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CAMPUS PRINCIPALS' ACTIONS AND PERCEPTIONS THAT CONTRIBUTE
TO THE DIRECT IMPACT OF TEACHER RETENTION

A Dissertation

by

EFRAIN D. REYNA

Submitted In partial fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Major Subject: Educational Leadership

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley
July 2024

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TO THE DIRECT IMPACT OF TEACHER RETENTION

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July 2024

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ABSTRACT

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This study focused on factors that suburban principals could perform to increase teacher retention. A suburban school district in the southwest area of Texas was selected to participate in this research. Principals were chosen and interviewed. Teachers from the selected school district were chosen to participate in a focus group. This qualitative single case study research was focused on the individual perspectives from six different principals, and eighteen teachers. Both participant groups, principals and teachers, were then interviewed to discover if the principal's actions directly impacted their decision to remain teaching.

DEDICATION

I dedicate my dissertation to my beautiful wife Veronica L. Reyna. Without her love, none of this would have been possible. She supported my dream day after day, and year after year. She is my rock where my family and I stand. I would also like to dedicate this to my lovely children Samara, Jonathan, Emilee, Calissa and Bryleigh, a small sacrifice for you all to show you that with God and family, all things are possible. Without my children encouraging me and standing by during this whole process, I probably would have given up. But what do we say? Never back down, never what? Never Give Up! I would also like to thank my parents for supporting me along the way and never giving up on me. Lastly, but most importantly, I would like to thank God for guiding me, pushing me, and picking me up when I thought about quitting many times. God's grace has seen me throughout this journey, and my hope is that I continue to use this gift for all children, staff, schools, districts, and states that I may represent, in my lifetime. This is for you all. Thank you.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Teachers make a tremendous impact on the overall success of students in their school classroom. According to Frahm and Cianca (2021), the school-related factor that has the greatest impact on student's academic achievement is the quality of their teachers. Darling-Hammond and Rothman (2011) further argues that skilled teachers dramatically impact and increase the level of achievement among the students they work with. According to American University School of Education (2022), teachers serve as role models and mentors, and if they leave the school, it can be discouraging to the children. The loss of a teacher has resulted in the withdrawal of class engagement, a drop in grades, and poor test performance. Thus, the teacher turnover rate can have a negative impact on learning. Therefore, this study will identify factors principals perform to increase teacher retention.

Teacher retention has now become the greatest solution to solving the teacher shortage that continues to plague education in the United States (Darling-Hammond, 2003). Teacher recruitment is a result of the teacher shortage problem, and as principals focus on the retention of the currently employed teachers, the need for recruitment will diminish (Darling-Hammond, 2003). Teacher retention is proven to be more valuable than new teacher recruitment because of the financial, social, and academic impact that replacing a teacher has on a school classroom, campus, and district (Darling-Hammond, 2003; Holden, 2016).

Darling-Hammond (2003) found there is "substantial evidence suggesting that, among all school resources, good teachers are the most important determinant of student achievement" (p.

2). Holden (2016) also states that there is strong evidence that indicates a direct connection between quality teachers and high student achievement.

During COVID-19 pandemic, many teachers in the United States had trouble adapting back to their classrooms and thus, eventually quit or retired (Lopez, 2022). According to Sainato (2021), the current teaching conditions and lingering COVID-19 fears have also affected the staffing of other school-needed resources such as custodians, bus drivers, and substitutes. Shortages of teachers and substitutes made teaching even more stressful. New teachers began to step up as teacher leaders because so many teachers had already left the teaching profession (Lopez, 2022; Sainato, 2021). The problem, however, is that many new teachers lack the wisdom and experience that veteran teachers offer, so much more than simply the number of years of experience (Sainato, 2021).

Dickler (2021) maintained that 38% of the entire full- and part-time teachers in the United States would retire before the beginning of the 2022 school year due to the stresses of teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. This is supported by Barnes (2021) who postulated that more than half of America's teachers would quit within the next two years, due to pandemic stress. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused an unusual increase in teachers leaving the teaching field. Yet, there are many teachers with more than 30 years of experience still teaching in the classrooms (Dickler, 2021; Barnes, 2021).

However, teachers are leaving the profession at a faster rate than in the past (Barnes, 2021; Dickler, 2021). New teachers are quitting within their first two years of teaching, while some veteran teachers are leaving the profession because of the lingering doubt about their health and safety (Lopez, 2021). With so many teachers leaving the profession, it causes an extremely high turnover rate. A high turnover rate impacts a school in many ways, such as causing a need

for more substitutes, which is difficult to fill because there already exists a shortage of substitutes (Lopez, 2021). A high turnover also has a negative impact on students' learning and their overall well-being. Yet, Boyd et al., (2011) claims that with an engaging and modeling administration, teachers can overlook most of the contextual factors that would otherwise cause teachers to quit.

Problem Statement

Principals still question what actions they take that directly impact or contribute to teachers' decision to stay in the classroom for another year and continue their teaching career. According to Darling-Hammond (2003), many teachers leave the classroom within three to five years of beginning their teaching profession. A report by NASSP (2020), indicates that 50% of teachers will quit teaching before reaching retirement. Much research has been conducted to determine why teachers are exiting the teaching profession within their first five years (Darling-Hammond, 2003). The five major factors which contribute to teacher attrition are: salaries, work environment, weak teacher preparation, job satisfaction, and lack of principal support (Darling-Hammond, 2003). A survey conducted by the National Education Association (NEA) (2022), as cited by Ellis and Kuhn (2022), found that teacher pay is one of the leading causes that teachers are leaving the profession as salaries have declined for the past 10 years. Geiger and Pivovarova (2016) claim that teachers who rate their working conditions satisfactorily high had lower attrition rates. Conversely, teachers who rate their working environment low had a higher chance of quitting.

There are also other relatively recent factors that contribute to teachers leaving education such as high-stakes testing accountability measures (Will, 2020). Violence on campuses involving teachers suggests that teacher victimization is prevalent with also definitely impacts their job performance, physical and emotional wellbeing (Moon & McCluskey, 2020). The

overhanging threat that Texas is a right to work state, means teachers can leave their job at any time and for any reason (Samuels, 2018).

Teacher attrition continues to increase and cost the school districts more money than if a teacher were to stay in the classroom until retirement. Teacher retention and longevity are important to a school district because high teacher turnover costs school districts and states an enormous amount of money. Furthermore, when effective teachers leave their schools, they take with them their experiences, knowledge of the schools' instructional curricula, and the valuable relationships they created with their students and parents (Cha & Cohen-Vogel, 2011).

Teacher retention and recruitment are still a worldwide issue, and retention at a very low rate continues to decline, unless new and novel approaches are explored (Williams, et.al., 2022). A report in 2002 from the Texas Center for Education Research estimated that the cost in Texas for teacher recruitment and training was \$329 million dollars each year (Cha & Cohen-Vogel, 2011).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify actions that principals do to impact teacher retention. A teacher's decision to be retained is implicated through positive social change through the recognition of needs, perceptions of teachers in order to improve job satisfaction, retain teachers, and positively affect student achievement (Williams, 2012). Principals need to determine why their teachers are dissatisfied before it is too late. Principals who do not address these expectations or wishes can have a negative impact on the campus. Teachers cite that lack of positive principal support is one of the main reasons they quit and leave the profession (Holmes et al., 2019). However, Podolsky et al. (2019) found that the quality of principal support

can determine whether teachers stay or leave the classrooms. Thus, principals must provide support for teachers in some form.

Principal support is defined as anything a school principal can offer to a teacher for their classroom needs and/or social-emotional needs (Canico et al., 2013). Principals need to target teachers' satisfaction such as job comfort or teaching contentment. According to Herzberg's Hygiene Theory (1966), job satisfaction is not the opposite of job dissatisfaction, and the two are separate factors. In understanding the hygiene factors and motivators, one needs to decrease negative job dissatisfaction and increase job satisfaction. Increasing the job satisfaction factor could increase teacher retention. The purpose of increasing job satisfaction and lowering dissatisfaction is to increase teacher retention. This study identified the type of principal support needed by teachers, so principals will improve teacher retention.

A shortage of teachers harms students, teachers, and the public education system. Lack of sufficient, qualified teachers and the staff instability that accompanies turnover threaten students' ability to learn and reduces teachers' effectiveness. High teacher turnover consumes economic resources that could be better deployed elsewhere. The teacher shortage makes it more difficult to build a solid reputation for teaching and to professionalize it, which further contributes to perpetuating the shortage. In addition, the fact that the shortage is distributed so unevenly among students of different socioeconomic backgrounds challenges the U.S. education system's goal of providing a sound education equitably to all children (Garcia & Weiss, 2019).

Significance of the Study

The present study aimed to identify factors that principals perform to increase teacher retention. Principal support can be administered in different leadership styles which in turn will encourage more teachers to stay in the teacher profession longer to support the social-emotional

and academic benefits to the students. Teacher longevity offers several benefits for school districts, new teachers, and students (Darling-Hammond, 2003).

Much research has been conducted to identify key factors why teachers leave the teaching profession within their first five years. In a study conducted by Gonzalez and Brown (2008), seven out of the eight participants stated that the biggest factor which influenced teachers not to return to the profession was administration and the lack of principal support. It is imperative to investigate why veteran teachers have stayed in their classrooms to understand the conditions, context, and leadership conducive to teacher longevity in the field. The Bureau of Labor Statistics (2022) predicts that high school teaching positions are projected to increase 8% from 2020 to 2030. Thus, on average, each year the nation will need an average of 77,400 high school teachers.

Identifying what principal actions support teacher longevity was discussed. The literature has explained why teachers are quitting; however, this researcher does not yet fully understand what principal actions influence teachers to make the decision to continue to teach.

Research Questions

The following research questions are those that were investigated:

RQ1: What do suburban principals and teachers report as ideal strategies for effective teacher retention?

RQ2: What actions, if any, do the suburban principals and teachers report that principals perform that demonstrates support for teacher retention?

RQ3: What are the characteristics that suburban principals exhibit that contribute to a high retention rate?

This case study qualitative research investigated six principals and eighteen teachers in a predominately Hispanic suburban school district in the Rio Grande Valley of South Texas. The study was conducted with elementary, middle school, and high school principals, as well as teachers from each level. This researcher selected two principals from each level and conducted semi-structured interviews. This researcher then selected three teachers from each campus and conducted focus groups in each educational level, such as elementary, middle, and high schools. It identified factors that principals performed to increase teacher reaction by examining the principals' actions, principal support, and teacher reports, that directly impacted teachers' decision to continue teaching.

Definitions of Terms

The terms that follow are presented and defined for the use in this research.

Attrition: the percentage of teachers exiting the educational profession in a given school year (Cha & Cohen-Vogel, 2011)

Retention: a field of education research that focuses on whether teachers stay in their school, move to a different school, or leave the teaching profession before retirement.

Suburban School District: according to TEA, a district that do not meet the criteria for a major urban school district are not contiguous, and if the enrollment is less than 3% of the closest contiguous district, and a district that exists in the outer suburbs of a city.

South Texas: a region of the U.S. state of Texas which is from San Antonio and south.

Principal support: the extent to which principals and other school leaders make teachers' work easier and help them to improve their teaching, (Boyd et al., 2011).

Motivation factors: factors that are related to satisfaction in the workplace. Allow employees to be content, and promote job growth, (Kurt, 2021).

Hygiene factors: factors that are not related to satisfaction in the workplace. These factors prevent dissatisfaction, (Kurt, 2021).

Summary of Chapter

While the devastating numbers of teacher attrition continue to rise and cause expensive and often temporary solutions, many researchers are now looking into a more sustainable avenue which is teacher retention. Teacher recruitment is a reactive measure, throughout the country, that targets a shortage of teachers, or even the larger issue of attrition. Teacher retention places the appropriate attention on the principal and demonstrates the value that teachers possess. Keeping this idea in mind that teachers possess value, this researcher focused on teacher retention in a suburban school district in south Texas and identified actions that principals performed and teachers reported to increase teacher retention.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This researcher investigated what actions principals can do that directly impact the decision of a suburban teacher, novice, or veteran, to stay at their respective campus for another year. The goal was to identify characteristics, strategies, and actions that contribute to the retention of teachers in a suburban school district. This chapter will explain what attrition is and how high attrition rates can cause low retention rates. Retention is the focus of this research so that principals can reflect on their leadership styles and apply any new characteristics which may contribute to a higher retention rate. Retention is valuable to a school district and school for reasons that this researcher will explain in this chapter. This literature will also explain the suburban school system challenges that cause teachers to quit, and strategies from principals who have a low attrition rate on their campuses.

The need for suburban teacher retention is critical to schools, but more importantly to the students. The teachers are closest to the students and therefore, have the biggest impact on their academic performance (Cerda, 2017; Redding & Walber, 2012). Therefore, retaining teachers is key for student success.

Teacher Attrition

The shortage of qualified teachers has been a recurring issue for most of the twentieth century (Dove, 2004). Attrition is defined as all teachers who leave their current school for a variety of reasons and are named accordingly and refers to either premature or voluntary departure from teaching (Dove, 2004; Cha & Cohen-Vogel, 2011). The different names are,

movers (those who move to other schools), leavers (those who leave education), mothers (those who leave for family), students (those who go back to school), and retirees (those who retire) (Dove, 2004; Cha & Cohen-Vogel, 2011).

Dove (2004) argues that the United States is producing more teachers than are being hired, so training and recruiting are not the problem. Teacher attrition is also the largest factor in determining whether school districts will receive federal funding and educational provisions (Dove, 2004). Losing good teachers also causes the school to lose teachers' experiences, the knowledge of the school curriculum, and the relationship that they have created and fostered with students, parents, and coworkers (Cha & Cohen-Vogel, 2011).

In the 1990's, American teachers were leaving the field at a much higher rate than new teachers entering the profession (Dove, 2004). Darling-Hammond (1998), as well as Farmer (2020), reported that for new teachers entering the profession, teacher attrition was at 30% within the first three years and up to 50% during the first five years. Farmer (2020) further posits that 17% of new teachers leave after their first year of teaching, and 10% of veteran teachers retire annually. According to the National Education Association (NEA, 2003a), as cited in Gonzalez et al., (2008) reports their attrition rate to be at 20% within the first three years, the rate is up to 50% in urban areas. Perrachione et al., (2008) further state that the turnover rate is higher in high-poverty school districts than in any other area. In 1999, the schools in the United States hired 230,000 teachers, yet in that same year, 287,000 teachers (about half the population of Wyoming) left the teaching profession, with only 20% of those due to retirement (Darling-Hammond, 2003).

