my mother was truly the most influential teacher in my decision to enter the field of education.

Mom, a teacher herself, was not very subtle as she shared her vision of me becoming a teacher. She had numerous connections in education, and I was always "invited" to help in classrooms, observe lessons, or take on leadership responsibilities that involved younger students. At one point I took a short hiatus from college classes only to find university catalogs left on the doorstep of my apartment.

So when it was my turn to introduce myself to my new classmates, I shared about how much my mother loved being a teacher, and how she was confident that I would love it, too. There were many who influenced my decision to become a teacher, but I would have been entirely remiss had I not given my mother the starring role.

Little did I know that my professor's question that day was the beginning of a long, rich journey of self-reflection. It was in that moment that I first considered the impact of teachers - something I have continued to do for the past twenty years. It is these years of reflection that have led me to where I am now – an elementary school principal pondering the role I play in teacher development and retention.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to reflect on personal experiences and explore research that will bridge the gap between theory and practice for the purpose of learning how I, as a principal, can best support teachers and encourage them to remain in the profession. Teacher attrition is a complex phenomenon that can be studied from many angles. Examining statistical research or personal experiences in isolation will not lead to the comprehensive insight school leaders need to reverse a trend that has serious implications for students. By taking a thorough look at teacher attrition through the lenses of teachers, school administrators and researchers, I will gain the insight I need to best support teachers as they develop into the master teachers our students need and deserve. The remainder of this chapter will be dedicated to providing both personal background and a research summary to develop a problem statement, prove the significance of the study and propose a question for further research.

Personal Background

I first explored the complex and significant role of a teacher as I was learning to be one myself. I remember being eagerly excited the first day I stood before a class of students. While I was still a university student and the children were not in "my class," I immediately knew from this one experience that I was doing exactly what I was called to

do. I soaked up every moment and couldn't wait until I got to teach again. After completing the required course work, my student teaching assignment included four high school subjects and three different teachers on three different floors of an old school building. It was a frantic semester of lesson planning, moving in the hallways with students to get to my next class, and searching for attendance sheets that seemed to always be misplaced by one specific teacher supervisor. It was exhausting, but I loved every minute of it!

I worked primarily with Jan Inman during my student teaching experience, and we were a perfect match. Not only do we share the same birthday, we have a mutual passion for student success, and we both love the novel *To kill a mockingbird* (Lee, 1960). Jan skillfully guided me through instructional techniques, classroom and time management, parent conferences, and a host of other skills I would need as a teacher.

My student teaching experience was the perfect segue to my first "real teaching job." Before my student teaching experience was fully completed, I was fortunate to accept a teaching position at a high school near my home town. My new position included only three subjects, and I had my own classroom. This was going to be a piece of cake! I worked very long hours, but I knew that I was exactly where I needed to be, and I was doing exactly what I was called to do.

Along with my new teaching position came the most amazing mentor. While my mom was the greatest influence guiding me to the teaching profession, and Jan was the perfect catapult to launch me into my new career, Cindy Ward had the greatest impact on my growth as a teacher. Because I was a mid-year hire, Cindy and I hit the ground running. There were no special trainings over the summer and no leisurely lunches

casually getting to know one another. Our time together generally began with me running to her room after school saying "you're not going to believe what just happened!"

Cindy was an amazing listener and coach. I'm not sure she ever told me "what to do" but instead asked the right questions to guide me to my own solutions. Like my initial university professor and Jan, Cindy was a master teacher guiding me to learn through my own reflective practices. This skill continues to serve me well, not only as an educator, but in many other facets of my life. In fact, it is this same skill that guides this research.

When I made my final decision to become a teacher, I already knew the next step would be school administration. Not only were there many teachers in my family, there was an intergenerational history of leaders in my gene pool. My grandfather, for example, was a high school principal for more than a decade. No one questioned the impact he had on his school and community as an educational leader. My mother and an aunt also went on to become school leaders. Even more so, I had learned many things in my short time as a teacher, and I wanted the opportunity to influence others beyond the four walls of my classroom. As I began my fifth year of teaching, I also started my first year of graduate school.

My first graduate school reading assignment was a book titled *Pedagogy of the oppressed* by Paulo Frerie (1968). While I can't give you many details of the book, I remember it was a difficult assignment that raised more questions than it answered. As I worked to complete the writing assignment my ability to reflect and learn were moving to an entirely different level. I pondered my role as a teacher and as a future leader of

teachers. I reflected on the relationships I had seen modeled by Jan, Cindy, and the numerous campus administrators who had supported us as teachers.

The two years I spent in graduate school learning to become a principal proved to be a masterful mix of theory and practice. I spent my evenings either in class engaging with other aspiring administrators or studying independently at home. My days were spent teaching and taking on as many school leadership roles as possible. I was able to attend principal meetings, serve as administrator on duty at athletic events, and observe student discipline proceedings. I was even asked to serve as the administrator for a Saturday tutorial program and be the summer school principal.

Of the numerous responsibilities I assumed as an aspiring administrator, the most challenging and rewarding was to work with struggling teachers. While I did not initially recognize my role, the time these teachers spent with me was a requirement of their professional growth plans. I observed in their classrooms, and they observed in mine. Each observation period was followed by reflective discussion. I was now the “mentor teacher” helping to guide others through reflective practice. There were many frustrating moments, but there were also hints of triumph. As I look back at my professional journey, I believe these experiences with new and struggling teachers were some of the most influential. When I accepted my first assistant principal position I naturally found myself drawn to new and struggling teachers, and I eagerly volunteered to lead the campus’ new teacher academy. I had been blessed with amazing role models and teacher mentors, and I simply wanted to pay it forward.

The professional and personal growth I experienced during my master’s program was so rewarding that I wasn’t ready for it to end. I spent another year in school earning

my superintendent certification before applying to the doctorate program in Educational Leadership and Cultural Studies at the University of Houston. I often compare my doctoral studies to a telescope. You only get a small glimpse of the stars by simply gazing at the night sky. A telescope, however, gives you an entirely different perspective while demonstrating just how little you know about the universe. I had grown and learned so much since that first education class when I talked about my mom, and yet I was suddenly aware of all there was to learn and how little I truly knew. My reflective journey had suddenly moved into high gear, and I found myself questioning everything.

As I advanced through my doctoral studies and into my eleventh year as an administrator, I have maintained a keen interest in teacher development. I understand the unequivocal value of teachers and my role as lead teacher and lead learner. My experiences have taught me that teachers are the cornerstone of education and the most valuable resource in a school. You can have the best programs and a building full of eager, well-behaved students, but without effective teachers, you do not have an effective school.

As a principal, I expect all of my teachers to build relationships with their students. It is critical that teachers listen to students and understand their perspective. It is also important that teachers go out of their way to learn about students and find ways to support them in the classroom. I expect teachers to be kind and honest while offering constructive feedback – even when it's hard. As I've insisted on these teacher behaviors through the years, it has become clear that I must expect the same of myself. I, too, must build relationships with teachers by listening, offering support and having kind, honest conversations that lead to growth. I must always model the type of relationship I expect

of teachers in their classrooms. And just as I expect my teachers to seek out growth opportunities and engage in reflective practice, I must expect the same of myself.

I am a teacher first, and the success of all teachers is my primary goal. If I don't want my own children in a particular classroom, then it's time to roll up my sleeves. There is work to be done! Over the past 11 years, I have experienced successes and failures as I've sought to help teachers navigate the rough waters of accountability, classroom management, instructional techniques, and a myriad of district initiatives.

There was one year when I felt as if I failed the entire staff. I was new to the campus that year, and I failed on many fronts including building relationships with teachers, supporting teacher growth and listening to concerns. I had great relationships with students, parents and a few teachers, but tension was high, and our school was not a happy place for staff members. While me met our goal of being exemplary for the first time in the school's history, and we were the only exemplary school in the district, the atmosphere at the time was not one that would sustain this achievement in future years. Our success had come at a price. There were numerous extraneous circumstances that added to the complicated dynamics of the school, but as the principal I was fully responsible for the dark climate. There was the potential for a mass exodus of teachers at the end of the year, but family circumstances prevailed, and we relocated to another part of the state at the end of the school year. The fact that I left the school that summer is what likely kept so many teachers from seeking other opportunities.

The experiences of that challenging year were not lost. While there was much I did not understand during the course of that school year, extensive time in reflection lead me to better grasp my role as an instructional leader and the critical role I play in campus

morale. I began to understand that my eagerness to “fix” all of the problems outlined by my superintendent only opened Pandora’s Box creating more problems than I solved.

The lessons I learned that year, in addition to those I continue to learn, have served me well as I’ve moved into other new campuses. While my new schools have come with their own set of “issues,” I am much more deliberate in how I go about leading change. I am more reflective as I consider how my actions, or inactions, will impact my staff. This in itself has allowed me to better support teachers and ensure that we have many years to work together as we guide students to greater levels of success.

I have many responsibilities as a principal, but I must never lose sight of how important it is to hire, develop, support and retain the best possible teachers. This awareness has led to an in-depth study of why teachers leave schools, the negative consequences of attrition, and the role of the principal in teacher retention.

Problem Statement

High rates of teacher attrition are costly – not only in fiscal amounts, but in terms of student achievement, campus stability, and overall morale. To address this problem, educational leaders must first understand who leaves the profession and why.

Research indicates that teachers are motivated to leave for a number of factors including retirement, lack of pay, family concerns, and insufficient training and preparation. In addition to these reasons, numerous studies have also reported a lack of principal support and poor working conditions as significant factors (Ax, et al, 2001; Chapman, 1983; Deal & Chatman, 1989; Darling-Hammond, 2003; Ingersoll, 2004; Inman & Marlow, 2004; Tye & O’Brien, 2002; NCTAF, 2003; Ingersoll, 2012; Alliance for Excellent Education, 2014).

Teachers look to principals for guidance and support. Very often, the principal is the first person a new teacher gets to know in a school (Brock & Grady, 2001). The premise of this reflective study is that the principal plays a significant role in the retention or attrition of teachers (Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004; Brock & Grady, 2001; Struyven & Vanthournout, 2014). In order to retain quality teachers, however, principals must first understand why teachers leave and what they can do to offer support and meet their needs (Littrell et al, 1994; Struyven & Vanthournout, 2014).

Significance

Retaining quality teachers is critical to teacher development, student achievement, organizational health, and fiscal responsibility. Huge financial expenses are incurred each time a teacher resigns. This turnover also has the potential to hinder the development of master teachers which can result in a loss of student learning. Teacher attrition breaks the collaboration of a team which can lead to poor campus morale and overall campus performance. Through this study, I am seeking to gain insight as to why teachers leave and what school principals can do to support these professionals. Archived attrition data from a regional school district and the National Center for Education Statistics' Teacher Follow-up Survey, found in the public domain, will be used to gain insight into principal controlled factors that influence a teacher's decision to remain at his current school or seek other employment opportunities. This information could be valuable to school principals, the district being studied, and other school districts, as well as universities, and regional service centers for the following reasons:

Understanding their role in teacher retention can lead principals to create conditions and develop behaviors that encourage teachers to remain in their current schools and the profession as a whole.

- An increase in teacher retention rates can lead to fiscal savings, a highly trained staff, increased student and campus achievement, and organizational stability.
- Colleges and universities can use the information as they prepare future principals and school leaders.
- School district leaders, service centers, and university partnership programs will have the comprehensive insight needed to train and support principals as they create campuses in which teachers want to continue working.

Research Question

The following research questions will guide this study:

- What can I learn from reflecting on district and national reports regarding teacher attrition and implied administrator behaviors?
- How can I, as a principal, use this reflective knowledge and my personal experiences to create circumstances and practices that encourage teachers to remain in the profession?

Chapter II

Review of Related Literature

The High Cost of Teacher Attrition

Each year new teachers enter the field of education and each year these same new teachers, as well as many veteran teachers, leave the profession. Much attention has been given to high school drop-out rates and the resulting financial burdens that impact entire communities. Unfortunately, the "teacher drop-out" rate is even higher than the student drop-out rate in many areas, and it frequently goes untallied and unnoticed. Just as with low student graduation rates, school districts can no longer afford to turn their heads and allow quality teachers to leave at an alarmingly high rate. Teacher attrition comes with a heavy price tag, not only in dollar amounts, but also in terms of student achievement, teacher excellence and organizational stability.

The exact number of teachers who leave the profession can be difficult to measure as studies can have varied operational definitions of attrition. Regardless of the exact attrition rate, however, research consistently reveals that approximately 15.7% of teachers leave their positions each year, and about 40% of those who pursue undergraduate degrees in preparation to teach never enter the classroom (Carroll & Fulton, 2004). Of the half million teachers who leave each year, only 16% are retiring. The other 84% of those leaving their schools are going to other campuses or abandoning the profession entirely (Boyd, et. al, 2009). Even more alarming is the fact that after only five years, more than 41% of new teachers leave the profession altogether (Perda, 2013; Ingersoll, Merrill & Stuckey, 2014).

While some turnover in any profession is healthy and necessary, high attrition rates can create instability within an organization and may serve as an indication of organizational problems (Perticara, 2004; NCTAF, 2007; Borman & Dowling, 2008; Ingersoll, Merrill & Stuckey, 2014). Data suggests that the annual turnover rate for teachers is as much as 4% higher than other fields (Ingersoll, 2012; Riggs, 2014; Boogren, 2014; Ingersoll, Merrill & Stuckey, 2014). While teacher attrition rates are less than some occupations such as childcare, secretarial and paralegal fields, the percentage of professionals leaving nursing, law, engineering, architecture and academia are less than those in elementary and secondary teaching (Ingersoll, Merrill & Stuckey, 2014; Ingersoll & Perda, forthcoming).

Not only are attrition rates higher in education than many other profession, there appears to be a steady increase over the past decades (NCTAF, 2007; Borman & Dowling, 2008; NCTAF, 2010; Riggs, 2014). The Bureau of National Affairs indicates a stable departure rate in all professions of approximately 11%. According to the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF) and the National center of Education Statistics (NCES), teacher attrition rates have fluctuated between 12.4% and 16.5% since 1988. The most recent Teacher Follow-up Survey conducted in 2012 – 2013 by NCES indicates 15.8% of teachers left the profession or changed schools that year (Goldring, Taie & Riddles, 2014).

Financial impact. Richard Ingersoll used data from the 2007 – 2008 School and Staffing Survey and the 2008 – 2009 Teacher Follow-up Survey from NCES to estimate the fiscal costs of teacher attrition. Ingersoll estimates that nation-wide almost $2.2 billion is spent annually to replace roughly half a million U.S. teacher who either changed

schools or left the profession altogether (Haynes, 2014). The costs for each individual teacher ranged from $4,365 for small, rural, affluent districts to $9,501 per teacher in large, urban, low-income districts. School districts in Texas spent the most of all states – an estimated $235 million (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2014; Haynes, 2014; Keigher, 2010).

Some of the expenses a school or district may incur during the hiring and induction process include time and travel for administrators to attend job fairs, job postings through Internet web services, time and money spent interviewing and checking references and backgrounds, new teacher induction stipends, mentor time and compensation, release days for professional development and classroom observations, and the loss of training invested in teachers who leave. These funds would be better spent implementing stronger support systems for teachers rather than wasted on a revolving door that only seems to gain momentum. Resources are wasted if those who would ultimately become good teachers do not remain in the profession (Ladd, 2009).

Student achievement. Not only is the financial loss staggering, schools and students lose when teachers leave the profession. Researchers and educators agree that the single most important element in determining a student's success or failure is the quality of his or her teacher (Haynes, 2014; Mori, 2009; Sawchuck, 2012; DePaul, 2000; Ronfeldt, 2011; Haynes, 2014; Rockoff, 2004; Henry, Fortner & Bastain, 2012; Wong, 2002a; Johnson, Kraft & Papay, 2012). "Teaching quality is recognized as the most powerful school-based factor in student learning. It outweighs students' social and economic background in accounting for differences in student achievement" (Haynes, 2014, p. 1). The best way to ensure that students are reaching their full academic

potential is to have a highly qualified, knowledgeable and skilled teacher in the classroom (Berry, 2004; Ingersoll, 2005; Kaplan & Owings, 2003; Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005; Mori, 2009; NCTAF, 2002; NCTAF, 2003; Ravitch, 2007).

According to Haynes (2014), “Teachers need from three to seven years in the field to become highly skilled – with the analytic and flexible thinking needed to engage learners, deepen their conceptual understanding, and respond to how well they are learning” (p. 5). Carroll (2007) clearly summarized the dilemma when he stated, “These schools struggle to close the student achievement gap because they never close the teaching quality gap – they are constantly rebuilding their staff” (p. 2). If schools cannot retain their educators, there is very little hope they will be able to provide the education all students need and deserve (Kaplan & Owings, 2003; Marzano, 2003; NCTAF, 2007).

Organizational health. In addition to high fiscal cost and a loss in student learning, research indicates that even if overall teacher effectiveness were to stay the same in a school with high turnover, it is clear that the turnover hurts staff cohesion and a sense of community in the school (Sawchuk, 2012 ; Ronfeldt et al, 2011). Significant teacher turnover interrupts the on-going collaboration, teamwork and consistency that contribute to a solid school environment. Experienced teachers become overburdened by the needs of their inexperienced colleagues, and there is a loss of community within the school as parents and students fail to have continuity (NCTAF, 2003; NCTAF, 2007; Paslay, 2013). More research is needed to determine the specific reasons for this documented decline in campus cohesion – whether it is a “loss of collegiality, or perhaps a loss of instructional knowledge among the staff due to turnover” (Sawchuk, 2012, p. 2).

Research clearly outlines an expensive and growing crisis of high teacher attrition rates. School districts are losing valuable funds, students are not receiving the best possible education, and schools are suffering due to a loss of collegiality and momentum. It is clearly time for educational leaders to seek viable solutions that will keep teachers in the classroom. Ingersoll and Smith (2003) contend that it is ineffective to continue pouring water into a bucket full of holes. The answer is to plug the holes and retain the teachers who have already been hired and trained. This will not only solve the shortage problem but will reduce the financial strain on districts and better ensure student learning (Classroom Ideas that Work, 2007; NCTAF, 2007; Ingersoll, 2012). One of the first steps is to look within our schools and determine why teachers are no longer choosing to remain in the profession.

Why Teachers Are Leaving

To better understand how to retain teachers and avoid the high costs of teacher attrition, we must first understand why teachers are leaving the profession. Results from the National Center for Education Statistics' School and Staffing Teacher Follow-up Survey conducted in 2012 – 2013 give insight as to why teachers left the profession at the end of the 2012 school year.

