

Identifying Teacher Retention Factors through Campus Comparisons

by

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ABSTRACT

Teacher retention is an increasingly critical issue facing the education system. Over the next few years, there will be an increase in the demand for teachers as enrollment continues to rise in Texas and as more teachers become eligible for retirement. Studies show that teachers who feel successful or feel they are making an impact are more likely to remain in teaching than those who feel ineffective. If teachers believe their hard work is not impactful, they can be dissuaded from staying in what they determine to be an unfulfilling job.

The study focused on determining characteristics of teachers who are likely to return to their campus at the end of a school year, indecisive about returning, and likely not to return. Through various qualitative data collections, the researcher collected insight on teacher perceptions and opinions on various factors that impacted their job. By collecting data from two campuses with different retention rates, the researcher was able to identify three specific themes, including Teacher Compensation and Career Opportunities, Teacher Workload and Support, and Student Behavior. The goal of the study is to provide additional information on how campuses and districts can work towards reducing teacher turnover rates by increasing targeted and intentional support for teachers and by analyzing teacher data for specific characteristics.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Teacher retention is a critical issue facing the education system. The rate of attrition for teachers with five or fewer years of teaching experience is forty to fifty percent nationally (Reyes & Alexander). While in Texas, nineteen percent of new teachers leave the profession after the first year, and out of those who returned, twelve percent left the field the following year (Cloudt et al.) Over the next few years, there will be an increase in the demand for teachers as enrollment continues to rise in Texas and as more teachers become eligible for retirement (“Supply and Demand for Educators in Texas”). It is also estimated that elementary teaching positions will add the second-highest number of jobs in the state by the decade's end.

The teacher shortage has been a focus for districts and campuses for years as the demand for teachers steadily increases past the supply of teachers currently available (Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, and Carver-Thomas, 2016). Studies like Hughes (2012) have focused on determining why teachers are leaving the profession and how teacher retention impacts student academic achievement. Research (Zhang and Zeller, 2016) has also shown that teachers who feel successful or are making an impact are more likely to remain in teaching than those who feel ineffective. If teachers believe their demanding work is not impactful, teachers can be dissuaded from staying in what they determine to be an unfulfilling job.

Before the impact of the pandemic, teachers were “consistently experiencing some of the highest levels of occupational stress among most occupations” and the “lowest levels of well-being among all professions.” (Kush et al., 2021, p.2). As a result,

about 25% of public-school teachers state stress as a reason to leave the profession and a contributor to teacher shortages. Due to the uncertainty of the pandemic and the constant changes it brought, educators' mental health was negatively impacted (Kush et al., 2021). The COVID pandemic has highlighted the need for additional support for teachers as stress factors increased as teachers ventured into the unknown. Even though schools have reopened, and virtual learning has decreased, the effects of the pandemic linger and will need to be addressed as it accelerates teacher shortages.

Background of the Problem of Professional Practice

Texas state legislatures have attempted to tackle teacher shortages and teacher retention through various laws and policies. This is evident in the recent House Bill 3 (HB3) passed by the 86th Texas Legislature. This bill included the Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA), and salary increases for educators (“House Bill 3 Texas School Finance”). The goal of the TIA program is to provide a six-figure salary for teachers and allow districts to retain effective teachers. Based on the effectiveness of a teacher and the type of campus they are teaching at; an educator could earn up to an additional \$32,000 on top of their regular salary.

HB3 also increased the minimum salary schedule for educators across the state and increased district budgets. The bill stated that 30% of a district’s budget increase must go to compensation increases and that 75% of those compensation increases must go to teachers, librarians, counselors, and nurses. The goal of the recent legislation is to reward highly effective teachers with a higher salary and reduce the desire of teachers to leave districts and the profession. Texas schools hope to increase their teacher retention rate through the TIA and compensation increases.

The primary problem with the target reform initiative is that the current initiatives attempt to treat all teachers equally, focusing on overall teacher retention without diving into deeper causes and differences among teacher subgroups or determining the root causes of the teacher shortage. Turnover rates affect specific subgroups of teachers more than others. For example, studies have found “that the more qualified teachers and those who scored higher on college admission exams” leave teaching at higher rates than others (Hughes, 2012, p.245), an issue not addressed through HB3. The bill also does not address the root causes of determining factors identified by teachers as reasons they leave the profession.

Studies such as Erichsen & Reynolds (2020) state that teacher collaboration and professional culture affect teacher morale, impacting teacher retention. Bouwmans et al. (2017) state that through team activities, teachers learn how to work together towards a common goal. These teachers can share ideas and collaborate to help all their students instead of focusing on the students within their classroom. The shared knowledge maximizes the teachers' skills and increases the team's teaching capacity. The more a teacher feels like part of a team or a community, the higher the chance they will remain at their current campus. Like in most professions, a healthy and positive work environment entices individuals to stay in their job compared to unhealthy environments that become stressors. A policy that contributes to creating a healthy environment and assessing the climate of a campus can lead to greater retention of teachers.

It is also vital to understand the factors that keep teachers in the classroom so that what is effective can continue to be implemented. Instead of teachers having their work micro-managed and being excluded from decisions affecting them, teachers prefer to be

treated as professionals and trusted to make correct decisions. By giving more power to teachers, they will feel that they are being heard and that they can contribute beyond their classroom. As policies are developed, it is important that teachers provide input as stakeholders and contribute to decisions that will impact their work and their students. Policy needs to take into consideration the assorted reasons different teachers decide to leave their job.

Problem of Professional Practice

An exploratory needs assessment (ENA) was conducted by the researcher to determine areas of need at Mockingbird Elementary and Bluebonnet Independent School District (BISD), the campus and district at which the researcher served as an administrator during the study. A pseudonym was given to the campus and the district. The Critical Success Factors (CSF), which are foundational elements of the Texas Accountability Intervention System (TAIS) developed by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and the Texas Center for District and School Support (TCOSS), were used as a guide to analyze the data collected. The CSFs “have been found to be key elements for implementing improvement efforts” and, when all are considered, can lead to school improvement. (Critical Success Factors, 2018). These factors include: Improve Academic Performance, Increase the Use of Quality Data to Drive Instruction, Increase Leadership Effectiveness, Increase Learning Time, Increase Family and Community Engagement, Improve School Climate, and Increase Teacher Quality. Through the lens of the CSFs, the researcher reviewed campus and district State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) and Texas Academic Performance Reports (TAPR) data. Additional data collected and reviewed included the district improvement plan (DIP), campus

improvement plan (CIP), a teacher Google survey, informal interviews, and informal observations.

The first CSF is a foundational component: Improve Academic Performance. The data collected for academic performance included STAAR data and TAPR reports.

Tables 1.1 and 1.2 show the pre-COVID STAAR results for the district and Mockingbird Elementary, broken down by the percentage of students who achieve certain performance indicators. The data shows that Mockingbird Elementary was performing significantly above the district. Table 1.3 shows the results of the first STAAR exams after students returned in person to school. The district and the campus showed a decrease in student performance, with the campus just slightly having a higher percentage of students passing the exams.

Table 1.1

2017-2018 STAAR Results for District and Campus

Student Performance All Subjects 2018	% Approaches	% Meets	% Masters
District	69	38	14
Campus	76	45	21

Table 1.2

2018-2019 STAAR Results for District and Campus

Student Performance All Subjects 2019	% Approaches	% Meets	% Masters
District	73	42	16
Campus	80	50	25

Table 1.3

2020-2021 STAAR Results for District and Campus

Student Performance All Subjects 2021	% Approaches	% Meets	% Masters
District	52	25	8
Campus	54	25	11

Increasing the use of quality data to drive instruction has been a focus of BISD and implemented through professional learning communities (PLCs) and data meetings. The goal is for teachers to regularly use data to guide their next steps. Based on informal observations by the researcher, teachers were not consistently using their classroom data to guide their instruction. The most common reasons shared by teachers were a lack of time and a lack of knowledge in using data. Since teachers were not in the habit of reviewing data independently, they were also not collaborating with other teachers in

analyzing their data. The data showed a gap in knowledge on how to meet student needs and how to work as a team to address weaknesses in the data.

The campus shows a need to increase leadership effectiveness based on teacher surveys and informal conversations. Through PLCs, teachers are asked to step forward and take charge of the meeting and discuss the data amongst themselves instead of listening to an administrator or instructional coach explain the data to them. PLCs have gradually released responsibility from campus leaders over to the teachers as they become more comfortable dissecting student data and implementing interventions in upcoming lessons. The goal is to have leaders arise on each grade-level team to guide their team through lesson planning and data meetings as an ongoing process instead of just when the admin team schedules PLC meetings. A further look into how a teacher's decision to leave a campus is impacted by school leadership will reveal more insight into this area.

Classroom observations have revealed a need to increase learning time which is one of the CSFs. When reviewing instructional times, there were opportunities discovered within the structure of lessons. Teachers spend most of their instructional time modeling and extending their allotted time for each content area, causing some subjects not to be taught every day or for independent practice not to be provided. Data shows that teachers need assistance with the pacing of their lessons to teach every content and provide students with practice opportunities. In surveys, teachers have revealed that they do not feel they have time to teach everything planned in one day (Google Survey, personal communication, 2021). Other opportunities to increase learning time include using transition times and incorporating cross-curricular activities in art, music, and

physical education (PE). With an increased instructional capacity, teachers can maintain their pacing and find opportunities to improve student learning. By expanding a team's instructional capacity, teachers can assist each other with addressing their instructional time.