In urban high-poverty schools, 22% of the faculty are lost each year (Oliver, 2008; Farmer, 2020). These urban schools are identified by having more than 50% minority, most of

the students receiving free or reduced lunch, and fewer resources (Oliver, 2008), unlike rural school districts with much the same demographic, only living outside of the central city areas. Furthermore, if a school has a minority population of 50% or higher, it has twice the number of teacher turnover than a school with less than 50% minority population (NCES, 1998), as cited by Ingersoll and May (2011). These numbers are further exacerbated with the rates in 2018 when first year teachers were quitting at an average rate of 83 per 10,000 each month, the highest rates since 2001. (Farmer, 2020).

Teaching is a “revolving door profession”, according to Gonzalez and Brown (2008, p. 2). The high rate of teacher attrition is not due to teacher retirement, because that is only one-third of the national teacher attrition (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019). At the national level, teacher attrition rate was at 8.4% in 2008 (Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond, 2019), which equaled approximately 125,000 teachers leaving education yearly. Most recently, the attrition rates are the highest in south Texas, in cities and suburbs, at about 17% (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019). While recruitment of teachers is critically important to lower the attrition dilemma, retention of strong teachers is the only way to effectively lower the current attrition rates (Darling-Hammond, 2003).

Looking at attrition through an international lens and not exclusively only the United States, Dove (2004) points out that a high attrition rate is caused by several working conditional factors. These factors include the decline in status of being a teacher, the lack of government, social, and familial support, large class sizes, little planning time, increase of student discipline, and the ever-changing roles to include social and cultural advocates. These factors have caused many teachers to question their longevity in teaching, and often leave within their first five years.

More recently, Louisiana state attrition rate went up from 11% in 2021 to 14% in 2022 (Barnum, 2023). That data signifies that about 1,000 more teachers left the classroom than normal. Furthermore, Barnum (2023) explains that in Clark County, Nevada, turnover rose from 9% to 12%. However, in Austin, Texas, there was also a dramatic increase in attrition with the rate spiking from 17% up to 24% in a single year (Barnum, 2023). Attrition has also occurred midyear, like it did in North Carolina, from under 4% to over 6%. This occurrence disrupts the school year and as a result, North Carolina did not hire as many teachers as it lost which left some positions vacant while some were even eliminated (Barnum, 2023).

Concerns with Administration

According to a study conducted by Gonzalez and Brown (2008), seven out of the eight participants that they interviewed agreed that one of the biggest factors for not returning to the teaching profession was due to the administration. Their study revealed that the administration tended to put down teachers rather than motivate or encourage them. Furthermore, when a new teacher had a parent conference, the administration would blame the teacher for the child's misbehavior and support the parent (Gonzalez & Brown, 2008). In a separate research, the number one reason for teacher turnover in a high-poverty school was poor school leadership (Oliver, 2008). According to Boyd et al., (2011), the teachers' perceptions of the administration have the greatest influence on whether the teacher chooses to stay or leave. Oliver (2008) further explains four influences from the actions of the principal which caused teachers to leave: indifference of principal support, a lack of influencing the faculty and staff, the classroom discipline issues, and not providing ample time for planning. Principal support is also lacking in lower-income schools, more often than in higher-income schools (Oliver, 2008). The poor principal support along with other working conditions, compounds a teacher's reason for leaving

the teaching profession. In California, a survey analysis indicated that poor working conditions, larger class sizes, facilities, and poor principal support, led teachers to say that they planned on leaving teaching if the issues were not resolved quickly (Darling-Hammond, 2003). Attrition rates as high as 51% are a result of poor principal support (Farmer, 2020). Ladd (2011) discovered that the highest predictor of teachers departing from education was the quality of the school leadership.

Moreover, according to Glazer (2018), attrition rates will continue to rise due to teachers leaving the profession because principals continue to put more restrictions on how teachers can teach. Veteran teachers have typically mastered teaching strategies, yet when principals impose what needs to be taught, for the sake of assessments and curriculum. Teachers will retaliate by leaving the profession (Glazer, 2018).

Student discipline was another major factor for teachers leaving the profession (Gonzalez & Brown, 2008). According to the study, all eight teachers interviewed stated that disciplining students was a trial-and-error situation because they were not trained for handling all types of discipline related situations. They felt that the administration did not help with the discipline issues that arose in the classrooms and left the discipline to the new teachers. Farmer (2020) explains that 46% of teachers who left their classrooms stated that student discipline and behavioral issues were a major reason. Stress caused by student discipline, low engagement, and a lack of motivation are influencers for teachers to leave their current schools (Farmer, 2020). Former novice teachers regarded class management as “emotionally too hard to cope” with along with a high workload (Amitai & Van Houtte, 2022, p. 7).

Teacher Burnout

Teacher burnout is a term used to describe when teachers feel overwhelmed with their profession and leave (Williams, 2011; Francis, 2022). Trinidad (2021) further defines how burnout can be expressed in several ways such as mental exhaustion, cynicism, or reduced personal efficacy. New teachers, specifically from Gen Y, are leaving the profession at a rate of 51% higher than older teachers (Williams, 2011). The factor of mental exhaustion continues to develop into other mental health issues including compassion fatigue and feelings of being exploited by their principals assigning more work than can be handled daily (Farmer, 2020). The National Education Association (NEA) reported that teachers felt overwhelmed, lost with unclear expectations, unsupported, isolated, underpaid for comparable professions, and not respected or valued (NEA, 2003a), as cited in Gonzalez et al., (2008).

The nation is facing severe teacher shortages because teachers are leaving the profession to go to other careers. Three main influences for teachers leaving are salary, working conditions, and a lack of professional development opportunities (Cha & Cohen-Vogel, 2011). These conditions are also supported by another study that found teachers were being burnt out by several lacking motivators within the schools (Kaiser, 1982). These extrinsic motivating factors are the chances of advancement, sense of achievement, recognition for a job well done, and increased responsibilities for proving oneself according to Kaiser (1982).

Special Education teachers are experiencing higher rates of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization which is causing them to leave the teaching field at a rate of 20% or into general education at approximately 10% annually (Farmer, 2020). Nonetheless, the reason for the special education teachers to make these moves is due to the teacher burnout that they are experiencing while in the classrooms. A teacher's negative perception of their work environment

can negatively impact their well-being and performance. The perception, either negative or positive, according to Farmer (2020), is the strongest predictor of teacher stress, which leads to teacher burnout, and ultimately to teacher attrition.

Teachers who do not have positive relationships with their colleagues for the sake of collaborating and emotional support, especially among new teachers, are more likely to move schools or leave the teaching profession all together (Farmer, 2020). Positive relationships are not exclusive to teaching professionals, but also to their classrooms (Farmer, 2020; Trinidad, 2021). While teachers understand the demands of their daily work in the classroom may elicit positive emotions, the stressors outside of the classroom such as dissatisfaction, anger, and frustration describe their professional relationships with teachers and principals.

As aforementioned, compassion fatigue is caused by working in a situation with high emotions, such as teachers working with their students who have experienced some sort of trauma. Teachers, as well as students, are being exposed to many more traumatic experiences which range from school shootings to natural disasters, which is causing more counseling and professional development related to mental health (Farmer, 2020). Since teachers are working in high stressful environments, they tend to feel isolated, have low professional performance, and even go through behavioral changes, all because of indirect symptoms (Farmer, 2020).

Stress is one of the main factors that contributes to job dissatisfaction. (Farmer, 2020). Stress, accompanied by compassion fatigue and teacher burnout causes many first-year teachers to feel self-doubt, blame, restlessness, and inadequateness, causing them to leave the profession. The direct effects of teacher burnout caused by stress, long work hours, emotional fatigue, and student behavior range from headaches, muscle pain, and insomnia, to anxiety and depression (Farmer, 2020).

Teacher burnout is further exacerbated by adding accountability policies which apply to new and veteran teachers in the same way (Farmer, 2020). Teachers work in environments where students' test scores determine their performance proficiency. While working with this stress hanging over their heads, many first-year teachers, especially in middle and high school levels, must collect, analyze, and maintain an unprecedented amount of data (Farmer, 2020). This stress is driven by assessments and the expectations of being negatively evaluated if the students have low test scores. Ultimately, stress and mental health related causes may lead to teachers believing that their work and worth is meaningless and will eventually cause them to leave the profession (Farmer, 2020).

Low Salaries

Teacher salaries continue to be perceived as low in comparison to other professions which require a degree (Darling-Hammond, 2003). Among teachers across the United States, Texas ranks 28th with its teacher salary being \$7,652 less than the national average (Lopez, 2023). Teacher salaries in the 1990s were 15-40% less than other college degreed individuals who went into other fields of work (Darling-Hammond, 2003). For teachers with a master's degree, the difference in annual salary with their counterpart of someone in another field was minus \$32,000 (Dove, 2004). Not only was the salary lower than other professions, though there was some compensation for sponsoring extracurricular activities or coaching. However, at the elementary level, there was usually no compensation at all (Gonzalez & Brown, 2008). The difference in salaries, seems to be more important at the beginning of the teaching career than later in their profession (Darling-Hammond, 2003). The single most direct and effective way to reduce attrition, according to the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), is to raise teachers' salaries (Dove, 2004). While pay is a factor for

retaining teachers, after COVID, salary increases were cancelled in many districts (Loewus, 2021). The low salary caused a jump in teacher vacancies, 51% between last year and this year (Merod, 2023).

Economists use words such as “underpaid”, “discordant”, and “under-rewarded” when referring to teacher salaries (Dove, 2004, p. 10). Despite the obvious unparallel salaries, economists argue that teachers are getting paid what is comparable to other teachers in the country (Dove, 2004), and still 65% of teachers reported that they cannot live comfortably from their earnings (Bryant et al., 2023).

Reports now indicate that despite an increase in teachers’ salary over the last few years, when adjusted for inflation, the average teacher salary decreased by 6.4% in the last 10 years (Merod, 2023). Approximately 72% of Black teachers cited that a primary reason for considering leaving their job was due to their low salary. Teachers who viewed their salary as low, or inadequate, requested a \$17,000 dollar raise (Merod, 2023). The low salary and long working hours contribute to teachers considering other professions. Compensation is the number one reason why educators consider leaving the profession, across all school types (Bryant et al., 2023).

Teacher Preparation Programs

Many new teachers exited teaching due to being poorly prepared for the education environment (Dove, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 2003). Within five years of teaching, 29% of new teachers left the teaching profession (Darling-Hammond, 2003). Teacher preparation typically discusses the schooling that a new teacher receives prior to entering the classroom. To meet the demand of needing new teachers, the states governments facilitated programs to recruit and train individuals for teaching certification known as alternative certification programs (Dove, 2004).

Those teachers did not have any student teaching experience or effective teacher preparation. Darling-Hammond (2003) continues to depict that in Houston, Texas, the Teach for America program, had an average of 80% attrition after the two years required in the classroom. Dove (2004) also itemizes data to reflect the same findings of high attrition rates due to an unsuccessful attempt of alternative certification programs. In Massachusetts, new teachers were offered a signing bonus and within three years, almost half of the teachers left the profession. In California, 40% of emergency-permit teachers left within a year. The National Center for Education Statistics compared teachers who had completed student teaching and those who had not (Dove, 2004). Those teachers who had completed student teaching had a 15% attrition rate, whereas those without student teaching had 29% attrition rate (Dove, 2004).

New teachers struggle when their vision of what teaching should be like does not match the reality of teaching once in the classroom. If the teachers feel as though they are making a difference in the students' lives, they are more likely to stay in teaching. If a new teacher discovers that their vision is not matched by the real-world, they are more likely to leave the profession (Farmer, 2020).

There is a positive correlation between the number of years spent in teacher preparation and the years spent in the classroom. The less time spent in student teaching and in preparation for teaching causes higher attrition rates. Within five years of training, the retention rate for teachers was 84%. Conversely, for those teachers who went through an alternative certification program, the retention rate was only 34% (Dove, 2004).

Costs Due to Attrition

Teacher attrition costs the United States up to \$2.2 billion dollars every year (Trinidad, 2021). The Texas Center for Education Research found the teacher turnover in Texas costs

approximately \$329 million, and nationally more than \$7 billion for recruitment, administrative paperwork, hiring, and training (Perrachione et al., 2008; Cha and Cohen-Vogel, 2011). Darling-Hammond (2003) further explains that this cost is roughly \$8,000 per teacher who leave education in their first few years of teaching. Currently, the estimates of teacher turnover costs the school district between \$20-30,000 per teacher (Hillard, 2022).

On average, the financial cost of teacher turnover varies between school district types (Francis, 2022). The cost of teacher turnover in rural districts is about \$9,000, in suburban districts \$11,000, and in urban districts \$21,000. The National Education Association (NEA) conducted a survey in June of 2021 in which they asked teachers if they planned on leaving the profession. Thirty-two percent of the teachers planned on leaving the profession. The data from 2017 indicated the cost of advertising, recruiting, training, and hiring, would cost the district about \$20,000 per teacher (Francis, 2022).

There is an emotional and academic cost to high teacher attrition as well. The constant interaction between the teachers and the students creates a real sense of community and family (Oliver, 2008). Student learning is negatively impacted by the high rates of teacher turnover, as well as inexperienced teachers. The negative impact is a result of the inexperienced teachers not being able to create a positive rapport with the students as quickly as needed, and because of the new teachers' lack of content knowledge well enough to continue to curriculum momentum that is already established at the campus (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019). The inability to create and develop a strong relationship between teacher and student can inhibit the school's ability to be effective (Oliver, 2008). This puts the students at an educational disadvantage. The high turnover of teachers also affects instructional improvements and the productive collaboration of teachers (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019).

COVID-19 Pandemic

Approximately in December of 2019, the novel coronavirus, otherwise known as COVID-19, appeared in Wuhan, China and the virus quickly spread in China (Mahase, 2020). The World Health Organization (WHO) declared the COVID-19 outbreak was indeed a pandemic as it quickly spread to other parts of the world (Mahase, 2020). In March 2020, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) reported that over a million students had transitioned to alternate methods of teaching and learning worldwide (Mahase, 2020). Schools shut down completely and teachers and students left their classes for spring break and did not return to the schoolhouse for the remainder of the school year. The United States was preparing all the social distancing measures and training new teachers they were going to need (Jackson & Keirstead, 2020). School closures were occurring, and teachers did not know what was going to happen and no one knew when traditional schooling would return. Principals were faced with a challenge that had never existed (Kuhfeld et al., 2020).