The most frequently sited response at 38.4% was personal life factors. A number of teachers did not list a most important reason (20.5%). Career factors were listed by 13% of leavers followed by salary and job benefits at 6.8% and school factors at 6.3%. Student performance factors (3.1%) and assignment and classroom factors (2.4%) were also noted in the survey. In addition to these who voluntarily left the profession, another

9.7% said they left involuntarily due to contract nonrenewal, being laid off, or the school being closed or merged (Goldring, Taie & Riddles, 2014).

Of the 259,400 surveyed teachers who left their position at the end of the 2012 school year, 38.3% retired. Another 29.3% were working in a K-12 education setting, but not as a regular K-12 teacher. Of the remaining leavers, 9.4% were caring for family members, 7.7% were working outside of education, and 5.8% were unemployed. (Goldring, Taie & Riddles, 2014).

The 2012 – 2013 Teacher Follow-up Survey also gathered information from the former teachers who were still working with students but no longer in a regular K-12 setting as well as former teachers working outside of education altogether. The survey asked these "leavers" to rate various aspects of their current position to teaching. More than half of the "leavers" listed the following as better in their current position than when they were teaching: ability to balance personal life and work (60.8%), influence over workplace policies and practices (58.5%), control over own work (57.4%), intellectual challenge (55.1%), general work conditions (52.8%), professional prestige (52.2%), and manageability of work load (51.2%). Other notable areas that former teachers note as better outside of teaching include opportunities for professional advancement or promotion (48.9% compared to 17.6% in teaching); opportunities for professional development (45.7% as compared to 21.2% in teaching); recognition and support from administrators / managers (44.9% as compared to 12.5% in teaching); opportunities to make a difference in the lives of others (44.1% compared to 24.5% in teaching) and salary (43.5% compared to 19.7% in teaching).

A 2013 MetLife Survey indicates that the teacher job satisfaction rate has taken a serious downward spiral to 39% in 2012. This is a sharp 23 percentage point decrease from 2008 when the satisfaction rate was 62%. A similar MetLife Survey in 2010 revealed that one third of American teachers intended to leave the profession soon (Craig, forthcoming).

Retirement. National reports in the 1980's and 1990's indicated a severe teacher shortage was on the horizon. Student enrollment trends were rising, and the workforce was aging. All indications were that new teachers would be needed to fill the shoes of retiring baby boomers who entered the field of teaching in the 1970's. Recent survey data suggests that this trend may be ending (Ingersoll, Merrill & Stuckey, 2014).

Analysis of the School and Staffing Survey for the past 24 years has shown a steady increase, until recently, in the number of teachers aged 50 or older. In 1988, approximately 530,000 were at least 50 years of age or older. At that time, the most common age for teachers was 41-years-old. Twenty years later in 2008, 1.3 million teachers were age 50 or older, and the modal age of teachers was 55-years-old. This trend, however has taken a slight turn. In 2011 – 2012 the most common age of teachers was 30, and the number of teachers who were 50 years of age or older decreased to 1.2 million – a drop of about 170,000 teachers. (Ingersoll, Merrill & Stuckey, 2014). While retirement will always have an impact on the number of teachers leaving, it may not be as significant as many believe. According to the NCES 2012 – 2013 Teacher Follow-up Survey, 7.7% of teachers left the field of education at the end of the 2011 – 2012 school year. Only 38.3%, just over one-third, of those leaving did so because of retirement (Goldring, Taie & Riddles, 2014).

Caring for family members. According to the 2011 – 2012 School and Staffing Survey, over 76% of teachers are females; therefore it is not surprising that a significant number of teachers may leave the profession for family purposes such as pregnancy and child rearing (Goldring, Taie & Riddles, 2014). The 2012 – 2013 Teacher Follow-up Survey indicated that of the 7.7% of teachers who left education at the end of the 2013 school year, only 9.4% listed "caring for family members" as their primary reason (Goldring, Taie & Riddles, 2014). While there is very little that can be done to alter the attrition rates attributed to family or personal reasons, educational leaders should recognize that women who leave for the purposes of pregnancy and child rearing are more likely to return to the classroom if they feel the salary is comparable to other career options (Imazeki, 2005). In a 2002 report published by Tennessee Tomorrow, nearly 75% of female teachers who left teaching due to pregnancy or child rearing expressed a desire to return to the profession. The report also suggested that strong administrative and colleague support during the early part of their careers played a significant role in helping women decide to return to the profession.

Working conditions and overall job dissatisfaction. Research conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) consistently shows that approximately one third of all teachers who change schools or leave the profession do so because of poor working conditions and other overarching concerns that lead to overall job dissatisfaction. Specific areas may include inadequate salary, lack of training and preparation, assignment and classroom elements, student behavior, school issues, student performance factors, and inadequate administrative support. As mentioned previously,

the overall teacher job satisfaction rate in 2012 was only 39% - a decrease from 62% just four years earlier (MetLife, 2013; Craig, forthcoming).

Salary. Ten years ago, poor compensation was cited by 54% of the people who left the field of teaching because of job dissatisfaction (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). At the time, teachers in the United States were making about 20% less than other professionals with comparable training and education (Dove, 2004). In 2000, The American Federation of Teachers reported that "after adjusting for inflation, the 1999 – 2000 average teacher salary of $41,820 [was] only $46 above what it was in 1993. It [was] just $2,087 more than the average salary recorded in 1972 – a real increase of only about $75 per year" (p.15).

Interestingly enough, more recent research indicates that inadequate salary does not play as significant a role in teacher attrition as many believe. Hanuschek and Rivkin (2007) determined that salary impacts mobility less than a teacher's dissatisfaction with quality of leadership and working conditions, such as facilities and safety. These findings were confirmed in studies conducted by The Center for Teacher Quality at California State University (Futernick, 2007). The most recent 2012 – 2013 Teacher Follow-up Survey conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics indicates that of the 8.1% of teachers who changed schools at the end of the 2012 school year, only 3.5% listed salary as a primary reason. Of the additional 7.7% who left the profession altogether, only 6.7% cited salary as the primary contributing factor (Goldring, Taie & Riddles, 2014).

Information from the most recent Bureau of Labor Statics' National Occupational Employment Wage Estimates indicates that teachers earn on average $54,740 to $58,170

per year depending on the level at which they teach. This is higher than the national salary average of $46,440 for all employed Americans (Dorfman, 2014; BLS, 2014). Compared to some other professions, teacher salaries are found to be similar: plumbers and pipefitters ($53,820), chemical plant system operators ($54,690), real estate appraisers ($57,040), forensic science technicians ($57,340), and police officers ($58,720) (Dorfman, 2014; BLS, 2014). While some may argue that teachers work fewer days than the professions listed earlier, it should also be noted that none of those professions require a bachelor's degree.

Reviewing a decade of salary information indicates that schools have made significant strides in the area of teacher salary – especially the salary of new teachers. Research indicates, however, that schools continue to fail mid and late-career teachers when it comes to compensation. In several states such as Arizona and North Dakota, teachers with 10 years of experience who are the breadwinner for their families often qualify for numerous federally funded benefits programs including children's health insurance and school breakfast and lunch programs. The same teacher with 10 years of experience in Colorado makes less than a truck driver. In Oklahoma, a teacher with 15 years of experience and a master's degree earns less than a sheet metal worker. A teacher with a graduate degree and 10 years of experience in Georgia makes less than a flight attendant in the same state. For teachers in 11 states, the average base salary for a teacher with 10 years of experience is only $39,673 (Boser & Straus, 2014).

It is unlikely that the perception of poor salary compensation will ever be fully rectified. Not only would it be an expensive endeavor considering the vast number of teachers in the work force, it is unlikely that most teachers would ever agree they are

being paid enough. Evidence from a 2005 study (Imazeki) confirms that the salary increase needed to keep teachers from leaving is so high that it is not considered a viable method to solve the teacher attrition problem on a national level.

Training and preparation. A second area of job dissatisfaction affecting attrition is that some teachers feel they are simply not prepared by their certification programs to manage and lead a classroom. In fact, MetLife (2006) found that the number one reason teachers leave was a feeling of being personally unqualified to teach the assigned subject. Entering the classroom unprepared followed by little administrative support leads to frustration and feelings of inadequacy (Laud, 2006; Bolich, 2001; Hope, 1999; Jorissen, 2002; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003).

Darling-Hammond (2005) states that as many as 50,000 individuals enter the teaching field each year without any type of training. Ingersoll, Merrill and May (2012) used national data bases to determine that more than 40 percent of teachers come into the profession through nontraditional or alternative routes. Many alternative certification programs have been created to fill vacancies in America's classrooms. Unfortunately, many of these programs have not only failed to prepare teachers for the classroom, they have failed in retaining them in the profession (Dove, 2004; Long, 2004; MetLife, 2006). "… many alternative programs, and some traditional programs, fail to provide one of the most important elements of preparation – the opportunity to learn under the direct supervision of expert teachers working in school that serve high-need students well (Darling-Hammond, 2007, p. 2).

Research suggests that the type of training program a teacher completes may indeed influence a teacher's likelihood of remaining in the profession. After three years

in the classroom, 84% of teachers trained in a five year program were still teaching as compared to 53% of teachers trained in four year programs and only 34% who were trained in an alternative certification program (Darling-Hammond, 2002). Additional research in 2001 revealed that after two years, 80% of recruits trained in Houston for the "Teach for America" program had left the profession (Dove, 2004). Similar results were found in California in 2002 when Darling-Hammond's research revealed that 40% of the state's emergency-permit teachers left the profession after the first year. Unfortunately, what most alternative certification programs have done is lower the standards needed for certification (Darling-Hammond, 2007). This lack of preparation has only added to the attrition problem by creating more holes in Ingersoll's metaphorical bucket.

Job demands. Another major factor impacting teacher attrition is working conditions such as principal leadership, parental support, student motivation, status in society, class sizes, resources, planning time, and paperwork (Dove, 2004; Brown & Wynn, 2009; Castro, Kelly & Shih, 2010; Tennessee Tomorrow, 2002; Beteille, Kalogrides & Loeb, 2009). While many surveys have gathered teachers' perceptions of these demands, a few studies have gone a step further to look for correlations between these working conditions and a teacher's perceived job satisfaction and the potential they will remain the profession.

Ladd, in a 2009 CALDER working paper, used teacher survey data from North Carolina to determine that "working conditions, as perceived by teachers, are highly predictive of teachers' intended [and actual] departure rates even after many measureable characteristics of the school are controlled for" (p. 3). This particular study categorized working conditions as leadership, facilities and resources, teacher empowerment,

professional development, mentoring and time. It was determined that leadership was the most significant category impacting teachers' intentions to leave their current schools. A lack of teacher empowerment was impactful for high school level teachers while time constraints were predictive at the elementary and middle school levels.

Johnson, Kraft and Papay (2012) analyzed a similar survey conducted throughout the state of Massachusetts. This particular survey categorized working conditions as colleagues, community support, facilities, governance, principal, professional expertise, resources, school culture and time. The category labels differed slightly from the ones used by Ladd, but the operational definitions showed great similarities: leadership and principal, empowerment and governance, and professional development and professional expertise. The Massachusetts study showed similar results indicating that "conditions in which teachers work matter a great deal to them and, ultimately, to their students. Teachers are more satisfied and plan to say longer in schools that have a positive work context" (Johnson, Kraft & Papay, 2012, p. 2). This study also determined that elements such as facilities and resources were far less significant in predicting job satisfaction than social conditions such as the school's culture, principal leadership, and relationships with peers.

Principal leadership. These two studies confirm what many other bodies of research contend. Administrative support is the most impactful of all working conditions in regards to teachers' perceived job satisfaction and their intention to remain in the profession (Bolich, 2001; Darling-Hammond, 2003 & 2007; Ingersoll, 2004; Inman & Marlow, 2004; Tye & O'Brien, 2002; Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2003; National Commission on Teaching, 1996; Tennessee Tomorrow, 2002; Ingersoll, 2012; Boyd, et

al, 2009). In a 2002 study conducted by Tennessee Tomorrow, Inc., teachers leaving the profession selected a lack of administrative support as the primary reason for leaving the profession. In a similar study, 82% of teachers said they would choose to transfer to a school with stronger administrative support (Bolich, 2001). Nearly 45 percent of teachers who left their teaching positions in 2012 stated that they receive more recognition and support from their current administrators / managers (Goldring, Taie & Riddles, 2014). Additional research found a strong relationship between administrative support and new teacher job satisfaction and their desire to stay at a school (Boe, Barkanic & Leow, 1999; Ingersoll, 2012; Boyd, et al, 2009).

Verifying and expanding on the impact of principal leadership, an additional study was conducting by the CALDER Institute in 2009 to explore general working conditions and to examine specific principal behaviors that impact teacher attrition (Beteille, Kalogrides & Loeb, 2009). Survey participants were asked to rate their principals with regards to recognizing staff, communicating respect for staff, encouraging teacher development, using assessment data to plan curriculum and instruction, and developing teacher agreement toward the school's mission. The study verified that principal behaviors are a key factor in teacher attrition suggesting that policies focused on improving school administrators may be effective in reducing teacher turnover. In addition to the specific administrator behaviors mentioned above, the study also explored additional working conditions that are under the direct influence of a school principal: teacher influence over school policy, staff relations, student behavior, facilities, and general safety. These conditions also showed a significant impact on a teacher's desire to remain at or leave their current school (Beteille, Kalogrides & Loeb, 2009).

Conclusion as to why teachers leave. While the findings are varied, the reasons teachers leave do not contradict each other as much as they highlight the complexity of the issues involved. There are many reasons for teacher attrition that school administrators cannot control including retirement, family concerns, salary, and pre-service preparation. They do, however, have a great deal of influence over the working conditions in their schools and the level of support they offer teachers. Principals must create the most ideal circumstances for their teachers if they want to avoid replacing these professionals within a few short years (Struyven & Vanthournout, 2014; Guarino, Santibanez & Daley, 2006). This premise will guide the remainder of the literature review as well as the research to follow.

Reducing Teacher Attrition through Effective Leadership

Research conducted by the CALDER Institute (Ladd, 2009) and Johnson, Kraft and Papay (2012) shows that teacher job dissatisfaction is a major factor when teachers decide to leave the profession. Key areas of dissatisfaction include inadequate salary, lack of preparation, poor working conditions, and a lack of administrative support. Principals are essentially powerless to address dissatisfaction with salary and inadequate pre-service preparation. And while principals may consider the type of training a teacher has received when considering whether or not to hire, they have little influence on the actual quality of that training.

Despite their lack of control regarding salary and pre-service preparation, principals have a great deal of influence as they create healthy, supportive work environments and offer adequate levels of induction support to new teachers (Andrews, Gilbert & Martin, 2006; Billingsley et al, 2004; Correa & Wagner, 2011). The

management and organization of a school can be blamed for many staffing problems, but it can also play a significant role in the solution. "Even a modest association between turnover and workplace conditions presents an important finding to local school administrators" (Kukla-Acevedo, 2009, pg. 444). The responsibility for making sure a school's environment helps, rather than hinders, a teacher falls squarely on the shoulders of school principals. Principal support of teachers has been cited as one of the most important factors for both general and special educator retention (Cancio, Albrecht & Johns, 2014). Rather than looking outside of the school to solve the problem of teacher retention, data show that school administrators would be better served by looking within the school (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Hope 1999; Darling-Hammond, 1997; Whitener, et al, 1997; Kula-Acevedo, 2009).

Instructional leadership. One way a principal can improve working conditions and support teachers is by being an instructional leader. Instructional leaders are the primary teachers on campus. They work directly with teachers to guide curriculum and instruction (Urick & Bowers, 2013). The Stanford Educational Leadership Institute defines effective school leadership as "that which promotes and sustains learning gains for students, professionals, schools and districts."

The National Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research (CALDER) Institute, 2009, states that instructional leaders aid and monitor the schools instructional program and develop a positive learning culture. Their research revealed three key findings regarding relationships between teachers and principals: (1) effective principals are able to retain more effective teachers and remove less effective teachers; (2) among teachers who transfer, those who are considered most effective will transfer to

campuses with effective principals suggesting that effective principals can also attract effective teachers; and (3) effective teachers improve even more under the leadership of effective principals (Beteille, Kalogrides, & Loeb, 2009).

In 2004, the governor of North Carolina commissioned a study to determine the best working conditions for teachers. The survey revealed that 27% of teacher stayed in their current position because they perceived the principal had a strong instructional emphasis. Another 34% stayed because they felt valued and not isolated (*Governor Easley's teacher working conditions initiative in North Carolina*, 2004).

Sargent (2003) found similar results stating that administrators need to provide teachers with the same environment that teachers provide their students: structure, support, consistency and the security to take educational risks. Teachers must be encouraged by their principals to practice habits that will make them lifelong learners (Ash & Persall, 2001). Instructional leaders provide opportunities for meaningful professional development (Blasé & Kirby, 2000). They know the dynamics of their schools and the teachers within it (Norton, 1999). In summary, effective instructional leaders make decisions that contribute to the overall improvement of classroom instruction.

Communication and availability. In addition to encouraging teacher growth, strong communication is essential to effective school leadership (Spinella, 2003; Inman & Marlow, 2004; Jorissen, 2002; Van Beck, 2011). As the key person in the hiring and evaluating process, teachers want to fulfill their principals' expectations. Without a clear understanding of the expectations, teachers often feel frustrated and abandoned (Normore & Floyd, 2005; Jorissen, 2002; Angelle, 2002; Brock & Grady, 1998; Carver, 2003).

Teachers have also been shown to have a higher sense of belief in their capabilities when they have open, honest communication with their principals (Gimbel, 2003; Ingersoll, 2012; Dumler, 2010).

Strong instructional leaders clearly communicate expectations to all teachers (Blasé & Kirby, 2000; Certo & Fox, 2002; Carver, 2003). When a principal communicates confidence in a teacher, that teacher will often succeed beyond his normal capabilities. This in turn can translate into improved academic success for students (Kouzes & Posner, 1997; Inman & Marlow, 2004; Van Beck, 2011).

Effective administrators also set aside time for their teachers (Blasé & Blasé, 2001; Moore-Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Carver, 2003; Ingersoll, 2012). They are frequently seen in the hallways and classrooms. They are approachable for teachers, students and parents (Curtis, 1996; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Carver, 2003). Communication must also be two-way. Administrators must also listen closely to what teachers are saying and plan programs and professional development accordingly (Cancio, Albrecht & Johns, 2014).