In the CSF of “Increase Family and Community Engagement,” no data was collected. A survey will be needed to determine how this critical success factor impacts student achievement and teacher retention. A survey can reveal how community support factors into a teacher’s decision to stay and how it affects student achievement by analyzing parent involvement on the campus compared to student scores.

Improving school climate has a direct role in increasing teacher retention. Through surveys, teachers stated that they need time to tackle all they are asked to do (Google Survey, personal communication, 2021). They feel stressed and feel that they will get reprimanded for falling behind in their work. An increase in school climate, especially one where teachers work together and create a community of collaboration, can help retain teachers as they feel supported and part of a larger community. Table 1.4 shows the teacher turnover rate for the district and the campus over two school years. As both show a decrease in the turnover rate, Mockingbird Elementary maintains a higher rate than the district.

Table 1.4

Teacher Turnover Rates for District and Campus

	District	Campus
Teacher Turnover % 2020	17.8	30.1
Teacher Turnover % 2021	13.9	24.4

In the CSF of “Increase Teacher Quality,” Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System (T-TESS) data is needed to determine how teachers are rated on a standardized appraisal system and track their growth throughout the year. Through teacher observations, teachers are given action steps they work on each week, but a measurable factor would provide better data. It was determined that a survey could be conducted to see if a teacher feels they are growing and if that growth impacts their students’ performance.

After analyzing the data, two strengths were found:

- Teacher turnover has decreased due to stability in the campus leadership role.
- The campus has remained above the district average in terms of student achievement on the STAAR exams

After analyzing the data, four high-priority weaknesses were identified:

- Teachers do not look at their classroom data daily to adjust their lessons for the next day, which shows a lack of professional development in data-driven instruction.

- Teachers do not collaborate outside the grade level to share ideas and ask for support. Teachers stay within their grade-level groups, and there is no campus-wide teaching community.
- Teachers do not see PLC as an essential piece in improving their instruction.
- Teachers sense a lack of support is affecting their ability to complete tasks on time.

Both the district and the campus improvement plan list PLCs as a vital piece in student achievement. During PLCs, grade-level teams are expected to share ideas, ask questions about upcoming lessons, and adapt lessons for their students. While some grade levels meet the expectations for PLC, not all grade levels work collaboratively, and some do not take ownership of the PLC. Another trend identified through monthly surveys is that teachers feel they do not have enough time to meet all their job demands. This can influence their ability to analyze student data, collaborate with other teachers, and effectively target student needs.

Teachers at Mockingbird Elementary are not utilizing PLCs to collaborate with other teachers effectively or to increase their instructional capacity. This lack of instructional capacity and team collaboration leads to teachers feeling either inadequate and/or isolated and puts them at a higher risk of leaving the campus. This problem of practice was determined through the ENA and the analysis of multiple data points and observations. Teachers lack professional development on how to maximize PLCs to collaborate with fellow teachers. Teachers also lack consistent monitoring and feedback from campus leaders in the areas of data-driven instruction and collaboration. If the campus culture and PLCs can be improved through professional learning and consistent

monitoring and feedback, then teacher instructional capacity and team collaboration will increase, and teacher job satisfaction will improve.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine the characteristics of teachers with different decisions on returning to their campus by comparing data from two campuses with different retention rates. In compliance with BISD research policies, the study will include two campuses that do not include Mockingbird Elementary but are within the same district. The two campuses will have different retention rates. Data will be collected to identify the needs of teachers by using their opinions on factors that affect their job. The goal is to collect data on teachers' perceptions of their campus culture, their administration, their teaching, and their thoughts on returning to their campus the next school year. Hughes (2012) identified effectiveness as a factor in a teacher's decision to stay in the profession, while Boyd et al. (2011, p.308) stated that teachers were more likely to stay if they had developed "positive relationships with their colleagues". By comparing campuses, different retention factors can arise specific to each campus.

This study also aims to dive deeper into identifying the specific supports teachers describe in their responses. Teachers will be asked to reflect on their current needs and what support they need to improve their job satisfaction. Teachers will provide suggestions on how their campus and the district can improve in how they support teachers. The study will provide a deep insight into what teachers view as vital to their needs and the differences different groups of teachers can have regarding the types of support they need. As the COVID pandemic has accelerated the teacher shortage, the

study aims to provide a targeted approach to address teacher concerns and retain educators.

Design Parameters

This study will incorporate Creswell and Guetterman's (2012) description of educational research and components of design-based school improvement intervention design described by Mintrop (2016) and action research described by Coghlan and Brannick (2014). Through educational research, a spotlight can be placed on important issues affecting teachers by diving deep into a campus and district's data. Through action research, a collaborative relationship between the researcher and participants is created to tackle a problem of practice and develop new knowledge. When designing possible interventions, Mintrop suggests school leaders should engage in five key strategic components, which are highlighted in this chapter: (a) researchers must consider how adult learners learn when devising activities, (b) drivers of change must be identified as they relate to real-world settings, (c) consideration must be made when sequencing activities to ensure effectiveness, (d) school leaders must be prepared to develop imaginative solutions, and (e) activities may be practiced to promote efficacy. These strategic components were followed to determine possible interventions for schools and districts to implement.

Significance of the Study

The goal of the study is to increase the current research on teacher retention and identify the primary characteristics of teachers deciding to leave their school. Current studies focus on why teachers leave the profession or how districts provide additional compensation and benefits for teachers. However, there is little research on how effective

different retention methods are, how changes in the district and campus affect the teacher retention rate, and how teachers' decisions on leaving their campus develop over time.

By analyzing other factors that impact a teacher's decision to stay at a school or leave, along with retention data, significant changes can be implemented to target the root cause. The study will provide additional research on how the various needs of a teacher can be addressed and how those needs influence the decision to remain in the profession. Each campus is unique and by comparing campuses, common and unique trends can be identified and be beneficial in furthering teacher retention solutions. This study has the potential to change how districts and schools attempt to retain teachers, and its findings can be used to create and modify future retention interventions.

Theoretical Framework

Based on the problem of professional practice, teacher self-efficacy will be used to provide structure to the research. Through Pfitzner-Eden's (2016, p.2) research, self-efficacy is defined as the "belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments". Self-efficacy influences "behavior via determining what goals and challenges individuals set for themselves, how much effort they choose to invest in pursuing their goals and overcoming challenges, and to what extent they persist in the face of difficulties and obstacles" (Pfitzner-Eden, 2016, p.2). As teachers will reflect on their capabilities through the study and will be involved in providing suggestions, self-efficacy provides an appropriate framework.

Teachers face different challenges and obstacles in their profession that impact their job satisfaction. The belief in one's capabilities in overcoming those challenges can determine if a teacher decides to return to the profession or leave (Hughes, 2012). This

qualitative research study aims to determine the characteristics of teachers with different mindsets on returning to their campus by gathering teachers' self-reflections on various subjects.

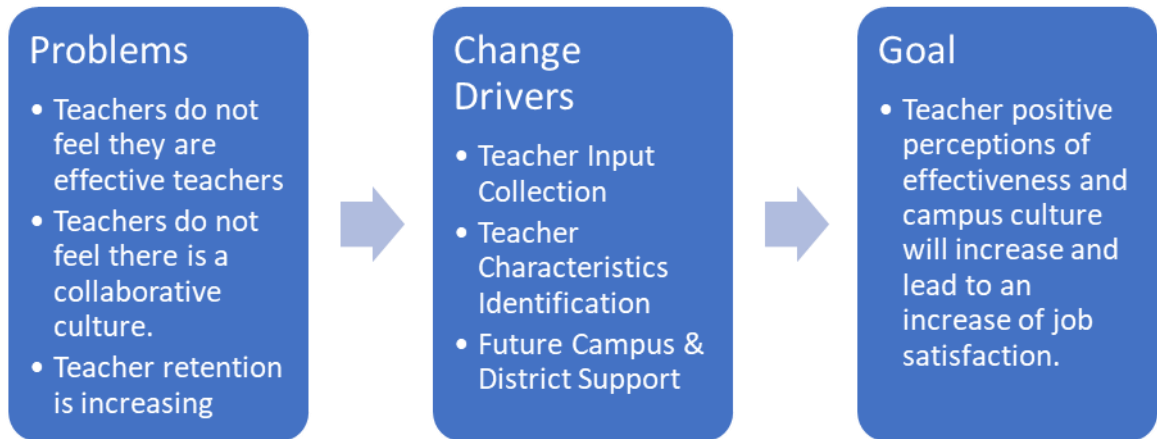
Change Drivers

The change driver diagram in Figure 1.1 provides a guide to how the study will use the identified problem of practice and use teacher input and identified teacher characteristics to provide campuses and districts suggestions on how to achieve the goal of increased instructional capacity, collaboration, and job satisfaction.