School districts had to find a way for teachers to continue teaching, keep the students engaged, and help the students learn from their homes (Jackson & Keirstead, 2020; Noor, 2020). Some teachers were able to figure out the online virtual environment using video conferencing platforms such as ZOOM™, Google Classroom, and Microsoft Teams. Yet, many other teachers struggled (Noor, 2020). Some students had a negative experience with the virtual environment and didn't have academic success (Noor, 2020).

In the fall 2020, some districts allowed the teachers and staff back into the buildings and the hybrid model of instruction began (Lopez, 2021). By now, some teachers were back in the classroom teaching a few students in front of them physically, while other students remained at home in their virtual classrooms (Lopez, 2021). Nonetheless, the stressors continued for the

teachers to engage and ensure that instruction and learning were happening. Protocols at schools from countries around the world (i.e., China, Denmark, Norway) were established and set in place for mask-wearing, social distancing, and handwashing (Melnick & Hammond, 2020). Teachers were still struggling with engaging students and maintaining their own safety (Lopez, 2021).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the biggest struggle for teachers was to ensure continuity of learning and equitable learning for all the students (Jackson & Keirstead, 2020). The pandemic caused teachers an unprecedented amount of exhaustion, concern for safety, increased stress, and confusion for the future of teaching (Trinidad, 2021). While there was much concern for the students' mental health, difficulties in attending class, and educational outcomes, the impact on teachers was overlooked. Teachers' stressors of teaching in person and their own health risks were not addressed (Trinidad, 2021). Teachers' social-emotional needs needed to be acknowledged, understood, and addressed (Jackson & Keirstead, 2020; Trinidad, 2021). These teachers were also facing personal challenges as well as supporting students and their families who had also experienced significant stress or lost loved ones (Jackson & Keirstead, 2020). In some cases, teacher morale was at its lowest, and burnout increased because of the pandemic. While organizational support is assumed to help teacher burnout and reduce turnover, these supports did not have the same effect of aiding teachers because they were applied during a health crisis (Trinidad, 2021).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the principal's role was to work closely with the students and teachers alike (Rahman & Subiyantoro, 2021). Principals needed to optimize learning, provide training on online platforms, and listen. Nationwide, states, and districts were given the allowance for non-traditional instruction, distant learning guideline flexibility, and

teacher autonomy (Jackson & Keirstead, 2020). Loewus (2021) argues that teachers wanted principals to listen to them without assuming them to be overdramatic.

Eventually, all students returned to the classrooms. After all the changes, the trials, and errors, and the many COVID positive cases, there began to be a sense of normalcy with returning to the campus. Teachers did not have to teach in a hybrid environment anymore and students began socializing with their friends and adults (Trinidad, 2021; Lopez, 2021). Teachers started working through their many challenges that had occurred (Lopez, 2021).

Teachers who have continued to work past the pandemic have asked that principals need to acknowledge how hard teachers worked during the pandemic (Loewus, 2021). As the brunt of the pandemic passed, attrition issues continued to linger. Administration underemphasized that administrative burdens on teachers had much more meaning than they thought (Loewus, 2021). Only 27% of principals claimed that reducing duties such as hall duty, paperwork, and meetings would help teachers. Yet 43% of teachers felt that reducing those duties and tasks would support and help them. Principals must acknowledge how hard teachers had to work during the pandemic and make those needed adjustments (Loewus, 2021).

The high attrition rates continue to plague education, and the reasons for such high attrition rates range from the lack of preparation for teaching, to the lack of regard for teacher input in making decisions at the school. Attrition is also attributed to the increased student enrollment against the number of teachers retiring. The rationale for increased turnover has shifted from recruitment of new teachers to retention of current teachers (Oliver, 2008).

Teachers' salaries, working conditions, and support are all critical to address for lowering the attrition rates. These factors directly affect job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction for teachers, which ultimately decide whether to stay or leave. If the educational system continues to

accept high attrition rates as a normal part of education, then when will the value of teaching and our children be realized?

Teacher Retention

Salary Increases

According to Williams (2022), salaries could be increased to attract more serious teachers as a form of recruitment. However, the higher salary would require new teachers to have taken more preservice classes, as part of their teacher education program at an accredited university. This practice elevates the prestige of being an educator, as well as identifying those teachers who show a genuine interest in the profession for longevity (Williams et al., 2022).

Governor Greg Abbott has announced that there is a Teacher Vacancy Task Force, researching on how to make the teacher profession a better one (Lopez, 2022). A higher starting salary is one of the ideas that the task force is considering implementing. According to Lopez (2022), the increased salary would also require a tougher teaching certification exam.

Another form of teacher incentive is not directly through salaries, but through options such as the forgiveness of student loans, stipends, pay for performance, and even housing (Williams et al., 2022). Teacher villages have been created in states such as New Jersey, California, North Carolina, and Texas, where teachers can buy or rent with below-market rates and even in some cases for free (Williams et al., 2022).

Much of the literature supports increasing salaries, offering better teaching environment, and more specific professional development as solutions to many of the concerns of teachers quitting. However, salary increases sound like a way to keep many teachers in the teaching profession, yet teachers would then have to compete with other college graduates who have a

very specific set of skills (Darling-Hammond, 2003). Conversely, the benefits to keeping teachers in the profession for a longer period show to be much more productive.

Experience of Veteran Teachers

While our society celebrates young and new teachers, Alvy (2005) states veteran teachers have so much knowledge with their wealth of experience. According to Oxford Dictionary (2006), the term “veteran” comes from the Latin word *veteranus*, which means ‘old’. The dictionary further explains that a veteran is a person who has had long experience in a particular field (2006, p. 853). Therefore, a veteran teacher can be defined as a teacher who has had long experience in education. Research, however, does not have a consensus on the length of time to qualify a teacher as a veteran teacher. The literature does not have a consistent number of years to identify when a veteran teacher emerges as a veteran teacher (Day & Gu, 2009). Teachers have been considered as veteran teachers with seven years, eight years, 15 years, 35 years, or even defined as “many years” of experience (Day & Gu, 2009, p. 445). The terms “veteran” and “experienced” have also been used interchangeably throughout the literature (Day & Gu, 2009, p. 445).

Veteran teachers may seem skeptical at times; however, that only comes with experience. Veteran teachers have been through changes and have been a part of successful as well as unsuccessful initiatives. It is normal to question change and understand that changes that are worthwhile have only been the result of some hard questioning. Schools need to consider how to create circumstances where veteran teachers would prefer to remain in the classroom instead of retiring (Alvy, 2005).

Despite being challenged throughout their professional lives, veteran teachers have sustained their original call to teach (Day & Gu, 2009). For many veteran teachers, the students

they have taught differed greatly over the years. Maintaining the energy to continue teaching has also been challenging for many veteran teachers. Nonetheless, while these teachers may have experienced good and bad days, they have persisted in their teaching profession. In an interview with a teacher, Day and Gu (2009), learned that the teacher and colleagues were all in education for the same reason, which was to do the best they could for the success of all students.

Teachers choose to stay in the classroom because of their “love for students” (Loewus, 2021, p. 2). Their love of students also allows them to be more resilient and bounce back from adverse circumstances to continue their original call to teaching. Their value for education, sense of vocation, and experiences serve as sources of wisdom and strength, which benefits everyone in the schoolhouse (Day & Gu, 2009).

Principal Support

There are factors that contribute to young teachers who are quitting at a rate of 50% over there are countermeasures that can be considered (Williams, 2011). New teachers must be taught certain strategies for dealing with high-stress situations, which come from being a new teacher. According to Bobek (2002), “A teacher’s resilience is enhanced when he is capable of assessing adverse situations, recognizing options for coping, and arriving at appropriate resolutions” (p. 202). Each of these ideas is further developed with professional development. Teachers are not the only ones who need to understand that there are ways to combat teacher burnout. Principals play a huge role in lowering the attrition rate at their campuses (Bobek, 2002). The most important thing a principal can do to improve student achievement is to hire, retain, and develop teachers for a lasting commitment (Darling-Hammond, 2003). Teachers who require a more sheltered approach from principals would be those who teach and work with students with emotional and behavioral disorders (Canico et al., 2013). According to Bays and Crockett,

(2007), as cited in Canico et al., (2013), principals are inattentive to the teachers' needs and have competing priorities, which causes teachers to rely on other teachers.

The issue of retention should begin by recognizing that it stems from a complex teaching job (Gonzalez et al., 2008). The NEA (2022), as cited by Gonzalez et al., (2008), further proposes new teachers, for the purpose of retention, should have mentors, professional development, smaller class sizes, and plenty of planning time. Furthermore, there is a growing number of states and districts that are increasing financial incentives, instituting professional development programs, and improving working conditions as methods to retain teachers (Cha & Cohen-Vogel, 2011).

School principals should focus on improving working conditions, boosting teachers' job satisfaction, and improving the retention rate. Working conditions include student conduct, teacher influence, and principal support (Cha & Cohen-Vogel, 2011). Principal support should encourage the small learning communities to share goals, the school's visions, and teacher input. Faculty needs are met with effective principal support (Oliver, 2008).

Authentic Care

Teachers confront difficult circumstances constantly, which creates stress and tension (Oliver, 2008). Principal support is needed to target the stressors that teachers embody (Oliver, 2008). School leadership is inseparable from emotion, and more than simply management (Crawford, 2011). People will follow the person before they follow the plan. Edwards et al., (2020) further argues that dialogue and communication are a finding in which teachers value a response from their principals, regardless of the time of day or night that they receive the response. Principals must be communicating with their staff and should be a great model for teachers (Edwards et al., 2020). When a principal states that they are available, they need to be

visible and accessible, to display authentic care. By being accessible and in constant communication with staff, parents and community members, principals will know their faculty and staff on both professional and personal levels (Edwards et al., 2020).

Another example to demonstrate that authentic care is occurring, is to offer veteran teachers who are approaching retirement an opportunity to job-share. Job-sharing is an idea where two veteran teachers share a class schedule so that they might work part-time instead of full-time (Alvy, 2005). This idea keeps experience and knowledge in the classrooms. Many times, professional development is a one-size-fits-all type of training that takes place at the campus level; however, utilizing veteran teachers to help facilitate in the training or decide what is relevant can provide new strategies for novice teachers.

Principals also provide support by recognizing the commitment and resilience of veteran teachers and acknowledge the investment they have made by utilizing their experiences and wisdom to guide new teachers (Day & Gu, 2009). The principal, as the campus leader, should consistently and frequently visit and participate in classrooms to focus on student and teacher learning and provide feedback (Edwards et al., 2020).

Teacher Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction plays a high factor in teacher retention. With a better understanding of how job satisfaction is related to teaching, better policies and practices could boost satisfaction and curb attrition (Cha & Cohen-Vogel, 2011). This improved retention would also improve teaching.

One aspect of raising a teacher's job satisfaction stems from their feeling of effectiveness. This efficacy is a result of training and professional development. Teachers are requesting more training, but not in the traditional format (Williams et al., 2022). As a result of the COVID-19

pandemic, the professional development modality being asked for is to extend online or virtual knowledge. Professional development for online platforms was just as effective as the traditional face-to-face training (Williams et al., 2022). A feature that online training can also offer is an on-demand service, where teachers can revisit the training if needed. Therefore, Williams (2022) strongly advocates that an array of online training be available for all teachers throughout their careers, as their needs will vary. Having the online platform available may be a powerful teacher retention strategy, since it does not depend on anyone other than the teacher to use (Williams et al., 2022).

Mentorship Program

Mentorship programs had much success in retaining new teachers and lowering attrition rates from 30% to under 5% (Darling-Hammond, 2003). Principals usually assign mentors according to the content that both the novice teacher and mentor are teaching. Through allowed release time for coaching, the novice teacher can observe the mentor teacher. The mentor teacher is given time from their schedule to observe, document, and then conference with the novice. Furthermore, the different mentors involved with the mentoring program also meet with one another to collaborate and learn from their experiences. Both mentors and mentees should realize that an effective mentorship program is a two-way street (Alvy, 2005). Veteran teachers will be observing the new teachers, and vice versa. As Alvy (2005) advocates, the new teachers should thank the veteran teachers for their expertise and time. This practice will begin to change the culture of mentorship for a new era of teachers in the years to come. Furthermore, considering extending the mentorship program for a second year is another strategy that would offer the mentor an opportunity to remain at the school for one more year and see the improvements in the new teacher as well as in their own teaching.

Principal Leadership Characteristics

Great leadership ensures sustainability in the school long after the school leaders have gone (Meador, 2020). A great leader must be multifaceted in dealing with all the different facets of the school and is the key to the school's success (Meador, 2020). An effective school leader blends qualities and characteristics, over a course of time, that assists with other principals, teachers, students, parents, support staff, and support everyone in the school on a daily basis (Meador, 2020).

Principals who demonstrate an awareness of issues, have a proactive approach in support, and are committed to professional growth for new teachers, can retain teachers at a higher rate than other principals (Brown & Wynn, 2009). A principal who offers more types of support such as a mentor teacher, common planning time, and networking with others, to new and veteran teachers, had a lower attrition rate (Brown & Wynn, 2009). An effective principal creates and fosters collaboration for teachers to learn from one another (Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008). Collaboration is key and holding others accountable for high achievement and not settling for mediocrity is necessary.

Successful leaders, according to Meador (2020), admit when they have made a mistake and will do what they can to rectify the error and not repeat it. Learning about decisions and mistakes only comes from a leader who knows that they must make difficult decisions (Meador, 2020). An effective leader must make differentiated decisions when dealing with student discipline, teacher performance, and throughout the countless decisions every day. Even when some decisions look the same, each decision is based on an individual basis for the betterment of the school. Some leadership characteristics that have been identified in an effective leader who worked in a school district with low attrition rates are visionary and focused on teachers, offered

immediate feedback, gave direct assistance, and gave opportunities to teachers for meaningful decision-making decisions (Meador, 2020).

Another philosophy exists, according to Oliver (2008), that an invisible principal who navigates the school from the background of the daily grind, empowers their teachers. Meador (2020) further elaborates on this idea by explaining that an effective leader challenges their teachers, assists them in creating goals, and provides the ongoing support for success. An effective leader must be visible, observant, and actively involved. A principal who is passionate about their job can solve organizational problems and create positive teaching conditions. These conditions were evident predictors of high student achievement and teacher retention. The term “Supportive leadership” is about growth and development, not evaluation and punishment (Brown & Wynn, 2009, p. 52). Furthermore, leaders need to be flexible, collaborative, and understanding.