Effective principals also go beyond the minimum standard when it comes to new teacher observations. While teachers may have some anxiety at first, they will become accustomed to, and often welcome, having principals in their classrooms. Observations can be formal and lengthy or short and informal (Stansbury, 2001; Carver, 2003; Normore & Floyd, 2005; Angelle, 2002; Dumler, 2010).

Additionally, feedback should be reflective in nature. It should include discussions of teaching practices as well as student performance. Feedback should incorporate suggestions for professional and personal growth (Stansbury, 2001; Carver,

2003; Normore & Floyd, 2005; Moir, 2009; Gimbel, Lopes & Greer, 2011; Norton, 1999; Osunde, 1996; Slick, 1995).

Teacher placement and school involvement. In addition to effective communication and availability, it is critical that teachers are assigned to positions in which they are qualified and most likely to be successful (Jorissen, 2002; Carver, 2003; Darling-Hammond, 2003; Hull, 2004; McCann, Johannessen & Ricca, 2005; Martinez-Garcia & Slate, 2012; Cancio, Albrecht & Johns, 2014). This is particularly true for new teachers. Because there are so few ways to reward veteran teachers, principals have developed a long standing tradition of placing new teachers, instead of more experienced professionals, in the least desirable classrooms (Abel & Sewell, 1999; Darling-Hammond & Scian, 1996; Harrell, Leavell, van Tassel & McKee, 2004; Sifuentes, 2005). New teachers are often assigned to work with low-performing students leaving them more vulnerable than their experienced colleagues (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005). When new teachers are placed in the most difficult classrooms, they are being set up for dissatisfaction, disappointment, and abandonment of teaching all together (Jorissen, 2002; Angelle, 2002; Darling-Hammond, 2003; Abel & Sewell, 1999; Harrell, Leavell, van Tassel & McKee, 2004; Sifuentes, 2005). While principals' intentions may seem honorable as they seek to reward veteran teachers, this practice can be equated to cannibalizing the young.

Another way principals can support new teachers is by limiting their extra-curricular responsibilities such as sponsoring the cheerleaders, hall or lunch duty, and too many committee assignments (Stansbury, 2001; Jorissen, 2002; Williby, 2004; Ingersoll, 2012). "Sometimes beginners must be protected from their own enthusiasm in

volunteering for additional responsibilities" (Stansbury, 2001). A new teacher's time is valuable and should be reserved for lesson preparation and collaborating with other teachers (Governor Easley's teacher working conditions initiative in North Carolina, 2004).

While new teachers should be given an opportunity to serve within a school, the number of committees and assignments should be limited. Even new teachers need an appropriate place to voice their concerns and share in the decision making process of the school (Jorissen, 2002; Gimbel, Lopes & Greer, 2011; Gimbel, 2003; Barth, 1990). Without such collaboration and opportunity for influence, teachers often feel disconnected and unimportant (Watkins, 2005; Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993; Kukla-Acevedo, 2009) which can lead to job dissatisfaction. Over-loading inexperienced teachers, however, can have the opposite effect.

Administrative style. A principal's management style can have an impact on teacher attitude and success. The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) frames leadership in terms of transformational leadership, transactional leadership, and nontransactional or laissez faire leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1995).

- Transformational leaders, according to Burns (1978), are those who invoke intense emotions in their followers. Their subordinates view them with confidence and trust (Bass, Avolio, Jung & Berson, 2003; Deluga, 1990; Kouzes & Posner, 2002). These leaders seek to engage followers by building their self-esteem and encouraging them to think critically. Transformational leaders are credited with six key factors: building vision, providing intellectual stimulation, offering individualized support, modeling

professional practices and values, demonstrating high performance expectations, and developing structures to foster participation in decisions (Leithwood, 1994; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; Leithwood & Sun, 2012).

- Transactional leaders believe they must assign clear tasks to followers and then reward or punish them based on their effectiveness in completing the task (Burns, 1978; Deluga, 1990). These leaders closely monitor the actions of their subordinates. They often appear defensive and are enthralled in day-to-day routines and management.
- The Laissez Faire leaders are often described as the "do nothing" leaders. They are often reluctant to make decisions, and they frequently delegate to others (Deluga, 1990). They often appear to avoid responsibility and rarely follow through with requests.

Research by Stafford (2007) could not conclusively prove that Transformational principals have higher retention rates, but it did show that teachers who work for Transformational leaders have higher levels of job satisfaction than teachers who work under Transactional or Laissez Faire leadership.

While the MLQ categorizes leaders in almost all areas of work and life, Angelle (2002) focuses on educational leadership and describes four different types of principals and their impacts on new and veteran teachers:

- "Floaters" are friendly, well-like principals with an "anything goes" attitude. These principals admit to having little control in the hiring process – they simply take whoever the district sends. Teachers either pick up the laid back habits of

this principal or they find him a major source of frustration because they cannot define his expectations.

- The "Frenzied" principal is always in crisis, always behind, and always on the edge. Teachers either respect or fear this principal. They will often pick up the panicked attitude of their principal and quickly find themselves suffocating.
- The "Fractured" principal generally has the highest turnover rate resulting in the greatest number of new teachers. Communication is poor and teachers are often unaware of upcoming deadlines and events. The "fractured" principal spends more time handling student discipline than mentoring teachers.
- Finally, the "Focused" principal is aware of every element of his campus. He rarely sits behind his desk. He clearly communicates an expectation of student success. He gives immediate feedback to all teachers and is open to new instructional techniques. Principals who accurately perceive their role as an instructional leader make it a point to know what is occurring in each classroom. This is done through frequent formal and informal observations. These observations, in turn, lead to immediate and constructive feedback.

A 2008 meta-analysis of studies on the impact of different leadership styles on student achievement identified five core principal behaviors that positively impact schools, teachers and students:

- establishment of goals,
- promoting and participating in teacher development,
- planning, coordinating and evaluating instruction,
- managing resources, and

- creating a safe and orderly environment.

New teacher induction. "Good induction systems provide new teachers with clear standards and expectations and support in meeting them through observations, coaching, and learning opportunities designed specifically for new teachers," according to Wurzbach (2013, p. 10). Research consistently shows that attrition rates are highest among new teachers (Darling-Hammond, 1999; Ingersoll, 2001, 2003; Johnson & Birkland, 2003), therefore it would benefit school administrators to provide targeted support for these professionals. The metaphorical leaking bucket of teacher attrition cannot be corrected without first addressing the needs of beginning teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2007).

Data from the U.S. Department of Education suggest that new teachers who were not provided with appropriate induction activities were twice as likely to leave the profession as those who did (Williby, 2004; NCTAF, 2007; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Ingersoll and Strong (2011) found that teachers who participated in some type of induction program benefited in many ways. In addition to reducing the likelihood these teachers would leave the profession, they also performed better at various aspects of teaching and had higher student scores or gains on academic assessments.

Additional research indicates that new teacher induction is critical in providing the safety net and support needed for teachers to find fulfillment and remain in the profession (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2004; Capelluti & Nye, 2002; Gasner 2002a; Wynn, 2006; Ingersoll, 2004; Haynes, 2011; Patrick, Elliot, Hulme & McPhee, 2010; Kelly, 2004; Protheroe, 2006; NCTAF, 2007; Ingersoll, 2012; Alliance for Excellent Education, 2014; Haynes, 2014). "Just as the Texas Essential Knowledge and

Skills (TEKS) provide clear expectations for students, effective induction programs need to articulate clear expectation for beginning teachers. It's hard to know where you're going if you don't have a guide or map for getting there" (Wurzbach, 2013, p. 10).

A comprehensive induction approach may seem costly at about $3,000 per teacher, but compared to the $8,000 - $15,000 typically spent to replace teachers who leave, a quality induction program has the potential to save school districts a considerable amount of money (Wurzbach, 2013; NCTAF, 2007). "If even half of the early career teachers who leave teaching were to be retained, the nation would save at least $600 million a year in replacement costs (Darling-Hammond, 2007, p. 5). Quality induction programs have shown to more than pay for themselves – not only by saving billions of dollars each year to replace teachers who leave their current position, but also by retaining teachers and helping them grow into better, more effective teachers in a shorter amount of time (Fletcher & Villar, 2005; Mori, 2009; Strong, 2009; Ingersoll, 2012; NCTAF, 2007). "Given the increasing demands on teachers every year and the proven cost benefit – rather, savings – generated through induction support, it's time for a systemic look at what a quality induction program looks like at the district level" (Wurzbach, 2013, p. 9).

Unfortunately many school administrators fail when it comes to new teacher induction (Glazerman, Isenberg, Dolfin, et al, 2010). Principals mistakenly consider isolated programs, such as mentoring or orientation, to be the extent of new teacher induction. Carter (2003) found that new teachers rated the effectiveness of their induction programs lower than their principals did. Menchaca (2003) outlines the inadequate training most principals receive when it comes to supporting and developing

new teachers during this induction time. She refers to "band-aid" strategies that tend to be short and quick and do not provide follow-up. "Examples of 'band-aid' strategies are: making sure novice teachers know where the principal's office is should problems occur; introducing the novice teachers to the staff or team; taking the novice teachers on a bus ride of the community; showing the novice teacher where supplies are kept; and recognizing walk-throughs by the principal as a sign of showing support" (p. 25). Carver (2003) also stresses the importance of focusing on principal training when it comes to new teacher induction. Carver noted: "If school districts are serious about retaining new teachers, they need to encourage and support principal development in this area" (p. 40).

Breaux and Wong (2003) define new teacher induction as "a structured training program that must begin before the first day of school and continue for two or more years" (p. 5). According to Breaux and Wong, new teacher induction has these basic purposes: provide instruction in classroom management and effective teaching techniques; reduce the difficulty of the transition into teaching; and maximize the retention rate of highly qualified teachers. Johnson & Birkeland (2003) go one step further and suggest that new teacher induction begins as early as the interview when principals begin to communicate the culture and expectations of the campus. Breaux and Wong further emphasize that orientation and mentoring are only components of new teacher induction. New teacher induction must be comprehensive and sustained to help new teachers "transition from being students of teaching to being teachers of students" (Breaux & Wong, 2003).

While emphasizing that no two induction programs are alike, Breaux and Wong (2003), as well as Wurzbach (2013), outline components of successful induction programs and encourage that all aspects be included:

- Start with an initial four or five days of induction before school begins
- Offer a continuum of professional development through systematic training over a period of two or three years
- Provide study groups where new teachers can network and build support, commitment, and leadership in a learning community
- Incorporate a strong sense of administrative support
- Integrate a mentoring component
- Present a structure for modeling effective teaching by providing opportunities for inductees to visit demonstration classrooms
- Provide clear and adequate training for all principals and mentors

In summary, research supports a three prong new teacher induction program that includes New Teacher Orientation, continued professional development, and a strong mentoring program (Breaux & Wong, 2003; Ingersoll, 2004; Glazerman, Isenberg, Dolfin, et al, 2010; Ingersoll, 2012).

New teacher orientation. Breaux and Wong (2003) refer to the first few days of in-service before school begins as new teacher orientation. The purpose of orientation is to offer new teaching professionals reassurance and a sense of preparedness as they enter their classrooms on the first day of school.

Gasner (2002) offers guidelines for planning new teacher orientation. The first steps begin as early as the interview. This is an opportunity to present elements about the

school culture and introduce a mentoring program. It is also an opportunity to assess specific areas where a new teacher may need extra attention.

Robinson (1998) suggests that once a principal has hired all of his teachers, he should use information gathered from the interviews to develop an orientation for the beginning of school. Specific areas that may be identified by the principal and included during new teacher orientation include lesson planning, instructional strategies, discipline, first-day classroom procedures, time management, testing and assessment, parental involvement, learning styles, critical thinking, and needs of special student populations (Breaux and Wong, 2003). New teachers have many additional concerns including classroom management, content, curriculum, conflicting expectations, collaboration, isolation, and difficult work assignments (Menchaca, 2003). While Breaux and Wong (2003) caution against covering every valuable topic during the orientation days, they do suggest that a heavy emphasis be placed on classroom management. They contend that without solid classroom management, teaching and learning cannot occur.

Additionally, research tells us that the new teacher orientation should include many elements that introduce new teachers to the culture of the school. By the time the orientation in complete, new teachers should understand school policies and procedures. They should also have a clear picture of the principal's expectations (Stansbury, 2001; Normore & Floyd, 2005).

Continued professional development. Principals of new teachers should always be looking for appropriate professional development, conferences, and workshops to strengthen new teachers' skills, work to eliminate deficiencies, and build a sense of collaboration (Watkins, 2005; Hope, 1999; Carver, 2003; Ingersoll & Smith, 2004;

Wong, 2004; Olebe, 2005; Kardos & Johnson, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2007; Ingersoll, 2012). Wurzbach (2013) identified the following standards for beginning teacher development:

- Demonstrate knowledge of content and pedagogy,
- Demonstrate knowledge of students,
- Set instructional outcomes,
- Design coherent instruction, and
- Design student assessments.

In addition to outside workshops, solid professional development should be provided at the campus level. Study groups can be an effective form of professional development. This time provides the much need collaboration and communication new teachers desire (Hope, 1999; Carver, 2003). These sessions provide knowledge that is much different than that of researchers and other experts. This time with peers also allows for the effective practice of reflection (Angelle, 2002; Carver, 2003; Watkins, 2005). New teacher academies that address concerns such as parent involvement, classroom management, special education guidelines, differentiated instruction, and student motivation can serve as valuable learning experiences for new teachers (Youngs, 2002).

Mentoring. Gary Robinson succinctly stated the importance of new teacher mentors: “The mentor is the glue that helps bind all the inner-workings of the teacher induction process together” (1998). Darling-Hammond (1999) reports that “beginning teachers who have access to intensive mentoring by expert colleagues … become more competent more quickly” and are more likely to remain in the profession (p. 20).

Effective mentoring programs have been shown to greatly increase new teacher job satisfaction by building collegiality and decreasing feelings of isolation. Mentoring creates an integrated professional culture in which new teachers are encouraged to seek help and are expected to learn and improve (Ganser, 2002a; Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005; Gimbel, Lopes & Greer, 2011; Moir, 2009; Brock & Grady, 1998; Odell & Gerraro, 1992; Protheroe, 2006; Pomaki, et al, 2010; Ingersoll, 2012). Research in the Chicago Public Schools indicated that at the high school level, 82% of new teachers who received strong mentorship and support intended to stay in the profession. Additionally, 72% of these teachers intended to stay in the same school (Classroom Ideas That Work, 2007). Having a strong mentor can save a new teacher from becoming another statistic.

Mentoring also allows principals to effectively use veteran teachers – an incredibly valuable resource (Cancio, Albrecht & Johns, 2014). Veteran teachers who contribute to the growth of new teachers are making tremendous investments in the profession. Veteran teachers also report that mentoring new teachers has given them a "new lease on life" as they've gained from both sharing and learning with their newer colleagues. They report being stimulated and encouraged to remain in teaching (Darling-Hammond, 2007).

Designing a mentoring program. Mentoring was first assessed formally through analysis of data from the 1999 – 2000 NCES and Staffing Survey combined with data from the 2000 – 2001 Teacher Follow-up Survey. This data revealed that the aspects of a mentoring program that had the greatest influence on new teacher retention were:

- a mentor from the same field,

- common planning time with teachers in the same teaching area,
- regularly planned collaboration time with other teachers, and
- a connection with an external network of teaching professionals

(Ingersoll & Smith, 2004; Schwille, 2008; Bullough, 2004; Sargent, 2003; Strong, 2006; Protheroe, 2006; Ingersoll, 2012).

In addition to incorporating each of these components, Ganser (2002a) offers the following questions that are an important part of evaluating a mentoring program:

- Does the program only serve beginning teachers or experienced teachers as well?
- How are mentor teachers selected?
- How are mentor teachers assigned to new teachers?
- Are mentors provided with release time to observe and meet with their new teachers?
- How are conflicts between mentors and new teachers handled?

Selecting, training, and compensating mentors. When choosing mentors, Margolis (2004) encourages principals to consider teachers with four to six years of experience. These are the teachers who have learned to cope with the stresses and frustrations of being a new teacher but still remember the experience well enough to effectively guide others. In addition to Margolis, Wurzbach (2013) highlight these teachers as excellent resources for new teachers. He emphasizes the benefits it can have in reenergizing these teachers who are reaching a difficult point in their careers.

In 2008, Schwille published research stating that the most effective mentors offer more than emotional and psychological support – they actually coach and teach alongside novice teachers. This method of mentoring can be done in several different ways

including co-teaching, demonstration teaching, “mentoring on the move,” de-briefing sessions, co-planning, video tape analysis, and journal writing. Schwille (2008) points out that not all effective mentors will use all of these strategies with each new teacher, but they will adapt to what each individual teacher needs.

For mentoring to be effective, the mentor must be properly trained in the district’s vision and structure and be used as a component of the induction process, not a substitute for the entire process (Wong, 2004; Kardos & Johnson, 2010; Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005). Harrison, Dymoke and Pell (2006) suggest that all mentors should be well-equipped at guiding, leading, advising, supporting, coaching, enabling, managing and counseling. Rippon and Martin (2006) further suggest that mentors should be credible teachers with motivational skills, professional knowledge and approachability.

While little research has been done on whether or not compensating mentors for their time and efforts increases their effectiveness, Youngs (2002) points out that a lack of compensation often discourages experienced teachers from assuming the role of mentor, especially when they are compensated for other duties such as coaching or sponsoring an extra-curricular activity.

It is the principal’s responsibility to fully supervise the mentor / new teacher relationship (Angelle, 2002; Moir, 2009). Lack of proper administrative supervision is a key reason why mentoring fails to succeed at times (Wong, 2004).

Giving the gift of time. Once the mentoring program has been established and the mentors have been carefully selected and trained, principals must provide time for classroom observations and collaboration. Mentors need time to observe new teachers in their classrooms and vice-versa (Stansbury, 2001; Moir, 2009; Protheroe, 2006). These

observations allows for analysis of teaching styles, classroom management techniques, and creative collaboration to solve other problems (Stansbury, 2001' Protheroe, 2006). In 2002, Johnson and Kardos completed a survey in New Jersey and found that while 74% of new teachers had a mentor, only 17% had been observed by that mentor (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). Very often a new teacher's best resource is just across the hall, but she has no access to this veteran teacher (Johnson & Kardos, 2002).

Robinson (1998) suggests that to maximize the mentor experience the program must provide availability and frequent two-way conversations. Principals can arrange for mentors and new teachers to meet and collaborate during common conference periods, school assemblies, or even pep rallies (Johnson & Kardos, 2002; Kardos & Johnson, 2005; Ganser, 2002b).