The first driver is the collection of teacher input. The researcher will collect teacher perspectives through different formats and obtain insight into campus culture, administration, instructional capacity, and other areas mentioned by teachers. The input will provide information on how teacher input can vary based on campuses with different retention rates. With the data collected, the researcher will be able to identify characteristics of teachers who are returning to their campus, unsure of their return, and those who have already decided to leave the campus. Through these identified characteristics, future campus and district support can be designed and implemented. With the ability to identify early on in a school year which teachers are likely to consider leaving a school, campuses and districts can work to provide support and achieve the desired goal of higher teacher retention.

Figure 1.1

Change Drivers Diagram



Key Terms

- *Campus culture*- the guiding beliefs and values evident in the way a school operates (Fullan, 2007)
- *High-leverage*- drive improvement for the greatest number of aspects (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2012)
- *Instructional capacity*- a collection of resources for teaching that a district, school, or grade-level or subject-area team has to support instruction and, most importantly, the ability to effectively use these resources to engage students and deepen learning (Jaquith, 2013, p.58)
- *Job satisfaction*- a feeling of fulfillment or enjoyment that a person derives from their job (*Oxford Languages*)
- *Professional learning community (PLC)*- a group of educators that meets regularly, shares expertise, and works collaboratively to improve teaching skills

and the academic performance of students (“*Professional Learning Communities - Claremont Colleges*”)

- *Teacher retention*- ability to maintain staff over time and prevent staff turnover (Hughes, 2012)

Research Questions

To achieve the goals of this study, the following research question was designed to guide the research inquiry.

- What are the characteristics of a teacher who is likely to return to their campus, a teacher who is at risk of leaving their campus, and a teacher who has decided to leave their campus?

By answering this question, recommendations can be made to create teacher retention plans that will target specific teacher needs.

Assumptions

It is assumed that all data obtained during the study on teacher retention and teacher perceptions at the district and campus level is valid data. It is also assumed that participants in the study provided honest responses and were able to reflect on various factors and their willingness to remain in their current position. As a researcher, I assume I will be bias-free conducting the research while working within the district and use a triangulation of data to determine the needs of the teachers.

Limitations

The study is limited to two campuses during the 2021-2022 school year. The needs of the campuses are unique to the school's specific circumstances. The study is also limited to the data shared by the district in a research agreement with the researcher. The

findings in the study are specific to the two campuses and should not be generalized to other campuses or districts. This study is limited to the experience of the participants.

Summary

The current study examines the problem of teacher retention and the factors that impact the issue. By conducting an exploratory needs assessment, the researcher was able to identify a problem of practice and conduct a root cause analysis to identify a root cause. To retain teachers, their areas of need must be identified and addressed by their campus and their district. The data from Mockingbird Elementary provided insight into what teachers identified as potential areas of support and areas to further investigate on other campuses.

The study focuses on identifying which teachers are likely to return to a campus and which are likely to leave their campus at the end of the school year. By comparing teacher perspectives from two campuses, one with a higher retention rate and one with a lower retention rate, significant trends can be identified in how different groups of teachers think about certain topics. Overall, if teachers can receive the support they need, their perceptions of job satisfaction will increase, and the teacher turnover rate will decrease.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Teacher retention is impacting our education system. As teachers leave the profession, it is essential to understand what makes educators decide to change careers and what makes them stay in the field, allowing for implementing innovative steps to retain teachers. Evidence shows that teachers tend to leave their profession due to feeling ineffective or lacking a sense of belonging in their school's culture (Hughes, 2012). As schools and districts develop plans to recruit new teachers while retaining their current staff, leaders will need to enhance teachers' quality and efficiency. The study aims to analyze the characteristics of teachers from campuses with different retention rates in order to identify the characteristics of teachers deciding to stay at or leave their campuses. The literature review will examine the current research on why teachers are leaving the profession, how to retain teachers, and how campus leaders play a vital role in teacher retention.

Teacher Retention

Zhang and Zeller (2016) state that teacher retention is essential because teacher turnover negatively impacts teaching quality due to the cycle of inexperienced teachers that are brought in. As schools work to provide consistently strong instruction for students, a constant change of teachers can have an adverse effect as "continuously replacing experienced, effective teachers with novice teachers causes students to be taught by a stream of inexperienced, first-year teachers" (Zhang & Zeller, 2016, p.74). This turnover also leads to a rise in resources used on incoming teachers. When analyzing the economic impact of replacing teachers, money and resources are used to recruit, hire,

and train new teachers with estimates reaching up to \$2.2 billion a year (Hughes, 2012) These costs can be reduced, opening funding for other critical areas in education.

Hughes (2012) explains that the teacher retirement and the increase of student enrollment are not the only problems contributing to current staffing issues, rather organizational characteristics are also playing an impactful role.” Teacher retention is a complex issue that requires a purposeful and in-depth solution. Multiple factors need to be identified and addressed to increase teacher retention to create an effective solution.

According to Boyd et al. (2011), about half a million teachers leave their schools each year with “20% to 50% of teachers leaving the profession within the first five years” (Hughes, 2012, p.245). While every field experiences professionals leaving the field at a certain rate, turnover and career changes are occurring more often in the teaching profession when compared to other professions. (Hughes 2012). But are all teachers leaving the field at the same rate?

By further analyzing the data, turnover rates affect specific subgroups of teachers more than others. For example, studies have shown that teachers who left teaching had different retention rates according to their gender, ethnicity, education level, and even their marital status. (Zhang and Zeller, 2016). Boyd et al. (2011, p.305) state that “turnover is higher among young and old teachers compared to middle-aged ones and among less experienced teachers compared to more experienced ones” while Hughes (2012) found that newer teachers leave education due to their dissatisfaction with the profession or to find other opportunities to better serve their families and that attrition is higher when teachers are starting out because they have built up less capital within the field and feel that they haven’t been anchored into their position yet, while veteran

teachers mostly leave due to retirement. Hughes (2012) also found that younger teachers do not leave the field permanently but leave for a period of time and do make up a significant number of new hires each year. Teachers of certain years of experience leave the profession for varied reasons, but less experienced teachers leave at a more significant rate.

In analyzing retention rates among different teacher demographics, Hughes (2012) states that studies showed that male teachers, White teachers, elementary teachers, and mathematics teachers are more likely to stay in teaching in comparison to their peers in other demographics. Overall, “the literature seems to indicate that teachers who stay are middle-aged, men, ethnic minorities, do not hold graduate degrees and scored lower on standardized tests of achievement” (Hughes, 2012, p.246) while Boyd et al. (2011, p.306) state that studies “generally find that schools with large concentrations of low-income, non-White, and low-achieving students are the most likely to experience high teacher turnover”. Understanding which kinds of teachers are staying in education reinforces the complex issue that is teacher retention as different groups of teachers choose to stay or leave based on different issues.

Job Dissatisfaction

When looking into why these teachers are leaving the profession, Hughes (2012) states that when considering whether to stay or go, teachers primarily considered their effectiveness with their students. While salaries play a role in teacher retention, a teachers' dissatisfaction with their salary is increased whenever their workload is increased without their salary being increased as well (Hughes, 2012). Further studies showed that “teachers agreed that supportive leadership, time for collaboration, access to

high-quality curriculum and resources, clean and safe buildings, and relevant professional development are even more important than higher salaries” (Zhang and Zeller, 2016, p.75) in terms of teacher retention strategies. While a higher salary can entice some teachers to remain in their position, it does not supply an overarching solution.

Many educators choose “teaching as a profession because they want to help students; however, student discipline problems and lack of student motivation might lead teachers to doubt their impact and question their professional choices” (Hughes, 2012, p.247). Teachers are not feeling that they are making a difference with students and closing achievement gaps. If they think that their demanding work is not impactful, they can be dissuaded from staying in an unfulfilling job. Especially with new teachers, higher levels of stress and the decreased job satisfaction are primary reasons teachers leave the field (Hughes, 2012). Training teachers in PLC techniques to improve their teaching and make strides in student achievement can lead to increased job satisfaction and teacher retention as they see their impact in their students’ achievement.

Within job dissatisfaction, other factors tie into teacher retention. These include “certain aspects of school environments, such as student behavior or insufficient school support” that “are often cited as reasons that teachers change schools or leave teaching and can certainly play a role in the career decisions of lateral entry teachers” (Zhang and Zeller, 2016, p.87). School environments can persuade or dissuade teachers from staying in their position as studies show that possible causes of the teacher shortage can be found in the working conditions of schools and districts (Hughes, 2012). Although factors such as personal characteristics, teacher preparation, and teacher efficacy have an impact on teacher retention; studies show that school climate plays a more impactful role (Hughes,

2012). Analyzing how a positive and supportive school climate is created can lead to further strategies for teacher retention.

Other factors that affect the school environment are a school's economically disadvantaged rate, the size of the school, the resources and facilities, and the ethnic demographics of the school (Hughes, 2012). Even parent collaboration affects teacher retention as Hughes (2012) states that teachers who were pleased with parental involvement were more likely to continue teaching due to less stress as parents took a vital role in their student's education in partnership with the teacher. Overall, "the actions of students; discipline, motivation, and achievement; and the actions of parents both contribute to a school environment that either retains or repels teachers" (Hughes, 2012, p.247).

