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by

Abelardo Lozano Jr.

December 2014

# WHY TEACHERS CHOOSE TO STAY IN AT-RISK MIDDLE SCHOOL CAMPUSES

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

In Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education  
in Professional Leadership

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December 2014

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to discover why teachers choose to remain in at-risk middle school campuses in the Annabella-Christina Independent School District (a pseudonym district). Working at a middle school serving at-risk students brings not only the stressors of at-risk campuses but also the added stress of dealing with teenagers in some of their most difficult years. Studies have found that almost 50 percent of middle school teachers leave the middle school grades or leave education altogether within five years of starting their position (Colbert & Wolf, 1992; Darling-Hammond, 2003). Grissom (2011) stated that studies show at-risk campus teachers tend to get burned out more quickly because of the working conditions. The study takes place in a large suburban school district in the greater Houston area. The participants of the study were divided into two groups. Group one was made of five at-risk middle school principals. Group two, included 68 at-risk middle school teachers with at least two years experience on their current campus. The goal of the study was to expand the body of knowledge to help principals understand why teachers choose to remain in at-risk middle school campuses and what their campuses can do to help influence their teachers to return. The study was divided into three phases. The first phase of the study was to create a survey through an online survey gathering website. Phase two of the study was to have participants of the study complete the survey. Phase three of the study was to analyze the data and find themes that teacher's state as reasons they choose to stay in at-risk campuses and compare those responses to what their principals stated they believed were the factors that caused teachers to stay. The researcher found teachers who participated

in the survey stated eleven reasons for returning. The researcher found that principals stated three reasons that they perceived teachers stayed. The researcher found the number one reason stated by participating teachers for returning was 'for their students'. The researcher also found that a majority of the principals that participated in the study believed the reason teachers returned to the same at-risk campus was the campus culture.



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## **Chapter I**

### **Introduction**

#### **Introduction**

One of the most important responsibilities a superintendent or a principal has is finding ways to keep teachers on their campuses. Every year many teachers leave for other campuses or even leave the profession. Some teacher turnover can always be expected; teachers could leave for family reasons, retiring, or simply because teachers are relocating. According to Shakrani (2008) approximately 1,000 teachers leave the field of education every day across America. Lopez (2010) stated many teachers leave because of little support from administration, lack of student discipline, little student motivation, and even poor salaries. Carroll, Reichardt and Guarino (2000) found that some teachers exit teaching due to large class sizes, safety of campus facilities, and amount of teacher autonomy on a campus. Doherty (2001) stated that many teachers felt that standardized testing had taken away teacher creativity therefore pushing many teachers away from the classroom. Losing staff becomes particularly difficult when the principal has to replace effective teachers. The issue of teacher turnover has become one of the most important topics in education because of the large number of teachers who leave the profession every year. "Turnover, migrating to another school or leaving the teaching profession, is greater among teachers than other professions" (Hughes, 2012, p. 245). Having a strong teacher retention program can help principals alleviate the stress of having to hire new employees and enables the principals to focus on building up a strong and talented teaching staff.

Teacher turnover is even more of a concern to principals who are leaders in at-risk campuses. Many of the at-risk campuses deal with extra stressors that push away teachers who find it difficult to accomplish their goals for their students with the added factors of at-risk campuses. According to the American Federation of Teachers (2007), joblessness, poverty, gang violence, and drug abuse impact the daily lives of at-risk students. These extra stressors play a major role in teachers not wanting to return to the campus. According to Berry's (2008) research, teachers who are more experienced and better trained are more likely to teach in schools that have low-poverty and service academically advantaged students. With these added stressors, principals must create school culture and climates that not only get teachers to stay in the profession, but also keep their best teachers from taking their talents to other campuses or school districts. Maintaining a low teacher turnover rate on at-risk campuses can help create consistency in staff, which helps at-risk students become successful.

One type of campus that educational leaders have found it difficult to maintain high teacher retention rates is the middle school campus. "Among middle school teachers who entered a school during the past decade, 55 percent left that school within three years" (Marinell and Coca, 2013, P.7). Teaching middle school age children can be very difficult and many attribute the unique difficulties to the changes students experience during their adolescent years. Middle school age children bring a dynamic to the classroom that is not often seen in elementary or high school classes. In a middle school classroom, teachers can expect for a student's behaviors to change during any given period. Another difficulty that teachers find in middle school campuses is the ability to motivate middle school students. Eccles and Midgley (1989) found a decline in

motivation and performance for many children as they moved from elementary to middle school. Elementary teachers have the pleasure of seeing students with excitement to learn. Additionally, elementary children usually view teachers as important figures in their lives. High school teachers have the unique experience of being able to witness the finished product when students graduate. Middle school teachers see very different behaviors and rarely see the ultimate outcome of a graduating student. Middle school teachers deal with students during their early teenage years and pass on their hard work to the next school. Retaining quality teachers at the middle school level can be difficult, but the campus culture and environment created by school leadership can help alleviate the holes left by departing teachers and help build a strong core of effective teachers.

Working at at-risk or middle school campuses seem to be two of the most difficult places to work as an educator. The situation becomes even more difficult when an educator combines the challenges of working at a middle school and in an at-risk campus. The goal of the study will be to find what has kept teachers who work in at-risk middle school campuses in the Annabella-Christiana Independent School District (ACISD) (a pseudonym district) returning to their campuses yearly.

### **Statement of the Problem**

On a yearly basis, principals of at-risk middle schools have seen their teachers leave their campuses for other schools or other professions. Some of these teachers can be the campuses' most effective teachers. These teachers are the same teachers who put in the extra effort to motivate and inspire their students to strive for success. A campus administration's effort to train and build-up teachers' to be effective takes time and resources, these efforts have no positive long-term impact on the campus when teachers

choose to leave. When a teacher leaves, the campus must restart the process and take time and use financial resources to build a teacher into someone who can have a positive impact on students. While in the process of building up new teachers to be effective educators, the school's climate, community, and student achievement can suffer as the new teacher learns how to become effective in the classroom. Teacher retention allows campuses to build consistency in their staff, and to reallocate resources from training new teachers to developing existing teachers.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to identify why teachers teaching in at-risk middle school campuses in the ACISD have chosen to remain teaching at their campus yearly. The study took place in the Annabella-Christiana Independent School District, which is a large suburban school district with over 109,000 students. The school district has 11 high schools, 18 middle schools, 52 elementary schools, and four special population campuses. The district is 16.3 percent African-American, 43.3 percent Hispanic, 29.2 percent White, .5 percent Native American, and .07 percent Pacific Islander. 2.2 percent of the students are of two or more races, and 49.7 percent of the students are economically disadvantaged. The data obtained from the study added to the existing research by explaining to educational leaders what resources keep teachers in at-risk campuses and what principals can do that can influence teachers to stay at their at-risk middle school campus.

The study is a qualitative study. The participants included principals of five at-risk middle campuses and 68 teachers from five at-risk middle school campuses. All of the campuses have similar campus demographics. The study began by having the

principals of at-risk middle school campuses complete a survey on teacher retention on their campus. The survey was used to analyze what perceptions the principals have of why their teachers have chosen to remain on their campus. The second group was made up of teachers who have two or more years teaching at one of the five at-risk middle schools being used in the study. The second group completed a survey that asks what indicators have influenced the teachers to remain on their campus on a yearly basis. The surveys were then used to compare similarities and differences between the principals' perceptions and teachers' responses. The principals were chosen as a result of their campus being selected to be part of the study. The use of an online survey was used in order to give participants the flexibility of participating in the study with as little time commitment as possible.

### **Significance of the Study**

The importance of the study was to find why teachers have remained teaching in at-risk middle school campuses in ACISD. The study will assist the campus and district administrators of the campuses involved in the study by informing the campus principals of what policy changes can be made on their campuses in order to keep their teachers coming back on a yearly basis based on teacher responses, and add to the literature on teacher retention. Working in an at-risk middle school brings not only the stressors of at-risk campuses but also the added stress of dealing with teenagers trying to figure out who they are in life. During these adolescent years, teachers find themselves not only being a teacher but also playing the role of parent, coach, counselor, tutor, and emotional advisor. Being able to find teachers who not only give effective classroom instruction but who also are willing to return year after year is central to building a strong staff on a middle



school campus. Principals will be able to use this study to find common characteristics of why teachers have chosen to return to their campus on a yearly basis. The principals will then be able to evaluate their teacher retention programs at their campuses and determine what other things can be done in order to increase retention of teachers at their campus.

### **Research Questions**

1. What indicators do teachers report that influence them to return annually to the same at-risk middle school campus in the Annabella-Christiana Independent School District?
2. What do principals in at-risk middle school campuses in the Annabella-Christiana Independent School District perceive as indicators that increase retention of their teachers?
3. How are the principals' perceptions of why teachers choose to stay similar to and different to what teachers report as to why they choose to stay at the same at-risk middle school campus?

### **Theoretical Framework**

The study was based off of simple market theory. Grissom (2011) stated that the simple labor market theory predicts that teachers who dislike their work environment leave to look for more attractive work environments. Studies in teacher retention have found that some of the driving factors influencing teachers to remain at their campuses was having a good work environment where teachers feel safe and feel they can use their creative ability to teach their students. Secondly, a strong administration that supports teachers, helps maintain a strong sense of academic excellence, and provides opportunities for meaningful professional development.

## **Assumptions, Limitations and Delimitations**

The assumptions in the study were that teachers who are volunteering their participation would answer the questions truthfully and base their answers on their own personal experiences. Another assumption is that the principals of the campuses who are part of the study will be honest when they discuss what they believe keep teachers returning to their campus. A limitation of the study is that the entire study was conducted online and through e-mail another limitation is that participants could include teachers who want to leave the campus but have that been given the opportunity to leave yet. Delimitation on the study was that only 68 teachers participated in the study and participants only represent five campuses in one school district.

## **Definition of Terms**

*Teacher turnover.* The departure of teachers from their teaching jobs (Ingersoll, 2001, p. 500)

*Teacher Retention Programs.* Programs that are implemented on school campuses that target the return of teachers on a yearly basis.

*Teacher Attrition.* Leaving the occupation voluntarily or involuntarily (Brown & Wynn, 2007, p. 666)

*At-Risk Campus.* For the purpose of this study an at-risk campus is a campus that serves a high percent of low-income and minority students. In the literature review at-risk campuses discussed also include campuses that are not academically successful.

*Leavers.* Are teachers who leave the profession of education.

*Movers.* Are teachers who transfer from one campus or school district to another campus or school district.

*Stayers.* Are teachers who choose to return to their campus from the previous year.

## **Chapter II**

### **Literature Review**

#### **Introduction**

Maintaining high teacher retention is an essential part of a strong campus. Keeping a consistent staff not only helps build culture on a campus, but it also helps build up student achievement and assists campuses and districts in saving money by cutting new teacher training expenses. Education has become one of the leading job creators in the entire country. According to Ingersoll (2003), teaching makes up four percent of the civilian workforce. There is two times more kindergarten through 12th grade teachers as nurses and five times as many teachers as lawyers. Being able to hire new employees is great for any company, or in the case of education, great for any school district. Unfortunately in education, too many new employees, especially teachers, are exiting the field as quickly as they enter. Education ranks high in employee turnover compared to many other fields of employment. “Data suggest that after just five years, between 40 and 50 percent of all beginning teachers leave teaching altogether” (Ingersoll, 2003, p. 148). According to Lynch (2012), of the teachers who choose to leave, only 16 percent leave due to retirement. The rest either become movers and move to other campuses or become leavers and exit education altogether.

There has been a lot of literature written on the teacher retention. The literature often targets the attention of educators in leadership positions to inform them of the reasons teachers leave, the reason teachers stay or the impact teacher retention has on the campus and its students.

## **History of Teacher Retention**

Teacher retention first got the attention of American school leaders in the 1920s and 1930s when school leaders estimated that one fourth to half of all teachers were new to the position every year (Almack, 1920). The next major interest in teacher retention was in the 1980s. According to Lopez (2010), most of the research prior to the mid 1980s focused on whether there was an actual problem in teacher shortage, but little research had been done on what was pushing teachers out of the profession, what was keeping teachers in education and or the impact of low teacher retention in school campuses.

In recent history, the lack of ability to retain teachers started in the 1970s. The decade of the 1970s presented opportunities in other professions that previously had never been open to certain segments of the population. “The nation lost its once captive labor market for teaching, which had long been maintained by lack of employment opportunities for women and minorities” (Darling-Hammond, 1997, p.28). Once other job opportunities were presented to women and minorities, the field of education no longer had the same amount of people interested in choosing it as a career path. By the 1980s many veteran teachers were retiring and with the lack of teacher candidates, teacher retention became an issue as school leaders scrambled to keep their schools fully staffed (Brooks-Young, 2007). Along with the lack of teacher candidates, the quality of the teachers entering education decreased. The lack of qualified candidates had dramatically increased the retention problem because many of these unqualified teachers were leaving education, adding to the lack of staffing in campuses across America. “By 1983, entrants to teaching were among the least academically well-prepared college

students. Furthermore, the most able among them defected from teaching sooner and in greater numbers” (Darling-Hammond, 1997, p.28).

In the 1980s the National Center for Educational Statistics created two separate surveys. The first survey was the Schools and Staffing Survey, and the second survey was the Teacher Follow-Up Survey. The Schools and Staffing Survey was implemented to understand the staffing needs and occupational concerns in education. The Teacher-Follow-Up Survey targeted teachers who were leaving the profession. The purpose was to gather as much research as possible to understand why teachers were leaving. According to Ingersoll (2001), the Teacher Follow-Up Survey serves as the largest source of information on teacher turnover in the United States.

During the 1990s teacher retention continued to be a problem in the field of education. “Since the early 1990s, the annual number of exits from teaching has surpassed the number of entrants by an increasing amount, putting pressure on the nation’s hiring system” (Darling-Hammond, 2003, p.7). The Teacher Follow-Up Survey found that in 1991-1992 the teacher turnover rate in the US was 13.2, in 1994-1995 the rate increased to 14.3, and in 2000-2001 the teacher turnover rate increased to 15.7 (Ingersoll, 2003).

### **Reasons Teachers Leave Education**

The simple labor market theory suggests that employees who become dissatisfied with their current workplace make a relatively easy choice to leave (Grissom, 2011). Many factors attribute to pushing teachers out of the field of education. The Teacher Follow-Up questionnaire required teachers to give at least three reasons for their departure (Ingersoll, 1999). 93 percent felt the largest factor for leaving education was

poor salary; 68 percent left because of inadequate administrative support; and 48 percent left because of student discipline. In a similar study that was conducted in Fairfax County Public Schools found that the three leading factors for teacher turnover were lack of support from the campus administration, poor student discipline/motivation and poor salaries (Lopez, 2010). Carroll, Reichardt and Guarino (2000), found that working conditions have been an area of concern for teachers who have chosen to leave the field of education. Areas that have impacted the working conditions of teachers include administrative support, student discipline/motivation, class-size, the safety of the facilities, the area in which the school is located, and the amount of teacher influence in the decision making process.

Teacher salary is one of the factors that come up most when discussing issues related to teacher turnover. Baugh and Stone (1982) found that teachers are no different in responding to wages as other occupations in the United States. Studies have found that teachers who work in districts with lower wages are more likely to leave when compared to the districts with higher salaries (Brewer, 1996; Stinebrickner, 1998). Even though teachers tend to be more altruistically motivated and tend to put students first, the field of education is still competing with other occupations to try to attract talented individuals (Darling-Hammond, 2003). Adamson and Darling-Hammond (2011) found that people who are considering a career in education look at wages when determining whether or not to enter the field of education. Adamson and Darling-Hammond (2011) found that an 11 percent increase in weekly teacher salary would increase the willingness of college graduates to enter the field of education by 26 percent. Darling-Hammond (2003) stated that teacher salaries are about 20 percent lower than salaries of careers with equal

education and training. According to the Bureau of Labor Statics, the median salary for a middle school teacher in the US in 2013 was \$51,960. The median salary for a registered nurse in 2013 was \$64,690, and a dental hygienist's median salary in 2013 was \$68,250. According to a study completed by Taylor and Fowler (2005), teacher salaries are 8.3 percent below average starting salaries for all college graduates. The study also found that when teacher salaries were compared to similar occupations the teacher salary was 5.1 percent lower.

Teacher workload in relation to teacher salary has also impacted the rate of teacher turnover in school districts around the nation. Hughes (2012) stated that teacher workloads have increased, but teacher salaries have remained the same. Murnane and Olsen (1990) stated that teachers who work in more high demanding subjects like math and science are more responsive to differences in salary and think about their salary when making a decision about whether to remain or leave education. Hanushek, Kain and Rivkin (1999) used Texas teacher and student data and found that if a school district were to increase teacher salary by 10 percent, the chances of a teacher with zero to two years experience of leaving would be reduced by two percentage points. The study also found that a 10 percent increase in teachers' salaries would reduce the chances of teachers with three to five years of experience from leaving by one percent.

Other factors that influence teachers' decision to leave or stay included the working conditions of the campus. Many different topics make up the working conditions of a school; everything from stakeholders to the actual building can play a part in the perception of the working conditions. One significant indicator found by Ingersoll (1999) impacting the decision of teachers on whether to leave or stay at a campus was the lack of



support from school administration. Boyd et. al (2010) stated that administrative support refers to what school administration, including the principal and other school leaders, do in order to help the teacher improve in their classroom, the administrators' role in building a sense of community, establishing school procedures/rules, making sure teachers have adequate resources, and advocating for all stakeholders in the school community. According to Hirsch and Emerick (2007), teachers can view administrative support many different ways including assisting in developing professional development opportunities, and managing how the campus will implement district level mandates. In North Carolina, teachers who responded in a survey on teacher retention stated that the perception of the administrative support was the biggest factor for teachers when determining whether or not to return (Ladd, 2009). Johnson (2006) also found that the support a school administration has on a campus can influence the amount of involvement that teachers have and the safety that is felt in the school.

School safety is another part of working conditions that impact the decision of teachers to stay at a school. According to Boyd et al. (2010) school safety affects the physical and psychological make up of the campus. The safety of the school can be influenced by poor discipline in the classroom as well as violence in the neighborhood. According to a study conducted by Allensworth, Ponisciak and Mazzeo (2009), teachers in Chicago were more likely to remain at their campus if it were located in a more affluent area with a lower crime rate. The study found that schools with low crime rates had a retention rate of 87 percent. Schools with higher crime rates had a 76 percent retention rate; 11 percentage points lower. According to Duke (2002), schools that have fewer safety concerns can focus more on issues that involve instruction and academic

achievement. Teachers need to feel safe in order to do their job successfully. Ultimately the research shows that schools that fail to create a safe environment on their campus have a higher rate of teacher turnover than other campuses with a safe environment (Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, Ronfeldt & Wyckoff, 2010).

Student discipline is another factor that contributes to a teacher's perception of working conditions. According to (Brill and McCartney, 2008; Ingersoll, 2001) student discipline is one of the most cited reasons for teachers leaving the field of education. One of the major reasons that student discipline plays such an important role in teachers' professional lives is without proper classroom management, teachers can start to question their career choices, and can ultimately leave education (Swars, Meyers, Mays and Lack, 2009; Hughes, 2012). According to Haberman and Rickards (1990), data from a teacher survey in Milwaukee showed that the main concerns for teachers at the beginning of their careers was the same as at the end of their careers. The survey ranked student discipline as one of the highest reasons for teachers leaving education. Research by Boyd et al. (2010) has shown that student discipline has constantly been a factor that is tied to teacher satisfaction and the willingness for teachers to return to their campus. Ingersoll (2003) research stated that campuses that experience high number of student misbehavior also suffer from high teacher turnover. Ingersoll (2003) found that campuses where teacher have input in the decision-making process regarding student discipline tend to have lower turnover rates than campuses in which leave decision making to administration alone.

The building and its resources for teachers also play a role in whether a teacher chooses to leave or stay on the campus (Borman and Dowling, 2008; Brill and

McCartney 2008). Loeb et al. (2005) completed a study in California where surveys were reviewed to determine what things teachers believed played a role in choosing to return to a school. While student demographics and teacher salaries were common concerns for teachers in determining their decision to return to the campus, the building and teaching resources, such as textbooks, and technology were major predictors of campus retention of its teachers. According to Johnson (2006), how buildings are maintained sends a message to teachers. Campuses that are well supplied, maintained, and are designed to create the best learning environment shows that education is important to the community. Campuses where the building is deteriorating, classes are crowded, and resources are limited, send a message to teachers that education is not important in the community, which then can push teachers out of education. Schneider (2003) completed a study on why teachers leave in both Washington and Chicago. The study asked teachers to grade different aspects of their schools. An A would mean that the campus does a good job while an F means that the campus fails in the category. The study found that 40 percent of the teachers who gave their campus a C or lower in facilities led them to change campuses, and 30 percent were thinking of leaving education altogether. Buckley, Schneider and Shang (2005) found similar results in teacher surveys in Washington D.C. where data showed that teachers who believed that their schools had sufficient resources and had well supported buildings did a better job in the classroom and ultimately choose to return to the campus.