Realistic expectations for new teachers. Ganser (2002b) attributes new teacher success to three different factors: the knowledge and skills teachers bring with them, workplace conditions, and elements of induction support. While schools can certainly take steps in the hiring process to alleviate concerns with the first factor of teacher skill and knowledge, their greatest influence in teacher success and retention lies in the latter two areas. Gasner (2002b) is quick to point out that if a newly hired teacher lacks the necessary skills to be successful, "it is probably unreasonable and unfair to expect the mentor program and the mentor to eliminate the deficiency." (p. 9)

Kardos and Johnson (2005) remind principals that Rome wasn't built in a day. Learning to teach is an ongoing, cumulative process. You must allow new the teachers the privilege of being novice, offer frequent and immediate feedback, let them make choices, and then encourage them to reflect.

Education as a profession has been described as “cannibalizing its young.” Too often new teachers are thrown into isolation with a “sink or swim” attitude. These attitudes undermine a new teacher’s efforts to be an effective teacher (Kardos & Johnson, 2005). New Teachers have several needs, not the least of which is the privilege of being treated as novices (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). “…Beginning teachers need time to improve their skills under the watchful eye of experts – and time to reflect, learn from mistakes, and work with colleagues as they acquire good judgment and tacit knowledge about teaching and learning” (Black, 2004, p. 47).

While no one study perfectly assesses the relationship between participation in a new teacher induction program and teacher retention, evidence suggests that the more components of induction support teachers receive, the more likely they are to remain in the profession (Strong, 2009; Ingersoll, 2012).

Summary of the Teacher Attrition

Losing teachers is costly not only in dollars and cents, but also in loss of student learning and diminished organizational health. While many of the reasons a teacher leaves the classroom are beyond the realm of principal control, such as retirement, salary, and family concerns, there are many other elements over which a principal has great influence. These areas of influence include administrative support through communication, availability, effective leadership styles, and appropriate teacher placement. Additionally principals can greatly increase the retention of new teachers by ensuring appropriate induction to the profession and supporting new teachers while they learn, make mistakes, and grow. By taking very deliberate steps to create a positive work environment, principals are more likely to retain the quality teachers they have already

hired and trained. These are the first steps in creating a solid environment in which teachers find satisfaction and continue to grow and serve for many years.

Reflective Analysis

John Dewey explained that "… education, experience, and life are inextricably intertwined. When one asks what it means to study education, the answer – in its most general sense – is to study experience" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. xxiii). For decades, educational research focused on standardized test scores, statistics, and other quantifiable data. Much less attention was given to the learning that comes from people, experiences and events (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Donald Schön (1983, 1987, 1990) studied John Dewey's theory of inquiry as he completed his doctoral dissertation in the mid 1950's. Two decades later, Schön's interest and knowledge expanded as he collaborated with Chris Argyris to study professional learning, self-reflecting practice, and the learning processes in organizations (Argyris & Schön, 1974; Smith, 2011).

The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action, published by Schön in 1983, explored and clearly defined the role of reflection in personal and professional growth. In this study, Schön described reflective action as a holistic approach that encompasses rational problem-solving, intuition and emotion. According to Schön, the reflective process begins when a puzzling or troubling situation arises. It may be a specific, definable problem or it may be something less concrete, such as a feeling or concern. Once the dilemma has been defined, the reflective practitioner begins to ask questions that move the inquiry along: What is happening? Is it working? What do I not

understand? How are others accomplishing the goal? What do I need to change? These questions, and many others, keep the inquirer at the center of the learning process.

Reflection rarely ends in a simple solution but rather leads to other questions for further reflection. Simply put, reflective practice is a demanding, challenging, and on-going process in which the practitioner develops a conscious awareness of his own actions and how they impact others. Reflective practitioners are change agents who understand current situations and work to create the ideal (Jay & Johnson, 2002). Reflective practice, as further explained in Chapter 3, will be the primary research method used to further explore the principal's role in teacher retention.

Chapter III

Methodology

Much has been written as to why teachers leave and the substantial impact attrition has on students, schools, and school districts. While some of this research has focused specifically on the role school principals play in teacher retention, there is still much to be learned. Principals, including me, can find it difficult to generalize the information provided through research. It is easy to believe that state and national data simply doesn't represent our schools and districts. We may also have misconceptions as to how we are perceived by those we supervise.

This study is an in-depth look at teacher attrition through the lenses of prior research, a school district's separation interview summaries, individual stories of attrition, and my personal experiences as a teacher and school principal. The intent of this project is to discover what general and specific principal behaviors have the greatest impact on teacher retention. By exploring teacher attrition at a personal, local and national level, I am seeking to gain insights that can change my behaviors and the organizational health of my school. Ideally, the research will expand beyond my own usefulness and impact how other principals support teachers. There may also be findings that should be incorporated into principal preparation programs.

Research Method

Reflective analysis is a valuable tool in bridging theory and practice which makes it an ideal research method to further explore the principal's role in teacher retention. Reflective practice redefines not only the concept of learning, but the important role the learner plays in the process. Reflection requires concentration and careful consideration.

Reflective practice is a mindful focus on one's behaviors with the intent to improve personal effectiveness. Schön (1983) described reflective practice as a "dialogue of thinking and doing through which I become more skillful" (p. 31). When done thoroughly and accurately, reflective practice is a means of personal professional development that has the potential to impact not only the practitioner but an entire organization.

The term "reflective practice" was coined by Donald Schön in 1983. It is deeply rooted in experiential learning as explored by Dewey, Piaget, Kolb and others. This learning theory contends that experience without reflection will not lead to personal growth. While experience may provide the foundation for learning, a person must examine the event and make meaning of it in order to stimulate change and progress. It is through these observations that alternative views and solutions are developed. This perspective leads to new experimental behaviors which ultimately begin the learning cycle anew. It is reflection that makes learning from experience possible.

Prompted by a problem, concern or unexplainable phenomena, reflective practitioners take a step back to explore their actions as well as the reasons for and implications of those actions. Too often we fail to see the impacts of our own behaviors. There may be a disconnect between what we intend and what we actually do and achieve. Careful consideration of our own behaviors can provide new insights that serve as a guiding force in the creation of alternative strategies in the pursuit of resolution. The time spent in reflection leads to greater self-awareness, a broader understanding of the problem, and new knowledge of professional practices. It may reveal behaviors and

attitudes which are highly effective. Reflective practice can also reveal behaviors that need improvement or simply need to be eliminated altogether.

A true reflective analysis will take what is learned through scientific research and enrich that knowledge with the study of subjective elements such as personal behavior and intent. The combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches provides a comprehensive, rich view of the problem allowing for greater insight as solutions are developed and moved into action. While there is great value in exploring descriptive statistics, correlations and other quantitative research, a qualitative look at the personal and subjective elements of this puzzle are essential to fully understanding how I, as a principal, can best support teacher retention. There is much to be gained from the in-depth study of personal intent, motivation, perception and other elements unique to all individuals. Reflective analysis maintains self as the center of research leading to self-actualization and high levels of empowerment.

Theoretical Framework

I have spent an extraordinary amount of time reading research and studying theories that pertains to teacher induction and teacher retention. I have also spent more than eleven years supporting teachers at various stages of their careers. Unfortunately, I have spent considerably less time incorporating my knowledge into actual practice and even less time reflecting on the effectiveness of my practices as a principal in the areas of teacher induction and teacher retention. I am seeking to remedy that atrocity as I complete this study. Current research, as well as various theories of learning and practice, will be explored and applied throughout this study.

Kolb's experiential learning cycle. Schön's model of reflective practice is clearly followed in Kolb's experiential learning cycle (1984). This four step framework will serve as a road map as I progress through my reflective journey.

Concrete experience. The learning cycle begins when a perceived discrepancy between intent and accomplishment creates a sense of a problem. This discovery motivates us to gather information and moves us further into the reflection cycle.

Reflective observation. As research is gathered, we begin to understand the personal reactions of ourselves and others. It is through this thorough understanding of the problem that we begin to develop appropriate solutions.

Abstract reconceptualization. Alternate ways of thinking and acting are considered during this third phase of the learning cycle. We now have an understanding of what we did, why we did it, and why it didn't work. In light of our new found knowledge and personal reflection, we reconsider former practices and search for new ones that better align with our desired outcomes.

Active experimentation. A fourth step, active experimentation, completes Kolb's cycle of experiential learning. In this phase we test our new behaviors and assumptions and begin the learning process anew. The ongoing, habitual nature of active experimentation limits its inclusion in this particular research study. I will explore this area as I move in and out of the other three stages, but I don't expect to attain complete fulfillment.

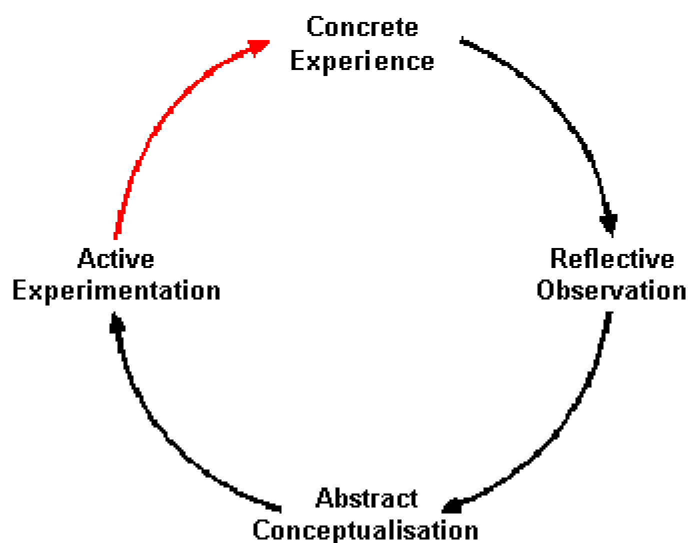

Figure 1: Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle, 1984

Fluid movement between the four stages is expected during the reflective process. Something we consider in the abstract conceptualization phase may cause us to momentarily return to the reflective observation stage as we explore something we had not initially considered. There may also be situations were multiple stages are being experienced simultaneously. The more habitual reflection becomes, the more likely this is to happen.

Single-loop learning versus double-loop learning. One aspect of Argyris and Schön's theory of learning (1978) involves the discovery, framing and correction of errors. Once a problem has been detected, some organizations will simply look to another strategy as a means of resolution. The goals, values and plans of the organization are not considered before a new strategy or system is put in place. Argyris and Schön describe this as single-loop learning. An alternative approach is described as double-loop learning. Organizations following this framework will apply considerable scrutiny to the underlying policies, procedures, and objectives before determining the next course of action.

Many "programs" and strategies have been implemented with the intention of placing and retaining teachers in classrooms. Some examples include alternative certification programs and mentoring. This study will explore many teacher retention trends to determine if they are single-loop or double-loop responses to the problem at hand. This determination may help principals and other educational leaders discover why some approaches are more effective than others.

Reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. Without careful thought, reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action may appear to be one in the same. Described by Schön in *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in* Action (1983), both are useful in helping educational leaders build a repertoire of strategies as they seek to define and resolve the many problems faced on a daily basis.

Reflection-in-action can be simplistically described as "thinking on your feet." When confronted with a new challenge, principals will refer to previous experiences and feelings to make decisions as the situation is unfolding. These solutions are often somewhere between productive and practical.

Reflection-on-action also allows a principal to draw from previous experience, only the consideration is done before or after the fact. Careful consideration before a situation occurs allows principals to anticipate how they will react in certain circumstances. Taking time to reflect after an incident or situation enables principals to consider not only what happened, but why it happened and what guided their actions and behaviors. Reflection-on-action is critical as principals add to their metaphorical "tool box."

When time is short, most principals rely on reflection-in-action. By creating future time to ponder and discuss a situation, principals move to reflection-on-action which can ultimately assist them in future reflection-in-action circumstances. Reflection-on-action is the heart of reflective practice and will be central theme throughout this study.

Technical rationality. Another term coined by Schön in 1983 was technical rationality. At its core, technical rationality is determining a solution without considering all of the underlying factors that contributed to the problem. An underlying assumption of technical rationality is that problems are routine and easily generalized. Technical rationality can lead educational leaders to rely only on scientific research studies without taking into consideration implications for the individuals involved. Technical rationality may also cause principals to simply repeat behaviors year after year without stopping to reflect on their success or the impacts of the behavior on current circumstances or staff members. Principals and educational leaders fall victim to the flaws of technical rationality when they adopt an "it worked in the past" attitude.

Research Design and Data Sets

Reflective practice emphasizes the importance of combining theory and practice while keeping the practitioner as the center of the learning process. It demands more than a search for knowledge but rather a purposeful learning experience that leads to change. With this end in mind, this study will take a mixed methods approach that combines prior research published in the public domain, archival data collected from a school district in Texas, previously published case study reviews, and my personal experiences and

reflections as related to the descriptive statistics gathered from the quantitative portion of the study.

Quantitative data. The National Center for Education Statistics has conducted extensive, nation-wide research for many years. Through the School and Staffing Survey and the Teacher Follow-up Survey, data have been gathered outlining teacher attrition rates and why these professionals choose to leave their schools or the profession. Found in the public domain, this data have been the foundation for numerous research studies and are central to much of the literature written about teacher attrition. While this is a rich data set, many school principals may find it difficult to generalize this information to their schools. It is too easy to believe that national data simply doesn't apply. A portion of this study will seek to verify or disprove whether or not national trends apply to a specific school districts in Texas.

Most school districts have practices in place that collect data from teachers who have resigned their current positions. Some districts may collect surveys while others may conduct exit interviews. Archival data collected from resigning teachers in a specific school district in south Texas will be instrumental in this study.

Reasons for leaving and perceived principal behaviors will be studied through a review of descriptive data collected through a district's exit interview summaries from 2011 - 2013. During these interviews, exiting teachers were asked to rate their principals in areas such as fair treatment of employees, recognition, resolving complaints and following policies. These findings will be reviewed against national trends and used to further explore the relationship between principal behaviors and perceived teacher job satisfaction.

Qualitative data. A review of theory and previously mentioned descriptive statistics will provide insight into the principal's role in teacher retention, but the most significant portion of the study will be in the reflective analysis. The ability to recite statistics may be impressive, but real value is gained when the data is transferred to personal practice.

Through analysis of previously published case studies, I am seeking to find principal behaviors similar to my own. A true understanding of exiting teachers' perceptions of their principals will hopefully provide honest evaluation of my own practices. It is unlikely I will ever have access to former teachers' honest assessments of my behaviors, so I am seeking to transfer perceptions of other principals' behaviors to my own behaviors.

I am currently finishing my eleventh year as a school administrator. My study will contain an in-depth reflection of my own practices as well as my professional relationships with some of the teachers I have supported during this time. I will specifically focus on what I did to support first year teachers and the role I may have played in the resignation of teachers throughout the years. For seven years I worked as an assistant principal at two large schools. The size of the faculty at these schools limits the possibility of reviewing my relationship with each first year or resigning teacher, but I will explore all applicable teachers during my four year tenure as principal.

Research Questions

The following research questions will guide this study:

- What can I learn from reflecting on district and national reports regarding teacher attrition and implied administrator behaviors?

- How can I, as a principal, use this reflective knowledge and my personal experiences to create circumstances and practices that encourage teachers to remain in the profession?

Chapter IV

Reflective Analysis

The end of spring break in Texas schools signals the beginning of testing season and numerous end-of-year activities. While principals and teachers are making a final push to ensure all students are ready to give their best efforts on state assessments, students are eagerly anticipating field trips, prom, awards ceremonies, graduation, and elementary field day. Summative teacher evaluations are being written and contract renewal recommendations are being considered. It is a stressful and exciting time of year that indicates summer is just around the corner.

While there is still much to be done in the current school year, most principals and teachers are already thinking ahead to the next year. What were the highlights of this year, and what needs to be changed for the following year? Just as some students prepare to go to a new school or seek other opportunities after graduation, many teachers are doing the same.

Years of research from the Department of Education's School and Staffing Survey through the National Center for Education Statistics reveal that approximately 15.7% of a campus' teaching staff will not be returning for the following year. A smaller school with a teaching staff of thirty can anticipate replacing approximately five teachers while a large high school may be replacing twenty or more teachers. Some turnover in a school can be healthy as new professionals often bring new ideas and fresh perspectives. Excessive turnover, however, places an extreme burden on schools, principals, and teachers.

Using Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle (1984) as a road map, I have explored quantitative data from exiting teachers as well as the qualitative data found in case studies and reflections of my own practices and history to learn more about how principal behaviors impact teacher attrition and what I can do to encourage teachers to remain at my school.

Phase 1: Concrete Experience – The Hiring and Induction of Teachers

Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle (1984) begins with a concrete experience in which there is a discrepancy between what one intended and what was actually accomplished. This initial stage launched my reflective analysis. Each time I hire a new teacher, I intend to select the best candidate, fully acclimate him to the school and our culture, help him develop into the ideal teacher that all of our students deserve, and retain him at our school for years to come. My reflective journey will tell the stories of teachers I have supported as their principal. Before I tell their individual stories, however, it is important to look at the hiring and induction processes I have employed since my first days as an administrator. Knowledge and evaluation of these processes will provide additional insight into my intentions as a leader of teachers.

Reflections on personal practices of hiring and induction. As I complete my eleventh year as a school administrator, I know that resignations and retirement announcements will soon be making their way to my office. The next four to five months will bring uncertainty as a portion of my staff will seek other opportunities that will likely take them from our school family. If I am fortunate, then my staff for the following year will be stable by the end of July or the beginning of August.

Some of the departures will bring excitement as teachers are able to retire after many years of service or follow a calling into administration or other leadership positions. Some departures will bring great sadness as I know it is a loss for our students and staff. On occasions, a resignation will bring a mix of emotions ranging from relief to a sense of personal failure. Regardless of the reason for departure, the exiting teacher must be replaced.

The timing of the resignation and the details of the vacant position have significant influence on the quality of applicants available. Bilingual, specific areas of special education, math, and science positions are traditionally the most difficult to staff. Teachers who resign in July, or later, are also difficult to replace with quality teachers. If I want to hire the best teachers, then I must act quickly. I have been guilty of creating an applicant list before officially delivering the resignation letter to human resources.

Sorting through the list of applicants and choosing teachers to interview can be one of the most challenging processes. I ask a number of questions as I read through applications, letters of interest and resumes. Do they have experience? What paths did they take to certification? Have they changed schools often? Will they need to relocate or are they close enough to commute? Do they talk about other experiences with children? The number of applicants chosen for interview general depends on the number of quality applications.