Creating a team culture makes teachers feel that they are heard and can contribute beyond their classroom. According to Hughes (2012, p.247), "school climate is perhaps the strongest indicator" of whether a teacher will return to campus, and "the literature suggests that the school environment directly impacts teacher retention". For example, "teachers appear to be more likely to stay at a school if they have positive relationships with their colleagues" and prefer "a strong sense of collective responsibility among teachers" (Boyd et al., 2011, p.307). Zhang and Zeller (2016, p.75) state that "collegiality and positive attitudes about teachers in the community are related to teacher retention". Many factors play a role in creating job dissatisfaction for teachers and implementing strategies that target multiple factors can allow teachers to focus on their love for education.

Effective Schools

Schools themselves play a role in teacher retention. Studies show that more effective schools are better at retaining teachers and being able to attract and hire effective teachers from other campuses (Loeb et al., 2012). Studies also show that “teachers’ perceptions of school leadership are more predictive of teachers’ intentions to remain in the school or to find alternative jobs than are their perceptions of any other school working condition” (Boyd et al, 2011, p.307) as a strong leader can create an effective school.

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) developed the Effective Schools Framework (ESF) to “provide a clear vision for what districts and schools across the state do to ensure an excellent education for all students” (“Effective schools framework”, 2018). The ESF is divided into five levers consisting of Strong School Leadership and Planning, Strategic Staffing, Positive School Culture, High-Quality Instructional Materials & Assessments, and Effective Instruction. These levers are broken down into actions and practices evident in high-performing schools. Through the framework, schools can create action plans to become high-performing schools and retain teachers.

Teachers want to work somewhere that has proven results in student achievement. More effective schools are also able to retain high-effective teachers at a higher rate than non-effective schools and develop their teachers to improve student achievement (Loeb et al., 2012). Teachers become more effective when working in effective schools, and those seeking to improve their craft will seek out these schools. Loeb et al. (2012, p.269) state that “teachers who work in schools that were more effective at raising achievement in a

prior period improve more rapidly in a subsequent period than do those in less effective schools”.

The ESF describes a positive school culture as involving stakeholders in decision-making. Boyd et al. (2011, p.306-307) state that “teachers appear to derive greater satisfaction from their work and are more likely to stay in teaching when they perceive themselves to have greater autonomy “and that they are “also more likely to stay in schools where they have the opportunity to contribute to schoolwide decision making such as decisions about scheduling, selection of materials, and selection of professional development experiences”. Instead of having their work micro-managed and being excluded from decisions that will affect them, teachers prefer to be treated as professionals and trusted to make correct decisions.

Effective schools succeed because they are run by influential campus leaders who seek to grow instructional capacity by seeking methods to retain effective teachers and keep them satisfied (Murphy, 2016). These schools work to build team capacity because they understand that building a teacher’s capacity increases their chances of staying at the school (Murphy, 2016). These school leaders understand how to create an environment of growth and teamwork that attracts and retains teachers.

Teacher Quality

As stated earlier, one of teachers’ main concerns was whether they could be effective for their students growth and achievement (Hughes, 2012) when debating whether to stay in or leave teaching. In a data-driven school, teachers can improve their efficiency and quality. Studies have shown that “quality teachers are one of the most important school-related factors found to facilitate student learning” while “schools face

a critical challenge in retaining qualified teachers” (Hughes, 2012, p.245). According to the ESF, maintaining a highly qualified staff is an important lever in creating an effective school. (“Effective schools framework”, 2018)

Teacher quality affects teacher retention. Zhang and Zeller (2016, p,76) found that “teacher attrition rates are, in part, due to the level of education received as well as the quality of the program itself” as those who are “more qualified teachers and those who scored higher on college admission exams are more likely to leave teaching” (Hughes, 2012, p.245). Boyd et al. (2011) also found a similar trend as teachers with higher test scores and from more competitive undergraduate programs were most likely to leave teaching. As schools look to hire and create quality teachers while quality teachers are at a higher risk of leaving the profession, addressing the concerns of those leaving teaching is critical in creating high student achievement.

While teachers may grow over time, schools cannot do better than the teachers they currently have (Murphy, 2016). That is why it is crucial that teachers have opportunities to grow and why teachers stay at schools that can grow them professionally. Campus leaders have control over “hiring high-quality teachers, strategically retaining good teachers and removing poor teachers, and developing the teachers already at their school” (Loeb et al., 2012, p.271). They also can provide training and other opportunities for teachers to grow and increase their instructional capacity (Loeb et al., 2012), such as DDI. While teacher development is essential in all schools, it is viewed as “an important part of teacher quality in all schools but may be particularly important in schools serving many low-achieving, poor, and minority students” (Loeb et al., 2012, p.273).

Teacher Effectiveness

Teacher effectiveness has proven to be an impactful component of teacher retention and student achievement. Hughes (2012) states that teachers reflect upon their own instructional capacity and effectiveness when considering returning to the profession as they receive higher job satisfaction when doing well. Schweitzer and Bailey (2017, p.41) state that “teacher effectiveness carries such an impact on student learning that it even outweighs the effects of differences in class size or heterogeneity”. Studies also show that “highly effective teachers hold the potential to close achievement gaps facing poor and minority students and even go so far as to suggest that the cumulative effect of having highly effective teachers consecutively, over several years, is enough to close minority achievement gaps all together” (Schweitzer & Bailey, 2017, p.41). Teachers strive for student achievement, and by being able to understand their impact on students can lead to greater job satisfaction and willingness to continue teaching.

Teacher effectiveness can improve through professional development such as those focused on PLC. When done correctly, professional development should improve a teacher’s instructional capacity and classroom skills and translate into their teaching (Schweitzer & Bailey, 2017). Not only is professional development needed to improve teacher effectiveness, but leaders also need to be strategic in assisting inexperienced or ineffective teachers and identifying those who are not aligned with the school mission and vision (Murphy, 2016). Through training to increase teacher effectiveness or training on data to allow teachers to analyze their impact, educators can make a greater impact on students and increase their own drive for teaching.

One of the ESF's levers is "Effective Instruction". In order to assist teachers in increasing their own effectiveness, their capacity must be built through observation and feedback cycles. Through these cycles and methods, such as professional development, educators can be taught effective classroom routines and instructional strategies, data-driven instruction, and how to close learning gaps in students. The goal of the level is to provide teachers the support they need in order to effectively meet the needs of all of their students. ("Critical Success Factors", 2018)

Developing Team Culture within Grade-Level Teams

To help retain teachers, it is crucial that they feel part of a team and enjoy working with those on their grade-level. Boyd et al. (2011) state that teachers are likely to remain at a school when they have positive relationships with their coworkers. Teachers can maximize their potential to raise student achievement by working as a team. Sun et al. (2017) state that student achievement is not achieved solely through the work of an individual teacher, but through the collaboration of a team of teachers. Teachers can work together to increase student achievement throughout the campus. But how do teachers affect each other's performance? Studies suggest that "teachers may influence each other's teaching and performance through both the social pressure and knowledge transfer mechanisms" (Sun et al., 2017, p.106).

Hope (1991) found that collegiality is a beneficial factor in self-improvement, and it can enhance teacher retention. The positive collaboration also creates a positive school culture and work environment. Collegiality, a strong school culture, and school improvement require time to develop, requiring a consistent team of teachers who work together toward improvement of the campus (Hope, 1991). By working together, teachers

gain skills from each other or are molded by the school culture to do what the other teachers do. By creating collaborative teams, over time, the process becomes part of the everyday school climate (Krečič et al., 2000).

Team culture is also essential in promoting initiatives since the initiatives only become successful if all stakeholders are onboard (Widmann & Mulder, 2020). A strong and cohesive team is necessary “because it is only when teams change the way in which they work that effective change can be achieved at the organizational level” (Bouwman et al., 2017, p.71). When a team does not agree on how the change will occur, the change will not be long-lasting. If a team cannot come together to implement an initiative and change what they are doing, then the initiative will not reach its maximum impact.

Team culture is not created by merely putting a team together. Campus leaders must do work to ensure the team has a common goal. Schweitzer & Bailey (2017, p.44) state that “while collaborative inquiry teams hold the potential for meaningful capacity building in teachers, the potential is wasted unless a communal sense of values and beliefs are established as well as a dedication to putting what is learned into practice”. Without a common goal, the team will not have a structure to guide their collaboration. They must come together to develop a clear vision of their current state and determine goals and a plan to achieve those goals. (Widmann & Mulder, 2020).

Team members must also be on the same page in terms of what needs to be accomplished and how to accomplish the tasks in order to reduce possible errors and improve efficiency. (Widmann & Mulder, 2020). By working closely together, team members can determine what knowledge everyone comes with, and the team can determine how the knowledge can be used to address needs and create solutions

(Widmann & Mulder, 2020). Team understanding allows for a group to play to their strengths by using each other to tackle obstacles based on their skill set. This is referred to as “knowledge sharing.” Knowledge sharing is defined as “a basic behavior, referring to all team member behaviors related to information and experience sharing with other team members, such as communication or exchange of materials” (Widmann & Mulder, 2020, p.6). It also “makes individual knowledge available to other team members and enables the creation, combination, and recombination of team knowledge that forms part of every innovation development” (Widmann & Mulder, 2020, p.7).