A teacher's teaching assignment can also influence the decision leave the campus or return. Many teachers have to deal with large class sizes, teaching subjects they are unfamiliar, and teaching multiple subjects in the same day. These factors can push

teachers to leave their positions. According to National Education Association (2003) in the 2000-01 school year 19 percent of teachers taught subjects in which they knew little about. According to Johnson (2006), studies found that about 12 percent of teachers in K-6 lacked a degree in either pre-elementary, early childhood, or even elementary school. In secondary education about one-third of math teachers, one-fourth of English teachers, and one-fifth of science and social studies teachers lacked a degree in their subject or a degree in a related subject. Some teachers struggled with their teaching assignments because of teaching split subjects throughout their day. According to Johnson and Birkeland (2003), a study of why teachers leave and stay at their campuses in the state of Massachusetts found one teacher's frustration with a split teaching assignment. The teacher felt the biggest reason for exiting the campus was due to teaching two English courses and two history courses. The teacher felt that because of not having any background in the subject of history the teacher lost satisfaction in the teaching assignment.

Another important element that impacts teachers' satisfaction in their work is the class size. According to a survey of new teachers cited by Johnson (2006), classroom size was a major source of teacher dissatisfaction. Studies have found that the larger the classroom size, the more it negatively affects student achievement. In a study conducted to inform California policy makers (Johnson, 1990) many secondary teachers felt less satisfaction in their work because of the difficulty teachers had managing large classrooms and the lack of success that came because of the large student numbers. Johnson (2006) stated that research by the Public Education Network showed many teachers feel that with smaller number of students in classrooms, teachers can focus their

attention on individual students, make more parent contacts, and build better relationships when compared to teachers with larger class sizes.

Accountability based on standardized testing is another factor that has created a negative impact on the working conditions of schools. Many teachers have become dissatisfied with being forced to spend time preparing students for a test rather than teaching lessons which impact students' academic careers. According to Doherty (2001), teacher surveys found 67 percent of teachers feel their lessons have too much focus on state tests. The survey also found 66 percent of teachers felt that other areas of their content were barely being taught or were skipped altogether in order to focus more on what information included in state testing. A teacher survey in the state of Delaware found that standardized testing made classroom instruction less individualized and more blended between test preparation and understanding of the content (Banicky and Noble, 2001). Teacher frustration on not being able to do what they believe is needed for their students in preparing them and having lessons pushed upon them also creates teacher dissatisfaction among teachers, Diamond and Spillane (2004) stated that schools have emphasized teachers cover test-taking strategies instead of using instruction for deeper understanding of the content. Other studies found that teacher dissatisfaction because of the focus on test preparation created teacher dissatisfaction, Johnson (2006) found in her research that 43 percent of new mathematics teachers, and 40 percent of new language arts teachers who work in at-risk campuses are required to spend instructional time on teaching test preparation. Banicky and Noble (2001) also found that teacher and campus involvement in the decision making process has become almost none existent when it

comes to decisions about standardized testing, and this issue has created much dissatisfaction among teachers.

### **Teacher Retention in Middle School Campuses**

Every campus has to worry about teacher turnover, but there are particular campuses that have to worry about retention more than others. Middle school campuses and at-risk campuses have traditionally been two types of schools that constantly struggle to retain teachers. Studies have found that almost 50 percent of middle school teachers leave the middle school grades or leave education altogether within five years of starting their position (Colbert & Wolf, 1992; Darling-Hammond, 2003). According to Jackson and Davis (2000), a middle school is defined as a school consisting of grade levels five through eight. Thornton (2004) stated that middle school campuses experience more shortages in teachers than any other certification level. Jackson and Davis (2000) stated that middle school education is one of the most important times in an early adolescence. At this stage, students' have a greater capacity for complex thinking than at any time in their lives. Yet, middle school students' lack the life experience that makes them vulnerable, and students are often caught up daily with taking new risks which impacts not only their academics but also their lives.

Middle school campuses have had a difficult time in the last decade being able to retain teachers. According to Neild, Useem and Farley (2005), many of the teachers who have left the middle school setting felt that teaching at a middle school was just a stepping-stone to better jobs in education, such as positions in elementary or high school. Marinell and Coca (2013) stated that since 2003 more than half of the teachers who entered the middle school level of education left within three years. 27 percent left their

campus within one year, 55 percent of the teachers left within three years, and 66 percent left within five years. According to a study on teacher retention in New York City middle schools, Marinell and Coca (2013), stated that between 2002 and 2009, 59 percent of New York City middle school teachers left education. Forty-one percent transferred within the school system and only 12 percent transferred into another sixth through eighth grade middle school. The study also found that the top three reasons for leaving were consistent with prior research stated earlier in the literature review. Seventy-five percent of the teachers stated that they left their campus because of lack of student discipline or student motivation. Eccles, Midgley and Adler (1984) found that one of the biggest challenges a middle school teacher faces is teaching a student going through many social, physical, and emotional changes. Eccles and Midgley (1989) stated that there is a large amount of research that shows a decline in student motivation for children moving from elementary school into middle school. Jackson and Davis (2000) stated that the students' behavior in middle school might be attributed to physiological and psychological changes that happen during puberty which accrue during the middle school years. Marinell and Coca (2013) also found that 66 percent of New York City middle school teachers left because of lack of support from administrators. Boyd et al. (2010) stated that administrative support is often measured by the ability of administrators to influence in such a way that teachers feel they are given the opportunity to be successful. Marinell and Coca (2013) also found that 56 percent left their campus because of lack of influence over school policies. Boyd et al. (2007) found teachers tend to stay on campuses where they have say in school wide decisions such as scheduling, what materials students will need, and what type of school wide staff development is offered.

## **Teacher Retention in At-Risk Campuses**

At-risk campuses also struggle to retain teachers. At-risk campuses are described as campuses that serve high levels of students who live in poverty, campuses which have a high number of minority students, and campuses with low student achievement (Rowland and Coble, 2005). According to Johnson (2006), studies have shown that schools in low-income communities have more teacher turnover in their schools than in communities of middle to high levels of income. Studies have also stated that teachers who transfer campuses tend to transfer to campuses with higher income students.

At-risk campuses no matter at the elementary, middle, or high school level are some of the most difficult campuses for teachers. Ingersoll and Smith (2004) stated that high poverty schools lose on average one-fifth of their faculty each year. Grissom (2011) stated that studies show at-risk campus teachers tend to get burned out more quickly because of the working conditions. Teachers are often required to have more intensive teaching strategies such as individualized student attention. Teachers in at-risk campuses tend to spend more time preparing for lessons compared to teachers in campuses with more affluent students. Grissom (2011) also stated parents of students in at-risk campuses are less likely to help or volunteer at their students' campuses, and parents of at-risk campuses will be less responsive to help as requested by the teacher.

The pattern of teacher turnover in at-risk campuses has been the same across the country. Neild, Useem, Travers and Lesnick (2003) found that 36 percent of Philadelphia teachers who began teaching in 1999-2000 left to teach in other campuses or left education all together. The study also found that the campuses with the highest poverty rates were also the campuses that struggled the most with teacher retention. Elfers,



Plecki, and Knapp (2006) studied the retention rates of six school districts in the state of Washington. The study found campuses with a higher rate of African-American students or campuses with a high rate of low-income students struggled to retain teachers every year. Scafidi, Sjoquist, and Stinebrickner (2007) found that in the state of Georgia, teachers who stay in the same school on a yearly basis teach in schools with lower rates of minority students and lower rates of low-income students. Hanushek, Kain, and Rivkin (2004) found similar data in the state of Texas. The study suggested that on average, teachers who transfer to different school districts look for districts that have about two percent fewer African-Americans, four percent fewer Hispanics, and six percent fewer students who are on subsidized lunch.

At-risk campuses also struggle to keep teacher turnover low because of its resources and facilities. According to Grissom (2011), at-risk campuses can struggle to maintain adequate classroom space, have less access to technology, and have fewer financial resources to purchase supplies that could aid instruction. At-risk campuses also struggle to maintain strong school culture because when teachers leave on such a constant basis, the school culture and collaboration are never able to develop. Carey (2004) stated that schools with a high rate of low income students, a high rate of students who are minority, and a high number of students who are underperforming on state accountability exams have a higher rate of unqualified, inexperienced teachers because of the rapid turnover. Grissom (2011) stated that constant turnover creates a cycle, which negatively impacts students. Constant teacher turnover leads to chronic low student performance, and research has proven that low student performance leads to more teacher turnover (Allensworth et al., 2009). Hanushek, Kain and Rivkin (2001) stated that 25 percent of

Texas teachers who taught in campuses who scored in the lowest quartile of the state assessment exam left their campuses after only one year. Campuses that scored in the top quartile of their state assessment exam lost fewer than 20 percent of their teachers within the first year. According to Johnson (2006) evidence shows that lower income schools lose more in teacher turnover than more affluent schools. Because of the high turnover rate, administrators in at-risk campuses spend a greater majority of their time recruiting and staffing their campuses rather than building and developing the teachers who choose to stay.

### **The Impact of Certification Paths on Teacher Retention**

The rate teachers leave the field of education causes many school districts across the US to scramble to find new teachers to fill open positions. According to Ingersoll (2003), between 40 and 50 percent of all beginning teachers leave the field of education altogether. According to Boyd et al. (2007), most school districts hire their teachers from traditional programs connected to schools of education at four-year academic institutions. Traditional programs are by far the most common routes for teachers to become certified. Unfortunately traditional programs cannot produce the amount of teachers needed in a given year to fill all open vacancies, so school districts look to other programs to certify teachers. Alternative Certification Programs (ACP) have increased in recent years. These programs allow non-traditional educators to join the field of education. According to the National Research Council (2010), 20 to 30 percent of new teachers are entering education from ACP.

Traditional teacher certification programs are the primary source for teacher supply. According to Boyd et al. (2007), states these programs are created with a

combination of state regulations, criteria of accreditation groups, and individual academic institution requirements. Individual states approve traditional programs as the teachers receive degrees at the completion of their program. Traditional programs spend significant resources in teaching potential teachers knowledge of instructional methods, theories in education, assessment and measurement, and classroom management. Boyd et al. (2007) states that there is a general uniformity in many areas of pedagogy, and 84 percent of states require preparation programs to present material on classroom management; 83 percent of states require programs to address subject-area pedagogy. Another major part to traditional programs is the field experience that potential teachers go through. Boyd et al. (2007) stated that 38 states require some form of field experience. Many observers feel that field experience is the most important component to the traditional teacher program especially when teachers experience environments in which they are not accustomed.

Alternative Certification Programs (ACP) have become a route in which non-traditional teachers have taken in order to enter the classroom. According to Boyd et al. (2007), the states of New Jersey, Texas and California get a third of their new teachers from ACP. Zeichner and Schulte (2001) stated that potential teachers who enter the ACP tend to be older in age and tend to be career switchers. Boyd et al. (2007) stated that more than half of ACP were created in the last 15 years, and a third of the ACP were created since 2000. According to Murnane and Steele (2007), ACP were first created in the 1980s to address teacher shortages. Grossman and Loeb (2008) stated that ACP was also created in as a response to critics of traditional programs in the university settings. Many of these critics believed that local teacher preparation programs run by school districts can better

match the needs of the districts through ACP. Johnson and Liu (2004) stated that the increase in ACP is because of the incentives associated with the alternative route such as bypassing prerequisites thereby allowing potential teachers to begin teaching sooner. According to Boyd et al. (2007), all ACP require teachers to hold a bachelor's degree, and 80 percent of ACP require teachers to show content knowledge by either completing coursework or passing a content exam; in some programs both are required. Boyd et al. (2007) stated that ACP vary between states but generally most programs have both pre-service and in-service requirements. Pre-service training includes pedagogy, methods of education, and some form of field experience. Pre-service training typically lasts anywhere from four to 12 weeks depending on the program. In-service training includes some form of coursework and some form of mentoring. The quantity of these trainings vary among individual programs.

The impact of teacher certification has had an influence on the choices of teachers choosing to return. Darling-Hammond, Chung and Frelow (2002), stated that how prepared teachers feel and their perceptions of their jobs has an effect on the issue of teacher retention. Darling-Hammond, Chung and Frelow (2002), completed a study in 1998 that surveyed teachers in New York City. The study showed that ACP teachers felt less prepared for the classroom, and the ACP teachers expressed less commitment to returning to the profession. According to Johnson and Birkeland (2003), beginning teachers' decide to remain in education based on their perception of their success in their classroom. This success relates directly to the quality of their teacher certification program. According to a study completed by Kee (2012), research shows that first year teachers who have less educational coursework and shorter field experiences feel less

prepared for the classroom than those teachers who experienced more pedagogy preparation. Kee (2012) stated that ACP that allow teachers to begin teaching with little to no coursework or field experiences will feel less prepared for their classrooms than those teachers who complete a traditional certification program. Kee (2012) stated that because of the lack of preparation that ACP teachers have ACP teachers would need time to catch up. The only way for ACP teachers to catch up by acquiring skills on the job, and it can only happen if they stay in education.

Because of the need to fill positions in campuses across the nation, bringing new teachers into the profession is an important and vital part of the school district. Whether the teachers arrive to the classroom from the traditional route or the ACP route, the first year of teaching will bring challenges to the teacher. How the teacher best meets these challenges will be an important piece into the decision of returning to the profession of education (Reese, 2010).

### **Teacher Retention and the Impact on the School Campus**

The school campus is affected in multiple ways when it fails to retain teachers. Not only does losing a teacher create an empty desk in a classroom, it creates an impact on the future progress of the campus and hurts student achievement. Due to losing teachers, campuses struggle to properly build meaningful staff development since members have different levels of experience in their educational careers. New teachers can also be impacted on a campus when the campus loses a teacher, because the less experienced teachers do not have the mentors they need. Newer teachers are frequently thrust into leadership roles before they are ready to assume them. Another issue that occurs when campuses have high teacher turnover is teachers who remain at the campus

will have to build trust with teachers who are new to the campus in order to communicate and collaborate effectively with each other. Campuses that constantly lose their teachers also find it difficult to build strong relationships between the community and the school since trust takes time to build.

Effective teachers are able to reach students and help motivate them to become successful not only on a test but throughout their educational career. Students are the first to feel the impact of losing an effective teacher. According to a study completed in Tennessee, research found that students were more successful with an effective teacher in the classroom. “Researchers found that all else being equal, students assigned to the most effective teachers for three years in a row performed 50 percentile points higher—that’s on a 100-point scale—than comparable students assigned to the least effective teachers” (Carey, 2004, p.4). When an effective teacher leaves, they take with them their knowledge of content, their pedagogy, and their ability to motivate and encourage students to learn and succeed.

Research also indicates that the single most important factor in determining student success is the classroom teacher (Rowland & Coble, 2005; Sanders & Rivers, 1996). Unfortunately it takes multiple years of experience in order for teachers to effectively evaluate what factors contribute to the success of students. According to Hammerness et al. (2005), when teachers were asked to evaluate classrooms, novice teachers offered only superficial and general observations that had little impact on the intellectual work of the classroom. Observations conducted at the same time by veteran teachers showed that experienced teacher could target specific areas that tied directly to students’ work (Hammerness et al., 2005). Many of the teachers who enter the field of

education never become a master or expert teacher. According to Olson (2000) many teachers do not reach their total potential until their fifth or sixth year in education. The problem is many of the teachers leave before they ever reach their fifth or six year. “The data suggest that after just five years, between 40 and 50 percent of all beginning teachers leave teaching altogether” (Ingersoll, 2003, p.148).

According to Hanushek, Kain, and Rivkin (2004), a study in Texas concluded that public school teachers have a tendency to stay if student achievement is high. Adversely those teachers who taught on a campus with low student achievement tended to leave in search of schools with better student achievement. According to Boyd et al. (2011) a study in New York City found teacher attrition rate was 15 percent for first year teachers in schools where students had high student achievement. In schools where student achievement was low, the attrition rate increased to 27 percent. Unfortunately as teachers leave low performing schools, a negative cycle is created where teachers leave as quickly as they enter negatively impacting student achievement. According to Allensworth, Ponisciak and Mazzeo (2009), found that in Chicago low student test scores was an indicator of low teacher retention on a yearly basis. Teachers leaving campuses needing more effective teachers, created a revolving door effect. Teachers tend to leave the campus just as they walk in causing campuses to struggle to find consistency in their staff, therefore, negatively impacting students’ achievement.

Losing teachers also impacts a campus’s staff development plan. Purposeful staff development is used to build up the campus staff or individual teachers to better serve students in the classroom. When replacing teachers with novice teachers’ campus leaders have to build from the foundation of the novice teachers’ knowledge. According to

Feiman-Nemser (2003), novice teachers need such topics as transition during lessons, classroom management, and momentum in the classroom. A campus's failure to properly train new staff members and assume they have been taught before entering the campus can lead to an increase in teacher turnover. Lack of proper training can affect novice teachers wanting to return especially when the teacher begins to feel the stress that accompanies first year failures in the classroom. Smith and Ingersoll (2004) stated that education is an occupation in which throws it's young directly into the line of fire. Smith and Ingersoll (2004) also stated that campus leaders must understand that there is a difference between pre-service training and in-service training, and combining the two creates a disservice to both new and veteran teachers. Pre-service training refers to the clinical studying that takes place before employment. For example in education, pre-service training would include student teaching. In-service training refers to upgrade or addition training of veteran teachers. Bringing in novice teachers and beginning them on the same staff development level with existing staff would not provide the novice teacher the essential knowledge and skills needed to be successful in the classroom. Campus leaders must also understand that building up veteran teachers is equally important. Building a campus staff development plan that only targets novice teachers will hurt the veteran teachers' potential to grow because the staff development would revolve around content veteran teachers have already mastered. Guin (2004) found many veteran teachers feel campus wide staff development becomes a waste of time because campus efforts are focused on catching up new teachers to the rest of the building.

When teachers leave their campuses, the new teachers lose strong mentors to go to for help and advice. Studies have found that veteran to new teacher mentoring is a key



way of helping new teachers to return on a yearly basis (Bobek, 2002). The effectiveness veteran teachers provide when introducing new teachers to the world of education helps many new teachers feel that there is someone to go to who has been through the same struggles they face (Bobek, 2002). According to Lana Danielson (2002), new teachers experience many benefits through mentoring. New teachers are introduced to the school culture, learn successful teaching skills, and find support when faced with unexpected situations through their first years in the classroom. Not only do the mentoring programs help ease the transition into the classroom, but they also help campus principals limit the amount of teacher turnover in a given year. According to a study completed by Smith and Ingersoll (2004), different types of mentoring programs can really impact the retention of teachers at school campuses. Smith and Ingersoll (2004) found that in campuses where little to no mentoring took place, the turnover rate was as high as 41 percent after the first year. In a campus where the mentoring program was basic, the turnover rate fell to 39 percent. Teacher turnover rates fell to 27 percent in campuses that included a basic mentoring program with added collaboration. Teacher turnover rates fell to 18 percent in campuses that included a mentoring program, added collaboration among teachers, teacher networking, and extra resources. With teachers leaving a campus, many teachers will receive little to no help in seeking advice from experienced veterans.

Another important part of the school campus affected by the turnover of teachers is the relationship among teachers and the impact it has on the collaboration. “ Teachers grow professionally when they seek out peers for professional dialogue and turn to each other for constructive feedback, affirmation, and support” (Danielson, 2002, p.183). Teachers who stay at campuses where there is constantly a high turnover rate are not as

open to sharing their classroom issues with new teachers due to not personally knowing the teacher who has been hired to replace the departing teacher. According to Guin (2004), trust is built on positive experiences people have with each other, and if schools are constantly changing teachers, then stakeholders of the school will find it difficult to build trust with the school.

In campuses where teacher retention is low, one common characteristic is teachers feel professionally isolated from other teachers on the campus. According to Johnson and Birkeland (2003), teachers left schools where they felt isolated or in which their philosophical approach to education did not match the other teachers at the campus. The teachers who felt isolated became movers and moved to campuses that fit them better professionally and personally. According to Dufour (2004), building a campus culture focusing on teacher collaboration is key to building a strong campus. If campuses continue to have high teacher turnover rates, collaboration could be affected among the staff. “Constant changes in the staff interrupt the planning and implementation of coherent, comprehensive and unified curriculum” (Brill & McCartney, 2008, p.752-753).