Day and Gu (2009), also add to this philosophy by stating that the head teacher who offers support, recognition, professional trust, and encouragement can tremendously motivate the morale of a teacher and the group. Leadership is the relationship between the leader and the ones who are being led (Oliver, 2008). According to Meador (2020), an effective leader must understand that they are continuously being watched and judged by how they respond to situations. Leading by example by arriving early to work and staying late, volunteering to help, remaining calm, and making informed decisions demonstrate that an effective leader maintains professionalism and dignity inside and outside of the school (Meador, 2020).

Summary of Chapter

In conclusion, the review of the literature has explained issues that cause high attrition rates, why teacher retention is critical for student success, and what strategies principals have

done in different parts of the world and the United States which have proven to be successful.

Thus, this study will identify factors that principals perform to increase teacher retention.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the researcher provided an overview of the research design and methodology for the study. The researcher began with an introduction of the purpose of the study. The research questions that guided this study were then presented. Following this, the researcher described the research design, population and participants, data collection procedures and analysis. The researcher concluded this chapter by identifying some research limitations and a summary of the chapter.

Introduction

Veteran teachers are proven to be the single most important resource a school could have because a veteran teacher can pass down knowledge as well as wisdom to the upcoming generations of students (Darling-Hammond, 2003). For many years, there has been a challenge to keep up with the teachers who are leaving the teaching profession, by retaining the teachers who are already in the classroom. Retaining teachers has proven to have many benefits (Alvy, 2005). For example, it is very costly for a school district to have to recruit and hire new teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2003), and the biggest impact for students is the discontinuity when a teacher leaves the classroom. Retention continues to be a large issue in the United States (Garcia & Weiss, 2019). The purpose of this study was to identify factors that principals perform to increase teacher retention. Investigating what principal support could directly influence a teacher to remain in the classroom could reduce the attrition rate, thus causing more student success and other school district benefits.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study stemmed from Dr. Frederick Herzberg's Two Factor Hygiene Theory which he developed in 1966 (Perrachione et al., 2008). Since that time, his theory has been used by business and industry, organizations, and educators to look for answers for motivating employees and their production (Kurt, 2021).

Herzberg's Two-Factor Hygiene Theory

Herzberg's Two Factor Theory, 1966, measures job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction. Herzberg theorized that job satisfaction was influenced by "intrinsic factors" or "motivators" such as what the person does. The job dissatisfaction influences are from "extrinsic factors" or hygiene" such as the work environment. The term "hygiene" is an analogy for something that must be maintained as a preventative to avoid unhappiness. Timmreck (1977) explains that simply lowering the hygienic ailments does not guarantee a happy environment because the hygienes are still present. Herzberg concluded that a person seeks to avoid pain, and rather seeks pleasure (Timmreck, 1977). Furthermore, either motivation or hygiene does not influence one or the other. The motivators and hygiene factors operate independently. Perrachione et al., (2008) clarify that the presence of intrinsic motivators does not lead to the extrinsic motivators diminishing. If hygienic factors were missing, that would cause an imbalance for the person because there would then exist a need to fill that void (Timmreck, 1977). A person needs to maintain the hygienes and raise the motivators.

It is important for personal growth that the individual, or teacher, achieve a task which is meaningful to them, and will then raise the motivators (Timmreck, 1977). The opposite of completing a meaningful task and having psychologically stimulating experiences, it is not known as dissatisfaction, rather no satisfaction. There exist motivators, also known as satisfiers

which motivate an individual. However, there also exists hygiene which needs to be maintained. There is no direct connection from one to the other. Timmreck (1977) illustrates that on a campus, a teacher can be highly satisfied with their performance, and at the same time be highly dissatisfied with their environment. Herzberg's Theory establishes a connection between the actions that the principal does, and the level of job satisfaction that the teacher identifies. Timmreck (1977) explains that if hygiene factors are targeted for motivation, there can be personal and organizational problems. Job dissatisfaction among teachers comes from three extrinsic factors which are pay, advancement and job security (Oliver, 2008). The key to utilizing the motivators for job satisfaction is to provide opportunities for the teacher to achieve, experience their success, and grow psychologically (Timmreck, 1977). The principal then becomes a facilitator or increasing the teachers' motivation, rather than raising the dissatisfaction, as those can easily become dissatisfaction factors instead. Once a principal can understand the major differences between motivators and hygienic factors, the principal can then create those opportunities for accomplishments, and lower some hygienic factors, understanding that they are on two separate gauges and not on a single plane (Timmreck, 1977). A teacher's perception is their reality, despite a correlation between working conditions and job satisfaction (Farmer, 2020).

Herzberg's Motivator-Hygiene Theory

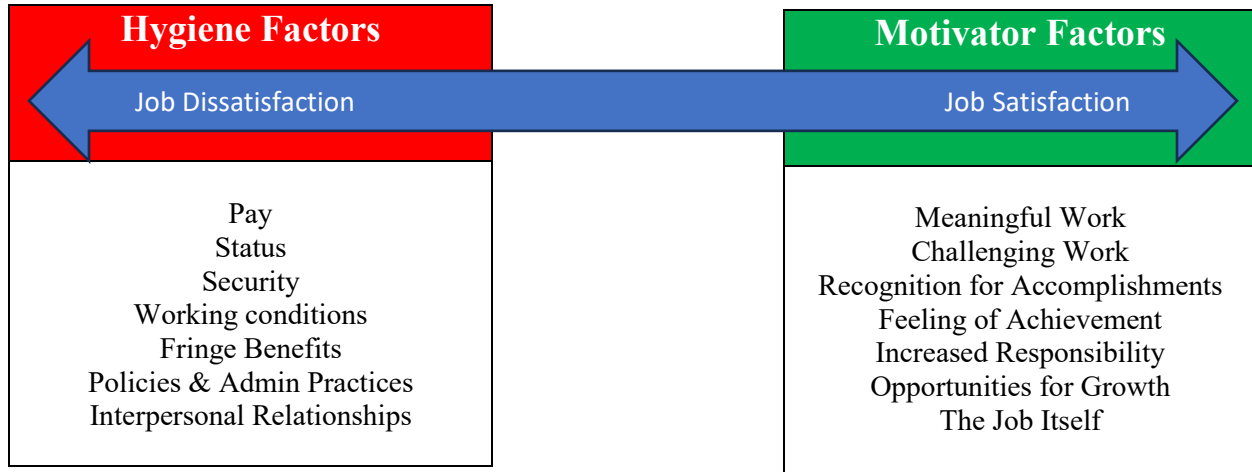


Figure 1: Motivators and Hygiene Factors. S. Kurt, 2022, Education Library Journal.

Research Questions

The following research questions are those that were investigated:

RQ1: What do suburban principals and teachers report as ideal strategies for effective teacher retention?

RQ2: What actions, if any, do the suburban principals and teachers report that principals perform that demonstrates support for teacher retention?

RQ3: What are the characteristics that suburban principals exhibit that contribute to a high retention rate?

Research Design

Qualitative research was conducted to explore and explain complex problems, develop, or refine theories, through rich and detailed data by empowering individuals to share their stories (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Qualitative research also understands that the settings for collecting data from participants will allow for addressing critical issues and that participant participation will drive the collection of data. This qualitative research study collected rich and descriptive

data from the participants (Creswell & Poth, 2014). The purpose of this research was to collect in-depth stories and detailed experiences from each participant to identify factors that principals performed to increase teacher retention.

This research study pertained to interpreting or understanding the meanings that the participants experienced through an interpretivism philosophy (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This means that the experiences were analyzed for meaning to support the theory that this research was based upon. Interpretivism is the philosophy that adequately supported this type of research because a positivist philosophy pertains to a more quantitative method type research.

The research approach that this researcher selected is both a deductive and inductive approach. Qualitative research continuously goes between deductive and inductive reasoning (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Deductive research begins by identifying a social theory that supports the researcher's interest, collects, and analyzes data, then tests the implications to that data. In other words, the researcher made a hypothesis, then analyzed the data, and concluded by determining whether the data supported the hypothesis. An inductive approach allowed for the researcher to gather data, identify patterns in the data, and ultimately develop a theory if concluded. Therefore, this researcher began with a general question and interest, collected data, analyzed data, looked for patterns, and then drew the appropriate conclusion.

Population and Participants

The principals that were targeted for this study must have been in administration for five years or more. The reason for this criterion was because principals with five or more years of experience have worked with teachers who have more than five years, as teachers who leave the teaching profession leave within their first five years (Ingersoll 2001, Darling-Hammond 2003). The sites selected were in a school district in South Texas that had a record of having a low

teacher turnover rate, and many teachers with more than 15 years of teaching experience (Texas Education Agency, 2023).

To gather a substantial number of participants, this researcher used two elementary schools, two middle-schools, and two comprehensive secondary public high schools in the district. There was a total of six campus principal participants in this study, two from each level of school. This study made use of purposeful sampling, which is a technique widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases for the most effective use of limited resources (Patton, 2002). This involved identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals that are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Three tenured teachers from each campus used in this research were also selected to participate in focus groups. In addition to knowledge and experience (Palinkas et al., 2015) note the importance of availability and willingness to participate, and the ability to communicate experiences and opinions in an articulate, expressive, and reflective manner.

Data Collection

Informed Consent

Before collecting data, the researcher contacted the superintendent and principals via email, explained the purpose of the study and requested permission to conduct the study in the school district, and at their respective campuses (Appendix A). The letter also included the dates of the intended study, and some potential benefits of participating in the study. The cover letter was provided to the participants via email (Appendix B) and included the name and contact information of the researcher and dissertation chair. An informed consent form (Appendix C) was also electronically mailed for a digital signature, if participants consented. The researcher

then collected electronic signatures from the participants prior to any interview. Qualtrics was used to develop the teacher demographic survey, as well as collect signatures. The data was triangulated utilizing the interview protocol, focus group protocol, and member-checking. Triangulation of data was important and is further discussed below.

Interview Protocol

Semi-structured interviews with each principal participant were conducted. After receiving consent from the principal participants, the researcher scheduled a time for the interview. The modality of the interview was through an online video conferencing tool known as Zoom™. The Zoom™ online computer platform allows for the participant to be at a location that is most comfortable and/or convenient for them. Zoom™ allows for the interview to be recorded and transcribed. At the time of the interview, the researcher reconfirmed that the participant still consented to the interview and was asked if the interview could be recorded audio and visually. Once the consent was given, the interviewer began recording and then repeated the question of consent. The semi-structured interview took approximately 45 minutes to one hour. At the conclusion of the interview the researcher thanked the participant. The transcription provided by the Zoom™ program was not completely accurate and required viewing and editing of the video and transcription.

Focus Group

Another source of data was a focus group protocol, utilizing 3 teachers from each school, a total of 6 teachers from each level, (elementary, middle, and high), for a total of 18 teachers (3 focus groups). The Zoom™ program was activated and the teacher participants waited. As the participants were virtually arriving, they were instructed to change their name to a pseudonym and turn their camera off. After all the participants had joined the room, the zoom meeting room

was then locked. At the time of the focus group, the researcher reconfirmed that the participants still consented to the focus group and were asked if they could be recorded via audio. Once the consent was given, the interviewer began recording and then repeated the question of consent. The focus group took approximately 60 minutes to complete. At the conclusion of the focus group, the researcher thanked the participants and ended the session. The audio transcription was not completely accurate and required further careful listening to the recording.

Document Analysis

The third data source for this study was documents, otherwise known as data that was generated from existing materials from the participants. Documents such as memos or other official type correspondence, private to public which painted a picture of the experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Documents were used as a secondary form of qualitative data so that the interviews were supported with the documents. In qualitative research, data is collected to describe an experience vividly and thoroughly. Therefore, by collecting documents, the researcher enhanced the experiences described by the participants, which aided the researcher in documenting and triangulating for validity (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher also requested consent from the participants to collect any documents or artifacts that contributed to the purpose of the research. These documents were any awards, discipline, memos, or other documents that further enhanced the experience of the principal actions to retain teachers.

Data Analysis

Data analysis included reviewing all the data which was collected through the interviews, focus groups, and documents. This data generated descriptions which were utilized to identify and create themes. These themes represented issues or situations to study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Once the completed analysis had been done, the study yielded some assertions (Stake,

1995) or explanations (Yin, 2009). In other words, general lessons learned from the study were discussed. The computer program also offered a transcribing feature which aided the transcription process. The researcher used the transcribing program to aid in identifying themes and the frequency of certain ideas. This was used to identify interconnected ideas within and among the participants.

The researcher read and reviewed each transcript from each participant and from each focus group and gathered a holistic idea and overall understanding. Then significant phrases or sentences were identified and clustered into themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The emergence of the clusters of themes were identified as common through all the transcripts from all the participants. Once themes had been identified and named, and a preliminary report had been generated, it was shared with the participants respectively. Lastly, when any new and relevant data emerged after member-checking, as put forth by Creswell and Poth (2018), it was added and included in the final report of the findings.

Confidentiality

During the interview process, participants were reminded that confidentiality was a part of the research. Creswell and Poth (2018), argue that ethical compliance ensures the confidentiality of the research participants, organizations, and anyone else who may provide information in the manuscript, will be kept confidential. While the participants logged into the Zoom™ website, they were able to change their username to a pseudonym, as stated by Wetherell (1998), as cited in Creswell and Poth (2018), for anonymity. The researcher identified the participant using the pseudonym created by the participant and anonymized the interviews. Another feature of Zoom™ was that it allowed users the ability to turn off their cameras. This ability ensured the participants that no one would be able to see their faces. After all the data had been collected and transcribed for the final report, the researcher continued to use the established

pseudonyms, to ensure the safety of the participants, and ethical compliance of the researcher (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Validity And Reliability

The validity of the research was based on the triangulation of the interviews, focus groups, and artifacts. Triangulation does not have to mean three sources of data, but can also mean multiple sites, multiple researchers, multiple forms of data. Primary and secondary forms of data. Secondary information can triangulate data. Validity considered in terms of descriptive, interpretive, theoretical, internal, and external facets. According to Creswell (2014, p. 250), validity demonstrates the accuracy of their findings and convinces readers of this accuracy. Peer-debriefing, another form of checking for validity, is when the researcher acquires someone to look at the data, and verify interpretation is like reading a text message. Woo and Terrell (2016) states that three good forms of credibility are enough, but it is however, important to explain and describe how this researcher implemented these forms. Therefore, this researcher utilized six different locations to thoroughly research principal actions that are not limited to a single location.