Bouwman et al. (2017, p.71) state that “by engaging in team learning activities, teacher teams can better understand ideas behind educational innovations, reach agreement among team members on educational innovations, increase their innovativeness and make progress towards realizing educational changes.” These collaborative teams also “provide the structure for learning from one another, thus enhancing the collective capacity for learning amongst all involved” (Schweitzer & Bailey, 2017, p.45). Teachers should not feel they are the only ones who can help their students grow. They need to know that they are part of a team that wants the same thing: student achievement.

Team culture also supplies opportunities to grow as a professional. Working together can trigger teachers to seek improvement as they learn from each other (Krečič et al., 2008). To succeed, teachers must reflect and identify areas of need within their own practice and understand that quality teaching is not accomplished on one’s own, but it is the result of a collaboration among various staff members that empowers teachers to

come together in order to focus on student learning and make a bigger impact as a collective (Schweitzer & Bailey, 2017).

Another lever of the ESF, “Positive School Culture” addresses the importance of having a strong school culture in order to be an effective school. Within this lever, campus leaders work on ensuring all stakeholders work in collaboration in providing a safe environment and high expectations for students by aligning their goals. Educators have a “shared ownership for student success” and have a “common understanding of the mission, vision, and values” of the campus. The alignment helps in focusing all stakeholders in working towards the common good for all students. (“Critical Success Factors”, 2018)

Professional Learning Communities

One method that campus leaders can use to develop a strong culture within a time is through a professional learning community. Ronfeldt et al. (2015, p.476) state that “there is evidence that schools characterized by higher levels of collaboration also have higher levels of student achievement”. PLCs are a group of stakeholders, often educators, who come together to address current needs and work together to increase their instructional capacity or obtain the desired results (Webb et al., 2009). An effective PLC can be defined as including “Shared values and vision; collective responsibility for pupils’ learning; collaboration focused on learning; individual and collective professional learning; reflective professional inquiry; openness; networks and partnerships; inclusive membership; and mutual trust, respect, and support” (Webb et al., 2009, p.406). PLCs promote collaboration among teachers as their work to increase student academic achievement.

Ronfeldt et al. (2015, p.475) found that “teachers improve at greater rates when they work in schools with better collaboration quality” and that “teachers and schools that engage in better quality collaboration have better achievement gains in math and reading”. The collaboration assists teachers to improve on their instruction and therefore improve student academic achievement. Collaboration increases teacher performance and impacts student achievement as “each individual teacher gains useful knowledge as she collaborates with colleagues about instruction, which in turn improves her individual performance” (Ronfeldt et al., 2015, p.509).

Administrators work to create a campus culture that invokes a sense of community, which creates positive relationships, and promotes teamwork towards a shared vision (Webb et al., 2009). Through PLCs, a structure is provided for teachers, and “by providing an organized structure, regular opportunities for collaboration among colleagues is promoted.” (Ronfeldt et al., 2015). PLCs provide more than an opportunity for collaboration and plan a vital role in motivating teachers. Webb (2009) described the teachers in the study as highly valuing a collaborative culture that included a supportive team of colleagues. A critical factor in teacher retention was being able to share personal concerns and issues since it was vital to teacher morale and effectiveness (Webb et al., 2009).

Having an organized structure for PLCs does not promote successful collaboration on its own, as “school and teacher characteristics likely influence the ways in which teachers interact with their colleagues” (Ronfeldt et al., 2015, p.477). Other factors for a successful PLC include “small school size, strong principal leadership, and social trust among faculty” (Ronfeldt et al., 2015, p.478). When implementing PLCs, it is

important to note that “all collaborations are not equal---or equally productive” and that “the quality of collaboration can vary across instructional teams, even among teams that collaborate regularly and are highly committed to students’ learning” (Ronfeldt et al., 2015, p.479). The quality of collaboration “influences the degree to which teams are able to change teachers’ practice and ultimately improve student learning” (Ronfeldt et al., 2015, p.479). Collaboration needs to be intentional to be effective.

Ronfeldt et al. (2015, p.479) determined that the most impactful types of collaboration “focused on analyzing student data and developing instructional responses and collaboration focused on curriculum and instructional decision-making” and that “teams that maintained a high level of ‘group instructional practice’—preparing together for instruction, co-teaching, observing one another, and grouping students flexibly for particular instructional purposes—had better student achievement”. Through collaboration, “teachers’ interactions shift from sharing teaching activities to critically questioning relationships between common activities, learning goals, and student learning” (Allen & Topolka-Jorissen, 2016, p.64) which allows for teachers to grow in their practice to provide quality instruction and increase their effectiveness.

Instructional Leadership

Campus principals serve as campus instructional leaders and are impactful in creating an effective school and increasing teacher retention. Hughes (2012, p.247) states that “principals have a great deal of power and influence, perhaps even more than they realize,” especially “when it comes to beginning teachers and the level of support provided to newcomers to the school”. Thus, campus leaders can support a population of teachers most likely to leave the field as studies show that administrators have enormous

impacts on teacher retention (Hughes, 2012). Administrators can tackle many of the issues affecting teachers, and “fortunately, school administrators can work toward assuaging workload issues, and improvements in this area could mitigate certain salary concerns” (Hughes, 2012, p.247). Boyd et al. (2011) also suggest that administrator support has the potential to influence a host of working conditions, such as the amount of teacher influence on campus decisions and school safety.

Studies also show that principals impact their schools through “motivating teachers and students, identifying and articulating vision and goals, developing high-performance expectations, fostering communication, allocating resources, and developing organizational structures to support instruction and learning” (Boyd et al., 2011, p.328). Campus leaders have a direct effect on the “instructional quality of schools through the recruitment, development, and retention of teachers” (Boyd et al., 2011, p.328). To create an effective school, instructional leaders must work to improve current teachers and recruit high-quality teachers.

Hauserman and Stick (2013, p.190) believe that “principals must stimulate, nurture, and support teachers” as they work as “good role models, encourage cooperation, work collaboratively, emphasize facilitation, and support empowerment”. The instructional leader's role is to develop their staff and push them to succeed. In studies, teachers “reported that principals who had the greatest influence were open, participatory, and effective” (Hauserman and Stick, 2013, p.191). An effective instructional leader serves as a model for teachers and must embody the characteristics they require of their staff.

When recruiting teachers, administrators attempt to hire teachers who would ‘fit’ well in the school culture” (Allen and Topolka-Jorissen, 2016). Finding teachers that already fit the school culture or are moldable requires less time and resources to meet school expectations. In building a successful school climate, “principals seek teachers who value collaborative learning and work and who see their responsibilities as extending to all the students in the school, not just to their own class” (Allen and Topolka-Jorissen, 2016, p.65). To grow and develop teachers, studies, such as Hope (1991) state that principals must be willing to coach new teachers and make time to ensure their development. Hope (1991, p.54) suggests that “constructive feedback on the teaching and learning processes unfolding in new teachers’ classrooms is also essential for their growth and development”. Teachers must grow throughout their careers, and an effective leader guides all teachers to develop to meet campus expectations.

Another role of an instructional leader is to promote collaboration. To build a collaborative campus culture, principals must create a master schedule that provides sufficient time for teachers to meet and work together (Allen and Topolka-Jorissen, 2016). Principals also need to “use their understanding of the school culture and developmental readiness of their teachers to design collaborative learning processes that best match teachers’ orientation to professional inquiry and learning” (Allen and Topolka-Jorissen, 2016, p.65).

A collaborative campus culture begins with school leadership. Goddard et al (2015) states that campus leaders must serve as a catalyst for teacher collaboration. Instructional leaders must work to create “organizational conditions under which teachers work best” (Hauserman and Stick, 2013, p.190). Campus leaders “support the degree to

which teachers work together to improve instruction, and together leadership and teacher collaboration may contribute to school effectiveness by strengthening collective efficacy belief” (Goddard et al, 2015, p.507).

It is important that principals model best practices since “the more that principals serve as instructional leaders with detailed knowledge of classroom practice, the more likely are teachers to engage in collaborative interactions designed to improve instruction and facilitate group goal attainment.” (Goddard et al, 2015, p.503) Building collaboration takes time but “as teachers become increasingly comfortable with their participation in the work of leadership, they move into deeper inquiry” (Allen and Topolka-Jorissen, 2016) and have impactful conversations with their teammates to meet students’ needs. It is also essential to make the collaboration meaningful by focusing on important factors such as “frequency of collaboration, and the degree to which collaboration is formalized” (Goddard et al., 2015, p.506). “Both principals’ instructional leadership and teacher collaboration for instructional improvement are important indirect predictors of differences among schools in student academic achievement.” (Goddard et al, 2015, p. 525)

Allen and Topolka-Jorissen (2016, p.64) describe the role of the campus leader as “influencing ‘the motivation, knowledge, affect, or practices of other members of the school community, with the intention of improving instructional practice”. As students and teachers grow and change, leaders must grow as well. Leadership must aim to improve practice as it requires a culture that embraces continuous learning and modeling to be effective (Allen and Topolka-Jorissen, 2016).