The relationship that campuses have with the parents of the community also has an impact on the teacher retention rate on a campus. Lynch (2012) stated that current research shows that teachers believe a relationship between the school and the parents of the community played a major role in the working conditions on the campus and encouraged teacher stability. According to Guin (2004), trust is only built over time, and a campus that struggles to retain teachers, finds it difficult to build trust with the community. Swick (1991) also stated that a parent and teacher relationship that lacks trust often experiences many issues in a teacher-parent partnership.

Rempel, Holmes and Zanna (1985) presented the idea that building trust happens in three phases consisting of predictability, dependability, and faith. The three phases happen in hierarchical order. Teachers can first start to build trust with the parents and community by being predictable; predictability refers to the specific and repeated behaviors that parents expect to see in the classroom from the teacher. Second, Rempel, Holmes and Zanna (1985) stated that a teacher would progress from predictability to dependability when trust is seen as a personal trait. The dependability level of trust occurs when teachers have demonstrated their behavior, and their behavior is predictable and responsive to students needs. The last phase of building trust according to Rempel, Holmes and Zanna (1985) is faith. Faith functions more as an emotional security and is not just based on past decisions from the teacher. Parents who are in the faith level of the relationship are confident that their student's teacher will follow through on their word, and the teacher will be there for their student's needs. Campuses with low teacher retention rates will have trouble building trust between the campus and the community, and therefore, will fail to build community, which is a major tool in having a positive campus culture.

### **The Role of the Principal and the Impact on Teacher Retention**

There are all kinds of leaders on school campuses who make decisions impacting not only their work but also the work of other educators. Brown and Wynn (2009) stated that school leaders are the group of people whose roles shape the overall attitude in teachers on their campuses. School leadership and administrative support are two big factors that teachers think about when determining whether to choose to stay or leave a campus. Many of the decisions made by school administration affect the working

conditions of the campus, the morale of the teachers, and the behavior of the students. Boyd et al. (2011) stated that administrative support is what the school principal and others in the school administration do to specifically make the job of the teaching staff easier. Effective administrative support is also measured by what things are done by the school administration in order to support the improvement of teachers skills in the classroom. According to a study completed by Spillane, Hallett and Diamond (2003), there are four forms of capital that school principals may consider when evaluating their effectiveness of school leadership and the impact on the teacher retention. For the purpose of the study conducted, capital is referred to as the resources in which hold value to specific situations such as teachers on a campus. A specific situation in education can be the issue of teacher retention. The first form of capital is human capital which teachers referred to as the knowledge, skills and expertise a person holds. The second is cultural capital, which is how things are habitually done on the campus. The third is social capital, which refers to the networking or sharing among teachers on the campus. The last form of capital in the study was economic capital; this capital refers to the money and instructional resources available to teachers on a campus. Ultimately the decisions of the principal will affect the satisfaction of teachers, which influences the teachers' decision stay or go (Brown and Wynn, 2009; Grissom, 2011).

One of the responsibilities of a school principal that aids in retaining teachers is creating the best professional culture for teachers to thrive. Spillane, Hallett and Diamond (2003) found in their study that 70.2 percent of the teachers surveyed mentioned that cultural capital is important to the way they view their administration. The principal of the school can not appear to have an authoritative management style and expect to create

a school culture in which sharing and value in what others are doing are a common practice. Principals must lead by example and use their influence to show that they are more than just a person who is in charge (Johnson, 2006). The principal must lead in creating a culture of sharing and professionalism in which teachers can have a collaborative work environment (Blase and Blase, 1999). According to Blase and Blase (1999), a collaborative network of teachers can be an effective tool in teacher retention. Collaborative teams have inspired teacher motivation, self-esteem, and created reflective behaviors in teachers. Brown and Wynn (2009) also found in their study that when principals begin to hire for teaching positions, the principal should look into who would fit their school culture best, so a supportive and collaborative environment remains among the teachers on the campus.

According to a study completed by Allensworth, Ponisciak and Mazzeo (2009), data showed school administration effects teacher collaboration thereby impacting teacher retention. The study found that teachers are more likely to stay on a campus in where the school administration has created an environment where teachers have a working relationship that is trusting and positive. The study also found that stability rates show an increase of four to five percentage points on campuses where teachers feel there is a shared commitment among the teaching staff. Leithwood, Leonard, and Sharratt (1998) completed a study in which teachers discussed the importance of having a collaborative culture and how it was important to their learning as professionals. The study found teachers feel when they have a collaborative culture, they receive honest, candid feedback that helps them grow professionally. In the study teachers also stated

schools where collaborative cultures exist, often have informal sharing of ideas and materials and collaboration becomes the norm among teachers on the campus.

Principals who use collaboration among teachers have found success in creating a positive culture, which creates a higher retention rate of teachers. Collaboration among teachers is not the only effective tool in promoting a culture of collaboration on a campus. Principal to teacher collaboration also fosters a positive culture on a school campus. According to the Institute for Educational Leadership (2008) current research has found that moving away from traditional administrative hierarchy to a more distributed leadership on a campus creates a climate and culture that promotes learning not only among students but also among teachers. According to a study conducted by Spillane, Hallett and Diamond (2003) 45.2 percent of the teachers who took part in study found human capital to be an effective tool in increasing culture on the campus.

Principals who create teacher leadership positions where teachers can use their knowledge and expertise to help make decisions which impact the campus helps build a culture in the school where teacher input is valued, and teachers feel as if they are part of the decision making process. Teacher leaders also assist the principal in helping retain teachers by assisting other teachers with struggles that they might have in the classroom. This creates a culture in where teachers know they can ask for help from other teachers in order to advance their skills in the classroom. Helping teachers grow professionally is key to retaining teachers, opening leadership positions will allow teachers to grow and understand education from various perspectives. Current research by Olson (2008) shows that when principals share their power and give teachers the ability to hold leadership positions both formally and informally, learning improves both for students and teachers.

Another way for principals to influence teacher retention is by using funds to purchase items that are needed to be successful in the classroom. Spillane, Hallett and Diamond (2003) referred to having instructional resources as economic capital. Several qualitative studies found a reason for teacher dissatisfaction was a lack of resource materials (Corcoran 1988; Johnson 1990). According to Johnson (2006), many teachers find it difficult to have success with their students when the campus lacks updated textbooks, place limits on the amount of paper that can be used, has a library with old and worn out books, and lacks other educational material imperative to student success. Many teachers spend their own personal money on instructional resources. The NEA (2003) found that in 2001 teachers on average spent \$443 of their personal money on instructional resources. A separate study by Quality Education Data (2002) found that the average amount first year teachers spend on their classroom resources was as much as \$710. In a study about what principals do in order to retain teachers Brown and Wynn (2009) found that principals made an effort to get resources teachers wanted in order to help students become more successful in the classroom. As there was increase in the availability in instructional resources, there was increase in teacher satisfaction, and ultimately an increase in teacher retention.

Having resources to help build up teachers' professional development is also an essential tool to keeping a low teacher turnover rate. Leithwood et al. (1998) found when campuses provided sufficient resources to carry out school wide initiatives teachers felt a boost in the learning. Teachers also felt there was a bigger benefit to professional development when there were sufficient support such as curriculum resources, computer technology, and program assistance with consultants and technology site administrators.

Loeb et al. (2005) conducted a study using California teacher surveys and found that teachers' availability of resources and instructional materials were significant predictors of teacher turnover. Those teachers who perceived their campuses to have sufficient resources to support their success in their classrooms were more likely to remain in their position.

Principals must use what Spillane, Hallett and Diamond (2003) call social capital where principals facilitate new teachers mentoring programs and insure that new teachers have the support of veteran teachers to assist not only in their first year but throughout their career on the campus.

In creating master schedules, principals must remember that new teachers sometimes lack the professional ability to maintain successful classroom management. Hartford (1998) states that new teachers are often assigned students with chronic behavior issues or students who have low attendance rates and learning difficulties. New teachers who are assigned challenging students are set up for failure because they lack the pedagogy to be successful with those students. Principals need to recognize and keep in mind the class size, structure and teaching load when considering the master schedule as it pertains to new teachers on their campus.

According to Hope (1999), teacher retention can also be impacted by the accessibility of the principal through out the beginning years of the teacher. According to Ryan (1986), many beginning teachers do not know how to feel about the school principal. On one hand teachers feel they should be able to approach the principal since the principal hired them. On the other hand the teachers also feel like the principal is an authority figure and can be difficult to approach. Hope (1999) states that even with



principals who practice an open door policy; new teachers still have problems with approaching the principal to discuss issues. New teachers feel that the principal is either too busy, or their issues are not pressing enough to warrant the attention of the school principal. To help relieve anxiety of new teachers, principals need to seek out new teachers and approach them to discuss matters relating to their experiences until the teacher becomes comfortable enough to approach the principal with such matters.

Another important part to retaining teachers' is making sure they understand the evaluation process. Just as in any other profession, being evaluated on their performance is a big fear for teachers (Wilson, Ireton, and Wood 1997). Hope (1999) states that teachers need to understand the complexity of teacher evaluations and how they are intended to be a tool of growth not criticism. Principals can reduce tension and any perceived threat of the evaluation process by taking time during the induction process to explain the frequency of classroom visits by the principal and other school administrators in order to evaluate the teacher's performance (Drake and Roe 1999).

### **The Importance Of Teacher Induction Programs on Teacher Retention**

School leaders have many different roles; many of these roles take take a large part of their day away from being in classrooms visiting students and staff. Although the everyday operations of a school do absorb a great amount of time, school leaders must remember that one of the essential goals to operating a successful school is being able to retain teachers. Novice teachers consist of the majority of the teachers who become leavers. Nearly 40 percent of new teachers leave the field of teaching within the first two years (Karge, 1993; Haselkorn 1994). District and campus leaders must understand that they play an important role in retaining and building both new and veteran teachers to be

successful in the classroom. According to Hope (1999), school leaders must understand that they play an integral role in the induction process of new teachers to the district and to the campus. Hope (1999) states that the induction must be more than just a 30-minute get to know you meet and greet. New teacher induction needs to consist of answering questions and concerns that new teachers will face throughout their first years. Concerns such as meeting students' needs, classroom management, confrontations with parents and not meeting campus expectations need to be addressed (Wilson, Ireton, and Wood 1997). The induction needs to cover the span of several years and have deep involvement with the campus administration.

Historically education as an occupation has failed to build induction programs that train and prepare entering teachers for their jobs as compared to other white-collar professions (Lortie, 1975 and Tyack, 1974). Breaux & Wong (2003) noted that school districts with low-attrition rates all have comprehensive and continuous induction programs to help their teachers grow as professionals. The induction programs in place in these school districts train their teachers constantly and have a focus of the infrastructure, vision, and culture of the school district as a part the induction program. Wong (2004) states that induction programs should be a professional development process that is comprehensive and logical to the experiences an educator will encounter. The induction process should be administrated in a well-organized fashion that supports teachers needs and encourages them to become life-long learners in the profession.

According to Wong (2004), an induction program should be a major tool in producing effective teachers. The induction program is a professional development tool that builds on skills at each point in teachers' careers. While no induction program is

alike there are several similar components in the most successful programs. Wong (2004) stated that each of the most successful programs begin with a four to five day initial induction before the start of school and the induction program continues in an organized and purposeful fashion for over a course of two to three years. The induction programs also offer learning communities where teachers can find support and learn from each other's experiences in the classroom. Induction programs should incorporate a strong support of campus administrators and integrate a mentoring program that is part of the program. Of the most successful induction programs there is an organized effort to have new teachers model effective teaching techniques in their classrooms and provide opportunities to new teachers to visit demonstration classrooms.

One major concern about induction programs in America is many school districts believe simply assigning a teacher a mentor will be sufficient to the success of a new teacher (Wong, 2004). Lehman (2003) stated that the help and support of a veteran teacher who has a full-time teaching assignment and who can only assist teachers when time permits is not enough to fully prepare and develop teachers. While mentoring can be a part of the overall induction program, it cannot be the only part to a successful induction program. Britton et al. (2003) completed a four-year study on teacher induction programs in Switzerland, Japan, France, China, and New Zealand. The study found that while programs were extremely diverse, the countries did share three common characteristics. First, the induction programs were very comprehensive, rigorous, and well monitored. Everyone involved had well-defined roles for their responsibilities and included what would be involved in the process. The induction programs included leadership involvement from administrators, instructors of staff development, and

mentors. Second, the induction program had a commitment to creating a professional learning environment. The programs emphasized delivering professional growth to the teachers as well as teaching professionalism in the classroom. The overall goal of the program was to encourage teachers to become life-long learners as professional educators. The third characteristic of teacher induction programs found between the five different countries was collaboration. The induction program strived to create a culture of sharing between those involved. The programs created ways to encourage teachers to share experiences, lessons, and tools they had learned through their work. The induction program viewed the teachers, not as new workers, but as cohorts who would grow together as professionals. Wong (2004) stated that American educators should redesign professional development and build a comprehensive induction program to build educators as life-long learners in their craft.

There have been several induction programs across the United States that have gained attention for unique responses to teacher assistance. Wong (2004) stated that the Dallas Public School's New Teacher Initiative Program is a unique way of addressing new teachers' struggles in the classroom. The program is made up of 12 trained teachers who act as a 911 emergency squad and will respond within a 72-hour period to address teachers' needs. The facilitators work with the campus administrators and other teacher leaders to help teachers in their need. This prevents teachers from becoming frustrated and leaving education all together. The Flowing Wells School's professional development department is a leader in induction programs in Tucson, Arizona. The program not only focuses on building new teachers but also addresses the growth and renewal of veteran teachers. The Flowing Wells School's has a five to eight year program

that encourages life-long in-house professional development to all teachers. According to Young (2003), the state of Connecticut has a statewide induction program for new teachers. The program is Connecticut Beginning Educator Support and Training (BEST), and is an induction program lasting for three years. The program consists of various activities that must be completed before teachers can become fully certified in the state of Connecticut. BEST requires school districts to assign teams of mentors for at least the first year of the program. In the second year the teachers must complete a portfolio where other trained teachers' can view and assess the new teachers pedagogical knowledge and skills. The portfolio will include two video samples of the teaching, lesson plans, and a sample of student work. Teachers are also required to submit responses to planning, instruction, and assessment of their students' progress. Once the teachers submit their portfolio, a team of certified teachers assess the portfolio, and those teachers who do not receive a passing score are allowed one additional attempt. If a teacher fails in their second attempt, they are denied certification in the state of Connecticut. Although the rigor of the program seems somewhat harsh, it holds the school district accountable for preparing their teachers to pass the BEST program, and therefore, increases the retention of classroom teachers after the completion of the program.

As induction programs have increased dramatically in the US (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004) efforts are still being evaluated as to how to modify programs to increase teacher retention needed by school districts across the country. Ingersoll and Smith (2004) stated that most effective induction programs offer bundles of support for new teachers. Induction programs not only provide mentors for new teachers but also give teachers groups to collaborate and grow with throughout their educational career.

## **Why Teachers Stay and What Districts Can Do To Keep Them**

Teacher satisfaction is an important key to keeping a low teacher turnover rate. According to Shin and Reyes (1995), a teacher's job satisfaction ultimately determines the commitment of the teacher. The more administrators do in order to keep job satisfaction high among their staff, the more teachers would be willing to commit themselves to the organization. Kim and Loadman (1994) found seven significant predictors to change job satisfaction: interactions with students, interactions with colleagues, professional challenges, professional autonomy, working conditions, salary, and opportunities for advancement. Billingsley (1993) stated that administrative, parental, and collegial support were also critical factors in determining teacher retention. According to Anderman, Belzer and Smith (1991), school culture also plays a part in shaping teacher satisfaction. Campuses where principals emphasize accomplishment, recognition, and affiliation tend to have high teacher satisfaction and commitment to the campus. Campuses that involve teachers in school-based decisions also tend to have higher teacher satisfaction, and therefore, increase retention on their campuses. Ingersoll (2003) stated that schools, which share control of the campus with teachers, find there is less conflict between the administration and teaching staff, especially when campuses made decisions on student discipline. According to Smith and Ingersoll (2003), strong induction and mentoring programs also play a significant role in a teacher's choice to remain in education.

Some of the reasons that teachers remain in education are the intrinsic parts of a teachers' job. Such as building relationships with students and colleagues, being successful in professional challenges and the feeling of making a difference in the lives of

students and overall society (Skilbeck and Connell, 2003). Student to teacher relationships are very important to a teacher's job satisfaction (Chang, 2009; Jepson and Forrest, 2006). Teachers spend a large part of their day with students and having a positive relationship can not only determine the atmosphere of the class but can also determine what type of year the teacher will have. Chang (2009) and Friedman (2006) determined through their research that the majority of a teacher's stress came from the direct relationship the teacher had with students. Friedman (2006) found that teachers who cares for the well-being of their students and exercise a sense of authority and control of their class often experience a positive relationship with their students. Lortie and Clement (1975) and Hargreaves (2000) found that some teachers find greater reward and satisfaction from their work when students show appreciation, gratitude, and respect for the teacher's efforts. According to Grayson and Alvarez (2008), teachers who were successful in maintaining a positive relationship with their students were better able to remain motivated and found their work to be more enjoyable compared to those who had a negative relationship with their students.

Another intrinsic form of satisfaction that helps teachers decide to return to a campus is the feeling teachers get from strong teacher-to-teacher relationships. Theobald (1989) stated that support from colleagues and positive interaction between teachers can have a huge influence on the satisfaction a teacher has and can increase the possibility for retention. Popkewitz and Myrdal (1991) found that collaboration among teachers could also lead to an increase in teacher satisfaction. According to Nieto (2003), engaging collaboration among trusted colleagues can help teachers keep building as a professional. Nieto's (2003) research found that teachers who take part in engaging collaboration

become more motivated in their careers, build their own professional lives, and invest in their own professional education by taking part in curriculum development, researching in their classrooms, attending conferences, and becoming mentors to new teachers.

Allensworth, Ponisciak and Mazzeo (2009) found that teachers were more likely to remain on campuses where their colleagues were motivated, innovative, and worked together to improve the campus. Teachers also had a better retention rate on campuses where teachers trusted each other and welcomed new teachers into their professional learning community.

The feeling of success of building up students who enter the classroom with personal challenges is another intrinsic reward teachers feel motivates them when making the choice to return to education on a yearly basis (Bobek, 2002). Williams (2003) found that teachers who return on a yearly basis eagerly embrace the challenges that each student brings to their classroom. The teachers take the challenge personally in order to use their skills to make sure every student will be successful. "These teachers describe teaching as a nonstop quest for novelty, variety, and new approaches-an art that offers endless opportunities for creativity and personal expression" (Williams, 2003, p.72). Williams (2003) found that when teachers experience the success of helping students and witness students' personal success giving students' the confidence gives teachers the motivation they need to continue working in the field of education.

There are also extrinsic motivators that help teachers make the choice to remain in education. One way to help lower the turnover rate is to increase salary. Chapman (1994) found through his analysis that increasing salaries would be the single most direct way of reducing turnover, but because of fiscal limitations, it is not practical to assume every



school district has the means of increasing salary to a point that it becomes a key retention tool. Greenlee and Brown (2009) found 57 percent of teachers would stay in education if they received salary enhancements. Murnane and Olsen (1989) found that an increase in teacher salaries tended to be an effective retention tool with the younger generation of teachers, yet retention rates did vary among subjects. Even with salary increases teachers who taught subjects such as physics and chemistry still left. Murnane and Olsen (1989) stated that an increase of \$1,000 per increment would result on average, another two to three years of service. Theobald and Gritz (1996) found that for teachers to be discouraged from leaving education there would have to be an increase of \$3,000. Unfortunately salary increases across the board would have to be so big that more harm could be done to school districts because of the financial burden a school district would face from salary increases (Hanushek, Kain, and Rivkin 2004). According to Macdonald's (1999) research, an effective monetary tool to increasing teacher retention is incentive based pay. Incentive based pay would allow school districts to keep base salaries the same and reward teachers extra pay based on certain requirements such as teachers who teach in specific locations, or teachers who have unique qualifications or perform better in their work. Greenlee and Brown (2009) found that 34 percent of teachers would be more willing to stay in their teaching position if they received a 5 to 10 percent salary bonus. According to Brill and McCartney (2008), this strategy could be part of a plan to increase retention in at-risk schools. Macdonald (1999) stated that incentive based pay could help school districts use monetary means to increase teacher retention and stay financially stable.