My current district has recently contracted with a screening company. Teachers complete the first phase of screening on-line as part of the application process. The second round of questions can be completed by phone or face-to-face with a trained screener. A final round of questions must be completed in a face-to-face interview. At

each phase, teachers are ranked in various areas, and a minimum score is required before proceeding to the next round. This three step process has provided valuable insight as I have chosen applicants to interview. As an administrator trained to conduct the second and third rounds of interviews, I am obligated to complete the screening process with applicants that other principals are considering for hire. While I find the interviews interesting and valuable, each phase can take up to an hour to complete.

The next step in the process is setting up interviews and asking other staff members to serve on the interview committee. It is much easier to complete this process before current staff members begin their summer vacations. Teachers are expected to work together throughout the school year, so I feel it is important to include members of the new teacher's team on the interview panel. Compatibility is critical, and ideally the new team member will bring skills that enhance the team already in place. While the ultimate hiring decision is my responsibility, the input offered by the interview team is invaluable.

My preference is to interview all applicants in one day. This allows me to make a quicker decision and keep all applicants at the forefront of my mind. Once a day is chosen, interviews are generally scheduled in 45 minute intervals. If my secretary is not available, then I will take the time to call each selected applicant and complete the interview schedule.

Selecting interview questions is an important part of the process. Over the years I have developed a bank of questions from which to choose. There are several generic questions I use in almost all interviews. It is essential, however, to choose a few questions specific to the position. Once selected, the interview questions are typed,

leaving space available for note taking, and copies are run for each applicant and each interview team member.

I enjoy meeting people, so the actual interviews are generally fun and interesting. Each interview team member will take turns asking questions from the prepared list. I feel it is important to ask the same questions of each applicant, but there are times when follow up questions are needed. Each interview begins with a brief description of the position and ends with a timeline for selecting a candidate. If time allows, the committee can discuss advantages and concerns for each applicant between interviews. Once all interviews have been completed, the committee will spend time ranking the candidates in order of preference.

The next step is checking references. If someone is currently under contract with another district and they appear to be a viable candidate, then I take a minute in the interview to ask whether or not their current principal knows she is interviewing for another position. If we select a candidate who has not shared with her principal, then I will give them an opportunity to do so before I call for a reference. I have found this to be a rare circumstance as most teachers report having shared the interview opportunity with their current principal.

School districts generally have guidelines regarding how many and what type of references are required. Some application systems send an automatic email to references when a teacher applies for the position. While this information is important to consider, I have learned that it is necessary to extend the reference process. I always try to contact the teacher's current principal, even if he or she is not listed as a reference. If I feel it is necessary, then I may seek out other people who have worked with the candidate.

Much like creating a list of interview questions, I have a list of questions I ask of each reference. While this list is usually the same, I may ask additional questions that relate specifically to the chosen applicant. My experience is that almost all references are positive. I am not sure if this is because poor candidates are eliminated during the interview process or if people are unwilling to give negative information about a former or current employee / coworker. There is also the possibility that a current principal wants the teacher to find a new place to work.

Once a candidate has been screened, interviewed, and references have been checked, then I call to let him know I am recommending him for employment. One smaller district where I worked required that I bring each candidate to meet the superintendent or assistant superintendent before making the recommendation for employment. This obviously presented a challenge at times and lengthened the already arduous hiring process. I complete the interview process by turning paperwork in to the human resources department and calling each candidate that was not chosen.

This hiring process is lengthy and time consuming. There have been rare occasions when I can complete the process a single time and find two or more teachers, but I generally I must repeat this entire process for each teacher I hire.

Finding the most ideal teachers is only the beginning of the journey. As the principal, I am committing to induction support to ensure the new team members develop into the most effective professionals. Some teachers may come with experience, so their induction needs may be less. Some teachers, however, will require years of support as they develop their skills. Research clearly states that induction is a three-fold process

that goes far beyond the first weeks of school. Just as a teacher commits to a school and its students, I must commit to supporting and developing the teachers I hire.

Like the beginning of a calendar year, each new school year brings a resurgence of energy and commitment as well as a heightened anticipation of what is to come. I personally find that I make more "new years' resolutions" in August than January. I begin each school year with an eager enthusiasm to conquer the world. I look forward to introducing new staff members to one another, and I am often as excited as the new teachers when I walk them to their classrooms and hand them the keys. I am always anxious to talk about my school and share our culture and expectations. Helping new teachers get started is fun! For me, orientation is the easiest part of induction.

Because my personal mentors as a student and newly hired teacher were so instrumental in my development, I take great care in selecting mentors for those I hire. While all teachers complete orientation, only first and second year teachers are assigned a formal mentor in my district. I will ask a colleague to "buddy" with experienced teachers who are new to campus, but this is not a formal or monitored process.

When selecting new teacher mentors, I begin by considering other teachers in the same subjects and grade level. This is ideal for curriculum support. At the elementary level, these teachers typically have the same conference period which allows for collaboration time during the school day. Additionally, I look for someone who is compatible with the new teacher and who has experienced trials and successes of his own. If there is not a suitable mentor at the same grade level or in the same subject, then I consider a teacher who has experience in the area where the new teacher is assigned.

In addition to choosing quality mentors, research discusses the importance of training and compensating mentors. Unfortunately, this is an area where I know I fall short. I have been guilty of introducing the mentor and mentee and then walking away. My current school district has a program to train and compensate mentors, and I have allowed these arrangements to justify my lack of follow through. Unless a mentor or mentee comes to me with questions or concerns, it is unlikely I will give the mentoring process any additional time or thought.

In contrast to mentoring, leading campus-wide professional development is a personal leadership strength. I use feedback gathered through surveys and end-of-year teacher reflections to select and execute a campus-wide professional development plan for each school year. I have led campuses in studies of student poverty, classroom instruction techniques, and most recently, authentic student engagement.

While the studies may benefit the campus as a whole, I am deficient in developing and implementing professional development that targets the new professionals on campus. When I discover an area of concern in an individual teacher, especially a new teacher, I too often developed plans that pass the responsibility for facilitating growth to others. I may share the concern with an instructional coach, assign the struggling professional to observe in other classrooms, or even select an outside workshop for the teacher to attend. These are all examples of technical rationality and single-loop learning as described by Schön (1983). The methods do not explore the root of the concern but rather jump immediately to a “one size fits all” solution. While these strategies may assist teachers, I have used them in place of spending quality time with the teacher to determine the source of the difficulty followed by honest, valuable feedback. If the

teacher continues to fail, then I am quick to list the things I've assigned others to try and am remiss in mentioning the steps I could have personally taken to ensure the teacher's success.

Summary of concrete experience. Hiring the right people is critical, and I spend a considerable amount of time in the selection of each teacher who joins my campus. I employ an interview team and put considerable effort into verifying the quality of each candidate. I begin with eager intentions of full commitment to developing and supporting each new professional, but much like a traditional new year's resolution, I find my eagerness waning quickly. As mentioned in the first stage of Kolb's experiential learning cycle, Concrete Evidence, my intentions do not match reality. Recognizing this deficiency encourages me to move to the second stage of the cycle where I explore data and I reflect on individual people and circumstances where I have fallen short of my own expectations.

Phase 2: Reflective Observation – Understanding How Principals Impact Attrition

There are so many angles and lenses through with to view and understand why teacher leave and why teachers stay. I chose not to limit my research to personal history, statistical data or only an administrator's perspective. Restricting my data sources would hinder the understanding I need to change my own practices and encourage others to do the same. To gain the in-depth knowledge I desire, I spent time reflecting on my own history and practices while reviewing what exiting teachers say about why they leave their schools or the profession in general. This phase of Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle is extensive as there is much to be pondered and considered.

Personal history: Reflecting on how I support teachers. During my tenure as a school administrator I have had the privilege of working with many wonderful teachers. I was responsible for selecting and hiring some of these professionals while others I was blessed to "inherit" as I stepped into a new role. For the purpose of this study, I spent time reliving, questioning, and exploring my relationship with six individual teachers. Three of these teachers were specifically chosen because they were first year teachers, and I was the most instrumental person in their hiring and induction processes. The other three teachers were chosen because they resigned while I was their principal. Two of these three leaving teachers did so at my urging. Spending time in reflection-on-action was critical to bridge the gap between intentions and reality. Some stories are rich with evidence of our interactions, while others have significantly fewer details. Regardless, each of these stories is important as it is the tale of a teacher and his or her journey into or out of the classroom. I explored each of these teacher relationships in order of when I worked with them. I chose to do this chronologically so I could also explore changes in my own behavior that may have developed with time and experience.

Katherine. Katherine was a late August hire chosen to fill a 7th grade science position. She was a brand new teacher who had just completed her undergraduate degree but had not had the opportunity to be a student teacher. Applicants for this position were very limited that late in the summer, and Katherine seemed the most eager and moldable. She was perhaps in her early thirties and had two daughters of her own. This gave her a slight edge over another applicant who seemed to be as insecure as the students she would be teaching. Several days of new teacher induction had passed, so Katherine was

getting a late start. She and I spent a considerable amount of time together trying to prepare her for the first days of school.

When I spoke with one of Katherine's university professors to gather reference information, she expressed an initial concern for Katherine's ability to succeed as a teacher. She talked, however, about how Katherine began to blossom slightly as she had opportunities to present lessons to her classmates. By the end of the conversation with her former professor, I had determined that Katherine was capable of succeeding, but she would need a greater level of support than other teachers I had hired earlier in the summer. I knew that Katherine's university professor wanted her to succeed, and I certainly wanted the same. For that reason, I took Katherine under my wing that year.

When I was a teacher I would spend the first few weeks of each school year determining which students I thought were most likely to fail my class. I then made it my personal mission to ensure they were successful. When I recommended Katherine for the science position, I knew she would need support. It wasn't that I thought she was destined to fail, I just sincerely wanted to see her succeed. It was only my second year as an assistant principal, and I also needed to prove to myself that I was capable of mentoring and growing teachers.

Katherine struggled with many areas that are often difficult for new teachers. Middle school students can be difficult to manage, and Katherine's classes were no exception. Managing time and meeting deadlines were also an occasional problem. Fortunately, Katherine was being mentored by an exceptional teacher who also taught 7th grade science. This teacher was able to guide Katherine in productive and non-threatening ways.

I scheduled time for Katherine and her mentor to spend time in each other's classrooms. These visits were very intentional. I meet with both Katherine and her mentor ahead of time and asked them to look for specific things during the observations. I would then debrief with them after the visits. While I was not aware of Schön's work at the time, I now recognize these steps as reflection-on-action – a deliberate time set aside for reflection before or after the fact. Because of the intentional reflection piece, the observations proved very useful in Katherine's growth. Spending the additional time before and after the observations enhanced this commonly used practice moving it from single-loop learning to double-loop learning. The source of Katherine's struggles were explored and addressed individually meaning the observation time was designed to specifically meet Katherine's needs.

In addition to observations by Katherine's mentor, I also spent time in her classroom. Sometimes I would stay for a short period of time. Other days I might stay for an entire class period. I always provided written feedback, and I made a point of meeting face to face with Katherine if I felt there were specific areas of concern that needed to be addressed.

There were some bumpy moments that first year, but Katherine finished with a new resolve. Her growth was obvious, and she entered the next school year determined to avoid the classroom and time management concerns that plagued her first year. I was able to work one additional year with Katherine. I continued to see her confidence grow as she instructed students and managed her classroom. Having a greater understanding of what was expected of her also helped her manage her time and other responsibilities. She

continued to work closely with her mentor teacher, and my level of involvement diminished significantly that second year.

I moved into a principal position at a different school after Katherine's second year, but I continued to have occasional contact with her. Five years later, Katherine was my son's teacher. At the time she was also serving as her academic team's leader and was sponsoring a large student organization. She was clearly my son's favorite teacher that year. I was so pleased to watch Katherine's growth from the perspective of a parent. She communicated well with parents, and the students respected her. As she completed that seventh year of teaching, I couldn't help but feel proud for her and all she had accomplished. Katherine is now completing her tenth year of teaching, and I enjoy hearing from her occasionally.

Tim. As successful as I felt with Katherine, my next hiring and mentoring experience with Tim did not go well. I was a new principal at an alternative education campus, and I needed to hire a multi-level middle and high school math teacher. I began this arduous task in mid-June, and at the end of the month I was still looking. Even though the school's alternative status did not require the teacher to be certified, I knew it would be a difficult position, and I wanted to find someone certified and capable of its many demands. This simply wasn't going to happen. As I began to contact non-certified applicants, I found two who were willing to meet with me about the position. One of these applicants was Tim.

I invited my lead teacher, who I didn't really know at the time, to join me for the interview. Tim was a former full-time member of the military who was still active part-time in the National Guard. He had a degree, but he had not completed alternative

certification requirements, and he had not taken the math certification exam. When I gave Tim an opportunity to ask questions at the end of the interview, he specifically asked what supports would be available to him as a new teacher. I was pleased with his question and shared with him my strong desire to mentor and develop new teachers. I explained that I had been doing this for several years including the last couple of years I was a classroom teacher. We discussed the demands of the job at length, and he was willing to accept the position.

On the advice of the district's Director of Human Resources, I offered the position to Tim as a long term substitute. Our agreement was that a contract would be considered once he passed his certification exam. He had completed other long term sub positions, and he agreed to this arrangement. His references, including a teacher whose classroom he had filled during a lengthy illness, were all excellent.

The school year began reasonably well, and classroom management was not a concern. I believe this was partially due to Tim's former military experience enhanced by the school-wide behavior management supports already in place. Tim's instructional strategies were adequate, and he was keeping up with the demands of the position.

The first conflict arose as we prepared for the first six weeks' report cards. Tim had refused to use a traditional grading scale. He chose instead to determine how many points an assignment should be worth and how many points the students earned. The scales varied considerably, and this was confusing for students and parents. Now that it was time to convert the grades to report card format, there were a number of surprises. Students and parents could not understand how he determined the report card grades, and a significant number of students were failing – several with a grade of 69.

Tim and I discussed this dilemma at length during several different meetings. I could not convince him that he needed to use a more traditional method, and he could not convince me that his methods were appropriate. I could not ask him to change the grades, but I did question him about the possibility that students could have earned an additional point if he had weighted the grades differently. He assured me that his method of calculation, his grading of assignments, and his instructional strategies were all without flaw. If a student earned a 69, then that was what he was going to get. I eventually had to tell him he would follow the same grading policy as the other teachers on campus. This was the first of several situations in which we did not see eye to eye.

As mentioned previously, classroom management was not a concern with Tim. Student relationships, however, were a serious problem. Numerous times students would come to my office requesting to be transferred out of Tim's class. Unfortunately, there were no other options for math instruction. I decided to use these conversations as coaching experiences for the students. We talked about why they did not want to be in his class and discussed possible solutions. I often suggested that students meet with Tim individually and ask what they could do to be more successful in his class. Sometimes this would work, and the students were able to finish their time at our alternative campus without too many additional conflicts. Other times we simply had to forge ahead. There were a few occasions when the conflict was so great that the students were forced to stay longer in the alternative education setting.

In addition to relationships with students, Tim also had numerous conflicts with other staff members. He intentionally did things to irritate other teachers. He spoke harshly with some of them, and refused to cooperate if they asked for something specific

from him. His interactions with staff and students were very antagonistic which made for a challenging and uncomfortable work environment.

Tim and I also struggled with our relationship. He was unwilling to consider my suggestions forcing me to give directives in order to create the most ideal learning environment for students. Tim began arriving late to work on a frequent basis. When I said something to him, he rudely responded with “I’m just a sub.” He also kept his classroom at an unbearably cold temperature. Students were required to wear uniforms to school, so sweatshirts and heavy jackets were not an option. Students were miserable, and it was significantly impacting their learning environment. After numerous conversations where Tim refused to raise the temperature, I finally had to set a minimum temperature requirement and check often to verify compliance.

Tim took the math certification test a number of times and was not successful. Because passing the test was part of our original agreement, and Tim was continuing to struggle with relationships with students and staff, I chose not to offer a contract at the end of the first semester. Tim pushed for a contract, and soon it felt like every interaction was a battle. By spring break, Tim asked if he was going to be offered a position the following year. I told him it wasn’t likely, but I was waiting until later to make my final decision. He then announced that he would only teach at our campus two days a week, and I would need to find someone for the other three days. I explained that this arrangement was not best for students and he needed to commit to every day or resign the position altogether. He chose to stay through the end of the year.

At the end of the school year, Tim and I had one final, lengthy conversation. He shared that he did not feel I supported him as a new teacher. I shared my frustration as he

flatly refused my suggestions. He replied that he did not see my suggestions as helpful. Tim said he felt he was making progress with students because they would come to him and ask what they could do to be more successful in his class. I explained that these conversations resulted from my attempts to coach students on how to appropriately interact with authority. We parted on less than pleasant terms. Tim passed his math certification exam that summer and found a full time teaching position at a high school in the area.

I genuinely felt like a failure as a mentor and teacher leader after unsuccessfully investing so much time in Tim. While it would have been easy to place all of the blame on Tim, I knew there were things I should have done differently.

I should have addressed the grading method long before it was time for report cards. If I didn't fully understand his system, then I should have known that his students and parents would not understand either. The longer I allowed him to use this method, the more difficult it became to "change his mind."

I was in Tim's classroom often, but I did not do an adequate job of providing immediate feedback. Because classroom management and instructional strategies were not a concern, I allowed the antagonistic relationship with his students to fester. Because Tim was also confrontational, I used my desire to "coach students" as a way to avoid difficult conversations with him. I still believe there was great value in helping students learn appropriate ways to interact with adults, but I should have personally followed up with Tim as well. By not speaking with him regarding the students' concerns, I allowed Tim to believe that his interactions with students were appropriate and productive. My coaching techniques helped students, but they did not help Tim.

I am still unsure whether or not I made the correct decision when I hired Tim as a long-term sub instead of offering him a probationary contract. Because we were an alternative education setting, Tim was not required to be certified before being offered a contract. I made my decision at the beginning of the year based on the advice of the Director of Human Resources. At the time I thought that we would be placing him on contract at semester. If Tim had been under a contract from the beginning, then he may have felt less pressure to immediately pass his certification exam. Instead, he took the exam each time it was offered, and his frustration obviously grew each time he did not pass. Being under contract could have also helped Tim feel more secure in his position, which might have alleviated some of the stress and conflict with students and staff.

Not having Tim on a contract, however, made it much easier for me to dismiss him at the end of the year. I simply told him that I would be looking for someone else to fill that position the following year. In a way, it seems like I was trying to take the easy way out by not offering a contract. I can assure you, however, that there was nothing easy about that year.