Goddard et al. (2015, p.526) state that “results signal a clear need for principals to support sustained interactions around instructional improvement to improve teaching and learning.” Effective instructional leadership creates a positive impact on a campus and “helping administrators understand their level of influence and guiding them toward building a positive working relationship with teachers and empowering teachers would enhance teacher retention” (Hughes, 2012, p.247).

Literature Review Summary Findings and Conclusions

The following literature review summary findings and conclusions are derived from the literature review completed for this dissertation-in-practice proposal.

Literature Review Summary Findings

1. Teachers leave the field at a rate greater than other professions. New and experienced teachers are leaving the field.
2. Teachers stay at a school when they feel a sense of autonomy and feel they are effective. Teachers need a say in campus decisions and to be provided with opportunities to gain experience and learn.
3. Effective teachers significantly close achievement gaps in their students. Teachers can improve through intentional professional development and by the guidance of campus leaders.
4. Data-driven instruction is a method that improves teacher efficiency and student achievement. Teachers base their next steps in teaching based on student data. They can determine individual students' needs and target those needs in planned instruction.

5. A strong team culture allows teachers to share knowledge and skills. The team can play to each other's strengths when a problem occurs. Teachers can learn from each other and improve their instruction.
6. Teachers cite effective campus leadership as a reason for remaining in a position. Campus leadership affects various aspects of campus culture and promotes the growth of teachers.
7. Instructional leadership promotes collaboration and builds a team-oriented climate.

Literature Review Summary Conclusion

1. There is a need to address the issue of teacher turnover rates. For schools to retain teachers, their needs must be met through building a team culture with data-driven instruction. Teams of teachers can collaborate to improve each other's instruction to maximize student achievement.
2. Instructional leaders play a pivotal role in growing high-quality teachers and promoting collaboration among teacher teams. Instructional leaders have a direct impact on developing an effective school.

Conclusion

Teachers remain at schools with a strong team-oriented culture and opportunities to grow professionally. PLCs have been proven to increase student growth and provide teachers with a structure to analyze their instruction and improve. When coupled with team culture, teachers will see all students as their own, not just those in their classroom. Sharing ideas and knowledge helps teachers become more efficient and feel that they are improving while making them feel like part of a team. Instructional

leaders work to ensure teachers are developing into high-quality teachers. Campus leaders help shape a campus's culture through the implementation and recruitment of staff. Teachers cite effective leaders as a reason to remain on a specific campus. As a result, teachers will most likely stay in their current schools and the field of teaching with instructional leaders that develop them professionally and promote collaboration.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Constructing the Study

This study analyzed the perspectives and opinions of teachers identified when asked to provide insight and suggestions on various factors that impact their teaching. The study also analyzed how teachers from campuses with varying retention rates compare to each other and which trends can be used to identify teachers at-risk of leaving their campus. The proposed study consisted of data collection within two elementary schools within the same district in North Texas.

This study utilized a qualitative study approach described by Creswell and Guetterman (2019). While the study tackled identified problems within an actual campus, the desired outcomes of the study were to create a deep understanding of the issue through the analysis of individuals. This study employed qualitative methods to collect detailed information on participants' perceptions of PLC, instructional capacity, collaborative campus culture, and job satisfaction along with suggestions on how campuses and districts can improve. The study aimed to provide insight into a specific education problem that will lead to solutions for campuses and districts and provide additional knowledge into the education field.

This study employed qualitative research methods to collect detailed information on participants' perceptions of campus leadership, campus culture, and other areas that impact their job. The researcher will use the data to identify trends and overarching themes. The trends and themes aimed to provide schools and districts with strategies to increase the effectiveness of their teacher retention methods. The action research study

aimed to solve a specific education problem that will lead to solutions for the problem and provide additional insight into the education field.

The study used district provided data obtained in the 2021-2022 school year. As part of a research agreement, the district shared with the researcher data from two campuses with different retention rates with identifiable information removed.

Problem of Professional Practice

An exploratory needs assessment was conducted to gather information about Mockingbird Elementary and identify a problem of practice. The campus showed a pattern of a higher than district average teacher turnover rate over a three-year period (See Table 1.4). Further analysis of informal conversations and a staff survey determined that teachers were leaving the campus due to feeling inadequate in their effectiveness and feeling isolated due to a lack of collaboration and support (Google Survey, personal communication, 2021). The staff survey's observations and data revealed that teachers participated in ineffective collaboration and PLCs. While teacher groups met consistently, each group varied in expectations and procedures, causing a lack of consistency across the campus and within the groups themselves. Grade-level meetings did not involve a discussion of data and teaching strategies to improve instruction, leaving some teachers to view the meetings as a waste of time and unnecessary (Google Survey, personal communication, 2021). The grade-level teams lacked sufficient support from campus instructional leaders in monitoring PLCs and providing targeted intervention to each grade-level group.

To further support teachers and create a higher teacher retention rate, there was a need for instructional leaders to develop a collaborative campus culture and increase

teacher instructional capacity through targeted intervention. Teachers should be able to work with the instructional leader to identify areas of improvement and recommend professional development they need to feel supported. If teachers participate in effective PLCs, then they should perceive an increase in their effectiveness and collaborative campus culture, as well as an increase in their job satisfaction. By obtaining teacher input and including them as collaborators in decisions, teachers gained a sense of support from campus leadership and further improved their job satisfaction. Teacher involvement created stakeholder buy-in as they will be provided the opportunity to provide direct input by sharing their thoughts and needs and assist in their development.

Purpose of the Study

The study focused on collecting teacher input on various factors that impact their job and comparing the results to teacher retention data to identify trends and specific characteristics of teachers who are likely to leave their campus. The participants participated in various opportunities to share their suggestions and opinions with the district and campus. The participants were able to voice the support they need and share their thoughts on teacher retention. The goal was to identify characteristics of a teacher who is likely to return to their campus, a teacher who is at risk of leaving their campus, and a teacher who has decided to leave their campus.

The study aimed to collect feedback from teachers and gain valuable insight on various topics that impact them. The researcher analyzed how the data compares among the two campuses within BISD with different retention rates and analyzed comparisons among teachers who stated they will not be returning and those who stated that they will be returning. The goal of the study was to provide additional information on how

campuses and districts can work towards reducing teacher turnover rates by increasing targeted and intentional support for teachers.

Questions Guiding the Study

The study aimed to determine the following question:

- What are the characteristics of a teacher who is likely to return to their campus, a teacher who is at risk of leaving their campus, and a teacher who has decided to leave their campus?

Context of the Researcher

The insider action research approach requires “research in and on your own organization while being a ‘complete member’” (Coghlan & Brannick, 2014, p.121). As a researcher and a member of the school where the problem of practice was identified, and an employee of the district where the study takes place, the researcher had prior knowledge of Mockingbird Elementary and BISD, which gives the researcher a foundation to work off and dive deeper into the problem of practice. The unique insider perspective allowed for a special understanding of the problem of practice and of the data in the study. The researcher lived in and attended the same school district where they work and have completed 8 years working in education. The researcher had also completed their second year as an administrator at Mockingbird Elementary, and second year in BISD where the study was conducted

The researcher’s role was to identify the needs of participants and provide targeted and analyze its impact on teacher job satisfaction and its variables. The researcher worked to recognize any possible biases and/or personal opinions and be cognizant of them throughout the study to minimize their impact. Ethical considerations

were also addressed. In insider action research, it is important that the researcher is aware of their perceptions of the campus and its teachers so as not to make assumptions or allow personal opinions to impact the study's validity.

School Setting

The campuses where this dissertation-in-practice study will take place were given a pseudonym and were referred to as School A and School B. Both campuses are elementary schools serving pre-K through fifth grade students. These schools are different from Mockingbird Elementary, the campus from which the initial problem of practice was derived. The campuses were in a suburban city in North Texas, where there are several districts in close proximity to each other. Further details on the campuses beyond retention rate were not shared with the researcher by the district as part of a research agreement.

Participants

The researcher obtained Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval before conducting the study to ensure the study protects all participants. The researcher obtained written permission from the district's research department to conduct the study. Once permission was obtained, the data was shared with the researcher by the district.

The study focused on teacher retention and teacher perceptions. The district recruited teachers to voluntarily complete a Wellness Check, a Temperature Check, and to complete an Exit Survey if they were leaving the school district. The number of respondents from each campus varied throughout the different data pieces. All participants were volunteers giving consent to participate in the district's data collection. The district will provide permission for the researcher to use the data with identifiers

removed by the district prior to sharing. All participants, the campus, and the district were provided a pseudonym to maintain confidentiality, and all responses will be kept confidential.

Data Sources

The study was a qualitative research study. Data included retention data, a Wellness Check, a Temperature Check, and an Exit Survey conducted by the district in the 2021-2022 school year. Retention data from the two campuses was shared by the district along with the other three pieces of data. The temperature check included a Likert scale and open-ended responses focused on teacher thoughts on campus culture and leadership. The temperature check was sent to school employees in the second semester of the 2021-2022 school year by the district to collect insight on areas of improvement that can be shared with campus leaders. The wellness check was also sent out by the district in the second semester of the 2021-2022 school year and obtained voluntary responses. Its questions focused on teachers' perceptions of stress and/or burnout in the work environment. The wellness check also invited input from teachers on suggestions to improve employee retention. The exit survey was given to employees who are not returning to the district in order to get feedback on possible changes and reasons for leaving the district.