Trustworthiness

The validity of qualitative research is essential and is recognized as a strength of the research (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Validity, also known as trustworthiness, is based on determining whether this researcher's findings were accurate, from the reader's standpoint. Lincoln and Guba (1985) explained trustworthiness by describing it as credible, transferable, dependable, and confirmable. This researcher actively implemented the validity descriptors to ensure trustworthiness, and that accuracy of the data existed. Furthermore, triangulation (Creswell & Poth, 2018) was implemented by utilizing three sources of data. One source of data

was the interviews, another source was the focus groups, and lastly documents were analyzed. Triangulation is another form of establishing credibility (Creswell & Poth, 2018). By using multiple data sources, the researcher was able to explore evidence of corroboration (Creswell & Poth, 2018) which strengthened the validity in the findings. Yet, Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that the best technique for establishing credibility in qualitative research is through a process known as member-checking. This process allows for the participants to review the researcher's data, analyses, interpretations, and findings, and then offer feedback to the researcher. This researcher incorporated this strategy of member-checking when they emailed the research findings to each participant and solicited feedback to ensure that accuracy and interpretations were correct. Some items that the researcher sought feedback from the participants were through the rough draft, transcriptions, and interpretations of the data collected (Stake, 1995, p.15). The researcher sent the participants the preliminary analyses, to check for descriptions and themes accuracy (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Bias

This researcher is aware that some bias existed due to past experiences working with teachers. This researcher disclosed their understandings of the bias that may have existed, and embedded opportunities throughout the study, for discussing connections that may have emerged from the research (Hall, 1997). This researcher wrote a reflexive passage in which there were discussions in the final report in the chapters such as the methodology, threaded throughout the research via vignettes, and at the end of the research. The researcher shared a similar phenomenon with the participants, principals, and teachers, therefore this was addressed throughout the paper accordingly (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Limitations

There were limitations with this study that prevented it from becoming an ideal or global research. One such limitation was the fact that this research was based on one school district in South Texas, and not more districts, or throughout the state. Furthermore, this research could also be done throughout the country in other low socio-economic settings. Due to the time limitation, only one school district, including six schools, could be studied. Another limitation was access to principals. For this research, principals needed to have five years or more as a school principal, to ensure some experience in dealing with teachers and teacher retention. The purpose of this study was to identify factors that principals performed to increase teacher retention.

Summary of Chapter

In this chapter, the researcher provided a detailed process for the data method, collection, and analysis of the proposed study. This research was focused on the principal support which directly impacts a teacher's decision to stay in the classroom for another year and increase teacher retention. This researcher used a qualitative study, purposive sampling, and collected data from three sources which allowed for triangulation. Then, the data was analyzed and coded so that themes were identified. The chapter also contained reliability and validity by having participants check the transcriptions. The researcher also included data trustworthiness through member-checking and identified limitations of the research.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Teacher retention, a topic long a focus of discussion among principals and educators, was this study's central theme. The study aimed to identify the practical factors that principals implement to boost teacher retention. It documented the successful strategies principals and teachers discussed, which were practical and effective in promoting teacher retention. Furthermore, the research also explored teachers' perceptions of how principals' actions directly impact teacher retention. The study was guided by three specific research questions, each designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors and strategies for increasing teacher retention.

RQ1: What do suburban principals and teachers report as ideal strategies for effective teacher retention?

RQ2: What actions, if any, do the suburban principals and teachers report that principals perform that demonstrates support for teacher retention?

RQ3: What are the personal traits that suburban principals exhibit that contribute to a high retention rate?

This chapter discussed the findings of a qualitative case study that includes six principals and eighteen teachers. The overall findings of the interviews and focus groups that were conducted with the principals and teachers indicated the following four themes about the teacher

retention practices that principals performed, and teachers claimed are effective: (1) Accessible, (2) Authentic, (3) Supportive, and (4) Mentor. Additionally, each theme included subthemes that further represented findings from the data. This chapter's conclusion includes a recap of the themes and subthemes identified in performing this research.

Participants Demographic Description

This research included interviews and focus groups with six principals from the three different levels of education, as well as eighteen teachers from the three different levels of education respectively. The participants are grouped into three large categories. The three categories are Elementary, Middle School, and High School. The collected participants' demographic information describes the participants included in the focus groups. Table 1 displays the demographic information gathered from the teachers via a Qualtrics survey. Table 2 displays the demographic information gathered from the principals during their respective interviews.

Table 1: Teacher Participant Demographics

School	Pseudonym	Gender	Grade	Years	
Level				Level	Exp.
Elementary	EST1	F	2	7	
	EST2	F	4	11	
	EST3	F	5	25	
	EST4	F	2	17	
	EST5	F	3	10	
	EST6	F	4	12	
Middle	MST1	F	6	10	
	MST2	F	7	12	
	MST3	M	7	10	
	MST4	M	8	16	
	MST5	F	8	20	
	MST6	F	6	6	

Table 1 continued

High	HST1	M	12	18
	HST2	F	9	26
	HST3	F	9	30
	HST4	F	11	30
	HST5	M	10	25
	HST6	M	9	31

Table 2: Principal Participant Demographics

School Level	Pseudonym	Gender	Years Exp.
Elementary	ESP1	F	21
	ESP2	F	24
Middle	MSP1	M	5
	MSP2	F	8
High	HSP1	F	21
	HSP2	M	11

Pseudonyms were assigned to each participant in the study for confidentiality.

Elementary School Teachers were identified by EST. Middle School Teachers were identified by MST. High School Teachers were identified by HST. The principal participants were also assigned similar pseudonyms, respectively. The participants varied in age, tenure, and locations.

Themes

Each of the participants in the study either had a principal or teacher position. Therefore, their answers and experiences combined, painted a more accurate and correlated findings. The four themes that emerged from the study were Accessible, Authentic, Supportive, and Mentor. The following subthemes were also identified from Theme1: having an open-door policy, being highly visible, and being accessible via cell phone. Theme 2 presented the subthemes of behavioral traits and leadership of a principal. From Theme 3, professional support and personal support were the subthemes for a principal who demonstrated being supportive.

Theme 4, contained subthemes of modeling behaviors, classroom encouragement, and professional development. The transcripts for the interviews as well as the focus groups were checked by the participants themselves to ensure accuracy of the information that was provided. Next, the transcripts were thoroughly examined to identify recurring themes. To ensure that these themes were valid, the audio recording was listened to several times, and the transcripts were reviewed. The findings indicated what factors were useful to increase teacher retention.

Table 3 displays the four themes (Accessible, Authentic, Supportive, and Mentor) and the corresponding subthemes which pertain to them. This chapter discussed the findings of the themes that emerged from the transcripts of the interviews and focus groups.

Table 3: Themes and Subthemes

Theme 1 Accessible	Theme 2 Authentic	Theme 3 Supportive	Theme 4 Mentor
Open-door policy	Behavioral traits	Professional Support	Modeling
High visibility	Leadership	Personal Considerations	Classroom Encouragement
Cell phone			Professional Development

Theme 1: Accessible

Three of the principals felt being accessible showed a willingness to be around where the teachers were working. According to Friedman (2020), principals must enable accessibility in the field of human relations to demonstrate their skills for a humane attitude towards individuals and teachers. Friedman (2020) further explains that being accessible and available is a positive trait in inter-personal human ability. Being accessible was demonstrated by the principal participants in a few different ways.

Participant ESP2 stated:

Everybody always talks about open-door policy, but a lot of times they're not gonna come within the school hours. It might have to be a call or a text after work; it might be on the weekend. You have that connection sometime that you know I'm here for you if you need it. And you wanna have that rapport, so I think it's just trying to keep the staff morale up.

The teacher participants corroborated this by repeatedly talking about how their principal was accessible to teachers and staff. Another participant, ESP1, said, "That's part of my job to be accessible, and to be there." The different methods of availability are what established the development of the subthemes. At times, being accessible means that principals are known to be at a certain duty site at a certain time, therefore allowing teachers to meet with them. HSP2 stated, "Follow up is always there, and I've had the benefit of teachers feeling comfortable enough for them to come and see me." Principal participant HSP2 also elaborated:

If they don't feel comfortable going with a particular administrator, they can always feel comfortable going to an instructional coach or myself. So we always wanna make sure that we instill in the teacher, that the door is always open, because the last thing we want is for us to lose a teacher. We wanna make sure that we build that teacher up.

Open-door policy

The first subtheme under Accessible was open-door policy. This personal policy allows transparency and availability for anyone searching for the principal. The teachers spoke about the principal's door always being open and feeling comfortable when they needed to speak with them.

Participant EST1 stated,

The one thing I really like about her is that she keeps her door open. So when I say she has an open-door policy, it's literally open, and you know you can just walk in and just knock on the door. And then, whatever it is that you need. I mean so sweet, like I know I'm not walking on eggshells.

Further, HST1 mentioned:

It's an open-door policy. I know people that are like, really? Yes, it's a big school, but we have so many assistant principals that are willing to help you any little question that you have.

Another teacher participant expressed how easily it is to get a hold of busy administrators. HST2 further supported this statement by stating:

And whatever questions that I have, they've been very supportive in that way. It's just an open-door policy, I want to say. Just it, they're very easy to talk to, and I can reach out anytime.

Furthermore, teacher participant, HST4 stated:

He's always ready to listen to us because got the open-door policy, and he is a good listener, like he'll let you finish before he offers his two cents.

High visibility

High visibility was described by the teacher participants in a way that demonstrated that they would see their principals throughout the day and throughout the campus. Some teachers even described their principal as being highly visible at extracurricular events. An example of principals being visible is when they take time from their lunches. MSP1 stated:

Another thing I do every day, and I tell the kids, you know what's the best is having had an opportunity to come in and see you guys eating in the cafeteria. And that's because you have an opportunity, if you're having a bad day, you come and see me.

Teacher MST1 stated:

So, I am a new teacher here. So right away from the beginning, just setting up my room. The principal did come by before school had even started, or we were even really, technically allowed on campus to make sure that first, and he introduced himself formally, and then just to ask me if, while I was setting up my classroom, I was missing anything or needing anything that I could email him and then, when we were actually doing our work days, everyone one of those days, he stopped by and just made sure.

Teacher participant MST2, stated that their principal is highly visible in the hallways. MST2 says, "He comes into the classroom at all times, you know, and the campus is huge. So, he comes in, or he'll just be out in the hallway, and he'll just walk by like *todo bien, todo bien?*" Likewise, another teacher participant, HST1 stated, "In addition, the principals are up and down the hallway."

Cell phone

The third subtheme that was discovered was that principals are accessible through their cell phones too. A principal can be reached via phone call or text message whenever a teacher needs them. Participant ESP1 confirmed:

Sometimes you see me on the phone all the time. I have 110 employees, so most of the time it's them, they know I'm a text away, a call away.

A teacher participant, HST1 also shared the same sentiment when she said:

I mean, I may not see her every day, but I know she's here, and I know I can just message her, and she's going to respond. She's gonna get back to me. And they do it. I'm amazed. So, how principal does it? I have no idea, in the grace of God because I mean, it's not just academics.

Principal participant HSP2 further supports the availability of principals when they stated:

And if they know that there's something out there that they feel is gonna help them grow as professionals, all they need to do is reach out to me. Send me an email or call or text. We will always support them.

Theme 2: Authentic

The authenticity of any kind of support towards teachers needs to be genuine. Principals may at times provide teachers with resources or gifts. Teachers can sense when the gesture is real. EST3 stated:

And she's genuine, that's the thing. She's not putting on a show. That's her genuine self that she's given us. So we want to give her, our genuine self as well.

An authentic leader is needed when dealing with teachers, students, and parents. Being authentic can sometimes appear unreal or in spite of something. However, principal participant HSP2 shared, "I think they need to see that we care. That we care, that I don't think anything that we do, we do it in spite to hurt them or do anything. It's all for us to help them grow." An authentic principal motivates their teachers, according to teacher participant HST4, when they stated:

Well, he's very positive. He's always telling you that you're doing a good job, or he, you know, he tries to encourage you to keep doing well.

Behavioral traits

The first subtheme within Authentic was behavioral traits. Behavioral traits include behaviors that the principal does to support the teachers. They demonstrate actions that indicate what kind of person and leader they are. The principals at all educational levels have certain behaviors that they default to. Many of those traits are intended for how a principal behaves. Their behavioral traits are identified as being authentic or not. The following behavioral traits were used to describe the principals that participated in this research. Several teachers described their principals in very colorful ways to show how much they appreciated and described them. Some words shared were, loving, caring, kind, empathetic, genuine, listening, and giving. All six principals that were part of the research were highly favored by the teachers. A principal who truly believes in his or her staff, will act according to that belief. Teacher participant MST1 explained:

No, he really does believe that we just have the most amazing school that's ever existed in the whole entire world.

An additional word that was used to describe a principal was motivating. Teacher participant HST2 explained, "She gets with us about pep rallies, and you know, it's a lot of, you can do it. Come on guys. It's just a lot of encouraging. And as minimal as you may think it sounds like, it doesn't make a difference, it really does."

Leadership

The second subtheme that emerged from Authentic was leadership. This subtheme details how the leadership styles from the various principals were impactful towards the teachers in wanting to perform better or stay in the profession longer. ESP1 explained that when leading teachers, "I have to give them the flexibility and empowerment." Principal MSP1 stated that,

“teacher retention is one of my top priorities because you want to make sure that you hire, first of all, the right people, and you help them grow professionally, and you wanna make sure that once they do that, that they stay for you to work with.” The same participant went on to continue and said:

I would like to retain as many people as we can, because the more retention you have, the more successful you’re gonna have as growing as a team.

When a leader can communicate effectively, it enhances the teachers’ motivation. When asked about the eloquence of the principal, teacher participant HST1 answered:

You can tell that she is a servant leader, and she’s transparent, and she speaks to you where you’re able to understand where she’s coming from, and her vision and her goal.

Theme 3: Supportive

The third theme that emerged was how administrators are Supportive of the teachers. Supportive in this sense discussed that professional support was given to help teachers in their profession and supporting teachers on a personal level. EST1 stated, “And so I think having the support that we do, gives us the reason to not call in just because. Gives us the reason to want to come gives us the reason to stay.” Support can mean several different topics. Another teacher MST1, discussed how support is important for teachers. MST1 stated:

So, if I’m having trouble with a student, are you going to support me? If I’m issues with coworkers, are you gonna be supportive of what’s best between the two of us? If I’m having problem with my direct admin are you going to listen? So yeah, that would be the biggest thing.