Another extrinsic motivator that school districts can use in order to get teachers to stay in education is improving the work environment. Rodgers-Jenkinson and Chapman (1990) stated that improving the working conditions of schools not only proves to be successful in teacher retention, but can also save the school district money when compared to using salary increases as a retention tool. Oliveira and Farrell (1993), found that teachers who felt that their salaries were not where they would like them to be would stay in their current position as long as the working conditions were good. Kushman (1992) and Friedman (1991) found that when teachers had working conditions that were favorable, they became more committed to the campus and teacher turnover decreased. Macdonald (1999) stated several things school districts and campuses could do in order to build a better working condition for teachers. First, school districts can repair and upgrade school buildings to maintain campuses' appearance. Another step in increasing motivation to stay is giving proper support to teachers in order to be successful in the classroom and recognizing teachers for their accomplishments. Campuses leaders also need to find ways to increase parental and community support for the campus and its efforts to make the students successful. Another extrinsic tool for school districts is providing some form of childcare for teachers. Macdonald (1999) and Oliveria and Farrell (1993) both found that teachers would be willing to remain in their current position if campuses worked to help teachers balance their workload and still find time to meet family commitments. Hanushek, Kain and Rivkin (2004) also found in their study that teacher turnover can be decreased by addressing teacher workplace issues such as student discipline, maintaining a safe learning environment, reducing the amount of

administrative regulations in the classroom, and providing supportive and positive leadership.

Other studies have found that teacher autonomy in the classroom and more influence in school wide decisions play a role in a teacher's decision to stay or leave. According to Johnson (2006), teachers are more likely to have greater satisfaction in their workplace if they have more independence in how to run their classroom. Williams (2003) found that teachers who return on a yearly basis tend to thrive on classroom autonomy because of their chance to use their creativeness to ensure student success. These same teachers who thrive on classroom autonomy feel as if they are experts in their field and feel they know what is best for the students they work with on a daily basis. Boyd et al. (2010) stated that teachers are more likely to remain in their position when they have greater influence on school wide decisions such as scheduling, selection of classroom materials, and which professional staff development campuses implement. Ingersoll (2003) stated that when teachers were given the opportunity to have a say in the school wide decisions such as student discipline and student tracking, administrators and teaching staff disagreed less and created a more positive work environment. According to Allensworth et al. (2009) a survey conducted of 50,000 Chicago teachers said that teachers would be more likely to stay in their school if they had more say in school wide decisions.

Mentoring programs have proven to be one of the most important and successful retention tools for school districts. According to Ingersoll (2003), the probability of a teacher leaving the field of education was 40 percent when the teacher did not participate in a mentoring program. For teachers who took part in mentoring programs the

probability of the teacher leaving fell to 18 percent. Serpell and Bozemann (1999) stated that mentoring programs would be the most beneficial retention tool if the program were to be well organized with activities to prepare teachers for the classroom. The mentoring program may reduce the amount of teaching a new teacher does in order to give the teacher more time to observe veteran teachers (Serpell and Bozemann, 1999). This would allow newer teacher to view best practices with students similar to those in their classrooms. According to Brill and McCartney (2008), effective mentoring programs will also have a formal mentor for each new teacher. The mentor will provide critical support in areas such as pedagogy, classroom management, lesson planning, and emotional support. Brill and McCartney (2008) stated that research in Wisconsin showed that 75 percent of teachers who took part in a mentoring program expected to be teaching in five years compared to only 25 percent of teachers who did not take part in a mentoring program. Serpell and Bozemann (1999) stated that the California New Teacher Project was evidence of what strong mentoring programs can do for teacher retention. The study stated that 95 percent of California teachers who participated in the mentoring program were still teaching three years later. Odell and Ferraro (1992) conducted a study of at least 160 teachers to measure the impact of mentoring on teacher retention. The study found that 96 percent of the teachers who participated in the mentoring program were still teaching, and 80 percent felt they would continue teaching for more than ten years.

Many teachers enter the profession of education simply because it offers a sense of job security in a world that many profession cannot offer (Kyriacou and Coulthard, 2000). Being able to build these young educators into effective teachers takes time,

campus administrators must create the incentives to not only help educators stay in the field of education but to create campuses full of effective educators.

### **Financial Issues of Teacher Attrition**

Teacher attrition is a topic that has grown in importance in school districts across the country partly because of the large amount of money a school district allocates in the budget for personnel. According to Thompson and Wood (1998), a typical school district spends up to 80 percent of the budget on personnel cost. Watlington, Shockley, Guglielmino, and Felsher (2010) stated that only recently have researchers started to focus on the cost of teacher attrition as it relates to the school district. Historically researchers believed that the inability to staff schools was only tied to teacher retirement and an increase in student population, not teacher attrition. However, researchers have now realized that large amounts of staffing issues arise from teacher attrition, which create major cost concerns for school districts across the country. While some conducted studies on the financial cost of teacher attrition in school districts have been questioned, what the research has largely agreed upon is that school districts are spending large amounts of money as it pertains to teacher attrition.

In a report from the Alliance for Excellent Education (2008) an estimated 157,000 teachers leave the field of education every year, not including those who retire. Another 232,000 teachers move to different campuses in a given year. The combination of movers and leavers make up almost 12 percent of the total teacher workforce. Synar and Maiden (2012) stated recent research has shown teacher attrition can cost school districts millions of dollars annually and even billions of dollars nationwide. According to Watlington, Shockley, Guglielmino and Felsher (2010) the US Department of Labor

estimated that teachers who left the teaching profession cost school districts across the country \$2.2 billion per year. When the cost of teachers who transferred to different campuses was added, the cost rose to \$4.9 billion a year.

Although there have been studies that show the cost of teacher attrition, the actual calculating of the cost of teacher attrition is somewhat difficult. Shockley, Guglielmino and Watlington (2006) stated that the difficulty in calculating the cost is because there is no single line item that appears in the superintendent annual budget that shows the cost of teacher attrition. Smith and Watkins (1978) were two of the first researchers to use categories to determine the financial impact that school districts faced in relation to teacher attrition. The categories consisted of separation cost, replacement cost, and training cost. Synar and Maiden (2012) stated that currently there are two instruments used to measure the financial cost of teacher attrition. The first is the School Turnover Analysis (STA) and the second instrument is the Teacher Turnover Cost Calculator (TTCC).

According to Watlington, Shockley, Guglielmino, and Felsher (2010) The STA uses multiple categories when calculating the cost of teacher attrition including separation cost, recruitment and hiring cost, new employee induction, and professional development. The separation cost includes the cost that comes with teachers leaving, such as exit interviewers' time, departing teachers' time, sick leave, vacation pay, and administrative cost of documenting files and inputting exit information. Recruitment cost consists of travel for recruitment purposes, advertising, recruitment fairs, and incentives to attract potential employees, and salaries for employees whose main purpose is for recruitment. New employee induction costs consists of orientation, professional

development, and extra training needed to help new teachers be successful. Extra cost that is associated with professional development is paying for presenters and hiring substitute teachers to cover classes for teachers in professional development. Watlington, Shockley, Guglielmino, and Felsher (2010) stated that the TTCC is similar to the STA, but it excludes several things. First the TTCC does not include separation cost. In excluding the separation cost the TTCC does not account for school districts spending on items such as cost of interviews' time, departing teachers' time, sick leave pay and other cost associated with teachers leaving the district. The second major difference between the STA and TTCC is the TTCC only adds advertising cost and hiring incentives cost when calculating the recruitment and hiring categories and excludes pre-employment cost such as reference checking, and time spent on interviewing potential teacher candidates.

There have been several studies since 2000 that have produced approximate costs of teacher attrition both at the state and national level. The Texas Center for Educational Research (2002) was one of the first to conduct a study trying to estimate the cost associated with teacher attrition. The study used a total of 258,000 teachers from Texas public schools and found that the annual teacher turnover rate in the state of Texas was around 15 percent. Of the 15 percent of those teachers leaving, 40 percent were teachers who were in their first three years of teaching. The minimum cost for the 15 percent of the teachers who were leaving was estimated to be around \$329 million a year. Because of the high teacher attrition rates school districts are forced to use already thin resources on recruitment efforts and on staff development that is dedicated to re-teaching the basics every year to novice teachers who come into education with little to no tools needed to be successful (Carroll, Reichardt & Guarino, 2000). Synar and Maiden (2012) did note that

this study was criticized because of its use of a business model to estimate educational cost.

A second study by ACORN cited by Allensworth, Ponisciak and Mazzeo (2009) on teacher attrition was used in the Chicago Public School system and used 64 elementary schools. The study used three different models and found wide-ranging results. The study used 2,377 teachers and concluded that there was a 22.9 percent reported turnover rate in the Chicago Public Schools. The study found that the total cost for teacher attrition was anywhere from \$5.6 million to \$34.7 million.

Breaux and Wong (2003) completed a nationwide study on teacher attrition. The study was completed on a specific formula and not cost calculations. The study used human resource specialist in industry just as the Texas study did. The study found that the loss of a teacher in the US would cost somewhere around 2.5 times the teacher starting salary in recruitment, personnel expenditures, and loss productivity.

Shockley et al. (2006) completed a study on teacher attrition in the state of Florida using the Broward and St. Lucie school districts. The study used 1,206 teachers from the Broward school system and found that it had a turnover rate of 7.25 percent. The total calculation cost for teacher attrition in the Broward school district was \$15.3 million dollars with an average cost of \$12,652 per leaving teacher. The study used 320 teachers from the St. Lucie school system and found the school district had a turnover rate of 16.4 percent and a total teacher attrition cost of \$1.48 million dollars, averaging about \$4,631 per leaving teacher. According to Shockley et al. (2006), the explanation for such a big difference in cost per teacher between both school systems was the amount of induction



resources Broward school district spent on its incoming teachers compared to St. Lucie school district.

The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future conducted a nationwide study on the cost of teacher turnover. According to Barnes, Crowe and Schaefer (2008) the study wanted to calculate actual cost of teacher turnover in a school district. To help determine the cost of teacher attrition this study used categories including recruitment and advertising, special incentives, administrative processing, training for new hires, and training for first time teachers, training for all teachers.

Barnes, Crowe and Schaefer (2008) used five school districts across the US to complete their study. Chicago Public Schools (CPS) and Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) represented urban school districts. The Granville County Schools (GCS) located in North Carolina represented a countywide suburban school district. The last two school districts, Jemez Valley Public Schools (JVPS) and Santa Rosa Public Schools (SRPS) from New Mexico, represented rural school districts. Each school district shared teacher information from the 2002-2003 school year. A total of 25,300 teachers from CPS took part in the study, 6,139 teachers from MPS, 532 teachers from GCS, 41 from JVPS and 58 from SRPS.

Barnes, Crowe and Schaefer (2008) used turnover rates from 2002-2003 to the 2003-2004 school years. The study found CPS's total turnover was 30.2 percent, MPS's total turnover was 17.4 percent, GCS's total turnover was 16.5, JVPS's total turnover was 42.9 percent; SRPS had a total turnover of 15.5 percent. Barnes, Crowe and Schaefer (2008) found that Chicago Public Schools total turnover cost was \$46,281,659.46. Each leaver cost \$9,500.92, and each mover cost \$93.08. The Milwaukee Public Schools lost a

total of \$673,829.80. Leavers cost Milwaukee schools \$861.48, and movers cost \$168.41. Granville County Schools had a total cost of \$502,959.17 in teacher turnover; teachers who left cost the district \$6,233.24 per leaver and \$1,170.36 per mover. Jemez Valley Public Schools had a total cost of \$71,123.72 in teacher turnover; leavers cost \$4,365.82 per leaver and \$635.33 per mover. The last school district that took part in the study was Santa Rosa Public Schools. The school district did not report cost information citing district level staff was stretched thin, and state reporting took precedence over the study.

Even with criticism of several of the studies regarding the financial impact of teacher turnover on school districts, there was little argument on the results that teacher turnover costs schools districts across the country millions of dollars each year. Synar and Maiden (2012) recommended that school districts start to focus their attention on teacher retention and less on teacher recruitment in order to lower the cost of school districts as it relates to teacher attrition. According to Barnes, Crowe and Schaefer (2008) there are several recommendations for school districts to consider in order managing the high cost of teacher turnover. First school districts need to use a data system in which cost can be calculated from various departments. Second, school districts must invest in teacher development in order to build up teachers in hopes that the cost of staff development programs will decrease the cost of teacher turnover in schools.

## **Chapter III**

### **Methodology**

#### **Research Design**

The study that was conducted was a qualitative study. The reason behind using a qualitative study is because of the perception the study examined from each of the participants. The study used e-mail contact as the primary source of communication as well as an online survey for gathering data. Using e-mail and a website gave the participants flexibility to participate since all participants were active educators. The study used *SurveyMonkey*, a website to help gather survey responses from the participants. The survey used open-ended questions, so the participants can answer the questions in a way that shows their own personal beliefs, attitudes, and motivation as it relates to teacher retention on their campus. The researcher used theming and coding of the data that was collected. Coding the data helped summarize the data and show the similarities and differences in the teacher and principal responses.

#### **Research Questions**

1. What indicators do teachers report that influence them to return annually to the same at-risk middle school campus in the Annabella-Christiana Independent School District?
2. What do principals in at-risk middle school campuses in the Annabella-Christiana Independent School District perceive as indicators that increase retention of their teachers?

3. How are the principals' perceptions of why teachers choose to stay similar to and different to what teachers report as to why they choose to stay at the same at-risk middle school campus?

### Setting

The study used participants representing five at-risk middle school campuses located within ACISD. ACISD is a large suburban school district in the greater Houston area. ACISD has a total of 84 campuses, consisting of 11 high schools, 17 middle schools, 52 elementary schools, and four special program facilities. ACISD was chosen because of the rapid growth the school district is currently experiencing and the large amount of opportunities teachers have to transfer to different campuses within the school district as well as the changing demographics and rapid turnover in teachers. The five campuses involved in the study were chosen because of the unique challenges facing teachers who have chosen to stay in a middle school serving a high number of at-risk students.

According to the Texas Academic Performance Report (TAPR) for 2012-2013. ACISD has a total of 109,773 students. As shown on Table 1, ACISD has a diverse student body with a growing demographic of minority students.

Table 1

#### *ACISD Student Demographics*

African-American	Hispanic	White	American Indian	Asian	Pacific Islander	Two or More Races
%	%	%	%	%	%	%
16.3	43.3	29.2	.5	8.2	.07	2.2

Table 2 shows the student demographic breakdown for each of the middle school campuses participating in the study. The significance of table 2 shows how all campuses involved in the study has a high number of minority students on the campus compared to the district percentage.

Table 2

*Campus Student Demographics*

	African-American	Hispanic	White	Asian	American-Indian	Pacific Islander	Two or More Races
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Campus 1	11.7	74.6	6.4	6.2	.1	.1	1.1
Campus 2	28.5	57.2	10	2.3	.1	0	1.9
Campus 3	27.5	53	9.5	7.3	.3	0	2.4
Campus 4	27.9	59.2	8.4	2.2	.1	.1	2.2
Campus 5	13.7	58.7	16	8.3	0	0	3.2

Table 3 shows the amount of enrolled students per campus involved in the study.

Table 3

*Total Student Enrollment Per Campus*

Campus 1	1573
Campus 2	1370
Campus 3	1417
Campus 4	1292
Campus 5	1231

Table 4 shows the representation of at-risk students in ACISD. The significance of this group of students is that research has shown that there is a higher attrition rate of teachers who work with at-risk students (Grissom, 2011).

Table 4

*ACISD Economically Disadvantage Students and At-Risk Student Population*

Economically Disadvantage Students %	At-Risk Students %
49.7	50.3

Table 5 shows the amount of students who are economically disadvantaged or are considered at-risk students for each of the six middle school campuses participating in the study.

Table 5

*Economically Disadvantage and At-Risk Students Per Campus*

	Economically Disadvantaged Students %	At-Risk Students %
Campus 1	82.2	47.6
Campus 2	74.9	42.6
Campus 3	75.1	38.9
Campus 4	72.9	41
Campus 5	66.5	38

ACISD has a total of 6,392 teachers which makes-up 50.3% of total personnel staff in the school district. Table 6 shows the amount of teachers each campus has according to the 2013 TAPR.

Table 6

*Total Teachers Per Campus*

	Total Teachers
Campus 1	92
Campus 2	86
Campus 3	89
Campus 4	85
Campus 5	77

Table 7 shows the teacher demographics for ACISD. The significance of Table 7 shows a difference in the number of minority teachers as compared to the number of non-minority teachers in the school district.

Table 7

*ACISD Teacher Demographics*

African-American %	Hispanic %	White %	American-Indian %	Asian %	Two or More Races %
10.5	12.8	73.5	.2	1.8	1.1

Table 8 shows the teacher demographic breakdown for each of the middle school campuses participating in the study. Table 8 is significant in the study because it shows the similarities and differences between the six campuses' teacher demographics involved.

Table 8

*Campus Teacher Demographics*

	African-American %	Hispanic %	White %	Asian %	American-Indian %	Pacific Islander %	Two or More Races %
Campus 1	18.9	7.2	68.7	1	0	0	4.2
Campus 2	30.3	15.7	50.4	0	1.2	0	2.3
Campus 3	13.6	10.5	72.5	1.1	2.2	0	0
Campus 4	22.8	12.4	63.6	0	0	0	1.2
Campus 5	9.8	12.9	73.4	1.3	0	0	2.6

Table 9 shows the percentage of female and male teachers in ACISD. The significance of this table 9 shows the large gap between male and female teachers in the ACISD.

Table 9

*ACISD Teacher Gender*

Male %	Female %
18.3	81.7

Table 10 shows the difference in the percent of male to female teachers on the six campuses that are involved in the study.

Table 10

*Percent of Male and Female Teaching Staff Per Campus*

	Male %	Female %
Campus 1	26.1	72.9
Campus 2	27.3	72.7
Campus 3	16	73.2
Campus 4	19.6	65.3
Campus 5	27.7	72.3

Table 11 shows the years of service teachers have in ACISD. The significance of this table 11 shows the difference in the percent of the teachers who are beginning teachers compared to the teachers who have taught multiple years and have been retained by the school district.



Table 11

*ACISD Teacher Experience*

Beginning Teacher	1-5 Years	6-10 Years	11-20 Years	20 + Years
%	%	%	%	%
5.2	28.7	24.9	27.1	14.1

Table 12 shows the experience breakdown the teaching staff has for each of the middle school campuses participating in the study. Table 12 is significant to the study because it shows the percent of teachers on each campus that have multiple years of teaching experience and the percent of teachers that are new to each campus.

Table 12

*Experience Of Teachers Per Campus*

	Beginning Teacher	1-5 Years	6-10 Years	11-20 Years	20 + Years
	%	%	%	%	%
Campus 1	7.5	34	27.3	19.1	12
Campus 2	6.9	43.8	21	22.4	5.8
Campus 3	10.5	29	25.5	28.1	6.9
Campus 4	12.8	34.5	24.4	15.8	12.5
Campus 5	14.2	30.5	23.4	19	12.9

Note. All campuses have at least forty percent of their total teaching staff with five or less years of experience.

**Participants**

Teacher turnover is of great concern to principals who are leaders on at-risk campuses. Many at-risk campuses deal with extra stressors that push away teachers who have found it difficult to accomplish their goals for their students. According to the American Federation of Teachers (2007), joblessness, poverty, gang violence, and drug abuse impact the daily lives of at-risk students. These extra stressors play a major role in

teachers' not wanting to return to the campus. Since the study focused on the retention of teachers of at-risk middle schools, the participants in the study included five principals representing five different at-risk middle school campuses located in ACISD and 68 teachers who represented five different at-risk middle schools. The participants were divided into two groups. The five participating campuses involved in the study were chosen because of the unique challenges facing middle schools that serve a high number of at-risk students.

Table 13 shows the years that each of the five campuses involved in the study opened its doors to students.

Table 13

*Year Campus Opened*

Campus	Year Opened
Campus 1	1955
Campus 2	2007
Campus 3	2005
Campus 4	1993
Campus 5	1982

The first group will be a principal group. Of the five principals involved in the study two of the principals were males and three of the principals were female. The following charts represents the years of service each of the principals has on their current campus.

Table 14

*Principals Years Of Service On Current Campus*

Years Of Service	2	3	6	7
Principals	1	1	2	1

The second group will be a teacher group. The teachers selected for this study had a minimum of two years of experience on their current campus. The following table shows the amount of the teachers who were male and female that participated in the study.

Table 15

*Gender Of Teachers Involved In The Study*

	Males %	Females %
Teachers Participants	11.7	88.2

The following table shows the years of service teachers have on their current at-risk middle school campus. The table 16 shows years in experience in groups of the teachers who participated in the study.

Table 16

*Teachers Years of Service On Current At-Risk Middle School Campus*

Years Of Service	2-4	5-7	8-10	11-13	14+
Percent of Teachers	17.6%	27.9%	42.6%	.04%	.05%

The following table shows the route that teachers took in order to become a certified teacher. The significance of the table shows a large gap between teachers who attended a traditional teacher program at a four-year university as compared to the teachers who attended an alternative teacher certification program.