Data Analysis

According to Creswell and Guetterman (2019), data analysis in a qualitative study should involve preparing the data for analysis, exploring the data, and coding the data for descriptions and themes. The data from the survey was organized by participants and was reviewed for any data entry errors. A descriptive analysis was completed to find any

preliminary trends. The data was further analyzed using data analysis software to identify trends within the data. Statements from participants were broken down into individual excerpts. These excerpts were compared to each other. Excerpts from the same individual and different individuals were compared and the data was also compared to the information collected from each of the data pieces to identify trends further. Reflections through the analysis process were kept in memos. Excerpts that fall in a similar category were grouped and coded to encapsulate the excerpts. Codes were then compared and connected to develop themes (Charmaz, 2006). The researcher used a qualitative data analysis software program, ATLAS.ti. to code the excerpts by grouping and labeling ideas that could be further grouped into themes and perspectives.

To validate the accuracy of the findings, the data from the Wellness Check, Temperature Check, Exit Survey, and retention data were triangulated. Triangulation is the “process of corroborating evidence from different individuals, or methods of data collection in descriptions and themes” (Creswell and Guetterman, 2019, p.54). The researcher examined each piece of data to develop a theme that is supported by multiple sources. By combining data, the researcher checked and established validity.

Maintaining Trustworthiness, Credibility, and Transferability

The researcher adhered to Creswell and Guetterman’s (2012) description of educational research and followed design-based school improvement as described by Mintrop (2016) to maintain trustworthiness, credibility, and transferability throughout the study. The study utilized multiple data sets and analyses to ensure the validity and reliability of the study and its results.

In order to maintain trustworthiness, the researcher followed the agreement made with the district and used the data appropriately and did not seek to identify the participants or the campuses involved in the data collection. The methods used in the research were described in detail to describe exactly how the study was conducted and how the results were determined.

Credibility was generated through the triangulation of data to determine patterns and emerging themes. Multiple data points were used to support emerging themes and findings in the study. By using various sources of data from various individuals, the researcher will have evidence for themes identified in the study.

Transferability was created through a detailed and thorough description of the study so that the findings could be transferred to another situation. Multiple data sets were also used to provide further information in the study. As this study was specific to a certain campus, its teachers, and a specific problem of practice, it is up to individuals to determine what details apply to certain situations. Future studies can further give information on the transferability of the study.

As an insider action researcher, it is important to be aware of biases that can emerge as the researcher plays multiple roles on the campus. As the researcher has previous experience with the district participants and the problem of practice, it is important to be conscious of the role of the researcher and the role of the administrator and not allow biases and personal opinions to affect the study.

Ethical Considerations

Typical research's findings include personal and confidential information from the participants and the researcher, so it was necessary that identifiable information was

removed to ensure privacy and confidentiality were supported. In this case, identifiers were removed prior to the research obtaining the data. To ensure that the participants and their privacy are protected, the researcher obtained IRB approval before the study began. District permission to conduct the study was obtained to ensure the study meets their privacy expectations as well. The researcher followed IRB protocol, Texas Tech and Texas Educator code of ethics, and district policies throughout the study to ensure the validity and reliability of the study and the safety and privacy of all participants. The researcher also ensured that the data collected throughout the study was accurate and free of identifiable information.

To ensure the privacy of all participants, the district, school, and each participant were given a pseudonym, and identifiable information was removed. Any information and data collected throughout the study was stored in a password-protected hard drive with a password-protected computer that only the researcher could access. The district was informed of the details of the study including, what data was collected, and how it was to be stored. The researcher answered questions and addressed any concerns before, during, and after the study.

Conclusion

This chapter detailed the action research design and how data was collected and analyzed to answer the research questions. The study combined insider action research and design-based school improvement to create a design to further analyze a problem of practice. The study incorporated multiple data sources that will supply reliable and credible qualitative data to allow for data triangulation and accurate results. Through various data collection methods, themes were determined by the researcher to draw

conclusions from the data and assess teachers' perceptions of campus culture, instructional capacity, and job satisfaction. The researcher incorporated methods to ensure that the study provided ethical, trustworthy, credible, and transferable results. The results of the research provided vital information to campus and district leaders on measures they can take to tackle teacher retention and retain strong educators in schools.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

This study aims to determine the characteristics of a teacher likely to return to their campus the following year, a teacher at-risk of leaving their campus the next year, and a teacher who has already determined they will be leaving their campus the following year. In this chapter, the following ideas will be covered: 1) a review of the process and 2) the findings and the themes of this study. First, this study aimed to identify the similarities and differences between teachers at two campuses with different retention rates. In addition, this study focused on examining teacher perceptions of various components that impacted their positions and their suggestions on teacher retention. The bounded system for this study involved data gathered from two elementary schools in a suburban school district in Texas.

Teacher retention is a critical issue in education, with many school districts needing assistance and innovation to keep their experienced and effective teachers. This issue is especially true in today's educational landscape, where there is a high demand for qualified teachers and a shortage of candidates to fill open positions, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, it is crucial to understand the factors teachers evaluate when considering their future at a campus, at a district, or in the education field. By understanding these factors, schools can create targeted interventions to improve teacher retention rates. This study aims to identify the factors contributing to teacher retention and turnover through a comprehensive analysis of survey and interview data collected from two campuses. Ultimately, this study aimed to provide actionable insights that

campuses and districts can use to create tailored action plans to improve teacher retention rates.

Review of the Process

This qualitative study examined teachers' views on their well-being, campus culture, campus support, district support, and teacher retention. The aim was to find ways districts and schools could create targeted plans to retain teachers based on their shared input. This qualitative study followed Creswell and Guetterman's (2012) description of educational research and components of Mintrop's (2016) design-based school improvement and Coghlan and Brannick's action research design.

After several meetings between the researcher and the school district where the research was to be conducted, the district and the researcher agreed on allowing research to be conducted in a manner that limited any tasks teachers needed to complete. The district shared with the researcher three pieces of data their research department had collected from two undisclosed elementary campuses with different retention rates. School A had a retention rate of 54% from the previous school year, while School B had a retention rate of 82%. The district provided a unique identifier for each teacher in the data to remove any personal identifiers.

One shared piece of data was called a "temperature check". The temperature check included a Likert scale and open-ended responses focused on campus culture and leadership. This data collection piece was sent to school employees in the second semester of the 2021-2022 school year by the district to collect insight on areas of improvement. Twenty teachers from School A participated in the temperature check, along with thirteen teachers at School B.

Another shared piece of data was called the “wellness check”. The district sent the wellness check in the second semester of the 2021-2022 school year. Its questions focused on teachers’ feelings of stress or burnout. It also invited input from teachers on suggestions to improve employee retention. School A had five participants in the wellness check, while School B had seven participants in the wellness check.

The third piece of data shared was the “exit survey”. The district implemented the exit survey to gather feedback and input from leaving employees. School A had twelve respondents to the Exit Survey, and School B had eight respondents to the Exit Survey.

The researcher analyzed the wellness check, the exit survey, and the temperature check provided by the district and coded the responses from the teachers using ATLAS.ti. The researcher initially used Excel to code the data but found the task too difficult when coding a response with multiple codes and switched to a software program with the feature needed to add multiple codes to an excerpt. The researcher initially ended up with ninety-three codes. From there, the researcher reviewed the codes and merged and recategorized the codes to condense the information into overarching themes. The emerging themes were teacher compensation and career opportunities, teacher workload and support, and student behavior.

Process and Impact Data Results

The study relied on the temperature check, the wellness check, and the exit survey for data collection. The teacher responses were analyzed and coded into themes using ATLAS.ti through five rounds of reanalysis that included the researcher reflecting on connections leading to emerging themes. The researcher then disaggregated the data by school to allow for comparison. The researcher calculated the percentage that each

respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the survey statement and found the average for each campus by each category of statements.

School A had twenty respondents to the Temperature Check, and School B had thirteen respondents to the Temperature Check. Table 4.1 shows the campus responses to the campus culture statements from the Temperature Check. For the statements on campus culture within the Temperature Check, School A had an average of 58.9% agreeance, and School B had an average of 76.2% agreeance for the specific section. The statements with the most considerable variance in agreement between the two schools were “Although the amount of work I have has led me to feel exhausted and stressed, I feel valued by my team.” and “The work that I do is stressful, but it's worth it.”. School B’s teachers agreed more than School A on every campus culture statement except “My school/department leader has my well-being in mind”.