Professional Support

A subtheme that teachers brought up while discussing how principals are supportive, was in professional support. Principal HSP2 said:

I think I'm pretty supportive as it applies for them, whether is any need. I mean whether it's a personal need, an instructional need, or whatever it is that they need for them to be successful.

Resources were discussed at length by both teachers and principals, as well as providing a mentor teacher for new teachers. Teacher participant HST2 stated:

Our new teachers are assigned veteran teachers as that as their support system. I know, I have two current teachers that are just fresh out of college, and that one of them who's going through the, alternative certification route, and so I'm their mentor teacher.

A principal can also offer professional support by allowing teachers to have autonomy in their classrooms or clubs. Teacher participant, HST2 stated, "Do your thing, you know. I trust you. She doesn't micromanage. She's very supportive." Principal participant HSP2, enhanced the idea of professional support being utilized by the instructional coaches. HSP2 stated:

Right now, we have been blessed that we have three instructional coaches, and those three instructional coaches work individually with them.

Continuing with the support provided by instructional coaches, teacher participant HST6 stated, "Instructional coaches are available as well to all teachers, obviously."

Personal Considerations

A subtheme that teachers discussed about how principals are supportive was through their personal questions, not questions pertaining to work, but showing an interest in the teacher as a

person. MST1 gave an example of this kind of questioning when they shared, “Like, how’s the kids? How’s your husband? How’s ... you know? Like dude.” Nine of the teacher participants explained how a principal who allows their staff to put family first is highly favored among the staff. Furthermore, teacher participant HST1 stated, “Working with the other teachers, I mean it like I said there, it’s like family. Believe it or not.” Principal ESP1 said:

I want people feeling like they are welcome, feeling like they belong, and feeling like they’re an important part of the team. The panorama survey tells us a lot of things that we don’t wanna hear. But, I mean, I will tell you, for the most part they’re so positive. And I’m like, gosh, I guess that why we retain teachers, because they do feel like they belong.

Teacher HST6 stated:

I’ve had surgeries before, and they’re like hey, get well. We want you back, but we want you to get well. If you’re not ready to come back, it’s not that we don’t want you here, we’re just concerned about your health so that you know you will be able to be here, and that you won’t have to worry about your house. Just little things like that, I think will show glad they want you.

The concept that Principal ESP2 shared was that they understand that employees have lives after work. Principal ESP2 stated, “I don’t expect my teachers to answer my emails or do any work after hours. They have families and lives to worry about and take care of.” That idea echoed from a teacher participant, MST5, “She always tell us to do what we can while we’re here at work, and not take anything home.”

Teacher participant MST1 stated, “Every meeting starts with affirmations. Every single one. People are laughing, and it kind of lightens the mood.”

Principal participant ESP1, explained how she likes to give food, thank you cards, gifts, and coffee to her employees on a regular basis. ESP1 said:

It starts with a cup of coffee in the morning. You know you think a cup of coffee, but yes, it starts with a cup of coffee. You have no idea how it goes a long way, the way the teachers feel like, hey, I get a cup of coffee, and that is one thing that I've always been really adamant.

Teacher participant, EST1, said, "Maybe if they're grumpy, you'll be surprised. Just a thank you note, or just something to motivate them." EST1 made that comment when trying to explain the rationale why random gifts end up on teachers' desks.

One thing that a teacher stated was how their principal validated their presence on campus. Teacher participant MST1 explained:

Sure, just the little things like that, or just really being told, like there'll be random times where I run into him, and he'll just be like, I'm so happy you're here. Like, you are such an amazing teacher. We're so lucky. And he doesn't have to do that. You know what I mean, and it doesn't even take not even one minute of his time, but it's nice to know that even in such a big campus, you're being seen, known, and appreciated.

Small validating comments like that help a teacher continue through their day and year.

Theme 4: Mentoring

The fourth theme from the data collected is the mentoring that occurs from the principal to the teachers. Principals acting as mentors are intentional in their interactions with the teachers, and incidental with the students. This mentoring occurs in the form of modeling acceptable

behavior for teachers, and mentoring teachers for the classroom encouragement. Mentoring may be delivered by a principal, instructional coach, or grade level teacher.

Modeling

The first subtheme from Mentor was modeling. Modeling in this aspect pertains to principals who model behaviors directly or indirectly for their teachers. Participants referenced how an effective principal will model the ideal behavior for their teachers. ESP2 talked about how they worked with children as if their own and stated, “Treat children the way you want your own children to be treated.” Principal ESP1, also reflected on their professional practice and stated, “I also want feedback. I also have room to grow. And even after thirty years of being an educator, there’s always room to grow.” Principals are observed by teachers leading by example in the school. MST1 stated:

Principal is very good about leading by example, for sure, so he doesn’t just talk it, you know, doesn’t just talk the talk like they say right? He’s very supportive from day one. Another teacher discussed how the principal knows what happens in a classroom, because they are always in the classrooms. Teacher participant HST1 explained:

Teachers who might be quiet individuals, but once they close that door, man, there they shine, and she knows that the principal knows what goes on behind closed doors.

This explanation went on to discuss that teachers who pull their weight and impact students’ learning are retained, while also knowing that teachers who struggle with impacting students’ learning get visited for support.

Classroom Encouragement

The subtheme of classrooms was brought up by several participants, in the sense that classrooms teachers receive a Mentor teacher when they are not performing well, because it is the teacher's first year. Eighty-nine percent of the teacher participants illustrated that the campus assigns a mentor teacher when they are new to the campus, whether they are a first-year teacher or not. Grade levels also have a teacher known as the Grade Level Representative. These teachers are part of the mentoring process for new or tenured teachers on campus. Teacher HST2, stated, "Instructional coaches help us out when we need help. We have to go ask for help." With teachers in the classroom, Principal HSP2 said:

As far as establishing those relationships not only with the teacher, so that we can make sure that the teacher establishes those connections in the classroom.

Professional Development

Another subtheme that evolved from the Mentoring theme was professional development. Several teachers stated that their district, as well as their campuses, offer Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and specialized professional development opportunities. EST1, EST3, EST4, EST5 all stated that the PLC trainings that occur on their campuses, offer professional development on various topics ranging from test data to classroom strategies that can be implemented. Teacher HST1 explains how the principal accommodates for the teacher to attend trainings. HST1 stated:

Sometimes we have them come in from Region One the ELA coordinators, and if I want to go somewhere, they're willing to let me go as well.

That teacher was not the only one who shared that sentiment when teacher participant HST2 stated, “We’re allotted the opportunity to go outside of the district. So we do have those funds available.” Teacher participant MST4 shared:

Yes, we do have professional development both here and off campus. For your content area, it’s encouraged.

Summary of Chapter

The findings of this qualitative research study, which utilized the collection of interviews and focus groups were organized around the three research questions. There was consistency among the findings from the teachers with what principals are reporting as factors for increasing teacher retention. Principals reported that their ideal strategies for effective teacher retention must include teacher support in the classroom and in their personal lives. Teachers reported that the actions from the principals must be genuine and authentic. Teachers claimed that when small, personal actions are done, authenticity shines through. The characteristics that suburban principals exhibit that contribute to a high retention rate must be received by the teachers when they are in need of motivation and support. When a final question was asked about what it is that teachers ultimately needed from their principals, a couple of answers resonated with all of teacher participants, support, and action. About eighty-six percent of the teachers stated that they needed support from their principals, on different levels. The support can be demonstrated by providing resources and materials, or by simply listening and validating their teachers. The second answer of action is a follow-up to a principal supporting their teachers. When a principal provides resources and materials for a teacher, the action taken is follow-up. The action of

speaking with the teacher or students about what the materials were needed for is important. Teacher participant HST1 stated, “You know, most people will listen, but not everybody’s gonna act. And teachers need that. Otherwise, they burn out and they don’t want to teach anymore.”

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this qualitative research was to identify factors that principals perform to increase teacher retention. In this qualitative case study, this researcher sought to increase understanding on what corroborates teacher retention rates in one South Texas school district by analyzing the perspectives of the principals who work with the tenured school teachers utilized for this study. The researcher further emphasized that by identifying the methods and strategies that principals utilize to increase teacher retention, this study can serve as a guide for other administrators to increase the retention of high-quality teachers within their districts. This chapter includes a discussion of the major findings and how they answer the research questions.

Results

The study was guided by three research questions: (1) What do suburban principals and teachers report as ideal strategies for effective teacher retention?, (2) What actions, if any, do the suburban principals and teachers report that principals perform that demonstrates support for teacher retention?, and (3) What are the characteristics that suburban principals exhibit that contribute to a high retention rate? Combining the principal interviews, the teacher focus groups, and member-checking, a triangulation was utilized to create four emerging themes that provided the data needed. The results created four themes: (1) Accessible, (2) Authentic, (3) Supportive, and (4) Mentor.

Research Questions

This study focused on factors that principals perform to increase teacher retention in the suburban border state of Texas. The goal was to identify the factors from the principals.

Combining the principal interviews, the teacher focus groups, and member-checking, triangulation was utilized to create four emerging themes that provided the data needed. This chapter contains discussions and further research possibilities to help answer the three research questions that guided this study:

RQ1: What do suburban principals and teachers report as ideal strategies for effective teacher retention?

In explaining what strategies that principals and teachers reported in performing for teacher retention, the identification of which teachers should be retained, needs to be identified first. During the interviews with the principal participants, a question was asked about which teachers should be retained. All six principals agreed that every teacher should be retained. For example, Principal MSP1 reported that “only teachers who produce, should be retained.” Principal MSP1 later said, “but really what we do here is try to retain them all.” Principal ESP1 exclaimed, “Is that a trick question? All teachers should be retained!” Principal ESP2 stated that the ideal strategy for teacher retention is through, “provide them with the training and the materials and support that they need.”

Middle school principal participant MSP2 discussed what to do when hiring new staff members.

Principal MSP2 advocated,

“There’s not really much you can do with who you inherit right? But the ones that you do hire. I make it a point to ask some very specific questions during the interviews to ensure that, I can do my best to retain them.”

Another Principal stated something along the same lines. Principal participant HSP2 stated,

“Whenever we’re looking at applications is that what has been the experience that teacher has had in their previous employment. Luckily for us here at High School, we have had pretty good run when it comes to retention.”

The theme of Supportive, was identified in illustrating in what ways the support by a principal was done. According to Cha and Cohen-Vogel (2011), “school principals should focus on improving working conditions and principal support.” Principals offered support professionally. Principal participant MSP1 stated, “Making sure that you’re in constant communication with your leadership team, and with the department that you oversee.” According to participant teacher MST1, “principal comes into my classroom to make sure that the kids aren’t acting up.” According to Bobek (2002), “a teacher’s resilience is enhanced when he is capable of assessing adverse situations, recognizing options for coping, and arriving at appropriate resolutions.” Principal ESP1 stated, “Just take care of the person, you know? First and foremost, I know that they’re my employees, but for me they’re my family.”

Principal ESP1 said that she does “little things to ensure that they [the teachers] feel like they are part of the team. It’s a family.” Principal ESP2 echoes the familial sentiment. Principal stated, “I try to make my school like a family-oriented school.” The principal also believes that family comes first. The personal considerations that the principal offers as support is a subtheme of Supportive.

Principal HSP1 described their strategy for an effective teacher retention program, is “Building relationships and really knowing your students and staff. Knowing your team, and the team is what’s inside the building most of the time.”

According to teacher participant HST1, an example of principals offering support, on a personal level is, “principal makes sure to tell us to work as much as we can when we’re here. They don’t want us to take work home.” Principals also perform smaller scale strategies to offer support for their teachers. According to Teacher participant EST2, “It’s the little things they do. Like sometimes, if it’s been a busy week, we’ll show up on Friday, and find like a small pair of earrings, or a thank you note on our desk.” According to Oliver (2008), “teachers confront difficult circumstances constantly, which creates stress and tension. Principal support is needed to target the stressors that teachers embody.”

RQ2: What actions, if any, do the suburban principals and teachers report that principals perform that demonstrate support for teacher retention?

According to Edwards et al., (2020), “when a principal states that they are available, they need to be visible and accessible, to display authentic care.” The themes of Accessible and Mentor emerged from answering this question. Being visible around campus offered teacher participant MST5 reassurance that he or she was there to support teacher retention. Teacher participant MST5 stated, “when I see principal walking down the hall, fist bumping teachers and asking them if everything is ok, I feel good because he or she asks us if we are ok.” “The principal, as the campus leader, should consistently and frequently visit and participate in classrooms to focus on student and teacher learning and provide feedback (Edwards et al., 2020).

When a principal has an open-door policy, it also shows that they are willing to be available for anybody to seek support. Having an open-door policy is a subtheme that was evident under Accessible. Teacher participant EST6 stated, “my principal has an open-door policy that is literally always open. I can go by his or her office and wave at them.”

Being accessible does not always have to mean in person. Teacher participant HST6 said, “I’m in a different building, but if I have a question, I can just call him or her on their cell phone and I know they’ll pick up.” According to Edwards et al., (2020), “By being accessible and in constant communication with staff, parents and community members, principals will know their faculty and staff on both professional and personal levels.” Along the example of being in communication and supporting teachers, Principal HSP1 stated,

“You do as much as you can to defend your teacher, and you talk to that teacher, and then privately, when the parent is gone, when the student is gone, when the other teachers are gone, you talk to that teacher.”

Principal participant ESP1 stated, “It starts with the cup of coffee in the morning.” Principal ESP1 provides coffee for the entire staff, on a daily basis, at the beginning of every day, as a way to demonstrate support for her teachers. Also, Principal participant MSP2 explained how she takes action against student discipline to support the teachers. MSP2 stated,

“Okay, so instead of you sending them to me with a referral, I’m gonna come to you. And I’m going to sit in those blocks, and I’m going to be there as a presence, you know, for disciplinary reasons. Then you can teach. Those kids can learn, and I can do my walk throughs.”

Lastly, principal HSP2 stated, “Administrative support to me looks like working as a team to ensure that the teachers’ area of need are tended to.”

RQ3: What are the characteristics that suburban principals exhibit that contribute to a high retention rate?