Table 17

*Certification Routes Of Teacher Participants Involved In The Study*

Certification Route	Teachers
Traditional Four-Year Certification Route	59.4%
Alternative Teacher Certification Route	40.5%

**Procedures**

The study started by contacting the research and development department of ACISD for approval to hold the study on five at-risk middle school campuses located in the school district. The study was also be submitted to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the University of Houston for approval of human participants in the study. Once the approval for the study from both the school district and IRB was obtained the study was divided into three phases.

The first phase was to create two separate surveys through an online survey gathering website such as *SurveyMonkey*. The principals' survey consisted of two parts. The first part of the survey covered demographic questions such as gender and years of service on current campus. The purpose of the demographic questions was to gather further information on the participants of the study. The second portion of the survey was an open-ended question that related to the principal's perceptions of why teachers have chosen to stay on their campus. Two members of the doctoral cohort then reviewed the surveys for clarity and understanding. Once the surveys had been tested the surveys were edited with recommendations from the doctoral students who tested the survey.

The second survey created was a survey for teachers who took part in the study. The survey was created via a website *SurveyMonkey*. The teacher survey consisted of two

parts. The first part of the study was a demographic section, which included years of service on current campus, gender and what certification route was taken by the teacher. The purpose of the demographic section was to gather further information on the participants of the study. The second part of the survey included questions related to why the teacher chooses to remain on the same at-risk middle school campus. Two members of the doctoral cohort reviewed the surveys to check for clarity and understanding before they were sent to the participants.

The second phase, included gaining participation consent forms from individual principals and teachers and having the participants complete the online survey. The researcher used a research sponsor who is a current ACISD employee, as required by ACISD guidelines, to initially contact potential participants for consent to participate. The principals were initially contacted through e-mail by the research sponsor. The e-mail introduced the study to the campus principals and asked for their personal consent to participate in the study. Principals were given a one-week time frame to return the consent form to the research sponsor. Once principals agreed to participate in the study the principal received an e-mail from the researcher asking the principal to complete a survey through the online website *SurveyMonkey*. The e-mail contained a website link that took the principal directly to the survey. The principals were given a week time frame to complete the survey. The survey began by asking the principal demographic information such as gender, years of service and race. After the principal completed the demographic section of the survey the principal answered one open-ended question. The open-ended question asked principals what they perceive as the reasons teachers choose to stay in the same at-risk middle school. This process will be repeated with all five

campuses involved in the study, and the process will remain the same in order to ensure consistency.

Following each the principal's completion of the survey the research sponsor e-mailed teachers who had two or more years of experience on all five at-risk middle school campuses. The initial e-mail will discussed the impact of the study on their campus, assure the teachers that their participation in the study would be keep anonymous and request the teacher to sign a consent form and e-mail the consent form back to the research sponsor. The teachers were given a four-day period to return the e-mail. Once teachers returned the consent form by e-mail to the research sponsor stating their approval to be part of the study, the teachers received an e-mail from the researcher with a link to the online survey gathering website *SurveyMonkey* for the teachers to complete the survey. The teachers were given a week time frame to complete the survey. The teachers answered a demographic portion of the survey asking for gender, race, and years of service on the campus and whether they completed a traditional certification program or an alternative certification program. The teachers then answer one open-ended question asking what factors have impacted the teacher's decision to choose to remain at their campus. This process was repeated with all teachers who volunteered to participate in the study and the process was kept the same in order to ensure consistency among all participants.

Phase three of the study was to analyze the data. The research looked for themes and code that were presented in the answers of all participants. The method used came from Gribbs (2011) explanation of analyzing qualitative data. Analyzing began by collecting all data from the surveys. First, demographic information from the principal's

data of the survey was charted. Second, demographic information from the teacher's surveys were charted. After the demographic portion has been input to chapter three the researcher began to analyze the open-ended question portion of the surveys. The researcher reviewed the answers from the principals' open-ended question. First the researcher read each answer and took side notes and looked for key words from what the principals perceive as reasons for teachers returning to their campus. After notes have been made, the researcher placed the key words that were found into themes and created labels for the themes and coding was conducted to show a quantitative summary of the data received from the surveys. After the research has identified the themes and coded the themes the researcher will look for significance of the codes in relation to the research questions.

After analyzing the principals' answers to the open-ended questions, the researcher then analyzed teacher responses. The researcher combined all of the teacher responses onto one document. Once responses have been compiled, the researcher read through the answers and make side notes about major factors that teachers believe play a role in returning to their campuses. Once the major factors had been found, the researcher then grouped factors into themes and create codes. To show a quantitative summary of the data received from the survey the researcher used the codes that were created. The analyzing of the data process was repeated to insure consistency between both groups of participants in the study.

Once all responses were analyzed and coded, the researcher used the summary of the coded themes to show similarities and differences between what the principal

perceived were factors in teachers returning and what campus teachers reported as the factors that influence them to remain at their campus.

### **Instruments**

To gather the data, first the principals completed a survey where they were asked a series of questions. The questions in the survey were divided into two parts. The first part of the survey was questions about personal demographic information. The second part of the survey included questions that related to the retention of teachers on their campus. The principals' questions were as follows. For the principals' demographic information, they will have a total of three questions.

1. Male or Female
2. Ethnicity
3. How many years have you been principal at your current campus?

The principal then answered one question that related to the retention of teachers on their campus.

1. What do you perceive to be the most important factors in teachers choosing to return to your campus on a yearly basis?

The teachers who choose to be part of the study were given a survey. The survey was divided into two parts. The first part of the survey was personal demographic information. The second part of the teachers' survey was an open-ended question that asks teachers to state what they believe keep them returning to their campus on a yearly basis. The following questions were part of the demographic part of the study.

1. Male or Female
2. Ethnicity



3. How many years have you been at your current campus?
4. Did you take part in a traditional teacher certification program or an alternative certification program?

The teachers then answered the following open-ended question that related to their personal experiences and why they choose to return to their campus.

1. What factors do you believe keep you returning annually to the same at-risk middle school campus?

## **Chapter IV**

### **Results**

#### **Introduction**

The study that was conducted was a qualitative study that focused on finding the reasons teachers choose to stay in at-risk middle schools in the ACISD. The study looked to answer three questions.

1. What indicators do teachers report that influence them to return annually to the same at-risk middle school campus in the Annabella-Christiana Independent School District?
2. What do principals in at-risk middle school campuses in the Annabella-Christiana Independent School District perceive as indicators that increase retention of their teachers?
3. How are the principals' perceptions of why teachers choose to stay similar to and different to what teachers report as to why they choose to stay at the same at-risk middle school campus?

Surveys were administered through an online data gathering service titled [surveymonkey.com](https://www.surveymonkey.com). There were a total of 73 participants involved in the study. The participants represented five at-risk middle school campuses. Five of participants were campus principals and 68 of the participants were at-risk middle school teachers. Once the teachers' data was collected by the researcher the data was coded in order to group responses into common themes. The researcher found eleven reasons that teachers reported as factors influencing them to return annually to the same at-risk middle school

campus. The principals' data found three responses that principals believed were factors in teachers choosing to return to the same at-risk middle school campus.

Data is presented in three tables. Table 18 shows the percent of teachers who reported the specific theme as a reason for returning to the same at-risk middle school campus. Table 19 represents the principals' data and shows the number of principals that reported what the principals perceived as the reason for teachers returning to the same at-risk middle school campus. Table 20 shows a comparison between what the principals perceive as reasons for teachers returning and what teachers state as factors for returning to the same at-risk middle school campus. Of the 68 teachers who participated in the study, 42 percent of the teachers stated multiple reasons for returning to the same at-risk middle school. Of the five principals who participated in the study, two of the principals stated multiple reasons for what they believed impacted a teacher's decision to return to the same at-risk middle school.

## **Results**

The simple market theory states that employees will stay where they feel good about where they work (Grissom, 2011). Teachers are no different than any other profession. Shin and Reyes (1995) stated that a teacher's job satisfaction would ultimately determine the commitment of that teacher to their campus. This study attempted to find why teachers choose to stay in at-risk middle school campuses. Second, the study looked at what the principals of at-risk middle schools believe keep teachers returning. Lastly, the study compared the results between what teachers responded as factors when determining to return and what the principals perceive as factors for teachers when determining to return.

The first question that the study investigated was:

1. What indicators do teachers report that influences them to return to the same at-risk middle school campus in the Annabella-Christiana Independent School District?

Table 18 shows the percent of teachers who reported one or more of the following reasons as to why they choose to return to the same at-risk middle school campus.

Table 18

*Common Responses Among 68 Teachers That Reported Why They Choose To Return To The Same At-Risk Middle School Campus*

Indicators For Returning	Percent of Teachers Who Responded
Working With Students	58.8
Working With At-Risk Students	33.8
Campus Culture	27.9
Feeling Of Making A Difference	19.1
Campus Administration	17.6
Student Achievement	.07
Socioeconomic Personal Experiences	.04
Location	.04
Classroom Autonomy	.04
Job Security	.01
Financial Reasons	.01

Note. See Appendix A for full list of open-ended responses from teacher survey.

The study found eleven responses of the 68 teachers who participated in the study. The eleven responses that were stated as reasons for returning included working with and helping students, specifically working with at-risk students, campus culture, the feeling of making a difference, campus administration, student achievement, personal experiences similar to at-risk students, location, classroom autonomy, job security and financial reasons.

Of the 68 teachers who participated in the study 58.8 percent of the teachers stated that working with students was the number one reason influencing their decision to

return to the same at-risk middle school campus. Teachers stated helping students be successful, creating opportunities through education, building relationships and simply having heart for their students gave them the motivation to return to their campus.

Williams (2003) also found in a similar study that teachers became motivated and found the drive to continue in the field of education when they see the success their students have after the help the teacher has given them. Williams (2003) also found that teachers are motivated to return yearly because of the personal challenge of being able to use their talents and help students overcome academic and life obstacles.

Along with working with the students, teachers stated that the ability to build strong teacher to student relationships was another reason that teachers stated they returned. Grayson and Alvarez (2008) also found that teachers who build strong relationships with their students found their work more enjoyable and remained more motivated to continue to work with their students. Lortie and Clement (1975) also found that teachers find a greater reward of their work when they have positive relationships with their students.

Appendix C, reflects the open-ended responses teachers gave that felt working with students was a major reason they choose to return to the same at-risk middle school campus.

Of the 68 teachers that participated in the study the second largest factor influencing teachers' decision to return was working specifically with at-risk students. 33.8 percent of the teachers who participated in the survey specifically addressed this factor as a reason for returning annually to the same at-risk middle school. Bobek (2002) also found that the feeling of student success with students who bring in personal

challenges is a major factor in influencing teachers' decision to return to education yearly.

Appendix D, reflects the open-ended responses teachers gave that felt working specifically with at-risk students was another major reason they choose to return to the same at-risk middle school campus.

Another leading response of the teachers who participated in the study cited having a strong campus culture influenced their decision to return to the same at-risk middle school campus. Of the 68 participants 27.9 percent responded to the open-ended question of the survey and mentioned responses that stated relationships with their team, staff and overall climate of their campus was a reason for returning to the campus. In a similar study Anderman, Belzer and Smith (1991) found that school culture played a major role in shaping teacher satisfaction. Campuses that had a high focus on the campus culture had higher teacher satisfaction, and therefore increased the commitment to the campus from their teachers. Nieto (2003) also found that when teachers worked together in a positive relationship and have a collaborative partnership the teachers become more motivated and invested in the success of the campus.

Appendix E, reflects the open-ended responses teachers gave that felt having a strong and positive campus culture was a reason they choose to return to the same at-risk middle school campus.

Many teachers enter the profession of education with the motivation of making a difference in the lives of their students. Of the 68 participants in the study 19.1 percent stated that the reason they choose to stay at the same at-risk middle school campus is because of the feeling that they are making a difference. Skilbeck and Connell (2003)

found that in a teacher survey of why educators choose education 8.3 percent of those who participated stated that the feeling of making a difference in the lives of humans and society plays a significant role in their choice to work in education.

Appendix F, reflects the open-ended responses teachers gave that felt that what they do as a teacher is making a difference in the lives of their students influenced their decision to return to the same at-risk middle school campus.

Campus administration was another response that many of the teachers who participated in the study stated influenced their decision to return to the same at-risk middle school campus. Of the 68 participants in the study 17.6 percent felt that campus administration had an impact of their decision to return to the same at-risk middle school campus. Ladd (2009) also found in a teacher retention survey conducted in North Carolina that campus administration was a leading factor when teachers were determining whether or not to return to their campus. Ingersoll (1999) conducted a similar study and found that support from campus administration was a leading factor impacting the teachers' decision to stay on their campus.

Appendix G, reflects the open-ended responses teachers gave that felt campus administration was a reason they choose to return to the same at-risk middle school campus.

Another factor that influenced teachers to return to the same at-risk middle school campus was the socioeconomic experiences that teachers had personally experienced. Of the 68 participants of the study .04 reported that personal experiences within the same socioeconomic status as at-risk students was a factor in the decision to return to the same at-risk middle school. Lynch (2012) found in his research that a relationship with the

community played a major role in the working conditions of the campus and ultimately influenced teacher stability on the campus.

Appendix H, reflects the open-ended responses teachers gave that felt personal experiences within the same socioeconomic status as their at-risk students influenced them to choose to return to the same at-risk middle school campus.

Of the 68 participants that took part of the teacher survey .04 of the participants felt that classroom autonomy was a reason for them returning to the same at-risk middle school campus. Johnson (2006) also found that teachers have a greater satisfaction in the educational workplace if they have greater independence in their classroom. Williams (2003) also found teachers have a tendency to return yearly when given the opportunity to use their creativeness in their classroom in order to help students succeed.

Appendix I, reflects the open-ended responses teachers gave which felt that classroom autonomy was a reason they choose to return to the same at-risk middle school campus.

Of the 68 participants in the teacher portion of the study .04 reported that the location of the campus was a deciding factor when determining to return to the same at-risk middle school campus. Allensworth, Ponisciak and Mazzeo (2009) found Chicago teachers would be more willing to stay at their campus if it where located in more affluent areas with lower crime rates.

Appendix J, reflects the open-ended responses teachers gave that felt that location of the campus was a reason they choose to return to the same at-risk middle school campus.



Teachers also mentioned student achievement, as a reason for returning to their campus yearly. For the purpose of the study student achievement included the progress of students in which the teachers witness in their classrooms and not necessarily student achievement based on standardized test scores. Of the 68 participants, .07 percent stated that student achievement helped influence their decision to return to the same at-risk middle school. Boyd et al. (2010) also found similar results in a New York study in which teachers who had higher student achievement would return more often than compared to those who had lower student achievement.

Appendix K, reflects the open-ended responses teachers gave that felt that student achievement was a reason they choose to return to the same at-risk middle school campus.

Job security was another response that teachers gave as a reason to return to the same at-risk middle school campus. Of the 68 participants who took part in the study .01 stated that job security was a factor in deciding to return. Kyriacou and Coulthard (2000) stated that they found many educators entered and stayed in education because of the job security found within the profession.

Appendix L, reflects the open-ended responses teachers gave that felt that job security was a reason they choose to return to the same at-risk middle school campus.

The final reason teachers gave in response to what keeps teachers returning annually to the same at-risk middle school campus is financial incentives. Of the 68 participants in the teacher survey, .01 percent stated that financial reasons were an influencing factor when determining to remain at their at-risk middle school campus. Greenlee and Brown (2009), Olsen (1989), Thebold and Gritz (1996) and Macdonald

(1999) all found financial or monetary incentives helped teachers decided to stay in their educational position.

Appendix M, reflects the open-ended responses teachers gave that felt that classroom autonomy was a reason they choose to return to the same at-risk middle school campus.

The second question that the study investigated was:

2. What do principals in at-risk middle school campuses in the Annabella-Christiana Independent School District perceive as indicators that increase retention of their teachers?

Table 19 shows the percent of principals involved in the study that reported one or more of the following reasons as to what they believe influence their teachers to choose to return to the same at-risk middle school campus.

Table 19

*Principals Perceptions Of Why Teachers Return To The Same At-Risk Middle School*

Principal Perception Of Why Teachers Stay	Principals Who Responded
Campus Culture	4
Administrative Support	2
Working With Students	1

Note. See Appendix B for full list of open-ended responses from principal survey.

The study found three common responses among the five principals that participated in the study that showed what principals perceived as reasons that influenced teachers to choose to remain teaching in the same at-risk middle school campus. The three common responses among the five principals included campus culture, campus administration and teachers working with students.

Of the five principals that participated in the study four of the principals felt that the campus culture played a crucial role in the teachers' decision to return yearly to the same at-risk middle school campus. Spillane, Hallett and Diamond (2003) found in a similar study that the campus culture was a major factor in teachers' decision to return. Blasé and Blasé (1999) found similar data that showed that campuses that have a positive culture for teachers retain teachers more successfully.

The second response from the principals' survey found that principals believe that support from the campus administration played a factor in the teachers' decision to remain at the same at-risk middle school campus. Two of the five principals stated support from the campus administration was an influencing factor on teacher retention. Ingersoll (1999) conducted a survey on teacher retention and also found that administrative support was a major indicator on a teacher's decision to return to their campus. Ladd (2009) also found similar data that stated that a teacher's perception of the support from their campus administrators was the biggest factor in deciding whether to leave or return to their campus.

The third reason given by only one of the five principals' for teachers returning was the work teachers do with their students. One of the principals who participated in the study stated the relationship teachers build with their students and feeling teachers get when helping students be successful influence the teachers' decision to return to the same at-risk middle school campus. Chang (2009) also stated that teachers building relationships with the students are crucial because of the large amount of time a teacher spends with their students. This large amount of time can determine the amount of satisfaction the teacher has at the end of the year influencing whether the teacher decides

to go or stay on their campus. Williams (2003) also found that teachers become motivated to stay in education when they see the success stories from their students.

The third question that the study investigated was comparing what teachers reported as reasons for choosing to stay at their campuses to what the principals believed were the reasons teachers remained at the same at-risk middle school campus.

3. How are the principals' perceptions of why teachers choose to stay similar to and different to what teachers report as to why they choose to stay at the same at-risk middle school campus?

Table 20 shows the comparison of what teachers stated were reasons for returning and what principals perceived were the reasons teachers returned to the same at-risk middle school campus.

Table 20

*Comparing Results Between Teacher And Principal Responses*

Reasons for Returning	Percent of Teachers That Responded	Number of Principals That Responded	Percent Of Principals That Responded
Working With Students	58.8	1	20
Working With At-Risk Students	33.8	0	0
Campus Culture	27.9	4	80
Feeling Of Making A Difference	19.1	0	0
Campus Administration	17.6	2	40
Student Achievement	.07	0	0
Socioeconomic Personal Experiences	.04	0	0
Location	.04	0	0
Classroom	.04	0	0
Autonomy			
Job Security	.01	0	0
Financial Reasons	.01	0	0

Note. Percent of teachers is from 68 participating teachers on the teacher survey. A total of 5 principals participated in the survey.

Of the teachers who participated in the survey the largest response that teachers gave for returning yearly was working and helping students. Of the 68 teachers 58.8 percent stated working with students, building relationships with students and helping students be successful was the biggest motivator for them choosing to return to the same at-risk middle school campus. Only one principal of the five principals who participated in the study stated that teachers' enjoyment of working and helping students and building relationships with students was a factor in the teachers' decision to return to the same at-risk middle campus.

Working specifically with at-risk students was referenced by 33.8 percent of the teachers as a reason to return to their campus. In the principals' survey none of the principals referenced working with at-risk students as a reason they believed teachers choose to stay.

Campus culture was another common response found in the teacher survey. Of the 68 teachers 27.9 percent reported campus culture as a major influence when deciding to return to their campus. In the principal survey four of the five principals referenced campus culture as a reason teachers decided to return to the campus.

Teachers also stated that the feeling of making a difference in the lives of their students and in society was another major factor influencing them to stay at their campus. This indicator should note that in teacher responses making a difference in the lives of their students could mean that progress is being made in the students academic life, but could be failing on state requirements. Of the 68 teachers 19.1 percent stated the feeling of making a difference as the reason they choose to stay. None of the principals referenced that teachers feeling of making a difference in the lives of their students in their response to why teachers choose to return.

Of the 68 teachers who participated in the survey 17.6 percent stated that administrative support was a reason for returning. Of the five principals in the study two of the principals stated that administrative support played a role in a teachers decision to return to their campus.