I clearly see situations where reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action were a part of that year with Tim. I was often thinking on my feet and trying to determine the best way to resolve situations with Tim. Not only were the techniques I had used with other new teachers not working well with Tim, I was the only administrator on campus. There were other administrators available to advise me, but none of them witnessed the situation, and many of the stories seemed exaggerated. I was also hesitant to share too much as it was my first year as a principal, and I didn't want to appear as if I couldn't handle the position.

Schön's technical rationality was evident that year. The strategies that had worked so well with other struggling teachers were ineffective with Tim. It is possible that these techniques did not work because Tim's struggles were different than other teachers' struggles. It is also possible that the strategies I used were not effective because of Tim's past experiences, our gender differences, his personality, and our unique environment in the alternative education program. I was guilty of assuming that the methods I used to support past teachers would also help Tim feel supported and experience growth. This notion was entirely flawed.

I have spent years reflecting on the mistakes I made with Tim. I have not worked with another teacher who was as strong-willed as Tim, but I am confident that I will handle the situation much better should it happen again. I will be more upfront with my expectations and then follow through to see that those expectations are met. If I have a long term sub as contentious as Tim, then I will not allow him to continue simply because I am concerned about finding someone to replace him. The students did learn some math while in Tim's class, but there were many distractors that took away from the students' abilities to succeed at the highest level.

I also feel my reference checking process is so much more thorough as a result of that year with Tim. I now seek information from people who are more likely to be knowledgeable in their evaluation of work performance. The teacher who gave Tim a glowing reference never witnessed his interactions with others. She knew that while she was away her students received the instruction they needed, and Tim kept up with paperwork and managed the class well. The other references I checked for Tim were peers. Because Tim's prior work experience had been in the military and no immediate

supervisors were listed, I did not speak to anyone who could have shared the concerns I experienced as Tim's principal. I am confident such conversations would have offered valuable insight.

Hannah. After only one year as principal at the alternative education program where I worked with Tim, I was excited to accept an elementary principal position in another part of the state where my family lived. I hired three teachers that summer, one of whom was a brand new teacher named Hannah. I had not initially scheduled an interview with Hannah because her application and letter of interest indicated that she would be commuting almost an hour and a half to work each day. The day I was scheduling interviews, however, Hannah called directly to the school and asked to speak with me. She introduced herself, and I remembered her application from the screenings. She asked if she could please interview for a teaching position, so I scheduled her in one of my vacant slots.

During the interview, Hannah approached the circumstances of her commute. I had not mentioned my concern to her, but she obviously knew it was something she needed to address. Hannah's husband also commuted but in the opposite direction. She assured me that she was accustomed to driving and would not mind. She asked me to please not exclude her from being considered for the position because of the drive. Her parents lived near the school, and she was confident the commute would not be a problem.

I am so glad that Hannah contacted me that day, that she addressed the commute, and that I chose to hire her for the position. She was the most amazing first year teacher I had ever met. Everything about Hannah's classroom and instruction made it appear that

she had been successfully teaching for many years. Her students and parents adored her, and her students made tremendous academic gains that year.

I was very deliberate when I selected students for Hannah's class. Knowing that she was a first year teacher assigned to a state accountability grade level, I wanted to make sure I created circumstances that would help her be successful. I consulted with other staff members to eliminate serious discipline or academic problems from her classroom. Third grade enrollment numbers, however, did not allow me to reduce the number of student in her classroom. Hannah handled that year like a seasoned professional. Even though her students were carefully selected, I have no doubt that Hannah could have successfully handled any situation.

Hannah quickly gained the respect and admiration of her co-workers. Veteran teachers would seek advice from Hannah, and she was an active part of the committee to which she was assigned. She also did a nice job of excluding herself from those who resisted new ideas while not appearing to choose sides. Hannah was always supportive and cheerful, and people were naturally drawn to her.

I did very little to support Hannah that year. She never missed deadlines, made appropriate commitments without overextending herself, and was simply a joy to have on campus. Hannah was eager to learn and grow, and she did not hesitate to come to me if she had questions or needed guidance. When she did come to me, she almost always had the right solution in mind. In my years as an administrator, I have only met one other first year teacher with the same natural abilities. Working with Hannah restored my faith in my capacity to select, train, and mentor teachers. Hannah and I continue to stay in

touch, and when Hannah was ready to apply for a position closer to her home, I was eager to speak highly of her to potential employers.

Melanie. I met Melanie after returning to the school district where my teaching and administrative career began. At the time, Melanie was a university student completing internship activities. She was on campus a couple of days a week during the fall semester, and she taught an occasional lesson in the 4th grade math classroom where she observed. That spring, Melanie was assigned to student teach at my campus with the same teacher she had observed in the fall.

Melanie did an adequate job that spring, but she seemed insecure most of the time. She relied heavily on her cooperating teacher and was easily rattled if plans changed. She was dependable, however, and she experienced growth that semester.

Soon after school ended, Melanie accepted a 3rd grade teaching position in a neighboring district. Little did I know that I would be accepting the principal position at the same campus a few weeks later. Melanie and I were going to work together again. She seemed relieved that we knew one another as we both prepared for our new roles.

The situation was a little unique as I had not hired Melanie, but I was already aware of growth opportunities for her. I made a point of visiting her classroom early and often. Now that Melanie was on her own, classroom management concerns became more obvious. She would ignore behaviors that needed to be addressed while giving too much attention to minor infractions. Her classroom was not a complete disaster, but there were times you could see and hear her frustration.

Melanie generally did an adequate job of instructing students. She was working hard to implement the professional development we were exploring in faculty meetings.

She did an excellent job of using academic vocabulary, but she struggled to ask appropriate guiding questions. Melanie was willing to take risks and try something new, but her plans didn't always work as she expected.

I did not feel Melanie's weaknesses in classroom management and instructional techniques warranted time out of her classroom to observe other teachers, so I did not use this approach with her. I did, however, make sure that I was in her classroom at least once a week. I gave both written and verbal feedback, and Melanie was always receptive. I completed her formative observation in October of that year. We chose specific goals on which to focus for the remainder of the school year. I was pleased with her progress when I completed her summative evaluation in late April. There were still areas for growth, but her confidence had improved, and it showed in her classroom management and instructional abilities. Melanie's end-of-year reflection showed acknowledgement of her own growth while indicating areas where she wanted to improve.

At her summative conference that first year, Melanie shared that her dream job would be teaching 3rd or 4th grade math as opposed to a self-contained classroom. We had a mid-summer resignation in 4th grade math, and Melanie was thrilled to move into that position. I am not sure if it was another year of experience or if Melanie simply found her place, but she appeared to be an entirely different teacher the second year. She had many of the same students that year as she had moved from 3rd grade to 4th grade, but these students responded much better to her redirection. Students were eager to please, parents spoke highly of her, and there was a confidence about her that I had not seen the previous two years.

In addition to her confidence in the classroom, Melanie took a more active role in campus-wide activities. She agreed to chair the campus Climate and Morale Committee where she brought in new ideas, and veteran teachers willingly followed her lead. Melanie also became a vital part of our Saturday tutorial program where she often prepared lessons for other teachers. In only her second year of teaching, Melanie was beginning to thrive.

Elissa. While I was helping Melanie through her first year, there was another new teacher on campus who was experiencing significant struggles. Elissa was a late hire for a very specific, hard to staff position – an inclusion PPCD classroom for three and four-year-olds. When I first accepted the principal position that summer I was told that I was fully staffed meaning there were no additional teachers to hire. I learned the second week of July that I had two teachers to hire, Elissa's position being one of them. Unfortunately I got the news after it was too late for teachers under contract to resign their positions. There were a couple of teachers interested in the position, but their current principals were unwilling to let them leave at such a late date.

Working with one of the district's special education coordinators, I interviewed the few certified special education teachers who did not already have positions. The possibilities did not look promising. Following a career in accounting, Elissa had worked as a substitute and a paraprofessional in middle and high school special education classrooms. She did not have any preschool experience, but she was willing to embrace the challenge. Her current principal spoke highly of her. She was described as a self-starter and a hard worker. Elissa eagerly joined our staff and began getting to know the paraprofessionals who would support her in the classroom.

Unfortunately, my new campus was also my first experience with preschool aged children. I had worked at other elementary schools, but none of these schools housed children younger than kindergarten. Elissa and I both had learning to do. The two paraprofessionals in the classroom had extensive experience working with students this age, but there was not a spirit of cooperation between the three ladies.

Elissa and I talked often about her transition from paraprofessional to a teacher with paraprofessionals. My intention was to help her recognize the steps she would need to take now that she was the leader in the classroom. We also spoke frequently about the fact that the two paraprofessionals would be a great resource to her. Either I did not explain myself well, or Elissa simply couldn’t make the transition.

Elissa, although not to the same extreme as Tim, was steadfast in her ways. The difference between Elissa and Tim was that Elissa recognized her weaknesses and wanted to learn to do the job well. She just couldn’t seem to make it happen. She worked hard, but she lacked understanding of the position and did not have a vision of what the class needed to be. She became resentful of advice from the paraprofessionals, and there was constant conflict.

Elissa was working long, impossible hours, and yet she couldn’t meet deadlines. She was always a step behind. I think this can also be partially attributed to her lack of understanding and vision. She spent excessive amounts of time doing the wrong things. We would discuss solutions, but she didn’t follow through on our plans. She would try them for a short time, but she became easily overwhelmed and would revert back to what she was doing previously. Elissa remained in a state of reflection-in-action instead of benefiting from reflection-on-action.

In addition to the extensive time I spent working with Elissa, I arranged for her to observe in other classrooms. Her mentor was another special education teacher who also invested a great deal of time in Elissa. The special education coordinator who was part of Elissa's interview also spent time in Elissa's classroom offering suggestions and help. Additionally, the district's elementary behavior specialist supported Elissa with a few students in her class. The time and energy invested in Elissa and her classroom were extensive, and yet we were not seeing significant progress for an extended length of time. In a word, we were all overwhelmed – especially Elissa.

Early in the spring semester I spoke with Elissa about other opportunities available in special education. I shared my concern that preschool aged children were not the right fit. She became easily frustrated when they did not follow her directions, and she simply could not meet them at their level. I reminded her of the afternoon a four-year-old asked her a questions about bees and she spent 15 minutes discussing intricate details that the students did not understand and were not interested in hearing. She then became aggravated because they did not want to listen to her.

As the semester progressed, Elissa became more cognizant of my concern, and realized that she needed to find another position. She liked our campus and really wanted to stay, but there simply wasn't a place where I thought she would do well. Elissa also found it difficult to connect with other employees outside of her classroom. She wanted to be accepted, but she struggled with knowing how to do this. There was not any animosity; there just simply wasn't a connection. Elissa began looking for other jobs and decided it was best to turn in her resignation on the last day of school despite not having secured another position.

Strained and exhausted, Elissa and I parted ways on amicable terms. I anticipated getting a reference call from a future employer, but I did not. I assured Elissa that I would speak to her strengths if contacted as a reference, but she may have chosen not to provide my contact information or to pursue a job outside of education. I think of Elissa often for several reasons. I wonder where she is and if she is still teaching. I also think about what I could have done differently to help her.

While their personalities were different, there were so many similarities between Elissa and Tim. Both were late hires, with no experience, and placed in difficult classrooms. Tim reacted by barking commands and trying to prove that he was in charge. Elissa reacted by working harder even though the work was misguided. In both instances, I was not prepared to help them the way I had helped other new and struggling teachers. Schön's technical rationality had once again found its way into my school.

Kelsey. The first year at my new school was incredibly busy. Not only was I guiding Melanie, Elissa and another new teacher, Kelsey asked me to supervise her internship as she completed her Master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction. Kelsey was a bright, energetic teacher who was also my first grade team leader. She was an excellent teacher, but there were several others on her team who had been teaching longer than Kelsey, and they were difficult to lead.

Kelsey and I spent a considerable amount of time talking about curriculum and instruction as well as leadership, challenging personalities, and stress management. Her final project during her internship was a valuable reading resource that she created and shared with the staff.

In late July the district decided to hire additional instructional coaches. The new coaches would be hired to work specifically with bilingual and ESL teachers. Kelsey had her ESL certification, and she saw this as an excellent opportunity to put her new Master's degree to work. I offered her my support as she applied for the position. Unfortunately, the new director for these positions got a late start. It was the week before school started when the director approached me and asked about moving Kelsey to the instructional coach position. I was frustrated by the timing as losing Kelsey right before school started was going to put a strain on that grade level. She was the instructional leader holding that team together. I had someone available to take her position, but there was no way she could be replaced. I knew how hard Kelsey had worked for her degree, how much she wanted the job, and how excellent she would be in the new role. I agreed to let her take the position. Her exit created a strain, but the purpose of investing time in Kelsey during her internship was to prepare her for the next position.

Exploring the data: A descriptive look at teacher attrition. As mentioned previously, there are many angles that must be explored to fully understand teacher attrition. Reflecting on my experiences with teachers provided valuable insight that could be enhanced with current research collected from exiting teachers. For the purpose of this study I chose to look at two different surveys that gathered information from teachers leaving their current schools. The first instrument is the 2012 – 2013 Teacher Follow-up Survey collected from approximately 4,400 public school teachers as part of the School and Staffing Survey through the National Center for Education Statistics through the Department of Education. This survey was conducted nationwide, and all of the data reviewed is found in the public domain. The second data set includes exit

interview summaries collected by an area school district between 2011 and 2013. This is archival data previously collected by the school district. Permission to use this data was granted by the school district's superintendent. I chose to study both sets of data to look for similarities and differences and to generalize principal behaviors to that of my own.

2012 – 2013 Teacher Follow-up Survey. All data listed in this section are taken from the National Center for Education Statistics report titled *Teacher Attrition and Mobility*: *Results From the 2012-13 Teacher Follow-up Survey* as written by Goldring, Taie and Riddles in September of 2014.

Nationally, there were 3,377,900 teachers during the 2011 – 2012 school year. The following school year 84% of those teachers remained at the same school while 8% had changed schools (movers) and 8% left the profession altogether (leavers). New teachers with one to three years of experience had a slightly higher attrition rate with 13% moving to another school and 7% leaving the profession. For the purpose of my study, I focused on responses given by the 16% of "movers" and "leavers."

While most movers and leavers did so voluntarily, there were some who were not given an option (9.7% of leavers and 30.3% of movers). Of those who left voluntarily, personal life factors was listed as the primary reason, although it was more significant for leavers (36.5%) than movers (22.7%). A nonspecific category of "other factors" was selected by 15.8% for movers and 20.5% of leavers. Salary and other job benefits were cited more often by leavers (6.8%) than movers (3.5%). Assignment, classroom and school factors were listed as the primary reason for leaving by 27.2% of movers and 8.7% of leavers. Additionally, 13% of leavers listed career factors as the most significant reason for leaving the profession.

Table 1. Teacher Follow-up Survey: Primary factor in the decision to leave a K-12 teaching position in 2012 - 2013

Reason for leaving	Movers	Leavers
Involuntary	30.3%	9.7%
Personal life factors	22.7%	38.4%
Assignment and classroom factors	4.6%	2.4%
School factors	22.6%	6.3%
Career factors	NA	13.0%
Salary and other job benefits	3.5%	6.8%
Student performance factors	0.6%	3.1%
Other factors	15.8%	20.5%

Goldring, Taie & Riddle, 2014

Of those who left the profession in 2012 – 2013, 9.4% said they were currently caring for family members, 38.3% said they were retired, and 29.3% were still working in a K-12 educational setting but not as a classroom teacher.

Of the leavers who were employed the following year, more than half of the respondents stated that numerous conditions were better in their current positions. These conditions included influence over workplace policies and practices; autonomy or control over their own work; professional prestige; manageability of workload; ability to balance personal life and work; general work conditions; and intellectual challenge. Of all the conditions surveyed, only job security was listed as better in education than in the leavers' current positions.

Table 2. Teacher Follow-up Survey: How employed leavers compared teaching to their current positions.

Aspects of current occupation	Better in teaching	Better in current position	Not better or worse
Salary	19.7%	43.5%	36.9%
Benefits	25.7%	9.5%	64.7%
Opportunities for professional advancement or promotion	17.6%	48.9%	33.6%
Opportunities for professional development	21.2%	45.7%	33.1%
Opportunities for learning from colleagues	15.9%	41.7%	42.4%
Social relationships with colleagues	17.8%	32.6%	49.5%
Recognition and support from administrators / managers	12.5%	44.9%	42.6%
Safety of environment	7.6%	19.9%	72.5%
Influence over workplace policies and practices	8.4%	58.5%	33.1%
Autonomy or control over own work	11.7%	57.4%	30.9%
Professional prestige	8.4%	52.2%	39.4%
Procedures for performance evaluation	9.7%	36.3%	54.0%
Manageability of workload	16.2%	51.2%	32.6%
Ability to balance personal life and work	12.9%	60.8%	26.3%
Availability of resources and materials / equipment for doing your job	16.0%	37.4%	46.6%
General work conditions	13.8%	52.8%	33.4%
Job security	25.6%	17.6%	56.9%
Intellectual challenge	10.7%	55.1%	34.2%
Sense of personal accomplishment	11.2%	43.9%	44.9%
Opportunities to make a difference in the lives of others	24.5%	44.1%	31.3%

Goldring, Taie & Riddle, 2014

As a school principal, there are several findings that require my attention if I want to retain teachers at my school. Several of the factors listed in the previous chart are beyond my realm of influence. Many of these elements, however, are clearly within my power to change and implementation would not put a strain on my already tight budget. These discoveries will be discussed further as I explore the Abstract Reconceptualization phase of Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle later in this chapter.

Area school district's Exit Interview summaries. Details for this section will be more specific as I was personally compiling and tabulating the data. The actual data were collected by the district and made available to me at a later date. This district will be referred to as Texas Independent School District or Texas ISD for short.

Survey response rates. The Human Resource Department in Texas ISD collected 87 surveys from certified teachers who left the district between August 2010 and July 2013. According to the Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) report, Texas ISD lost 37 teachers in 2010 – 2011 for a turnover rate of 9% and 54 teachers left the district in 2011 – 2012 for a turnover rate of 13.9%. According to the Texas Academic Performance Report (TAPR), 50 teachers left Texas ISD during the 2012 – 2013 school year. AEIS and TAPR report a total of 141 teachers leaving the district during this three year time period. The 87 surveys that were collected represent 61.7% of all teachers who reportedly left the district. The department made efforts to collect surveys from all teachers, but some teachers did not report to their exit interviews. These teachers were sent a survey via registered mail, but there was no additional follow up if the surveys were not returned.