There are many characteristics that the principal participants exhibit, according to some teacher participants in the study, which contribute to a high retention rate. The actions that

principals and teachers report that principals perform vary in form; however, the constant is in the method of delivery. The theme of Authentic is what emerged from answering this question. A principal's behavioral traits, a subtheme, can be used to describe the authenticity of their actions towards teachers, staff, and retention. Some words that were used by the teacher participants, to describe their principals were: motivating, positive, caring, giving, approachable, hard-working, all-around, logical, talkative, supportive, generous, helpful, and friendly. "School leadership is inseparable from emotion, and more than simply management." (Crawford, 2011). Oliver (2008) posits, "Teachers confront difficult circumstances constantly, which creates stress and tension." Therefore, it takes a leader with positive traits to strategically utilize the leadership qualities and ensure teacher retention. Teacher participant said, "She makes us all feel relevant and important."

Another indicator of an authentic characteristic is when the principal values veteran teachers. According to Alvy (2005), "another example to demonstrate that authentic care is occurring, is to offer veteran teachers who are approaching retirement an opportunity to job-share." This understanding and appreciating of veteran teachers, is part of the principals' leadership style. Leadership style is another subtheme to Authentic. Day and Gu (2009) further support that notion when they claimed, "Principals also provide support by recognizing the commitment and resilience of veteran teachers and acknowledge the investment they have made by utilizing their experiences and wisdom to guide new teachers."

Summary of the Study

Of the six principal participants in the study, two were from elementary schools, two were from middle schools, and two were from high schools. All six principals, however, were from a single suburban school district. The eighteen teacher participants were also from the same

school district and equally divided by three teachers from each campus respectively. Suburban principals and teachers report that some ideal strategies for effective teacher retention were similar.

To ensure that the research questions were in line with the purpose of the study, the researcher delved into a comprehensive review of the literature pertaining to teacher retention. This initial step was crucial in establishing a foundational understanding of the various components that cause teachers to leave education and claim that the reason was due to a lack of administrative support.

From the findings, the emergent theme that helped answer Research Question 1, of what suburban principals and teachers reported as ideal strategies for effective teacher retention, was the theme of Supportive. Teacher participants claimed that supportive administrators were a big reason for teacher retention. This research, however, demonstrated that principals and teachers viewed their administrators favorably for providing support. The support that was discussed was professional, personal, and socio emotional. Each of the subthemes was then further broken down into other facets of supportiveness. Administrative support, as indicated in the literature review, is a key to teacher leader success (Gigante & Firestone, 2007).

In answering Research Question 2, the two emergent themes that helped answer the question were Accessible and Mentor. According to the teacher participants, principals aid in teacher retention when they are accessible in various modalities, and when they provide mentorship opportunities in the classroom and professional development. Edwards et al., (2020) supports that by being visible and accessible to parents, staff, and community members, their staff will feel supported. The subthemes in accessible indicate an open-door policy, high visibility, and accessible via cell phones. The teacher participants indicated that having an open-

door policy and being highly visible throughout the school building and at events, they could approach their principals for professional and personal reasons, which develops into creating a positive relationship for retention. Edwards et al., (2020) also stated that when principals are available and accessible, they display support towards their teachers.

The last major theme that emerged in this study was Authentic. The emergent theme Authentic, assisted in answering Research Question 3. Principals' behavioral traits and leadership are the subthemes under authentic. The way a principal behaves towards his or her teachers directly impacts teacher retention. The teacher participants used many positive and colorful words to describe their principals, and all of the words indicated a supportive environment and uplifting relationship.

The four emerging themes that developed from the findings are visually represented in Figure 2 according to which research question they helped answer.

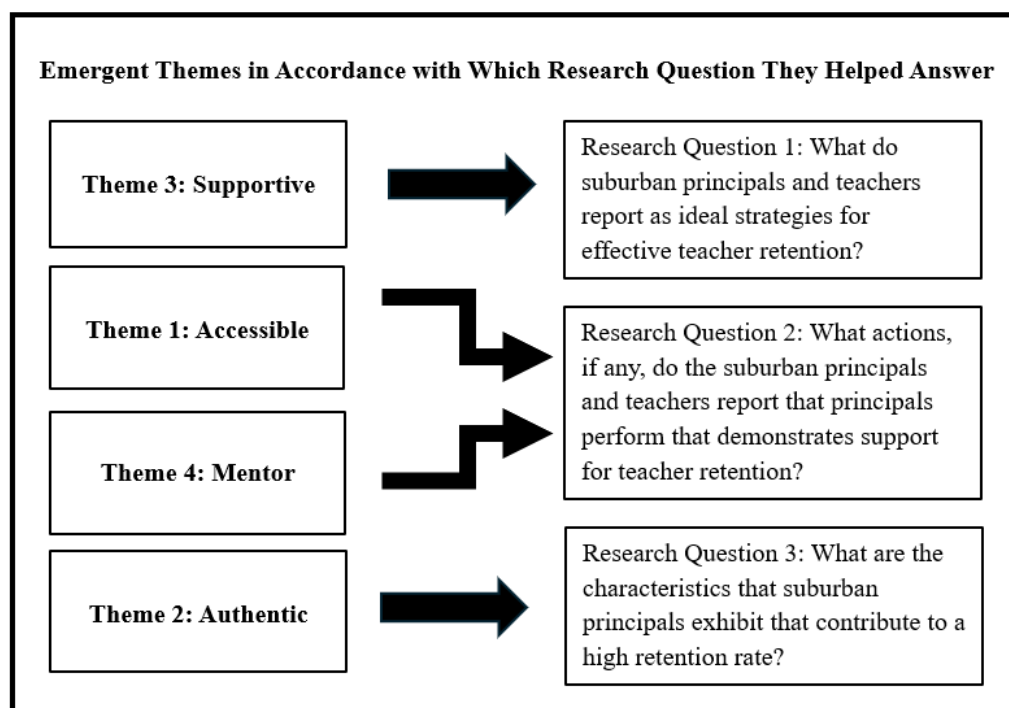


Figure 2: Emergent Themes from the Findings in Relation to the Research Questions

After the interview with the six principal participants and focus groups with the eighteen teacher participants, an analysis found four noticeable themes from the descriptive stories collected from the participants: accessible, authentic, supportive, and mentor.

Theoretical Framework Summary

Herzberg's Two-factor hygienes were evident from the study's four major themes. According to Herzberg's Hygiene Theory from 1966, job satisfaction is not the opposite of job dissatisfaction, and the two, are separate factors. Perrachione et al. (2008) clarify that the presence of intrinsic motivators does not lead to the extrinsic motivators diminishing. Therefore, all four themes, Accessible, Authentic, Supportive, and Mentor, can be added to the two factors of job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction.

Behavioral traits

The positive characteristics described by many teacher participants exemplifies that both gauges of Herzberg's Two-factor theory are affected independently. In other words, Teacher participant EST2 stated, "My principal supports me because one time a parent was getting mad, and the principal stopped the parent from yelling at me."

This describes that while the teacher felt supported by the principal, the job satisfaction gauge increased, the job dissatisfaction gauge was unaffected because of the teacher's perception of parents getting upset. The principals need to be able to support their teachers on different levels. Meador (2020) stated,

A great leader must be multifaceted in dealing with all the different facets of the school and is the key to the school's success. An effective school leader blends qualities and characteristics, over a course of time, which assists with other

principals, teachers, students, parents, support staff, and support everyone in the school on a daily basis.

Classroom encouragement

The theme of mentor was also discussed by approximately 88% of the teacher participants. This theme contributes to the idea of teachers feeling lost during their first years of teaching. A feeling of being lost increases the gauge of job dissatisfaction. Therefore, when a principal assigns a mentor teacher to a new teacher it provides a significant increase in teacher retention. According to Darling-Hammond (2003, p. 7),

Mentorship programs had much success in retaining new teachers and lowering attrition rates from 30% to under 5%.

While mentorship programs increased retention rates, they also offer a different form of teacher support. Brown and Wynn (2009) posit,

Principals who demonstrate an awareness of issues, have a proactive approach in support, and are committed to professional growth for new teachers, can retain teachers at a higher rate than other principals.

High visibility

Several teacher participants stated that the principal was highly visible throughout the campus and made them feel supported. In understanding that two factors exist, according to Herzberg's theory, a highly visible principal will raise the job satisfaction gauge, while at the same time does not lower the job dissatisfaction gauge.

During the data analysis, it was evident that the teachers discussed both positive and negative aspects of their teaching profession. Herzberg's Two-factor Theory was supported by identifying that if job satisfaction is increased, such as feeling effective, without lowering job

dissatisfaction, a teacher may still feel that the principal wants to retain them. Teacher participant MST2 stated, “I know my principal wants to keep me because I produce good scores.”

Conversely, if job dissatisfaction is lowered, without increasing job satisfaction, retention is still likely. The teachers here were not that nice or supportive when I first got here, but I love my job and working with children, so I’ll stay.” Herzberg concluded that a person seeks to avoid pain, and rather seeks pleasure (Timmreck, 1977).

Interpretations

While the teachers and principals each had variations for the different questions that were asked, each of the four themes were common in teacher retention factors that principals perform. The themes that emerged have a unique importance to principals and the factors that can be performed to increase teacher retention.

Implications for Theory and Research Recommendations

More exploration and investigation are needed in teacher retention. Principals who are dedicated to increasing teacher retention frequently find themselves seeking clarification, direction, and guidance on evidence-based methodologies to uphold the factors that best serve the interest of teacher retention.

Moreover, establishing a network of collaboration among principals, superintendents, and districts, beyond this research would help. Such a network would facilitate a statewide network of collaboration that would assist the state to continue sharing insights, resources, and mutual administrative support.

Educators, researchers, and district leaders considering effective teacher retention programs may benefit from this guide through experiences of teachers elaborating and describing their sentiments of effective strategies from their principals. Additionally, this study may offer

opportunities for reimagining teacher retention. Furthermore, this study addressed the correlation between what principals reported as effective strategies, with what teachers claim are effective strategies.

Limitations

This researcher encountered several limitations while conducting the research. The first limitation that the researcher faced was that this study was only conducted in one educational region. There are currently 20 educational regions in Texas, however, the research was only conducted in one, due to limitations of time and travel.

This particular case study included only one South Texas school district within the aforementioned region; thus, it cannot be said that the data revealed is happening in other school districts that have a high retention rate. Having only one district to conduct research provided a limited number of participants. Researching in more districts would provide richer data and more generalizability.

Another limitation in this research was the time constraint that only allowed for a short window of months of time for data collection. With a short amount of time, it limited the number of participants needed to deeply investigate more experiences from other teachers and perceptions from more principals. Also, due to the time constraint, only one school district was researched. With more time allotted for data collection and analysis, more school districts which met the criteria of having a high teacher retention rate would have been utilized.

The focus group organization caused a limited amount of time to schedule and coordinate. Many times, during the scheduling process, there were time conflicts from the participants. Three of the six participants in either of the focus groups were from a different school. A different school means a different calendar of events. Often, if the day was planned,

then the time caused an issue. This limitation caused a delay in gathering data from all six teacher participants at the same time.

Another limitation of the study pertained to the honesty from and among all the participants. While various efforts were made to encourage open and candid responses, some participants did not open up as much, therefore causing short answers. The participants also did not provide entirely honest and elaborate answers in their feedback, which limited the descriptive experiences being vividly told. Participants may have chosen to withhold certain information or modify their responses to align with perceived expectations. The role of an outsider may have introduced the potential for participants to be nervous and untrusting and possibly affecting the authenticity of their responses. The possibility existed that participants may have felt inclined to respond with what they perceived as my preferences or expectations.

Assumptions

There were several assumptions that the researcher discovered after the study was concluded. The first assumption that the researcher had was that principals would be easily accessible. However, simply getting a response from the principal about participating sometimes took a few days to a couple of weeks. Then, once the recruitment emails and consent forms were sought after, there was an extremely long delay in response time. Furthermore, once the principals consented, there was a challenge of availability to connect with the principals. Their busy schedule, and unplanned incidentals on their campus pushed back prearranged meeting times, sometimes by a week. The assumption was that the principals could easily modify their schedules and participate in the research.

Another assumption that the researcher encountered was in the ease of organizing the focus groups. The researcher assumed that one email would go out to the six teacher participants

in each grade level, and that all six would immediately respond with the same availability. That was hardly the case, because in the secondary level grade level planning does not exist like in elementary. The scheduling is completely different and there are many more events after school at the secondary level. The researcher ended up offering only windows of availability that the participants had to agree upon.

Lastly, there was an assumption that all the participants would be honest with their answers. However, at times during the focus groups, contradictory stories were told. Rather than calling out on the different participants to clarify or explain their stories, other participants simply agreed. The assumption that grouping the entire educational level would be advantageous was not the case because there is a different culture established at each campus, which causes the flow of interviewing to be skewed at times.

Implications for Practice

Based on the data gathered, the factors that were identified are practices that can be applied for increasing teacher retention. One of the main purposes of this study was to identify factors that principals perform to increase teacher retention. Some of the teacher participants identified retention strategies that the principals had reported performing, in order to retain teachers. Other teacher participants identified teacher retention strategies that the principals had not identified as being successful. The misalignment of perceptions only strengthened the factors that principals could perform in order to increase teacher retention. Another purpose of this study was to identify the factors that teachers report as being successful strategies that principals perform, to increase teacher retention. Furthermore, the findings of this study can serve as a tool for reflection and implementation in the Local Educational Agency, as well as other regional agencies, and school districts.

Recommendations

In this section, the researcher provided recommendations for future research. This qualitative study aimed to identify factors that principals performed to increase teacher retention. Because this study focused specifically on a suburban school district in South Texas, a recommendation for future research is to duplicate the study within the entire region, such as Region One, within the entire state, and within the entire country using suburban school districts, in order to have accurate generalizability. Another recommendation for future research would be to have a larger group of teachers from one school at a time, rather than from multiple schools. The research is on direct impact, thus combining schools would not necessarily produce reliable results.

Summary of Chapter

In this study, the teachers' participation played an important role. Due to the nature of principal effectiveness on teacher retention, teachers addressed their needs of administrative support and what strategies were effective. However, the principals' perception of teacher retention strategies could be more implemented with consistency if the teachers had communicated directly with their principals. This study aimed to highlight what principals are already practicing ensuring teacher retention.