Of the 68 teachers who participated in the study less than one percent stated that personal experiences within the same socioeconomic status, classroom autonomy, location, student achievement, job security, and financial reasons were reasons that

influenced their decisions to return to the same at-risk middle school campus. None of the principals stated teachers' personal experiences within the same socioeconomic status as at-risk students, classroom autonomy, location, student achievement, job security and financial reasons as reasons for teachers returning yearly to the same at-risk middle school campus.

### **Conclusion**

In education our teachers are the backbone to any successful school. Being able to retain our teachers becomes a crucial tool to being able create a campus full of talented educators that can reach our students and push our students to be successful. School administrators constantly seek opportunities to create an atmosphere that teachers feel comfortable in and to create an environment that teachers choose to return to yearly.

The survey data collected from teacher responses found eleven different reasons that teachers stated for returning yearly to the same at-risk middle school campus. The data found that working with students, working specifically with at-risk students and the campus culture are the three main factors that teachers stated influenced their decision to return yearly to the same at-risk middle school campus. A high percentage of the teachers also stated campus administration and the feeling of making a difference were strong indicators for teachers returning yearly to the same at-risk middle school campus. Less than one percent of the teachers reported student achievement, personal experiences with the same socioeconomic status as at-risk students, location, classroom autonomy, job security and financial reasons as factors for returning yearly to the same at-risk middle school campus.

The survey data collected from the principal responses found three perceptions as to why the principals believe teachers choose to return to the same at-risk middle school campus. The most common response was campus culture, followed by administrative support and one principal stated teachers working with students as the reasons principal believe teachers return.

Comparing the data revealed that only one principal perceived that students was the reason teachers returned. Data also conveyed that principals agreed with teachers that campus culture and campus administration were also influencing factors in teachers choosing to stay at the same at-risk middle school. None of the principals stated that they believed any other reason reported by teachers such as the feeling of making a difference, student achievement, personal experiences with same socioeconomic status as at-risk students, location of campus, classroom autonomy, job security and financial reasons as reasons teachers stay in the same at-risk middle school.



## **Chapter V**

### **Conclusion and Implications**

#### **Introduction**

On a yearly basis, principals of at-risk middle schools have seen their teachers leave their campuses for other schools or other professions. Campus administration's effort to train and build-up teachers to be effective in the classroom takes time and resources; these efforts have no long-term positive impact on the campus when teachers choose to leave.

During the process of developing new teachers to be effective educators, the school's climate, community, and student achievement can suffer as the new teacher learns how to increase their talents as an educator. According to Olson (2000) many teachers do not reach their total potential until their fifth or sixth year in education. Teacher retention allows campuses to build consistency in their staff. Having teachers return yearly allows the campus to reallocate resources from training new teachers to developing existing teachers. The study attempted to add to the body of knowledge of 'What keeps teachers teaching in at-risk middle school campuses?' and 'What can principals of at-risk middle school campuses do to insure more teachers remain at their campuses?'

The study took place in a large suburban school district located outside of Houston, Texas. The study was conducted at five at-risk middle school campuses that have similar demographics. The study utilized two surveys. Teachers who had two or more years of experience on the campus took one survey that looked to answer why the

teachers choose to remain at their at-risk middle school campus. The campus principal took the second survey, which looked at what the principal perceives to be the factors in teachers choosing to return to the same at-risk middle school campus. Finally, the study investigated the similarities and the differences between what the teachers stated as reasons for returning to the same at-risk middle school campus compared to what principals perceived as factors that impacted a teacher's decision to return to the same at-risk middle school campus.

The researcher started collecting data by sending an e-mail to all 73 participants involved in the study. The e-mail contained a link to [surveymonkey.com](https://www.surveymonkey.com) which is a website that was used by the researcher for collecting survey data. Participants were given a week timeframe to complete the survey. In order to keep the survey anonymous all surveys that were completed were compiled into one document with no name or campus attachment. The surveys that were completed were separated by whether the participants were principals or teachers.

Once all of the surveys were completed the researcher coded and themed all data. To begin coding the researcher first read through all data to become familiar with all the teacher and principal responses. Second, the researcher re-read the data that was collected and added side notes by each individual response in order to categorize what the teachers were stating as the reason for returning to the same at-risk middle school campus. The researcher then combined responses that were similar and gave the responses that were grouped together a theme determined by the group of answers.

## Discussion of Results

Of the 68 teachers who participated in the study, 42 percent stated multiple reasons for returning to the same at-risk middle school campus. Of those teachers who reported why they choose to stay at the same at-risk middle school 58.5 percent reported that they return for the students which was also found in Williams (2003) which reported that teachers became motivated and found the drive to continue in the field of education when they see the success their students have after the help the teacher has given them. 33.8 percent of the respondents stated that specifically working with at-risk students was another big part of why the teachers choose to return to the same at-risk middle school campus. The data also found 27.9 percent of the respondents stated that the campus culture influenced their decision to return yearly to the same at-risk middle school campus which was also found in research completed by Anderman, Belzer and Smith (1991) that stated school culture played a major role in shaping teacher satisfaction. Campuses that had a high focus on the campus culture had higher teacher satisfaction, and therefore increased the commitment to the campus from their teachers. 19.1 percent of the teachers reported that the feeling that they are making a difference in their students' lives helps them return yearly. The data also showed that 17.6 percent of the respondents stated campus administration as a factor in their decision to stay at the same at-risk middle school which was also found by Ladd (2009) and Ingersoll (1999) in which campus administration was stated as an indicator to why teachers stay on their current campus. Less than one percent of the teachers reported that classroom autonomy, financial reasons, job security, personal experiences with same socioeconomic status as at-risk students, location of campus and student achievement were reported as factors for

returning yearly to the same at-risk middle school campus. Table 21 shows the ranking of what the 68 teachers who participated in the study responded as the most important factor when determining to return to their campus.

Table 21

*Common Responses Among 68 Teachers That Reported Why They Choose To Return To The Same At-Risk Middle School Campus*

Reasons For Returning	Percent of Teachers Who Responded
Working With Students	58.8
Working With At-Risk Students	33.8
Campus Culture	27.9
Feeling Of Making A Difference	19.1
Campus Administration	17.6
Student Achievement	.07
Socioeconomic Personal Experiences	.04
Location	.04
Classroom Autonomy	.04
Job Security	.01
Financial Reasons	.01

Note. Percentage based on the participation of 68 middle school teachers. See Appendix A for open-ended responses.

The survey data collected from the principal responses found three perceptions as to why the principals believe teachers choose to return to the same at-risk middle school campus. Of the five principals four of the principals believed that campus culture was the leading factor as to why the teachers choose to return to the same at-risk middle school campus. Two of the five principals stated that they believed that administrative support was another factor that influenced the teachers' decision to return. Only one of the five principals stated that helping and working with students was the reason that influenced teachers to return annually to the same at-risk middle school. Table 22 shows the ranking of what principals felt were the reasons teachers returned to their campuses.

Table 22

*Percent of principals that responded to what they perceive as reasons of why teachers return to the same at-risk middle school campus.*

Principal Perception Of Why Teachers Stay	Percent of Principals Who Believe The Reasons Influences Teachers To Return
Campus Culture	80
Administrative Support	40
Teacher's Work With Students	20

Note. Percentage based on the answers of five principals who participated in the study. See Appendix B for open-ended responses.

In comparing the responses the data shows that teachers stay at their campuses because of the students, the principals believe teachers stay because of the culture of the campus. In response to the question of why teachers choose to remain at the same at-risk middle school campus, teachers most commonly referenced the work they do with their students and the relationships that they build with their students was the biggest reason for returning to their at-risk middle school campus. 58.5 percent of the teachers stated students were the number one reason for returning, 33.8 percent stated working specifically with at-risk students as the reason for returning. In the principals' response to answering what principals perceived as the reason teachers stay in at-risk middle schools only one of the five principals stated that teachers' work with students was the reasons that teachers stay. The most common referenced reason that principals stated as the reasons teachers remain on their campus was because of the campus culture that exists on their campus. The data shows that while working with students is the number one reason stated by the 68 teachers who participated in the survey campus culture ranked third among the teachers with 27.9 percent citing campus culture as a reason for returning to the campus. The second most referenced perception from principals of why teachers return was support from campus administrators. Only 17.6 percent of the teachers who

participated in the study referenced campus administrators as reasons for returning and support of campus administrators ranks fifth among the reasons reported by the 68 teachers who participated in the study.

In review of the data of both the teacher and principal surveys it could be determined that teachers greatly value the work they do with their students because the majority of the teachers who participated in the study stated in their responses that the most important reason for returning was what they do with their students. In reviewing the principals' data it could also be determined that the majority principals value the role they have on their campus in influencing teacher retention. Four of the five principals believed their work on the campus was the most important reason that influenced teacher's decision to stay. Only one principal stated what the majority of teachers stated as the reason for teachers returning, which was for the students.

### **Implications for School Leaders**

The study that was completed focused on why teachers choose to stay in at-risk middle schools in the ACISD. ACISD is a large school district with over 109,000 students according to the 2012-2013 Texas Academic Performance Report. ACISD has over 84 campuses, and of the 84 campuses, 18 are middle school campuses. ACISD is a school district that is experiencing rapid growth and changing demographics of students. Many of the campuses are not at-risk campuses in ACISD, which creates a challenge for those who are principals at at-risk campuses. Any given year the principals of at-risk campuses are challenged with trying to retain a staff that can easily have a choice of non at-risk campuses as positions open and the ability to transfer can be a yearly option for

teachers. Having an understanding of what type of educator and why educators choose to stay in at-risk middle school campus can help principals retain teachers yearly.

For campus administrators the study found emerging themes that revealed that it matters who principals hire, and it matters what type of educator principals bring on to the campus. The most reported reason teachers stated when teachers choose to stay was the teachers' drive to work with and help students. 58.5 percent of the teachers stated students as the reason they return to their campus that was also found in Williams (2003) study. Second, 33.8 percent of the teachers stated that they choose to return because of working specifically with at-risk students. The third most referenced reason was because of the campus culture in which 27.9 percent of the teachers reported when determining to return to the campus that was also found in Anderman, Belzer and Smith (1991) and Nieto (2003). Based on the top three responses from the 68 teachers who participated in the study administrators in ACISD at-risk middle schools should bring in student-centered teachers who are ready to work and help students, have empathy for students who are at-risk and are willing to work with other campus staff members. Administrators of at-risk campuses need to interview and question potential teachers and listen for responses that show the teacher's love and passion for working with students. Administrators should also listen for responses in which a potential teacher shows a strong empathy for students who are at-risk and an understanding that the teacher is entering a profession in which they can make a difference that can change the life student.

As an organization simply hiring good staff members is not enough. 27.9 percent of the teachers stated that campus culture was a big part to remaining at the campus. The

study also revealed that teachers have a strong connection to the students. Therefore, leaders would be wise to drive a campus culture that not only keeps positive feelings among staff members but as an organization the campus should create a campus culture that celebrates the success of the students and celebrates the work that teachers do with their students. Building a campus culture that celebrates and reminds teachers that their work is meaningful and makes a difference in the lives of their students could also help in retaining teachers as 19.1 percent of the 68 participating teachers stated the feeling of making a difference helped them decide to stay on their campus. The campus administration should also focus on celebrating the success and progress of students even if the students are not meeting state requirements for success on state test. The campus administration should also promote programs in which teachers and students work together such as teacher to student mentoring programs or school activities that have staff members working and leading students to accomplish goals within the campus.

As a campus works to implement a plan that addresses what will keep teachers on their campus, the campus should focus on those teachers that return annually. Finding teachers who are student first educators and teachers willing to work as part of a team in order to accomplish the goals of the campus will allow principals to build a team of talented and motivated teachers that will remain a key part of the staff yearly.

District level administrators and human resources personnel in charge of finding potential educators for at-risk middle school campuses should consider the results as a tool. The results of the study can give educational administrators a better understanding of the type of educator that would have a greater chance of staying long-term at an at-risk middle school campus. Human resources department can also begin to create a pool of



potential teachers for campus administrators to choose from that would include teachers how have already shown through district interviews as a candidate who would be a good fit for an at-risk middle school campus based on their responses. Human resources can also begin to train campus administrators on how to interview and how to find teachers that would be an educator who can potentially stay long-term on an at-risk middle school campus.

Using the results of the study allow administrators to see the motivators that were cited as the most common reasons for returning to the same at-risk middle school campus. Of the most important motivators, being student-centered, specifically working with at-risk students, enjoying a positive campus culture and the feeling of making a difference in the lives of the students were the most common themes that teachers stated as reasons for returning.

### **Implications for Further Research**

The study that was completed focused on a very specific target as it pertained to the teachers, principals, campuses and school district that were chosen for the study. While results of the study were from a targeted group, data could be used in a meta-analysis study of why teachers choose to stay in at-risk middle schools.

There are several recommendations for further research that can be made to to a study of why teachers stay in at-risk middle school campuses. First, to better understand what the principals are thinking a new line of questions can be added to the study that will help the principal answer the questions with deeper thought. Second, adding interviews among the principals could give the researcher an opportunity to ask follow-up questions and therefore be able to get richer answers from the principal's perspective.

Third, a change in the way data was collected can be done in order to separate data by campus. Dividing the data into five separate groups can allow data to be reviewed by campus. This would allow campus principals to see specifically what the teachers from their campus are saying keeps them at their individual campus.

The research process was created and designed to allow for as little time commitment as possible for participants in the study since all involved were active professionals in the field of education. Most of the work of the participants was done through e-mail and online. The process was created in order to get more participants willing to take part in the study because of the little time commitment that was required of the participant. Future researchers might want a more personal connection with potential participants by personally meeting with potential participants to explain the process of the study and discuss the benefits to the field of education. Having a meeting in person might attract more participation among teachers.

Working in an at-risk middle school campus will always bring unique challenges to educators and will test and push our teachers' emotional endurance. When campus administrators find those educators who are student-centered and have empathy for the challenges that face our at-risk population, then you have found the educator who will be willing to return year after year to the same at-risk middle school campus.

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## **Appendix A**

**Open-Ended Responses To Survey Question: “What factors do you believe keep you returning annually to the same at-risk middle school campus”**

*Open-Ended Responses To Survey Question: What factors do you believe keep you returning annually to the same at-risk middle school campus?*

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Teacher Responses

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A heart for the kids - they truly need someone

The support of the administration and school.

I have an opportunity to expose these kids to a much bigger world than what most of them have ever experienced. It is rewarding to take students who often times have barely ventured outside of their own neighborhood and not only learn things about our world but start to make connections and show understanding of our world. I find that my extra time and hard work pays off and the pay off is tangible through their reactions and responses to lessons as we progress through the year.

The potential to make a positive impact on students who actually need and value your support and guidance since many do not have a strong support system at home.

The students. I know I have a responsibility & desire to teach my content area; however, I also know my job is so much greater than that. I truly know it is my calling to be at title 1 schools. These kids need to be taught behavior/social skills as well as they need to know that they are loved and cared for; they do matter in this world. They are each here for a purpose- no person is an "accident or mistake" which many of my students over the years have told me this is what they are told at home. I want them to know they can be the first person in their family to go to college. They are just as capable as any other person to have the career they so desire. I want them to feel success and have the confidence to accomplish their dreams. My hope is for them to set goals and know they CAN reach them. Often, their dreams are stifled by being told others can do it, but not them. They can change that mind set by having someone believe in them, & in turn, they will believe in themselves. Every one deserves a chance.

The kids we teach are so appreciative of any extra attention. They are truly the sweetest kids in the world! I feel like I'm making a difference in their lives not only with the skills I teach them in class, but also with life skills in general. I also appreciate the families who generally are very supportive of the schools and show respect toward teachers in general.

I have quite a bit of autonomy in my classroom to do whatever is needed for each group of kids I get. The staff I work with are supportive and helpful. We regularly see good results with the majority of the kids. My job expectations are clear rather than ambiguous, so I know what I need to do each day.

1.) The students I teach deserve to learn just as much as any other student. 2.) The curriculum I teach is extremely important for these specific students to learn and use for their future. 3.) The relationships that I have established with the teachers on my hallway.

Pay, loan forgiveness, good staff

My belief is that every child can learn and be successful socially and academically. If I put in more effort, higher expectation, good relationship, respect, and care; I believe these students in at-risk middle school campus can be successful academically and socially. I believe some of these students experience few affections from their parents because parents have to work more hours or multiple jobs to put food on the table; therefore they are always tired. As a teacher, my showing affection and making the students feel welcome, accepted, loved and cared for; can boost their moral to learn and study to become somebody and be appreciative in the future.

My desire to give back and help others along with the relationships I build with my students are factors that motivate me to return to my at-risk middle school.

Having the security of the job is a big factor. Being involved in extra-curricular activities with the students. Colleagues at my campus that I have built a relationship with over the years. It certainly isn't for the incentives or the extra work that is required to work at a Title I campus.

The sense of community among the staff.

I believe working in an at-risk school allows me to touch lives in need of understanding, support, and guidance. I'm certain that my place is in this campus when many of my former students return to visit or keep in touch by e-mail just to share with me their successful stories in their life. I believe this is my place when students come back just to ask me for advice. Besides the academic success of my students, their journey for success in life is what keeps me here.

I feel like I can make a bigger difference in the lives of my students here.

The students' neediness, both socially and emotionally, and their eagerness to learn.

I became a teacher so that I could make a difference in students' lives just as my teachers made a difference in mine. My first teaching position was at an at-risk elementary campus, and I found the work there very rewarding. I moved to my present campus after teaching at another school for eight years because my principal was opening the school. I wanted to make a change, and I saw an opportunity to help build a school culture "from scratch." Students at my school face obstacles that other students do not, and seeing them succeed in the classroom is a powerful motivator.

Location of school, supportive team members and majority of students want to learn and do their best.

The students are what keep me returning to the same at-risk middle school. I enjoy working with these type of students and have found a way to communicate effectively with them.

I love working with the students and teachers. It feels like my work makes a difference.

Making a difference in children's lives, being challenged to think outside the box to reach the kids, and the support and encouragement from my peers and administrators.

Leaving a lasting impact on my students. Planting seeds of love and support in the beginning and seeing the kids blossom is what brings me back. I also love the fact that we can push our kids to achieve when society tells them no.

I have a passion for students in public education. I discovered early in my teaching career that students who enter our system with socio-economic challenges really had my heart. I have loved working with each and every student, all walks of economic life. The students in a Title I campus are my favorite, however. As I share my content, I have had much to offer students to help recoup some experiences they may not have enjoyed yet in life. I am here because these students captured my heart, and I love educational relationships with them as we gain insights & experiences with curriculum and the extra-curricular opportunities. I love teaching any and all students, but the special work that presents itself in a diverse, socio-economically challenged demographic, such as is found at, is where I am at home and why I keep coming back.

I believe I have kept coming back to this campus due to the continued leadership and sense of family that we have here at this campus. I also see how much the teachers care to help the students and want to see them strive to such new levels academically and personally. I really can't see myself anywhere else!

At one point on my current campus, we had a strong administrative team and principal who had a vision of children first. Our principal at that time was very supportive and not only put students first, he had a connection with the community. At this time, I enjoy working with the students and the challenges we face everyday. I truly believe administration sets the tone for the staff, with support from them, teachers and students are successful.

Great support from the team, feeling like you are really making a difference, letting children know that they can be and do what they want, creating a society that truly knows that it is not where you come from but what decisions you make that create who you are.

I love how appreciative the kids are of you. The fact that years later they come back to give hugs or to talk to you is amazing! I've taught at a non-title 1 school and the kids were not like that there.

The toughest kids need the best teachers. Students from affluent schools will learn in spite of the quality, dedication, creativity, or ability of their teachers - at risk kids will succeed because of them. Affluent kids come with more experiences, greater vocabulary, strong family support for education, and intrinsic motivation - at risk kids need teachers who will inspire them, challenge them, and use every available resource to reach them.

The needs to the kids. I truly believe that some of the kids at at-risk middle school need more people (including teachers) believing in them. They sometimes have few if any support systems at home. Work with students that are at-risk, while challenging, is also more rewarding for me. They need you more, and the opportunity for intrinsic rewards can be so wonderful and fulfilling (for both you and them).

Working with students in our demographic make-up. Comradery and enthusiasm of the staff. Loyalty to the Vision

Returning to an at-risk campus for the past ten years is only for the students. I understand that students don't choose to be at-risk. It's been exciting to teach almost all the siblings of a family and make the connection with them and parents. The students don't forget the impression I made on them and that's priceless. I am committed to the students and just because they are at-risk doesn't mean they don't deserve the best teachers.

I feel like I can make more of a difference in an at-risk students live. At-risk students need teachers that understand them and really care about them in order for them to want to put in the effort to do their best and learn. I really care about what happens to my students and I want to see them make good choices for their life. Sometimes it takes a teacher believing in them to get them to make good choices.