Summary of survey data. Of the 87 surveys collected, 27 were from 2010 – 2011 (31%), 25 were from 2011 – 2012 (28.7%), and 35 were from 2012 – 2013 (40.2%). Most of these resignations / retirements occurred at the end of the school year (76 teachers for 87.4%), but a few left during the school year (11 teachers for 12.6%). Thirty-three of the leaving teachers (37.9%) taught at the high school level (grades 9-12). Thirteen of the teachers (14.9%) were at the middle school level (grades 6-8). Thirty-six teachers (41.4%) were at the elementary school level (Early Childhood – 5th grade). The remaining 5 teachers (5.7%) taught at multiple levels. These five teachers likely taught at one of the district's two alternative campuses.

The largest number of teachers, 37, had been with Texas ISD for ten or more years. This group represented 42.5% of all surveyed teachers. Eighteen teachers had been with the district five to nine years (20.7%). The second largest group of leavers, at 26, had been with the district one to four years (29.9%). Additionally, there were 6 leavers who had been with the district less than one year (6.9%).

Exiting teachers were given a choice of 12 different options to best describe their reason for leaving Texas ISD. Teachers were allowed to choose as many reasons as applied. Most of the leavers were retiring (34 teachers at 39.1%). The second most common answer was to seek better opportunities (23 teachers at 26.4%). These two reasons alone accounted for 65.5% of all leavers. Other options included health or family circumstances (10 teachers at 11.5%); relocation (9 teachers at 10.3%); dissatisfaction with their supervisor (7 teachers at 8%); career change (6 teachers at 6.9%); working conditions (3 teachers at 3.4%); lack of recognition (2 teachers at 2.3%); better compensation (2 teachers at 2.3%); return to school (2 teachers at 2.3%); and

dissatisfaction with co-workers (1 teacher at 1.1%). Additionally, five teachers (5.7%) listed "other." In all, 84 of the 85 leaving teachers selected 104 different answers. One survey participant did not answer the question. Additional questions on the survey, however, indicate that this teacher was leaving for another district due to the commute.

To gauge whether or not leaving teachers might be exiting the profession, survey participants were asked if they were leaving to go to another district. Sixty teachers (70%) replied "no," while 25 participants (28.7%) replied "yes." Two people (2.3%) did not answer the question. Earlier survey questions indicated that 34 of these teachers were retiring. This leaves a possible 26 teachers (30%) who may have been leaving the profession.

The next question asked teachers why they chose the other school district. Teachers were asked to mark all answers that applied. The majority of those surveyed, 59 teachers at 67.9%, replied with "not applicable." Of the 25 teachers who were leaving for another district, 11 of them listed advancement opportunity (12.6%). Other answers included commute (8 teachers at 9.2%); pay (3 teachers at 3.4%); working conditions (3 teachers at 3.4%); work schedule (1 teacher at 1.1%); and other (4 teachers at 4.6%). An additional option of "benefits" was provided, but none of the survey participants selected this answer.

As I compared teachers' reasons for leaving and the reasons they chose another school district, there are some consistencies. Sixty teachers said they were not leaving for another district, while 59 answered the follow up question as "not applicable." Nine teachers said they were leaving for relocation while eight listed the commute as a reason to change school districts. Two teachers said they were leaving for better compensation

while three teachers listed "pay" as the reason for choosing another district. Three teachers listed working conditions as a reason for leaving and three teachers listed working conditions as a reason for choosing another district.

Survey participants were asked perception questions and asked to respond using a Likert scale. The first question was "How would you rate your supervisor in regard to the following?" Because surveys were only collected for teachers, it can be assumed that all teachers answered with their principal in mind. Likert responses were "excellent," "good," fair," and "needs improvement." Responses are recorded in the following table.

Table 3. How teachers leaving Texas ISD rated their principals.

Principal Behaviors	Excellent & Good	Fair & Needs Improvement
Treated employees fairly and equally	81.6%	18.4%
Provided recognition on the job	75.9%	24.1%
Developed cooperation and teamwork	81.6%	18.4%
Encouraged and listened to suggestions	74.7%	25.3%
Resolved complaints and problems	73.6%	26.4%
Followed policies and procedures	83.9%	16.1%

According to overall teacher perception, principals ranked highest in following policies and procedures, developing cooperation and teamwork and treating employees fairly and equally. They ranked the lowest in resolving complaints and problems, providing recognition on the job, and encouraging and listening to suggestions.

The second set of perception questions asked "How would you rate your experience in the district in regards to the following?" Teachers again used a Likert scale to respond "excellent", "good," "fair," or "needs improvement." Because only teacher

surveys were considered for this research, it can be assumed that supervisors are principals and the questions are answered based on their campus and not a department. Survey response summaries are included in the following table.

Table 4. How teachers leaving Texas ISD rated their experiences in the district.

District Experiences	Excellent & Good	Fair & Needs Improvement
Cooperation within your campus or department	92%	8%
Cooperation between campuses or departments	90%	10%
Communication within your department	95.4%	4.6%
Communication within the district as a whole	90.8%	9.2%
Communication between you and your supervisor	79.3%	20.7%
Morale at your campus or in your department	71.3%	28.7%
Job satisfaction	82.8%	16.1% *
Training and information to do your job	82.8%	16.1% *
Supplies and equipment provided to do your job	86.2%	13.8%
Employee benefits	95.4%	4.6%

*One person did not answer the question.

Overall, teachers had the highest positive perception of employee benefits, cooperation within their campus or department, and communication within their department. Areas teachers thought needed the greatest improvement were campus morale and communication between teachers and principals. Other areas needing improvement, according to exiting teachers, included training, information, supplies and equipment to do their jobs. Overall job satisfaction also ranked lower than some areas.

These perceptions appear to align with the perceptions asked in the previous question. Poor communication with principals, lack of recognition, low morale, and

unsolved complaints and problems appear to be areas of weakness for principals and the district as a whole.

These findings appear to be confirmed when teachers are asked to describe their work load. While most teachers describe the load as "about right" (64 teachers for 73.6%), 22 others described it as too much (21.8%). Four teachers did not answer the question (4.6%). No one listed the work load as too light.

The final two questions of the survey do not address specific concerns, but they do provide insight into teacher's overall perception of Texas ISD. One of the questions asks if the teacher would return to work for Texas ISD. A majority of the survey participants, 62 teachers for a total of 71.3%, answered "yes, without reservation." Twenty-two respondents (25.3%) answered "yes, under different circumstances." Two teachers (2.3%) responded "not at all," and one teacher (1.1%) did not answer the question.

The final question asks teachers if they would recommend the district to others as a place to work. Seventy respondents (80.5%) answered "yes" while 14 (16.1%) answered "yes, with reservations." Two teachers (2.3%) answered "no" while one teacher (1.1%) did not respond to the question.

Comparing the Teacher Follow-up Survey to Texas ISD. The questions between the two survey documents do not align exactly, but several similarities and trends are evident. They two bodies of research tend to complement more than contradict one another. One example would be the number of teachers retiring. National data indicated that 38.3% of leavers were retired while 39.1% of Texas ISD's teachers said they were leaving for retirement. There are also similarities with regards to teachers leaving for

family concerns. National data indicated that 9.4% of leavers were caring for family members one year later. Of the teachers leaving Texas ISD, 11.5% said they were doing so because of health or family circumstances. Salary did not appear to be significant at the national or local level with only 2.3% to 6.8% of exiting teachers at either level listing it as a contributing factor.

There are a couple of other survey responses that complement each other. Nationally, 45% of leavers said they received more recognition from supervisors in their new position and 24% of Texas ISD leavers said their principal did an inadequate or fair job of recognizing employees. The second most common reason for teachers to leave Texas ISD was to seek better opportunities (26.4%). Of the leavers at the national level, 48.9% said their new position offered them more opportunities for professional advancement or promotion. While the percentages don't appear to align, they were all high when compared to other survey items.

Despite the differences, national survey responses seem to generalize well to this specific school district. The local exit interview summaries asked questions directly related to the campus principal whereas national survey data asked about elements that are influenced by the principal. In both situations, it is clear that principals impact teachers' decisions to stay at their current school or seek other employment opportunities both in and out of education.

Case studies of exiting teachers: Anna Dean and Ashley Thomas.

As a principal, it can be challenging to get honest feedback about how my practices personally impact teachers at my school. My district conducts annual electronic surveys in which teachers are asked about my communication, problem solving skills and

other practices that pertain to my position. Teachers have mentioned that they are skeptical of the anonymity of these surveys, so there is a possibility they are not answering truthfully for fear of retaliation. Exiting teachers with secured future employment might be less fearful of being honest, but there is no way to segregate these survey responses. For this reason I have chosen to analyze two previously published case studies with the intention of looking for noted principal behaviors that may be similar to my own. Ashley Thomas and Anna Dean were both teachers in a large school district in the same region where I have worked as a teacher and principal. Both of their stories were researched and retold by Dr. Cheryl Craig (2013a, 2013b, forthcoming).

Anna Dean. Anna taught for six years and worked under four different principals. Her first principal was a stark contrast to the principal who had served her school for many years. Specific actions and traits used to describe this principal included (1) implementation of significant and divisive program changes such as Professional Learning Communities and Reader's and Writer's Workshop; (2) viewed teachers as "replaceable" leaving staff members "walking on egg shells;" (3) stifled collaboration among staff members as teachers did not know who they could trust; and (4) literacy teachers received an excessive number of observations from administrators, a consultant, and other teachers. These observations sometimes lead to harsh, public critiques. In addition to campus and department trials, Anna, a brand new teacher, did not share a conference time with others in her department. This left her to plan in isolation.

Anna's second principal remained on the campus for two and a half years. She recognized the turmoil of the campus and took steps to alleviate the stress. Specific traits and behaviors of this principal included (1) efforts to relieve tension and encourage

collaboration and relationship building; (2) a "restart" of program initiatives; (3) redefinition of a consultant's position from "critic" to "coach;" (4) teachers were valued and supported; and (5) district initiatives were presented in a way that was more palatable.

Anna's third principal stayed for only one year. He was brought in from out of state due to his knowledge of a specific program on Anna's campus. Unfortunately, he lacked knowledge of almost every other aspect of the school. Some behaviors and descriptions of this principal included (1) chauvinistic; (2) absent; (3) a poor money manager; and (4) significant change without consulting anyone.

Anna's fourth principal was responsible for announcing that the status of the campus had changed and the school would now be required to comply with all district initiatives brought in by the new superintendent. With the new principal came five new assistant principals with the one remaining assistant principal having only one year of experience. While the principal had some influence, most of the difficulties appeared to be primarily circumstantial. Ultimately, these concerns were too great, and Anna decided to leave teaching (Craig, 2013a & Craig, 2013b).

Ashley Thomas. Ashley and Anna taught at the same school with a few years overlapping. While Anna's story focused on a new teacher and the role her principals played in her decision to stay or leave teaching, Ashley's story is one of a veteran teacher plagued by poor working conditions and disappointment in the structure of second language learning programs.

Ashley was frustrated at the structure and quality of bilingual education in her district. Among other things, she believed that student placement was based solely on

state assessment scores. Ashley felt valued as an ESL teacher, but her school eliminated this program leaving Ashley to teach foreign language classes. This was also a source of frustration for Ashley as students were more concerned about their grades than mastery of the language.

Ashley also struggled with the condition of her classroom. Not only were there too many students in classes, the classroom itself had structural and safety concerns. The floor had rotted so badly that the legs of students' desks would fall through holes. Asbestos in the insulation was also a problem. The district eventually began work to replace the rotted floor, but this meant Ashley had to teach in 10 different classrooms over a three and half week period.

To further complicate matters, Ashley felt like she was unfairly evaluated by one of the assistant principals. In addition to video recording the lesson and staying less than the required amount of time, the assistant principal took weeks to share the evaluation results with Ashley. The evaluation results were poor, and Ashley was angry. It did not help that the assistant principal stated the poor results probably wouldn't matter to Ashley since she was about to retire. Not all of Ashley's frustrations were directly related to the principal, but the principal certainly had some level of influence over almost every area listed (Craig, forthcoming).

Anna and Ashley's school district. During this same time period, Anna and Ashley's school district published a report outlining exiting teachers' survey results. Much like the personal accounts provided by Anna and Ashley's stories, the surveys were very critical of principals in the school district. The response rate for this survey was very low at approximately 3% of all leavers, but the information provided could still be

valuable to principals. Much of the information provided in this report was similar to that of national reports, while other pieces of information were particularly damning.

Much like the 2012 – 2013 national Teacher Follow-up Survey, the school district's 2009 survey showed similar reasons for leaving with regards to caring for family members (11.3%) and salary (5%). Where the school district differed significantly was with the high rate of dissatisfaction in regards to school working conditions and policies (43.9%) and support from school administration (45.2%). Almost 43% of exiting teachers stated that they were somewhat or extremely dissatisfied with the recognition and support they received from their principals, and 50% said were dissatisfied with the level of influence they had over school policies and practices (Terry, 2009).

With regards to personal efficacy, exiting teacher felt a number of elements had a negative impact: campus leadership (55.5%), campus management plan for behavior (64.1%), and school climate (56.4%). With regard to principal effectiveness, exiting teachers felt principals were only slightly or not at all effective in numerous areas: respecting and valuing teacher input (59%); instructional leadership (54.2%); and involving staff in problem solving (57.8%) (Terry, 2009).

Summary of reflective observation. According to Schön (1983), we begin to understand personal reactions of ourselves and others as we gather research and information about the perceived discrepancies within the concrete experience. It is through this thorough understanding of the problem that we can begin to develop alternate solutions and behaviors. To gain this necessary insight I viewed the problem of teacher attrition through a number of sources and perspectives. I first explored my

personal history as a principal in supporting teachers. These stories are all told from an administrator's perspective without any teacher insight.

Second, I explored national and area school district data to determine why teachers leave and what role their principals may have played in that decision. I chose to explore both national and local data to look for similarities and differences that would make the information more generalizable to principals. Looking at attrition through the eyes of teachers provided another angle for investigation.

Third, I explored two case studies of exiting teachers in a nearby large, urban school district – one of the largest in the U.S. Along with these case studies, I reviewed exit survey information for a small percentage of teachers in this same district. Survey data are valuable as they provide descriptive statistics and definitive numbers, but the lack of open ended responses restricts the researcher from knowing "the rest of the story." By reviewing extensive case study data, additional insight was gained regarding the principal's role in a teacher's decision to leave their current school or the profession entirely.

This extensive review was necessary to eliminate what Schön described as technical rationality (1983). As defined in chapter 3, technical rationality is determining a solution without considering all of the underlying factors that contributed to the problem. Technical rationality can lead school principals to rely only on scientific research studies without taking in to consideration implication for the individuals involved and the social actions in which they are involved within embedded communities.

By exploring teacher retention through the eyes of a school principal and teachers both quantitatively and qualitatively, I am better able to avoid what Argyris and Schön describe as single-loop learning (1978). Once a problem is detected, leaders and researchers who are guilty of single-loop learning immediately look to the next strategy without considering the goals, values, and plans of the organization. The through discovery and framing of a problem is described by Argyris and Schön as double-loop learning and is more likely to lead to long term solutions. Exploring teacher attrition through a number of sources and perspectives has allowed for a more comprehensive understanding which can ultimately lead to more adequate solutions.

Phase 3: Abstract Reconceptualization - Alternate Ways of Thinking and Acting

Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle (1984) begins with an experience or problem that launches an investigation. The second phase provides the research and understanding needed to fully understand the dilemma. Through this phase we begin to understand what happened, why it happened, and why it did not work. This gives us the background knowledge to reconsider former practices and search for new ones that are more likely to give us the desired results. It is in this third phase that I will seek to answer the research questions that have guided this study.

Research question 1: What can I learn from reflecting on district and national reports regarding teacher attrition and implied administrator behaviors? Simply put, principals are falling short when it comes to retaining quality teachers. There will always be factors impacting teacher attrition that are beyond the realm of principal control, but past and present research clearly indicates that typical principal behaviors

must change if we are going to provide the most ideal environment for teachers and students.

The data are clear. Similar areas of concern surfaced in the School and Staffing Teacher Follow-up Survey, the Texas ISD Exit Interview summaries, Ashley and Anna's stories, and in the exit survey information from Ashley and Anna's school district: (1) a lack of recognition and support from principals, (2) teachers' limited influence over policies and practices, and (3) poor general working conditions. As a school principal, I have direct and immediate influence over each of these areas, and a large budget is not required to bring improvement that will impact teachers. Because the research question specifically asks what I can learn from the data, I explored these key areas and reflected on my personal degree of success or failure in each.

Lack of recognition and support. I know this is an area of personal weakness. I think very highly of my staff. They are amazing people who do wonderful things for children every day. Reality, however, is that I very rarely tell them how phenomenal I think they are. I may remember to thank them occasionally, but that is different from genuinely recognizing their actions and efforts. My intentions are honorable, but my follow through is lacking. As I've watched this area of teacher dissatisfaction surface over and over, I have asked myself why I do not do something so obvious on a more frequent basis. It is clearly important to teachers, so why is it not as important to me?

I think the most apparent reason for my failure in this area is a lack of time. Somewhere along the way I decided that I needed excessive amounts of time to put together cute little candy bar slogans or write deep, heartfelt notes to each staff member. While I am sure these things are appreciated, there are so many other less time

consuming ways to show my appreciation. This must become a deliberate focus if I want to be impactful. I have conversations with teachers all day. Some are casual hallway dialogues; others are guided by a written agenda. I should never end a meeting or personal conference without sharing something I appreciate about the people who are listening. One way to ensure this happens is to add words of affirmation to each meeting agenda. Not only would agenda items be an excellent reminder, it would also increase my level of accountability. It is a small action that has the potential for enormous impact.

Another possible reason why I am so inadequate at this task is that my personality does not demand a lot of attention or recognition. Sure, it's nice to be recognized occasionally, but this is not something I necessarily notice if it is not given regularly. There have also been times when I have received recognition only to find it slightly embarrassing. I try to remember to send "shout outs" on our campus Facebook page or with the weekly staff newsletter, but I do not always do a good job. I am more likely to say "thank you" while forgetting to say "good job."

Obviously providing recognition and support to my teachers is critical. Almost 45% of teachers who left the profession and entered another career said that recognition from their supervisor was better at their current position then it was when they were teaching. Only 12.5% of respondents said it was better in teaching. Only half of the teachers exiting Texas ISD said their principal did an excellent job of providing recognition, and almost a quarter of them said their principals were "fair" or "needed improvement" in this area. Teachers exiting Ashley and Anna's district in 2009 said they were "somewhat" or "extremely dissatisfied" with the recognition their principal provided 43% of the time.