In summary, this dissertation aimed to serve as a comprehensive guide for principals to evaluate what factors are effective for teacher retention. The data collected through interviews and focus groups examined the principals' perspectives regarding teacher retention. Through narrative inquiry and descriptive storytelling, the research may provide a nuanced understanding of the strategies that principals perform associated with teacher retention, offering valuable insights. Additionally, the study may contribute to the ongoing debate regarding the effectiveness

of principals' direct impact on teacher retention and best practices associated with implementation.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

APPENDIX A

Board of Trustees
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319 W. 4th Street • Weslaco, Tx • 78596 • (956) 969-6500 • rrivera@wisd.us

March 7, 2024

Efrain D. Reyna
1201 W. University Drive
Edinburg, TX 78589

RE: Campus Principals' Actions and Perceptions that Contribute to the Direct Impact of Teacher Retention

Dear Efrain D. Reyna,

I am writing regarding the research study titled, "Campus Principals' Actions and Perceptions that Contribute to the Direct Impact of Teacher Retention", to acknowledge and provide site permission for research that will be conducted with/at, 2 Elementary Schools, 2 Middle Schools, and 2 comprehensive High Schools. I understand that this data will be owned by UTRGV and will be used in professional presentations and publications.

More specifically, our facility will facilitate this research in the following ways:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Allow project staff to be on-site to recruit participants.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Provide space for participants to complete the research activities on site.
<input type="checkbox"/> Hand-out flyers about the study.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Obtaining consent from participants
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Provide data from records or access to records for the collection of study data.	<input type="checkbox"/> Conduct study assessments and/or collect study samples.
<input type="checkbox"/> Implement study manipulation/intervention	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other: Utilize employee emails to recruit participants and collect electronic signatures.
<input type="checkbox"/> I/we want to be recognized by name in publications or presentations. (If checking this box, please indicate the names of people or the organization as you would expect it to appear in publications _____)	

I certify to have the authority to bind my organization and to grant such permission to conduct the proposed research 2 Elementary Schools, 2 Middle Schools, and 2 comprehensive High Schools.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Richard Rivera".

Dr. Richard Rivera
Superintendent of Schools

APPENDIX B

APPENDIX B



The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

Principal Recruitment Email

Efrain D. Reyna, M.Ed.

February 14, 2024

Dear Principal _____ of _____

My name is Efrain D. Reyna, I am a Doctoral Candidate from the Department of Education and P-16 Integration at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV). I would like to invite you to participate in my research study to help identify teacher retention factors that principals perform. More specifically, an administrator's direct impact on teacher retention.

This research study has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRB) at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley and with permission from Superintendent Dr. Rivera.

You and your campus have demonstrated a high rate of teacher retention, according to the most recent TAPR. As the principal of that campus, you have met eligibility criteria that includes: you must be 18 years or older, have at least 5 years' experience at your current school, and serve in a South Texas school district. Participation in this research is completely voluntary, you may choose not to participate without penalty.

As a participant, you will also be asked to participate in an online interview which should take approximately 60 minutes to complete. All data collected will be treated as confidential by assigning a pseudonym to your name for confidentiality. The researcher is the only person who will have any identifying information about you.

If you would like to participate in this research study, please click on "I agree and do wish to participate". If you do wish to participate, a consent form will then be emailed to you for consideration and signing. If not, simply exit the web browser or click on "I do not want to participate". Please return this form to me and I will file it accordingly.

If you have questions related to the research, please contact me by telephone at 956-566-4713 or by email at efrain.reyna01@utrgv.edu.

Thank you for your cooperation!

Efrain D. Reyna, M. Ed.

Doctoral Candidate

College of Education and P-16 Integration

_____ **I agree and do wish to participate.**

_____ **I do not wish to participate.**

APPENDIX C

APPENDIX C



INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR INTERVIEWS WITH SCHOOL PRINCIPAL PARTICIPANTS

Study Title: “Campus Principals’ Actions and Perceptions that Contribute to the Direct Impact of Teacher Retention”

Principal Investigator of Research Project:	Efrain D. Reyna	Telephone: 956-566-4713 Email: efrain.reyna01@utrgv.edu
Faculty Advisor:	Dr. Velma Menchaca	Email: velma.menchaca@utrgv.edu

Key points you should know.

- You are being invited to be part of an interview as part of a research study being conducted by a Doctoral Candidate in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership. Your participation is voluntary. This means it is up to you and only you to decide if you want to be in the study. Even if you decide to join the study, you are free to leave at any time if you change your mind.
- Please take your time and ask to have any words or information that you do not understand explained to you. I want to make sure that you understand the purpose of the research study and interview before you decide if you want to consent to participate.
- I am doing this study because I want to further explore the following:
 - To identify factors that principals perform to increase teacher retention.

Please note that your participation is completely voluntary and will not impact your current or future employment with the school district.

- Why are you being asked to be in this study?

You have served as an experienced school administrator who has met eligibility criteria that includes: 18 years or older; 3 years administrative experience; serves in South Texas school district; experience in administrative capacity with teacher retention.

Your campus has a high rate of Teacher Retention, according to the Texas Academic Performance Report.

- Once you agree to be in this research study:
 - I would like to conduct a one-to-one interview that will be recorded via Zoom to collect an interview about your administrative experiences with teachers and teacher retention.
- By agreeing to participate, you are consenting to allow me to audio record the interview through Zoom. The interview should take approximately 60 minutes. The audio recording will not be publicized in that format; only transcribed (written) format may be published.
- Please note that one's decision whether or not to participate will not impact employment with the school district.
- Can you be harmed by being in this study?
 - The study involves no greater risk than what you ordinarily encounter in daily life.
 - There are minimal risks to your personal privacy and confidentiality. Your participation in this research will be confidential. Since I will be recording audio through Zoom, I will be able to identify you but only by your first name. I will assign a pseudonym (fictitious name) to identify you in the research study and any future manuscripts and/or presentations. The recordings will be stored in my password-protected personal computer.
- What are the financial costs of being in the study?
 - There are no costs associated with this study.
- Will you get anything for participating in the interview?
 - No.
- What other choices do you have if you decide not to be in the study?
 - You are free to decide not to participate in this study at any time.
- Could you be taken out of the study?
 - You will be removed from the study if you let either of us know that you no longer wish to participate in the interview or if you decide to not participate in the study.

Can the information collected be used for other studies?

If the data (i.e., transcript from the interview) collected is presented or published, your identity will be removed and replaced with a pseudonym. The information you gave me may be used for future research by me or other researchers; we will not contact you to sign another consent form if we decide to do this.

What happens if I say no or change my mind?

- You can say you do not want to be in the study now or if you change your mind later, you can stop participating at any time.
- No one will treat you differently. You will not be penalized.

How will my privacy be protected?

- Your information will only be shared with the Faculty Advisor listed on the IRB proposal.
- Even though we will make efforts to keep your information private, we cannot guarantee confidentiality because it is always possible that someone could figure out a way to find out what you do on a computer.
- Results from the interview may be used in future research publications and presentations. No published scientific reports will identify you directly. It is important to mention that although confidentiality of interviews cannot be guaranteed, the researcher will make a concerted effort to protect your confidentiality.
- If it is possible that your participation in this study might reveal behavior that must be reported according to state law (e.g., abuse, intent to harm self or others), disclosure of such information will be reported to the extent required by law.

Who to contact for research related questions?

For questions about this study or to report any problems you experience because of being in this study, you may contact my Faculty Advisor Dr. Velma Menchaca via email at velma.menchaca@utrgv.edu.

Who to contact regarding your rights as a participant?

This research has been reviewed and approved by the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Protections (IRB). If you have any questions

about your rights as a participant, or if you feel that your rights as a participant were not met by the researcher, please contact the IRB at (956) 665-3598 or irb@utrgv.edu.

Signature

By selecting agree, you consent to participate in an interview. If you agree, please include your name and signature so the researcher can proceed with the one-on-one interview.

Agree

Disagree

Name and email address:

APPENDIX D

APPENDIX D

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

Teacher Recruitment Email

Hello,

My name is Efrain D. Reyna, I am a Doctoral Candidate from the Department of Education and P-16 Integration at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV). I would like to invite you to participate in my research study to help identify teacher retention factors that principals perform.

This research study has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRB) at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley.

As a tenured teacher who has met eligibility criteria that include: you must be 18 years or older, have at least 15 years of teaching experience, 5 years at your current school, and serve in a South Texas school district. Participation in this research is completely voluntary, you may choose not to participate without penalty.

As a participant, you will be asked to complete an online survey which should take approximately 3-5 minutes. You will also be asked to participate in an online focus group interview which should take approximately 60 minutes to complete. All data will be treated as confidential by assigning a pseudonym to your name for confidentiality. The researcher is the only person who will have any identifying information about you.

If you would like to participate in this research study, please click on the survey link below, and Click on “I agree and do wish to participate”. If you do wish to participate, a consent form will then be emailed to you for consideration and signing. If not, simply exit the web browser or click on “I do not want to participate”. Please return this form to me and I will file it accordingly.

[Survey Link](#)

If you have questions related to the research, please contact me by telephone at 956-566-4713 or by email at efrain.reyna01@utrgv.edu.

Thank you for your cooperation!

Efrain D. Reyna, M. Ed.

Doctoral Candidate

College of Education and P-16 Integration

_____ **I agree and do wish to participate.**

_____ **I do not wish to participate**

APPENDIX E

APPENDIX E



INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS WITH TEACHER PARTICIPANTS

Study Title: “Campus Principals’ Actions and Perceptions that Contribute to the Direct Impact of Teacher Retention”

Principal Investigator of Research Project:	Efrain D. Reyna	Telephone: 956-566-4713 Email: efrain.reyna01@utrgv.edu
Faculty Advisor:	Dr. Velma Menchaca	Email: velma.menchaca@utrgv.edu

Key points you should know.

- You are being invited to be part of a focus group, as part of a research study being conducted by a doctoral candidate in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership. Your participation is voluntary. This means it is up to you and only you to decide if you want to be in the study. Even if you decide to join the study, you are free to leave at any time if you change your mind.
- Please take your time and ask to have any words or information that you do not understand explained to you. I want to make sure that you understand the purpose of the research study and focus group before you decide if you want to consent to participate.
- I am doing this study because I want to further explore the following:
 - To identify factors that principals perform to increase teacher retention.

Please note that your participation is completely voluntary and will not impact your current or future employment with the school district.

- Why are you being asked to be in this study?

You have taught as a tenured teacher who has met eligibility criteria that include: 18 years of age or older; at least 15 years of teaching experience; 5 years at your current school, serve in a South Texas school district.

- Once you agree to be in this research study:

I would like to conduct a focus group interview that will be recorded via Zoom to collect information about your teaching experiences with a focus on teacher retention. In addition, a brief survey will be given, after receiving your consent, to gather demographic data of the teacher participants.

- By agreeing to participate, you are consenting to allow me to audio record the focus group interview through Zoom. The focus group interview should take approximately 60-90 minutes. The audio recording will not be publicized in that format; only the transcribed (written) format may be published.
- By agreeing to participate, you are consenting to a Zoom audio recording. In addition, by consenting you understand that confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in a focus group setting.
- Please note that one's decision whether or not to participate will not impact employment with the school district.
- Can you be harmed by being in this study?
 - The study involves no greater risk than what you ordinarily encounter in daily life.
 - There are minimal risks to your personal privacy and confidentiality. Your participation in this research will be confidential. Since I will be recording audio through Zoom, I will be able to identify you but only by your first name. I will assign a pseudonym (fictitious name) to identify you in the research study and any future manuscripts and/or presentations. The recordings will be stored in my password-protected personal computer.
- What are the financial costs of being in the study?
 - There are no costs associated with this study.
- Will you get anything for participating in the focus group?
 - No.
- What other choices do you have if you decide not to be in the study?
 - You are free to decide not to participate in this study at any time.
- Could you be taken out of the study?
 - You will be removed from the study if you let either of us know that you no longer wish to participate in the focus group or if you decide to not participate in the study.

Can the information collected be used for other studies?

If the data (i.e., transcript from the focus group) collected is presented or published, your identity will be only through a pseudonym that the researcher created. The information you gave me may be used for future research by me or other researchers; we will not contact you to sign another consent form if we decide to do this.

What happens if I say no or change my mind?

- You can say you do not want to be in the study now or if you change your mind later, you can stop participating at any time.
- No one will treat you differently. You will not be penalized.

How will my privacy be protected?

- Your information will only be shared with the Faculty Advisor listed on the IRB proposal.
- Even though we will make efforts to keep your information private, we cannot guarantee confidentiality because it is always possible that someone could figure out a way to find out what you do on a computer.
- Results from the interview may be used in future research publications and presentations. No published scientific reports will identify you directly. It is important to mention that although the confidentiality of interviews cannot be guaranteed, the researcher will make a concerted effort to protect your confidentiality.
- If it is possible that your participation in this study might reveal behavior that must be reported according to state law (e.g., abuse, intent to harm self or others), disclosure of such information will be reported to the extent required by law.

Who to contact for research related questions?

For questions about this study or to report any problems you experience because of being in this study, you may contact my Faculty Advisor Dr. Velma Menchaca via email at velma.menchaca@utrgv.edu.

Who to contact regarding your rights as a participant?

This research has been reviewed and approved by the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Protections (IRB). If you have any questions

about your rights as a participant, or if you feel that your rights as a participant were not met by the researcher, please contact the IRB at (956) 665-3598 or irb@utrgv.edu.

Signature

By selecting agree, you consent to participate in a focus group interview. If you agree, please include your name and signature so the researcher can proceed with the focus group interview.

Agree

Disagree

Name and email address:

VITA

Efrain D. Reyna holds a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology, that he earned in December 2002, from the University of Texas-Pan American (a University of Texas Rio Grande Valley legacy institution). He also graduated from the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley with a Master of Arts degree in Educational Leadership in May of 2016. From 2018 to 2024, he was enrolled in the Doctor of Education program with a specialization in Educational Leadership at The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley.

Efrain began his teaching career in 2007 in the Pharr-San Juan-Alamo I.S.D. In 2018, he began working with the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, within the GEAR UP Grant Program. In 2019, Efrain returned to the school setting and became the Special Education Department Chair for the Science Academy of South Texas I.S.D.

In 2021, Efrain was promoted to an Assistant Principal at Weslaco East High School, in Weslaco I.S.D. After two years, Efrain became the Assistant Principal at North Bridge Elementary School, also in Weslaco I.S.D. Currently, in May of 2024, Efrain D. Reyna was promoted to Principal of Airport Elementary School, also in Weslaco I.S.D. Efrain may be contacted at efrainreyna@gmail.com.