The relationships you can form with the kids is a powerful motivator

feeling like making a difference in student and world

I have a heart for the students and want to see them be successful.

The students need our support no matter what, give them the sense of belonging. These students need our help the most and I want to help them

I have a sincere investment in teaching at-risk students. They need teachers with experience, dedication, and a firm understanding of content. I also have a sense of ownership to this campus.

Students returning to say, "Thank you" once they have graduated from high school or college.

The students because I feel like I impact their lives more than we know.

Factors include: sense of mission, being able to see clear progress, independence in planning, and good fit for my family (life balance). However, each year leaving is a consideration. So far, the plusses have outweighed the minuses. Minuses have included feeling overwhelmed, feeling unsupported (both campus and district), lack of camaraderie, lack of professional consideration from both administration and colleagues. It's usually a close call to stay or go.

I love working with this age of student. They are diverse and in a time of great learning curve potential.

I was an at-risk kid growing up, and I totally get that type of student.

Working with the at risk students and helping them to be successful and working with teachers who really care about the students.

The factors that I believe that keep me returning annually to the same at-risk middle school campus including enjoying helping students who genuinely want help, cooperative parents who encourage their children to listen to the teacher, and supportive administrators.

I truly believe that it is because of the demographics of the students at our campus. They look at school as a safe place with consistency. Something that they don't get at home. They know that every day 7:10-2:30 they can be at the same place and have the same schedule and not have to worry about the inconsistencies that take place at their homes on a regular basis.

How the staff works together to guide the student's to success.

Due to their economic status, students at Watkins are not afforded the same opportunities as students at some of our other middle school campuses. As a group, my students do not seem to realize the importance technology will play in their futures. It is my goal to arm them with all the skills and knowledge I possibly can about what choices they have available concerning their futures. The better informed they are at this level, the more educated decisions they will make when they enter high school. My BIM students can be certified in Microsoft Word, Power Point, Access, and Excel. These certifications will look great on their resumes and give them a head start in the business world over their peers. Many of my students are not planning on pursuing a higher level of education so I want them to know about trade schools, and the technology classes available in high school to prepare them to immediately enter the workforce. My students have more hardships to overcome so we must give them hope for their futures if we want them to succeed.

I really enjoy teaching at-risk students because I feel that I can better meet their needs because I came from the same economically disadvantaged, at risk group. I feel that I know what these children go thru on a daily basis in terms of the challenges from home.

I can relate to the student's needs and they can relate to my teaching style.

Student relationships

I would not return if I did not feel I had administration support, and a great team. Without support from AP's and principals, I feel like this job would be very difficult. Little appreciation 'gifts' help, such as lunch once a semester. Teachers do not mind working their behind off, but it's nice to know that the hard work is noticed.

Enjoy the challenge of working with at risk students. They need more attention and assistance compared to their counterparts who are not at risk.

Support from administration, challenge of teaching students that are at-risk, student/teacher relationships, content team support

Some factors that keep me returning to the same at risk middle school campus are: The consistency and respect from the administration. I also can see the difference I make in my students lives. In addition to the support from parents without them being too intrusive. Which gives me the opportunity to focus on my students and their learning more often.

My understanding for at-risk students. Also the ability to be able to demonstrate progress and success.

1) Principal flexibility 2) Student-teacher relationship 3) Successful results

To work in a title one campus you need to have a love, care, and compassion of teaching. Our student need a teacher willing to go the extra mile to meet them where they are at in order to see their success. I'm sure all who are teachers will say the same, no matter what campus they are located. It takes a certain type of person to teach.

The most important factor to me is a supportive administration that challenges you yet does not penalize you if your results aren't necessarily at the highest level. If the administration can see growth in student learning as well as growth in building connections with students, then you are more likely to stay. Recognition of hard work and working on the best behalf of students over pure test scores helps. Basically, have administration that can see the whole picture and gives you recognition (big or small-mostly small) for your daily trials and successes goes a long way towards building morale and retaining teachers.

I truly believe that I can relate to these students. As a minority parent, before becoming a teacher, I knew what I was looking for from the teachers and I knew my expectations for my child. I try to provide that to the parents of the students I teach. In addition, my style of teaching and expectations do not waiver because of the economic status. I continue to raise the bar and help them reach it by alternative means. Those alternative means are personal connections that means something to the student but connects to my content. There is no place I would rather be than at my school.

I am given a large amount of latitude to create what is best for the students. As such, we are very successful in the class, both with regard to grades and retention (I teach a high-level class that requires a minimum grade to remain) and STAAR scores.

I think the reason I continue to return is a combination of several factors. I am comfortable around this age group and the curriculum. I like the people I work with here. I have felt mostly supported and listened to by the administration. I feel a sense of accomplishment and it feeds my need to help people with less opportunities. I have time to do other things in my life. The parents are not as involved therefore less critical of me.-

I believe in dealing with at-risk students, as teachers, we need to convince them that they can do it. As oppose to affluent students, proving to them that it is worth it. In my subject area, at-risk students are usually very excited about my content area because they are not pulled in different directions such as piano lessons, ballet and parents who would see my content area just as a hobby. Working solely with the kids is much easier than dealing with affluent helicopter parents who may undermine the teacher. However, it would very refreshing to have parent support at at-risk middle school campus but for the most part, we can do what is needed for success to happen.

I feel like I truly make a difference in their lives.

The staff is wonderful and I love the kids

Campus culture and loyalty; I make a difference to my students and they need me. My administration shows they value and trust me. When I express a concern, they listen and address it. I feel like my administration has the same heart for my students that I have.

Administration that supports me and empowers me. Staff that is involved and has the same family type mindset. Location.

I love working with students who need the extra help

Close to my house, I like the students, I enjoy working with my team, haven't had any issues with Admin team, enjoy my work environment



## **Appendix B**

**Open-Ended Responses To Survey Question: “What do you perceive to be the most important factor in your teachers choosing to return to your campus on a yearly basis”**

*Open-Ended Responses To Survey Question? What do you perceive to be the most important factor in your teachers choosing to return to your campus on a yearly basis?*

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Principal Responses

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A supportive school wide culture that can emphasize with what a teacher on our campus goes through.

Support from other staff as well as administration

The connection the staff has with the students and the feeling of pride they have in helping the students succeed and grow.

Supportive Administration (student discipline, professional development) and supportive teacher team (teamwork and positive relationships)

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Supportive Environment

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## **Appendix C**

### **Open Ended Responses from Teachers Who Reported Working with Students as a Factor in Their Retention**

*Open Ended Responses From Teachers Who Reported Working With Students As A Factor In Their Retention*

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**Teacher Response**

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**A heart for the kids** - they truly need someone

**The students neediness, both socially and emotionally, and their eagerness to learn.**

**I have a heart for the students** and want to see them be successful.

**The students need our support no matter what, give them the sense of belonging.**

These students need our help the most and I want to help them

**I love working with this age of student.** They are diverse and in a time of great learning curve potential.

**The factors that I believe that keep me returning annually to the same at-risk middle school campus including enjoying helping students who genuinely want help,** cooperative parents who encourage their children to listen to the teacher, and supportive administrators.

**I can relate to the student's needs** and they can relate to my teaching style.

I think the reason I continue to return is a combination of several factors. **I am comfortable around this age group** and the curriculum. I like the people I work with here. I have felt mostly supported and listened to by the administration. I feel a sense of accomplishment and it feeds my need to help people with less opportunities. I have time to do other things in my life. The parents are not as involved therefore less critical of me.-

**I love working with students who need the extra help**

Close to my house, **I like the students**, I enjoy working with my team, haven't had any issues with Admin team, enjoy my work environment

**I have an opportunity to expose these kids to a much bigger world than what most them have ever experienced.** It rewarding to take students who often times have barely ventured outside of their own neighborhood and not only learn things about our world but start to make connects and show understanding of our world. I find that my extra time and hard work pays off and the pay off is tangible through their reactions and responses to lessons as we progress through the year.

**The potential to make a positive impact on students** who actually need and value your support and guidance since many do not have a strong support system at home.

**The students.** I know I have a responsibility & desire to teach my content area; however, I also know my job is so much greater than that. I truly know it is my calling to be at title 1 schools. These kids need to be taught behavior/social skills as well as they need to know that they are loved and cared for; they do matter in this world. They are each here for a purpose- no person is an "accident or mistake" which many of my students over the years have told me this is what they are told at home. I want them to know they can be the first person in their family to go to college. They are just as capable as any other person to have the career they so desire. I want them to feel success and have the confidence to accomplish their dreams. My hope is for them to set goals and know they CAN reach them. Often, their dreams are stifled by being told others can do it, but not them. They can change that mind set by having someone believe in them, & in turn, they will believe in themselves. Every one deserves a chance.

**1.) The students I teach deserve to learn just as much as any other student.** 2.) The curriculum I teach in extremely important for these specific students to learn and use for their future. 3.) The relationships that I have established with the teachers on my hallway.

**My believe is that every child can learn and be successful socially and academically.** If I put in more effort, higher expectation, good relationship, respect, and care; I believe these students in at risk middle school campus can be success academically and socially. I believe some of these students experience few affections from their parents because parents have to work more hours or multiple jobs to put food on the tables therefore they are always tired. **As a teacher, my showing affection and making the students feel welcome, accepted, loved and cared for; can boost their moral to learn and study to become somebody and be appreciative in future.**

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**I became a teacher so that I could make a difference in students' lives just as my teachers made a difference in mine.** My first teaching position was at an at-risk elementary campus, and I found the work there very rewarding. I moved to my present campus after teaching at another school for eight years because my principal was opening the school. I wanted to make a change, and I saw an opportunity to help build a school culture "from scratch." **Students at my school face obstacles that other students do not, and seeing them succeed in the classroom is a powerful motivator.**

**The students are what keep me returning to the same at-risk middle school.** I enjoy working with these type of students and have found a way to communicate effectively with them.

**I have a passion for students in public education.** I discovered early in my teaching career that students who enter our system with socio-economic challenges really had my heart. I have loved working with each and every student, all walks of economic life. The students in a Title I campus are my favorite, however. As I share my content, I have had much to offer students to help recoup some experiences they may not have enjoyed yet in life. **I am here because these students captured my heart, and I love educational relationships with them as we gain insights & experiences with curriculum and the extra-curricular opportunities.** I love teaching any and all students, but the special work that presents itself in a diverse, socio-economically challenged demographic, such as is found at, is where I am at home and why I keep coming back.

**The toughest kids need the best teachers.** Students from affluent schools will learn in spite of the quality, dedication, creativity, or ability of their teachers - at risk kids will succeed because of them. Affluent kids come with more experiences, greater vocabulary, strong family support for education, and intrinsic motivation - **at risk kids need teachers who will inspire them, challenge them, and use every available resource to reach them.**

**The needs to the kids.** I truly believe that some of the kids at at-risk middle school need more people (including teachers) believing in them. They sometimes have few if any support systems at home. **Work with students that are at-risk, while challenging, is also more rewarding for me.** They need you more, and the opportunity for intrinsic rewards can be so wonderful and fulfilling (for both you and them).

**Working with students in our demographic make-up.** Comradery and enthusiasm of the staff. Loyalty to the Vision

**Returning to an at-risk campus for the past ten years is only for the students.** I understand that students don't choose to be at-risk. It's been exciting to teach almost all the siblings of a family and make the connection with them and parents. The students don't forget the impression I made on them and that's priceless. I am committed to the students and just because they are at-risk doesn't mean they don't deserve the best teachers.

**I feel like I can make more of a difference in an at-risk students live.** At-risk students need teachers that understand them and really care about them in order for them to want to put in the effort to do their best and learn. I really care about what happens to my students and I want to see them make good choices for their life. Sometimes it takes a teacher believing in them to get them to make good choices.

**I have a sincere investment in teaching at-risk students.** They need teachers with experience, dedication, and a firm understanding of content. I also have a sense of ownership to this campus.

**Working with the at risk students and helping them to be successful** and working with teachers who really care about the students.

**I truly believe that it is because of the demographics of the students at our campus.** They look at school as a safe place with consistency. Something that they don't get at home. They know that every day 7:10-2:30 they can be at the same place and have the same schedule and not have to worry about the inconsistencies that take place at their homes on a regular basis.

**Due to their economic status, students are not afforded the same opportunities as students at some of our other middle school campuses.** As a group, my students do not seem to realize the importance technology will play in their futures. **It is my goal to arm them with all the skills and knowledge I possibly can about what choices they have available concerning their futures.** The better informed they are at this level, the more educated decisions they will make when they enter high school. My BIM students can be certified in Microsoft Word, Power Point, Access, and Excel. These certifications will look great on their resumes and give them a head start in the business world over their peers. Many of my students are not planning on pursuing a higher level of education so I want them to know about trade schools, and the technology classes available in high school to prepare them to immediately enter the workforce. **My students have more hardships to overcome so we must give them hope for their futures if we want them to succeed.**

**Enjoy the challenge of working with at risk students.** They need more attention and assistance compared to their counterparts who are not at risk.

Support from administration, **challenge of teaching students that are at-risk,** student/teacher relationships, content team support

**My understanding for at-risk students.** Also the ability to be able to demonstrate progress and success.

To work in a title one campus you need to have a love, care, and compassion of teaching. **Our student need a teacher willing to go the extra mile to meet them where they are at in order to see their success.** I'm sure all who are teachers will say the same, no matter what campus they are located. It takes a certain type of person to teach.

**I believe in dealing with at-risk students, as teachers, we need to convince them that they can do it.** As oppose to affluent students, proving to them that it is worth it. In my subject area, at-risk students are usually very excited about my content area because they are not pulled in different directions such as piano lessons, ballet and parents who would see my content area just as a hobby. Working solely with the kids is much easier than

dealing with affluent helicopter parents who may undermine the teacher. However, it would very refreshing to have parent support at at-risk middle school campus but for the most part, we can do what is needed for success to happen.

My desire to give back and help others along with **the relationships I build with my students are factors that motivate me to return to my at-risk middle school.**

**I love how appreciative the kids are of you. The fact that years later they come back to give hugs or to talk to you is amazing!** I've taught at a non-title 1 school and the kids were not like that there.

**The relationships you can form with the kids is a powerful motivator**

**Students returning to say, "Thank you" once they have graduated from high school or college.**

### **Student relationships**

Support from administration, challenge of teaching students that are at-risk, **student/teacher relationships**, content team support

1) Principal flexibility 2) **Student-teacher relationship** 3) Successful results

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**Appendix D**

**Open Ended Responses from Teachers Who Reported Working with At-Risk**

**Students as a Factor in Their Retention**

*Open Ended Responses From Teachers Who Reported Working With At-Risk Students As A Factor In Their Retention*

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**Teacher Responses**

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**I have an opportunity to expose these kids to a much bigger world than what most of them have ever experienced. It is rewarding to take students who often times have barely ventured outside of their own neighborhood and not only learn things about our world but start to make connections and show understanding of our world.** I find that my extra time and hard work pays off and the pay off is tangible through their reactions and responses to lessons as we progress through the year.

**The potential to make a positive impact on students who actually need and value your support and guidance since many do not have a strong support system at home.**

**The students. I know I have a responsibility & desire to teach my content area; however, I also know my job is so much greater than that. I truly know it is my calling to be at title 1 schools. These kids need to be taught behavior/social skills as well as they need to know that they are loved and cared for; they do matter in this world.** They are each here for a purpose- no person is an "accident or mistake" which many of my students over the years have told me this is what they are told at home. I want them to know they can be the first person in their family to go to college. **They are just as capable as any other person to have the career they so desire. I want them to feel success and have the confidence to accomplish their dreams.** My hope is for them to set goals and know they CAN reach them. **Often, their dreams are stifled by being told others can do it, but not them. They can change that mind set by having someone believe in them, & in turn, they will believe in themselves.** Every one deserves a chance.

**1.) The students I teach deserve to learn just as much as any other student. 2.)** The curriculum I teach is extremely important for these specific students to learn and use for their future. **3.)** The relationships that I have established with the teachers on my hallway.

**My belief is that every child can learn and be successful socially and academically.** If I put in more effort, higher expectation, good relationship, respect, and care; **I believe these students in at risk middle school campus can be successful academically and socially.** I believe some of these students experience few affections from their parents because parents have to work more hours or multiple jobs to put food on the table therefore they are always tired. **As a teacher, my showing affection and making the students feel welcome, accepted, loved and cared for; can boost their moral to learn and study to become somebody and be appreciative in future.**

**I believe working in an at-risk school allows me to touch lives in need of understanding, support, and guide. I'm certain that my place is in this campus when many of my former students return to visit or keep in touch by e mail just to share with me their successful stories in their life.** I believe this is my place when students come back just to ask me for advice. **Beside the academic success of my students, their journey for success in life is what keeps me here.**

I became a teacher so that I could make a difference in students' lives just as my teachers made a difference in mine. My first teaching position was at an at-risk elementary campus, and I found the work there very rewarding. I moved to my present campus after teaching at another school for eight years because my principal was opening the school. I wanted to make a change, and I saw an opportunity to help build a school culture "from scratch." **Students at my school face obstacles that other students do not, and seeing them succeed in the classroom is a powerful motivator.**

**The students are what keep me returning to the same at-risk middle school. I enjoy working with these type of students and have found a way to communicate effectively with them.**

**I have a passion for students in public education. I discovered early in my teaching career that students who enter our system with socio-economic challenges really had my heart.** I have loved working with each and every student, all walks of economic life. **The students in a Title I campus are my favorite,** however. As I share my content, I have had much to offer students to help recoup some experiences they may not have enjoyed yet in life. **I am here because these students captured my heart, and I love educational relationships with them as we gain insights & experiences with curriculum and the extra-curricular opportunities.** I love teaching any and all students, **but the special work that presents itself in a diverse, socio-economically challenged demographic, such as is found at, is where I am at home and why I keep coming back.**

**The toughest kids need the best teachers. Students from affluent schools will learn in spite of the quality, dedication, creativity, or ability of their teachers - at risk kids will succeed because of them.** Affluent kids come with more experiences, greater vocabulary, strong family support for education, and intrinsic motivation - **at risk kids need teachers who will inspire them, challenge them, and use every available resource to reach them.**

**The needs to the kids. I truly believe that some of the kids at at-risk middle school need more people (including teachers) believing in them.** They sometimes have few if any support systems at home. **Work with students that are at-risk, while challenging, is also more rewarding for me. They need you more, and the opportunity for intrinsic rewards can be so wonderful and fulfilling (for both you and them).**

**Working with students in our demographic make-up.** Comradery and enthusiasm of the staff. Loyalty to the Vision

**Returning to an at-risk campus for the past ten years is only for the students. I understand that students don't choose to be at-risk. It's been exciting to teach almost all the siblings of a family and make the connection with them and parents.** The students don't forget the impression I made on them and that's priceless. I am committed to the students and **just because they are at-risk doesn't mean they don't deserve the best teachers.**

**I feel like I can make more of a difference in an at-risk students live. At-risk students need teachers that understand them and really care about them in order for them to want to put in the effort to do their best and learn.** I really care about what happens to my students and I want to see them make good choices for their life. **Sometimes it takes a teacher believing in them to get them to make good choices.**

**I have a sincere investment in teaching at-risk students.** They need teachers with experience, dedication, and a firm understanding of content. I also have a sense of ownership to this campus.

**Working with the at risk students and helping them to be successful** and working with teachers who really care about the students.

**I truly believe that it is because of the demographics of the students at our campus. They look at school as a safe place with consistency.** Something that they don't get at home. They know that every day 7:10-2:30 they can be at the same place and have the same schedule and not have to worry about the inconsistencies that take place at their homes on a regular basis.

**Due to their economic status, students at Campus are not afforded the same opportunities as students at some of our other middle school campuses.** As a group, my students do not seem to realize the importance technology will play in their futures. **It is my goal to arm them with all the skills and knowledge I possibly can about what choices they have available concerning their futures.** The better informed they are at this level, the more educated decisions they will make when they enter high school. My BIM students can be certified in Microsoft Word, Power Point, Access, and Excel. These certifications will look great on their resumes and give them a head start in the business world over their peers. Many of my students are not planning on pursuing a higher level of education so I want them to know about trade schools, and the technology classes available in high school to prepare them to immediately enter the workforce. **My students have more hardships to overcome so we must give them hope for their futures if we want them to succeed.**

**Enjoy the challenge of working with at risk students. They need more attention and assistance compared to their counterparts who are not at risk.**

Support from administration, **challenge of teaching students that are at-risk**, student/teacher relationships, content team support

**My understanding for at-risk students.** Also the ability to be able to demonstrate progress and success.

**To work in a title one campus you need to have a love, care, and compassion of teaching. Our student need a teacher willing to go the extra mile to meet them where they are at in order to see their success.** I'm sure all who are teachers will say the same, no matter what campus they are located. It takes a certain type of person to teach.