Not everyone has the same personality type, and not everyone recognizes the demands of my position and overloaded schedule. All they notice is that I haven't recognized them when they are working so hard. The research does not say that providing recognition to teachers will resolve attrition concerns, but clearly it is an important part of my responsibilities – one that does not go unnoticed when I fail.

In the world of social media, quick electronic communications, and ideas aplenty on Pinterest, I have no valid reason for failing to recognize the many accomplishments of my teachers. It is something that needs to be part of my every day interactions. It will take more than a new resolve, however. I must be deliberate with my time and methods. Even if my new efforts do not retain all of the teachers at my school, it will certainly make a more positive work environment.

Limited influence over policies and practice. Teachers, like most people, do not want to be invisible, disregarded, or voiceless. There is something rewarding about empowerment. Most people choose to become teachers because they want to make a difference in the lives of others. It would stand to reason that they would also want to make a difference in their schools. This message came through clearly on all three of the surveys reviewed in this study. Nationally, almost 59% of leavers said they had more influence over workplace policy and practice in their new positions. More than 25% of teachers leaving Texas ISD said their principals did not encourage or listen to suggestions. Almost 58% of leavers in Ashley and Anna's district said principals were slightly or not at all effective in involving staff in problem solving, and 60% said their principal did not respect of value teacher input.

Including teachers in campus decisions is something I've learned to do over time. My biggest debacle came with my first elementary school principal position. I was hired in late May and was anxious to get to work. I was new to the area, so I didn't know people. That also meant I didn't know who to trust, and people didn't know if they could trust me. As I learned about the school I began to hear similar themes. I was told repeatedly that staff dress code was a problem and that the campus was very teacher-centered and capable of greater student achievement. In my naivety, I started working on solutions before I had even met most of my staff. I was full of ideas, and when presented with a problem, I simply chose what seemed like the most logical solution.

Needless to say, my ideas did not go over well, and it was a difficult year. Imagine my surprise when I begin to experience great resistance! I later learned that unkind things were being said about me in the community before school had even started. This was not my first principal position, but it was the first position where my reputation did not follow me. If I had made such changes as a new principal in my former district, then people would have given me the benefit of the doubt because they knew me. I had not earned enough credibility to make such changes in this new district.

About mid-year one of my team leaders, who had given me a great deal of resistance, said she knew from the first time we met that it was going to be a rough year. It took some time before I realized why. Our first meeting was essentially a discussion of the campus handbook. I had not stopped to consider how different some of these guidelines might be for my new staff, and I certainly had not sought their input. These guidelines were common place in my former district but foreign in my new district. My

intention was not to draw battle lines but to simply correct some of the problems that had been repeatedly mentioned to me.

That year was a difficult but valuable learning experience. I've since learned that empowering teachers is not about my inability to make a decision or solve a problem. Empowerment is about ownership, and ownership leads to excellence. I've also learned that others in my building have great ideas! As a principal, it is my responsibility to provide the platform for them to share those ideas. Make no mistake, everything that happens in my school is my responsibility, but it doesn't have to be my idea.

Poor working conditions. The definitions of working conditions can be as varied as the conditions themselves. For some it may be class size, safety, resources and work load while others may define working conditions as team work, morale, and general support. Despite not having a clear definition, most people recognize when they are in unsatisfactory working conditions. This was especially true of Ashley and Anna as revealed through their case studies. Ashley worked in an unsafe classroom with inadequate programs to meet the needs of her students. Anna experienced discord both within her school and within her department. As early as her job interview, Anna could see that the two teachers interviewing her had conflicting opinions. That meant her answers were likely to offend one or the other. Anna also worked for four different principals in six years. Two of these principals appeared to be focused solely on their own agendas regardless of the fall out. Neither Ashley nor Anna experienced the support and conditions needed to continue in the profession.

Statistical data from the surveys are difficult to quantify as operational definitions were not provided. There is still value, however, in looking at the responses of exiting

teachers when they are asked to rate their general working conditions. Exiting teachers in Ashley and Anna's district stated working conditions and policies as the primary factor in deciding to leave almost 44% of the time. Twenty-nine percent of exiting teachers in Texas ISD describe their campus morale as poor. Nationally the statistics look fairly similar with almost 53% of respondents to the Teacher Follow-up Survey saying that general working conditions were better in their new position then when they were teaching.

A wise mentor once told me that principals build campus morale by doing their jobs well every day. She elaborated to say that cake in the teacher's lounge is nice, but if I am not meeting my obligations as principal, then the cake will not matter. On the other hand, if I am doing my job well, teachers are less likely to notice that I don't provide cake. I can't help but remember her words as I consider whether or not I am providing ideal working conditions for my teachers. Despite the difference in what teachers consider working conditions, they all have a general idea of what is working and what is not. They certainly know whether or not they enjoy coming to work.

I have taken the "actions over cake" advice to heart and passed it along to many other aspiring school administrators. There have been times when I thought I was doing my job, and yet people still seemed disgruntled. In each of those situations, however, I've spent time in reflection and realized that there was at least one area where I was not meeting their expectations. The key to this dilemma is to keep my finger on the pulse of the campus and realizing when I need to step it up.

In summary, my reflections of district and national reports have revealed three key behaviors that are instrumental in my ability to retain teachers: recognition,

empowerment, and personal excellence in my own job performance. If I am meeting the expectations of my position, then I am creating ideal working conditions for teachers. To put it concisely, I must do my own job well so teachers are also able to give their best efforts and feel contentment in the process.

Research question 2: How can I, as a principal, use this reflective knowledge and my personal experiences to create circumstances and practices that encourage teachers to remain in the profession? Much of the insight gained from the first research question is applicable in answering the second research question. Assuming positive intent, teachers do not enter the profession to deliberately inflict harm on children, and principals do not work diligently to earn the role of instructional leader simply to drive the school into the ground. Sometimes, however, the best of intentions are simply not enough. We must be able to recognize what is working well and what is not. We must then consider whether or not our possible solutions are well researched and thought out or if they are simply single-loop fixes that never get to the root of the problem. Reflection is critical if we want to close the divide between our intentions and our reality.

The first phase in Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle (1983), Concrete Experience, occurs when we discover a discrepancy between what we intended and what we accomplished. This motivates us to gather information during the second phase of Reflective Observation followed by developing and discovering new ways of doing things in phase three, Abstract Reconceptualization. Sometimes principals make poor leadership choices or fail to support teachers due to a lack of insight. Sometimes the demands of the job cause principals to resort to reflection-in-action, or thinking on their

feet, and they forget to employ the essential technique of reflection-on-action where they stop to ponder what is working and what needs to change.

When I began this research, I was reminded of behaviors I had previously employed but had let fall away. I also discovered new ideas and methods that would benefit my growth as an instructional leader. Equally beneficial, I recognized that many of my current practices were in direct opposition of my desire to support, develop and retain teachers. During the course of my study, I have felt the need to create a principal checklist of "Dos and Don'ts" for teacher retention. My knowledge is not complete, and my list of ideas is not comprehensive, but I feel compelled to remind myself and other principals of the impact that our choices and behaviors have on the teachers we have committed to lead. Frequent reference to this list will be a practical way to stay focused and ensure my intentions become reality.

Table 5: Principal checklist for teacher retention

Ways to facilitate teacher retention:	Practices to avoid or eliminate:
• Ensure extensive new teacher induction that includes orientation, continued professional development and a quality, trained mentor. • Assign the newest professionals to positions where they will most likely succeed. • Protect teachers from overextending themselves. • Give the gift of time. • Provide all teachers with an opportunity to influence campus policies and procedures. • Recognize, celebrate and reward teachers' actions and accomplishments. • Know your staff. • Keep teachers informed.	• Assigning too many duties to new or struggling teachers. • Giving experienced teachers the easiest teaching assignments. • Allowing a fraction of the staff to do most of the work. • Making decisions without significant faculty input. • Staying in your office. Even worse, keeping your door shut! • Only doing the minimum number of teacher observations. • Providing meaningless feedback or no feedback at all. • Ignoring maintenance requests. • Blaming teachers. • Withholding or not supplying necessary materials.

• Do your job! Take care of discipline, conflict, maintenance, budgets, supplies, and difficult parents. • Roll up your sleeves and get in the trenches. • Practice deep listening.	• Ignoring situations that must be confronted. • Hiring before doing a thorough investigation of each applicant.

Phase 4: Active Experimentation – The Next Steps

The final phase of Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle is Active Experimentation. This is the phase where you test your new found knowledge. Did your ideas work as you expected? Where you short sighted in determining a solution? What worked well and needs to be enhanced? These are the questions that guide you to return to the first phase and begin the learning process anew. The cycle is a represented as a circle meaning there is no true beginning or end. The intent is to continue learning and growing while widening your circle of influence.

The time limitations of this study did not allow for extensive exploration of this fourth phase of the learning cycle. Many of the practices suggested in the third phase will take years to fully evaluate. The time I have spent investigating teacher retention and reflecting on my own practices has already had a significant impact on my behaviors as a principal. I have a much deeper appreciation for my role in teacher retentino. The research clearly indicates that I have responsibilities that cannot be ignored.

As I begin this initial evaluation of the fourth phase of the learning cycle, I would like to return to the six teachers I introduced earlier in this chapter. As mentioned previously, I elected to write about them in chronological order beginning with the teacher I met first. My desire in doing so was to explore possible growth through each experience.

Katherine was my first true investment in a new teacher. I had completed my Master's degree a year earlier, and many of the practices I employed were a direct result of what I learned in my graduate classes. Ideas were fresh and my enthusiasm was intense.

My success with Katherine, however, likely played a significant role in my failure with Tim. In my eagerness to hire for a difficult position, I selected an applicant without all of the information I needed about him or the position. My previous experiences with teachers were enveloped in a spirit of authentic conversations and cooperation. The things I did with Katherine worked so well that I was lost when they did not transfer as effectively to Tim. I expected struggling teachers to ask for help when needed, but I was hesitant to do the same. My decisions did not support Tim's growth, and he became my first retention casualty.

Hannah was an opportunity to pick myself up and begin anew. I was mindful of the timing when I hired Hannah, and I thoroughly explored any possible complications. Hannah had a natural gift for teaching, and any influence I had was minimal. This was fortunate as this was also the year when I made so many other leadership mistakes.

Melanie, much like Katherine, brought out the best of my abilities to develop teachers. Elissa, however, was another story. I once again found myself in the difficult position of hiring a high need teacher at the last minute. It was a combination that did not work well with Tim or Elissa, and she became my second casualty. My next experience was a unique opportunity to mentor Kelsey and help her move into the next level of leadership.

Unfortunately, I was unable to identify a clear pattern of growth as I explored these teacher building opportunities in chronological order. I would experience success with one teacher only to fail miserably with the next. It would be easy to place full blame on the circumstance or the strong personalities of the teachers, but reality is that I was unprepared to help these new teachers develop. Instead, it became necessary to "cut ties" at the end of the year. While I know Tim continued his teaching career until his untimely death from cancer a few years later, I am unsure of what Elissa is doing now. I can only hope that she found her place under the leadership of someone who could help her grow into the successful teacher she desired to become.

Early and honest evaluation in this final stage of the learning cycle was a clear indication that my practices must continue developing. I must look beyond what traditionally works and meet all teachers where they are. Some will be easy, like Hannah, while others will provide significant challenges like Tim and Elissa. At the end of the day, however, hiring, developing, and retaining teachers is my responsibility. I owe it to my students and my teachers. The better I become, the more likely they are to experience success as well.

The principal's checklist of "Dos and Don'ts" for teacher retention will continue to serve as a reflective guide as I seek additional ways to ensure teacher success. I will need to revisit the checklist during the hiring process, while planning professional development, and periodically throughout the year. Ideally, I will add to the list as I explore alternative ways of thinking and discover additional insight or strategies that encourage teacher success and retention.

Chapter V

Conclusion and Recommendations

Hiring, developing, and retaining teachers is a complex process. From screening applicants to determining contract renewals, there is much to be done along the way. Just as there are no "catch all" strategies with students, there is no one full-proof method for teacher retention. As principals, we may discover techniques that work well most of the time, but we must always be prepared for the exceptions.

We cannot become short sighted and simply move to the next plan when we fail. It is critical that we evaluate our purpose, goal, and intent as we seek new strategies and means of support (Argyris & Schön, 1978). It is also imperative that we not leave the responsibility for new teacher induction entirely up to others. While there will be many who can support a new teacher along her path to success, it is the principal's responsibility to ensure that each new professional is getting what she needs. Unfortunately, too many principals fall short when it comes to new teacher induction. They offer guidance at the beginning of the school year, but they do not follow through as the year progresses (Carver, 2003; Menchaca, 2003; Glazer, Isenberg, Dolfin, et al, 2010).

Prior research and current exit survey information provide guidance, but principals must never stop the learning cycle. We cannot become complacent or assume that we have all of the answers. It is our responsibility to create the most ideal circumstances, monitor those circumstances, and adjust along the way. The day we stop seeking better strategies and solutions is the day we should surrender our leadership roles on our campuses.

Limitations of the Texas ISD Exit Interview Summaries

The results of the Texas ISD data set may prove beneficial to that district as well as others, but there are a number of limitations. First, the teacher surveys that were collected are a convenience sample and only include those who were willing to participate.

Secondly, the teacher interviews were conducted face to face and were not anonymous. This could have led exiting teachers to withhold their complete and accurate thoughts. While the teachers had already submitted their resignations at the time, there is the possibility that they altered their answers during the interview with personnel in the district's human resources office.

Because these interviews were conducted verbally and recorded on a summary sheet, there is always the possibility that the interviewer's interpretation may have altered the participants intended response. There is also the opportunity for answers to be recorded incorrectly.

Finally, this study is restricted to one medium sized district in Texas. While the results may provide insight for this one specific district, results may not generalize well to other districts. The survey instruments and the research design, however, could be easily replicated by any school district in the nation.

Limitations of the Teacher Follow-up Survey

The Teacher Follow-up Survey conducted as part of the School and Staffing Survey through the National Center for Education Statistics is a national sample of teachers who were considered movers or leavers during the 2012 – 2013 school year. The results are estimates based on these samples and may vary slightly from results that

would be obtained if all exiting teachers had been surveyed. Like all surveys, the Teacher Follow-up Survey is subject to sampling and non-sampling errors that can be contributed to inaccurate recall or a participant's unwillingness to be forthcoming. There is also the possibility that questions were interpreted differently from one respondent to the next. While quality control measures were taken throughout the survey's development, collection process and data coding, there is always the potential for error (Goldring, Taie & Riddle, 2014).

Limitations of the Exit Survey from Ashley and Anna's District

The teacher exit study conducted by Ashley and Anna's school district in 2009 is subject to the same errors mentioned in the previous two research studies. Conducted electronically, it involved a convenience sample of exiting teachers who were willing to participate. Unfortunately, it had an incredibly low response rate. The results are based on 104 surveys. According to the 2008 – 2009 Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) report, this district employed 11,994 teachers that year. The district reported a teacher turnover rate of 12.9% meaning that approximately 1,547 teachers left the district that year. A sample of 104 surveys only represents 6.7% of the teachers who left the district that year (Terry, 2009). It is possible that the teachers who chose to participate in the survey had something specific they wanted to say. As a result, this data may not be a true reflection of the majority of teachers leaving the district that year. Exploring measures that would increase the response rate for this particular district could provide even more enlightening results which could ultimately lead to greater change.

Despite these limitations, consistent and valuable data was gained from each of these surveys. The data provide useful information to initiate and guide administrator conversations and reflections as they seek to improve their capacity to support teachers.

Potential for Future Impact

This study has merely touched on areas of teacher development such as pre-service training, induction and mentoring. It has not at all addressed principal training programs or other ways to develop principals so they are best prepared to support teachers. Almost all principal education programs discuss areas such as law, finance, and policy. There are opportunities for aspiring principals to learn about special programs, leadership theory, building morale and facilitating change. I have completed more than 100 hours of graduate credit, but not once do I remember a sincere discussion about teacher retention, the high cost of attrition, and what is required of me as a principal. The information I have gained through this study is too valuable to simply tuck away. It must be shared with other school leaders if it is going to truly impact teacher retention.

Educating current and future principals regarding the costs of teacher attrition and possible ways to retrain teachers must begin with awareness. Most principals have not taken the time to calculate the costs of teacher attrition. While some districts may seek to estimate monetary expenses, measuring losses in student learning and damaged organizational health are nearly impossible. Once principals have an awareness of the costliness of teacher attrition, they must then explore principal behaviors that lead teachers to seek other employment opportunities. Assuming positive intent, most principals would be willing to consider the items on the principal checklist provided in chapter 4 if they knew how profound the results could be. Once principals have the

necessary awareness, case studies of teacher attrition, like those of Ashley and Anna, could open the door for conversations that could lead to improved principal behaviors.

I have had a few opportunities to share my new found knowledge with other school leaders. The data from Texas ISD opened the door for conversations with school administrators in that district. The principal checklist for teacher retention will be a valuable guide for these principals who are seeking to improve their retention record. In addition to Texas ISD, I have spoken with another district who is considering a similar exit interview process with the hope of gathering attrition data and applying the information learned in this study. I have also presented my findings at a state principal conference and hope to do so again in the future. Other opportunities I would like to explore include presentations for principals in various school districts as well as a chance to share in principal preparation programs.

Recommendations for Further Research

The profession as a whole could benefit from a study of principal training programs and how these programs guide principals to support teachers. As educational leaders, we have debated the merits and flaws of teacher preparation and alternative certification programs. We have asked teachers why they leave our schools and the profession. We have researched and learned that teachers are the most influential factor in determining the success or failure of a child. And yet we have stopped short of realizing that principals are possibly the most influential factor in determining the success of a teacher. If we are serious about retaining the best and the brightest teachers in our classrooms, then we must be serious about training principals to support these teachers

(Carver, 2003). Additional research is needed to determine where our principal preparation programs are lacking and what can be done to remedy the situation.

Replicating studies, such as those conducted through the School and Staffing Teacher Follow-up Survey and Texas ISD, would add to the validity of the data reported in this study. Exploring attrition data in school districts of various sizes and in different locations would also add depth. Finally, comparing data of a district with an intentional focus on teacher retention to one without such a program may provide valuable information.

In conclusion, it is time for school leaders to seek solutions to the teacher retention problem. This will begin when principals recognize the dilemma, gather information specific to their own practices, explore alternate ways of thinking, and put their new found strategies to work.

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