**I believe in dealing with at-risk students, as teachers, we need to convince them that they can do it.** As oppose to affluent students, proving to them that it is worth it. In my subject area, at-risk students are usually very excited about my content area because they are not pulled in different directions such as piano lessons, ballet and parents who would see my content area just as a hobby. **Working solely with the kids is much easier than dealing with affluent helicopter parents who may undermine the teacher.** However, it would very refreshing to have parent support at at-risk middle school campus but for the most part, we can do what is needed for success to happen.

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**Appendix E**

**Open Ended Responses from Teachers Who Reported Campus Culture As a Factor  
in Their Retention**

*Open Ended Responses From Teachers Who Reported Campus Culture As A Factor In Their Retention*

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**Teacher Responses**

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I have quite a bit of autonomy in my classroom to do whatever is needed for each group of kids I get. **The staff I work with are supportive and helpful.** We regularly see good results with the majority of the kids. My job expectations are clear rather than ambiguous, so I know what I need to do each day.

1.) The students I teach deserve to learn just as much as any other student. 2.) The curriculum I teach in extremely important for these specific students to learn and use for their future. 3.) **The relationships that I have established with the teachers on my hallway.**

Pay, loan forgiveness, **good staff**

**I love working with the students and teachers.** It feels like my work makes a difference.

Making a difference in children's lives, being challenged to think outside the box to reach the kids, **and the support and encouragement from my peers** and administrators.

At one point on my current campus, we had a strong administrative team and principal who had a vision of children first. Our principal at that time was very supportive and not only put students first, he had a connection with the community. At this time, I enjoy working with the students and the challenges we face everyday. **I truly believe administration sets the tone for the staff, with support from them, teachers and students are successful.**

**I believe I have kept coming back to this campus due to the continued leadership and sense of family that we have here at this campus.** I also see how much the teachers care to help the students and want to see them strive to such new levels academically and personally. I really can't see myself anywhere else!

**Great support from the team,** feeling like you are really making a difference, letting children know that they can be and do what they want, creating a society that truly knows that it is not where you come from but what decisions you make that create who you are.

Working with students in our demographic make-up. **Comradery and enthusiasm of the staff. Loyalty to the Vision**

I have a sincere investment in teaching at-risk students. They need teachers with experience, dedication, and a firm understanding of content. **I also have a sense of ownership to this campus.**

Factors include: **sense of mission**, being able to see clear progress, independence in planning, **and good fit for my family** (life balance). However, each year leaving is a consideration. So far, the plusses have outweighed the minuses. Minuses have included feeling overwhelmed, feeling unsupported (both campus and district), lack of camaraderie, lack of professional consideration from both administration and colleagues. It's usually a close call to stay or go.

Working with the at risk students and helping them to be successful and **working with teachers** who really care about the students.

**How the staff works together to guide the student's to success.**

I would not return if I did not feel I had administration support, **and a great team**. Without support from AP's and principals, I feel like this job would be very difficult. **Little appreciation 'gifts' help, such as lunch once a semester.** Teachers do not mind working their behind off, but it's nice to know that the hard work is noticed.

Support from administration, challenge of teaching students that are at-risk, student/teacher relationships, **content team support**

I think the reason I continue to return is a combination of several factors. I am comfortable around this age group and the curriculum. **I like the people I work with here.** I have felt mostly supported and listened to by the administration. I feel a sense of accomplishment and it feeds my need to help people with less opportunities. I have time to do other things in my life. The parents are not as involved therefore less critical of me.-

**The staff is wonderful** and I love the kids

Administration that supports me and empowers me. **Staff that is involved and has the same family type mindset.** Location.

**Campus culture and loyalty;** I make a difference to my students and they need me. My administration shows they value and trust me. When I express a concern, they listen and address it. I feel like my administration has the same heart for my students that I have.

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## **Appendix F**

### **Open Ended Responses from Teachers Who Reported Feeling of Making a Difference as A Factor in Their Retention**

*Open Ended Responses From Teachers Who Reported Feeling Of Making A Difference As A Factor In Their Retention*

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**Teacher Response**

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The kids we teach are so appreciative of any extra attention. They are truly the sweetest kids in the world! **I feel like I'm making a difference in their lives not only with the skills I teach them in class, but also with life skills in general.** I also appreciate the families who generally are very supportive of the schools and show respect toward teachers in general.

**I feel like I can make a bigger difference in the lives of my students here.**

I became a teacher so that **I could make a difference in students' lives just as my teachers made a difference in mine.** My first teaching position was at an at-risk elementary campus, and I found the work there very rewarding. I moved to my present campus after teaching at another school for eight years because my principal was opening the school. I wanted to make a change, and I saw an opportunity to help build a school culture "from scratch." Students at my school face obstacles that other students do not, and seeing them succeed in the classroom is a powerful motivator.

I love working with the students and teachers. **It feels like my work makes a difference.**

**Making a difference in children's lives,** being challenged to think outside the box to reach the kids, and the support and encouragement from my peers and administrators.

**Leaving a lasting impact on my students.** Planting seeds of love and support in the beginning and seeing the kids blossom is what brings me back. I also love the fact that we can push our kids to achieve when society tells them no.

Great support from the team, **feeling like you are really making a difference,** letting children know that they can be and do what they want, creating a society that truly knows that it is not where you come from but what decisions you make that create who you are.

**I feel like I can make more of a difference in an at-risk students live.** At-risk students need teachers that understand them and really care about them in order for them to want to put in the effort to do their best and learn. I really care about what happens to my students and I want to see them make good choices for their life. Sometimes it takes a teacher believing in them to get them to make good choices.

**Feeling like making a difference in student and world**

The students because **I feel like I impact their lives more than we know.**

Some factors that keep me returning to the same at risk middle school campus are: The consistency and respect from the administration. **I also can see the difference I make in my students lives.** In addition to the support from parents without them being too intrusive. Which gives me the opportunity to focus on my students and their learning more often.

**I feel like I truly make a difference in their lives.**

Campus culture and loyalty; **I make a difference to my students and they need me.** My administration shows they value and trust me. When I express a concern, they listen and address it. I feel like my administration has the same heart for my students that I have.

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**Appendix G**

**Open Ended Responses from Teachers Who Reported Campus Administration as a  
Factor in their Retention**

*Open Ended Responses From Teachers Who Reported Campus Administration As A Factor In Their Retention*

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**Teacher Responses**

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The **support of the administration** and school.

Making a difference in children's lives, being challenged to think outside the box to reach the kids, **and the support** and encouragement **from my peers and administrators**.

At one point on my current campus, **we had a strong administrative team and principal who had a vision of children first**. Our principal at that time was very supportive and not only put students first, he had a connection with the community. At this time, I enjoy working with the students and the challenges we face everyday. **I truly believe administration sets the tone for the staff, with support from them, teachers and students are successful**.

The factors that I believe that keep me returning annually to the same at-risk middle school campus including enjoying helping students who genuinely want help, cooperative parents who encourage their children to listen to the teacher, and **supportive administrators**.

**I would not return if I did not feel I had administration support**, and a great team. **Without support from AP's and principals, I feel like this job would be very difficult**. Little appreciation 'gifts' help, such as lunch once a semester. Teachers do not mind working their behind off, but it's nice to know that the hard work is noticed.

Some factors that keep me returning to the same at risk middle school campus are: **The consistency and respect from the administration**. I also can see the difference I make in my students lives. In addition to the support from parents without them being too intrusive. Which gives me the opportunity to focus on my students and their learning more often.

**Support from administration**, challenge of teaching students that are at-risk, student/teacher relationships, content team support

1) **Principal flexibility** 2) Student-teacher relationship 3) Successful results

**The most important factor to me is a supportive administration** that challenges you yet does not penalize you if your results aren't necessarily at the highest level. **If the administration can see growth in student learning as well as growth in building connections with students, then you are more likely to stay**. Recognition of hard work and working on the best behalf of students over pure test scores helps. **Basically, have**

**administration that can see the whole picture and gives you recognition (big or small- mostly small) for your daily trials and successes goes a long way towards building morale and retaining teachers.**

I think the reason I continue to return is a combination of several factors. I am comfortable around this age group and the curriculum. I like the people I work with here. **I have felt mostly supported and listened to by the administration.** I feel a sense of accomplishment and it feeds my need to help people with less opportunities. I have time to do other things in my life. The parents are not as involved therefore less critical of me.-

**Administration that supports me and empowers me.** Staff that is involved and has the same family type mindset. Location.

Campus culture and loyalty; I make a difference to my students and they need me. **My administration shows they value and trust me.** When I express a concern, they listen and address it. I feel like my administration has the same heart for my students that I have.

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## **Appendix H**

### **Open Ended Responses from Teachers Who Reported Relating To At-Risk Students Because Of Personal Experiences as a Factor in Their Retention**

*Open Ended Responses From Teachers Who Reported Relating To At-Risk Students  
Because Of Personal Experiences As A Factor In Their Retention*

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**Teacher Responses**

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**I was an at-risk kid growing up**, and I totally get that type of student.

I really enjoy teaching at-risk students because **I feel that I can better meet their needs because I came from the same economically disadvantaged, at risk group**. I feel that I know what these children go thru on a daily basis in terms of the challenges from home.

I truly believe that I can relate to these students. **As a minority parent, before becoming a teacher, I knew what I was looking for from the teachers and I knew my expectations for my child. I try to provide that to the parents of the students I teach.** In addition, my style of teaching and expectations do not waiver because of the economic status. I continue to raise the bar and help them reach it by alternative means. Those alternative means are personal connections that means something to the student but connects to my content. There is no place I would rather be than at my school.

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## **Appendix I**

### **Open Ended Responses from Teachers Who Reported Classroom Autonomy as a Factor in Their Retention**

*Open Ended Responses From Teachers Who Reported Classroom Autonomy As A Factor In Their Retention*

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**Teacher Responses**

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**I have quite a bit of autonomy in my classroom to do whatever is needed for each group of kids I get.** The staff I work with are supportive and helpful. We regularly see good results with the majority of the kids. My job expectations are clear rather than ambiguous, so I know what I need to do each day.

**I am given a large amount of latitude to create what is best for the students.** As such, we are very successful in the class, both with regard to grades and retention (I teach a high-level class that requires a minimum grade to remain) and STAAR scores.

I believe in dealing with at-risk students, as teachers, we need to convince them that they can do it. As oppose to affluent students, proving to them that it is worth it. In my subject area, at-risk students are usually very excited about my content area because they are not pulled in different directions such as piano lessons, ballet and parents who would see my content area just as a hobby. Working solely with the kids is much easier than dealing with affluent helicopter parents who may undermine the teacher. However, it would very refreshing to have parent support at at-risk middle school campus but for the most part, **we can do what is needed for success to happen.**

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**Appendix J**

**Open Ended Responses from Teachers Who Reported Campus Location as A  
Factor in Their Retention**

*Open Ended Responses From Teachers Who Reported Campus Location As A Factor In Their Retention*

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**Teacher Response**

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**Location of school**, supportive team members and majority of students want to learn and do their best.

Administration that supports me and empowers me. Staff that is involved and has the same family type mindset. **Location.**

**Close to my house**, I like the students, I enjoy working with my team, haven't had any issues with Admin team, enjoy my work environment

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**Appendix K**

**Open Ended Responses from Teachers Who Reported Student Achievement as A  
Factor in Their Retention**

*Open Ended Responses From Teachers Who Reported Student Achievement As A Factor In Their Retention*

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**Teacher Responses**

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Location of school, supportive team members and **majority of students want to learn and do their best.**

Leaving a lasting impact on my students. Planting seeds of love and support in the beginning and seeing the kids blossom is what brings me back. **I also love the fact that we can push our kids to achieve when society tells them no.**

I have a heart for the students and **want to see them be successful.**

How the staff works together to **guide the student's to success.**

1) Principal flexibility 2) Student-teacher relationship 3) **Successful results**

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**Appendix L**

**Open Ended Responses from Teachers Who Reported Job Security as A Factor in  
Their Retention**

*Open Ended Responses From Teachers Who Reported Job Security As A Factor In Their Retention*

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**Teacher Response**

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**Having the security of the job is a big factor.** Being involved in extra curricular activities with the students. Colleagues at my campus that I have built a relationship with over the years. It certainly isn't for the incentives or the extra work that is required to work at a Title I campus.

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## **Appendix M**

### **Open Ended Responses from Teachers Who Reported Financial Reasons as a Factor in Their Retention**

*Open Ended Responses From Teachers Who Reported Financial Reasons As A Factor In Their Retention*

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**Teacher Response**

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**Pay, loan forgiveness, good staff**

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**Appendix N**

**District Approval Letter**



## Cypress-Fairbanks Independent School District

*Department of School Improvement and Accountability*

Christy Dafonte, Ed.D.  
Research Specialist

To: Abelardo Lozano  
From: Christy Dafonte, Ed.D.  
Date: July 31, 2014  
Re: Approval of Application to Conduct Research in Cypress-Fairbanks ISD

Your request to conduct the following research project in Cypress-Fairbanks ISD has been approved: Why Teachers Choose to Stay in At-Risk Middle School Campuses.

As you pursue this project, please refer to the conditions listed below:

- ® Keep Ana Martin, Principal of Kahla Middle School, informed of all activities involved with the project.
- ® You are approved to conduct your research only on the following campuses: Kahla MS, Thornton MS, Watkins MS, Dean MS, and Hopper MS.
- ® As your research sponsor, Elizabeth Bradley will assist you in the following manner:
  - o Sending consent forms to principals and teachers only at the campuses named above.
  - o Consent forms should be returned to Elizabeth Bradley. She will provide you with the consent forms of those individuals who consent to participate in your study. At that point, you may contact the participants to administer your suNeys.
  - o You may not contact the teachers directly until consent to participate has been received by Elizabeth Bradley.
- ® An information seNices request has been submitted for a list of staff at the 5 target middle schools with 2 or more years of experience. Once the information has been received the list of names will be forwarded to Elizabeth Bradley to be contacted for consent to participate.
- ® Consent forms and suNeys may only be sent only once to participants. If teachers or principals do not respond, you may not contact them a second time.
- ® No additional data may be collected beyond the suNey responses.
- ® Practice confidentiality while conducting the various steps necessary to complete the project.
- ® Use a random code system to record data collected. Never use names, ID, or social security numbers.
- ® Use a pseudonym instead of the district or campus name in your research.

10300 Jones Road, Houston, Texas 77065  
281.897.4000

P.O. Box 692003  
Houston, Texas 77269-2003

**Appendix O**  
**IRB Approval Letter**

UNIVERSITY of HOUSTON  
DIVISION OF RESEARCH

September 3, 2014

Abelardo Lozano  
Dean, Education

Dear Abelardo Lozano,

Based upon your request for exempt status, an administrative review of your research proposal entitled "Why teachers choose to stay in at-risk middle school campuses." on July 2, 2014, according to federal regulations and institutional policies and procedures.

At that time, your request for exemption under **Category 2** was approved pending modification of your proposed procedures/documents. The changes you have made adequately fulfill the requested contingencies, and your project is now **APPROVED**.

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

If you have any questions, please contact Samoya Copeland at (713) 743-

9534. Sincerely yours,



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

\*Approvals for exempt protocols will be valid for 5 years beyond the approval date. Approval for this project will expire **September 2, 2019**. If the project is completed prior to this date, a final report should be filed to close the protocol. If the project will continue after this date, you will need to reapply for approval if you wish to avoid an interruption of your data collection.

Protocol Number:  
14465-EX

316 E. Cullen Building      Houston, TX 77204-2015      (713) 743-9204      Fax: (713) 743-9577

COMMITTEES FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS.

**Appendix P**  
**Script for Research Sponsor**

## Script for E-mail for Research Sponsor

### **Researcher Sponsor will introduce title and who the researcher is why the study is being done**

Why Teachers Choose to Remain In At-Risk Middle School Campuses

You are being invited to take part in a research project conducted by Abelardo Lozano Jr. from the College of Education at the University of Houston. This project is part of a doctoral thesis and is under the supervision of Dr. Robert Borneman.

### **Researcher sponsor will state that the participation is voluntarily**

Taking part in the research project is voluntary and you may refuse to take part or withdraw at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may also refuse to answer any research-related questions that make you uncomfortable.

### **The researcher sponsor will state the purpose of the study**

The purpose of this study is to inform principals why teachers choose to remain in an at-risk middle school campus. The study will be completed in the fall semester of the 2014-2015 school year. The participants will only be asked to answer a short online survey.

### **The researcher sponsor will discuss the procedure of the study**

You will be one of approximately 400 subjects invited to take part in this project.

The study will start by asking principals to complete an online survey that explains what the principal perceives as reasons for their teachers to remain on their campus on a yearly basis. Second, teachers will take a survey that explains why they choose to remain on their campus. Third, survey data will be analyzed to see similarities and differences between the principal and teachers' answers. Participants will be asked to take a one-time online survey through surveymonkey.com.

### **The researcher sponsor will state the confidentiality of the participants of the study**

Your participation will be confidential and your responses will remain anonymous.

At this time the researcher will attach consent forms for willing participants to print, sign and return by e-mail.



**Appendix Q**  
**Consent Forms**



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

**PROJECT TITLE:**

Why Teachers Choose to Remain In At-Risk Middle School Campuses

You are being invited to take part in a research project conducted by Abelardo Lozano Jr. from the College of Education at the University of Houston. This project is part of a doctoral thesis and is under the supervision of Dr. Robert Borneman.

**NON-PARTICIPATION STATEMENT:**

Taking part in the research project is voluntary and you may refuse to take part or withdraw at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may also refuse to answer any research-related questions that make you uncomfortable.

**PURPOSE OF THE STUDY:**

The purpose of this study is to inform principals why effective teachers choose to remain in an at-risk middle school campus. The study will be completed in the fall semester of the 2014-2015 school year. The participants will only be asked to answer a short online survey.

**PROCEDURES:**

You will be one of approximately 400 subjects invited to take part in this project.

The study will start by asking principals to complete an online survey that explains what the principal perceives as reasons for their teachers to remain on their campus on a yearly basis. Second, teachers will take a survey that explains why they choose to remain on their campus. Third, survey data will be analyzed to see similarities and differences between the principal and teachers' answers. Participants will be asked to take a one time online survey through [surveymonkey.com](http://surveymonkey.com).

**CONFIDENTIALITY:**

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

#### RISKS/DISCOMFORTS:

There are no foreseeable risks for any participant who participates part in the study.

#### BENEFITS:

While you will not directly benefit from participation, your participation may help investigators better understand why effective teachers choose to remain in at-risk middle school campuses on a yearly basis.

#### PUBLICATION STATEMENT:

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

#### SUBJECT RIGHTS:

1. I understand that informed consent is required of all persons participating in this project.
2. I have been told that I may refuse to participate or to stop my participation in this project at any time before or during the project. I may also refuse to answer any question.
3. Any risks and/or discomforts have been explained to me, as have any potential benefits.
4. I understand the protections in place to safeguard any personally identifiable information related to my participation.
5. I understand that, if I have any questions, I may contact Abelardo Lozano at [abel\\_lozano23@yahoo.com](mailto:abel_lozano23@yahoo.com). I may also contact Dr. Robert Borneman, faculty sponsor, at 713-743-3382.
6. **Any questions regarding my rights as a research subject may be addressed to the University of Houston Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (713-743-9204). All research projects that are carried out by Investigators at the**

University of Houston are governed by requirements of the University and the federal government.

SIGNATURES:

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

Study Subject (print name): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Study Subject: \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

Principal Investigator (print name and title): Mr. Abelardo Lozano Jr. \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Principal Investigator: \_\_\_\_\_

Date:

**Appendix R**  
**Principal Survey**

**Principals Survey****1. Are you male or female?**

- Male
- Female

**2. What is your ethnicity?**

- African-American
- Hispanic
- White
- Asian
- American-Indian
- Pacific Islander
- Two or More Races

**3. How many years have you been at your current campus?****4. What do you perceive to be the most important factor in your teachers choosing to return to your campus on a yearly basis?**

**Appendix S**  
**Teacher Survey**

**Teacher Survey****1. Are you male or female?**

- Male
- Female

**2. What is your ethnicity?**

- African-American
- Hispanic
- White
- Asian
- American-Indian
- Pacific Islander
- Two or More Races

**3. How many years have you been at your current campus?****4. Have you worked at other campuses as a teacher? If so how many campuses have you been at?****5. Which route did you take to become a certified teacher?**

- Traditional Four Year College Certification Program
- Alternative Certification Program

**7. What factors do you believe keep you returning annually to the same at-risk middle school campus?**