Table 4.1

Percentage of Agreement on Campus Culture Statements by Campus

Campus Culture Statement	School A	School B
My coworkers care about and support each other when times are difficult or stressful.	70%	77%
I have positive relationships with other staff members at my school/department.	75%	100%
My supervisor takes the time to show interest in my goals and values.	80%	85%
I am recognized for the amount of effort I have made in my job.	50%	62%

Table 4.1 Continued

Campus Culture Statement	School A	School B
My school/department leader has my well-being in mind.	75%	69%
The district has my well-being in mind.	35%	54%
Although the amount of work I have has led me to feel exhausted and stressed, I feel valued by my team.	55%	85%
I look forward to going to work.	40%	69%
The work that I do is stressful, but it's worth it.	50%	85%

For the campus leadership section of the Temperature Check, School A’s teachers had an average of 66.9% agreeance on the statements, and School B’s teachers had an average of 80% agreeance. Their responses by specific statements are seen in Table 4.2. The statements with the most significant difference between the schools were “Campus leadership regularly seeks my input when making decisions that impacts the work I do.” and “Campus leadership is visible and promotes a positive school culture.” School B’s teachers agreed on the statements more than School A for each statement except the statement “Campus leadership understands how to use relevant data.” where the two campuses each had 85% agreement. School A’s teacher agreed with the following statement at a higher rate than School B’s teachers: “Campus leadership supports my decisions about student behavior”.

Table 4.2

Percentage of Agreement on Campus Administration Statements by Campus

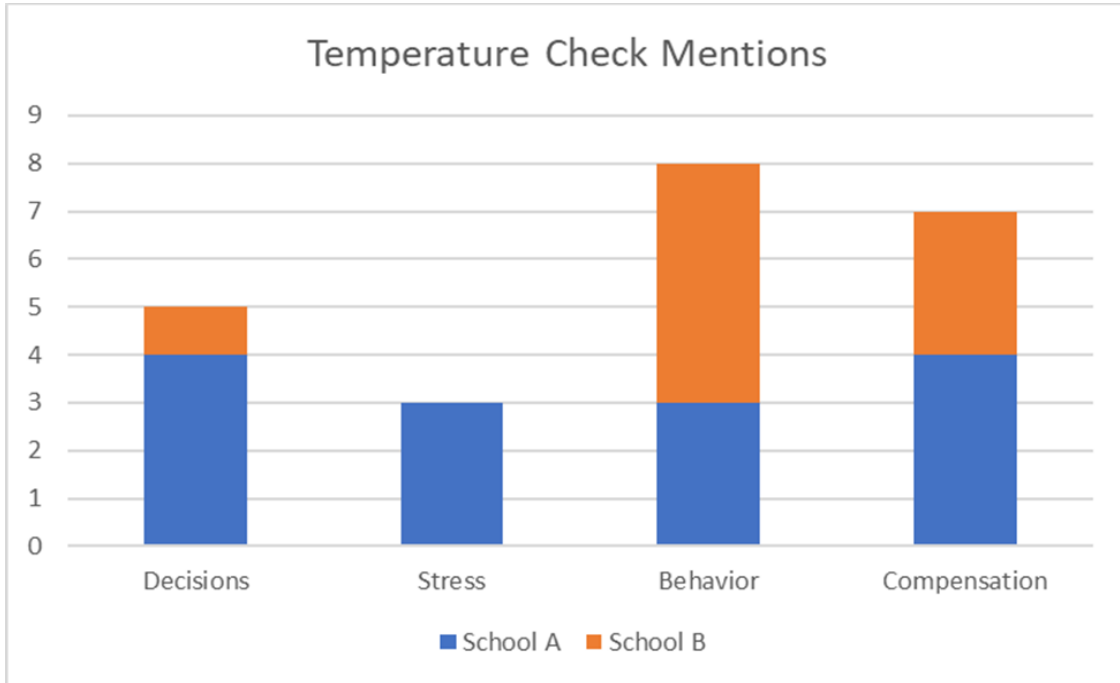
Campus Administration Statement	School A	School B
Campus leadership makes decisions that support student learning.	80%	92%
Campus leadership is aware of issues and concerns that teachers face.	65%	85%
Campus leadership regularly seeks my input when making decisions that impact the work I do.	40%	69%
Campus leadership treats me like a professional and empowers me to make decisions about my teaching.	75%	85%
Campus leadership understands how to use relevant data to guide school improvement and teacher effectiveness.	85%	85%
I feel comfortable going to campus leadership with my concerns.	65%	77%
Campus leadership supports my decisions about student behavior.	70%	62%
Campus leadership is visible and promotes a positive school culture.	55%	85%

In the open-ended responses that focused on what the district needed to improve on, School A’s teachers mentioned wanting to be included in decision-making processes and being overworked as areas of need. School B’s teachers stated that student behavior was a central area of need. Both campuses noted compensation as a main area for the

district to focus on. Figure 4.1 shows the most frequent topics that were mentioned by teachers from the two campuses.

Figure 4.1

Number of Improvement Topic Mentions by Campus



The Wellness Check was the next piece of data to be analyzed. School A had five respondents to the Wellness Check, and School B had seven respondents to the Wellness Check. In each of the statements, School B had a higher agreement percentage, see Table 4.3. Both schools were under 50% agreement with the statement “I feel happy and am not bothered by feelings of pain, anxiety, sadness, stress or burn-out” and “I have had serious thoughts of quitting my job”. The most significant difference between the two schools was the statement, “I feel that I maintain a healthy diet and lifestyle”. Based on the teacher’s responses to their suggestions for employee retention, see Figure 4.2, School

A’s respondents and School B’s respondents mentioned compensation most frequently as a way to improve employee retention.

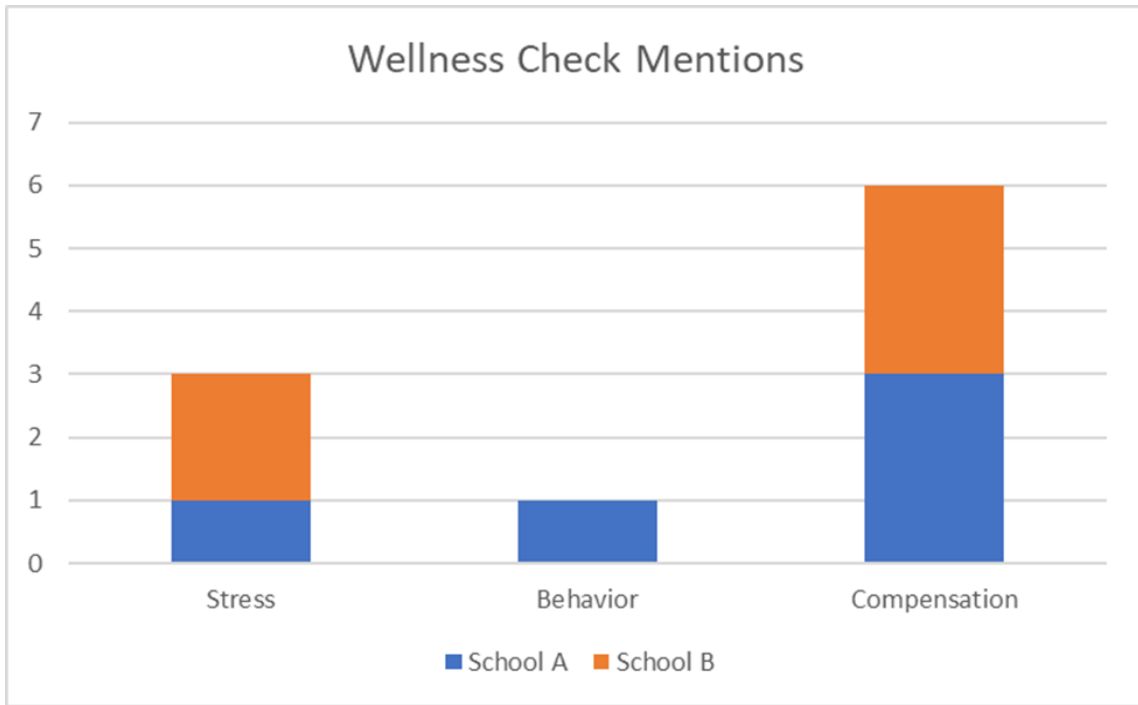
Table 4.3

Percentage of Agreement on Wellness Check Statements by Campus

Campus Administration Statement	School A	School B
I feel happy and am not bothered by feelings of pain, anxiety, sadness, stress, or burn-out.	20%	43%
I feel that I maintain a healthy diet and lifestyle (exercise, diet, sleep).	20%	71%
I manage my money well (good budgeting, planning).	80%	86%
I am more likely to learn and thrive from stress than react and cope poorly.	60%	71%
The amount of work I have has led me to feel exhausted and stressed.	60%	71%
I have taken off work because of work-related stress.	60%	71%
I have had serious thoughts of quitting my job.	20%	43%

Figure 4.2

Number of Retention Topic Mentions by Campus



The Exit survey was the third piece of data to be analyzed. School A had twelve respondents to the Exit Survey, and School B had eight respondents to the Exit Survey. Teachers were able to share their thoughts on their decisions to leave the district and what would have prepared them better. School A’s teachers mentioned the work environment, stress, student behavior, and compensation as factors that contributed to their decision to leave the district. School B’s teachers also mentioned the work environment and student behavior but mentioned stress at a higher rate and did not mention compensation as one of their deciding factors.

Themes

This section includes the results of the themes that emerged from the data based on responses from the participants. These themes emerged from the grouping and

consolidation of ninety-three original codes used initially to code the data. The themes focused on factors mentioned by teachers that related to their perception of their job and areas tied to teacher retention. The themes that emerged from the data include Theme 1: Teacher Compensation, Theme 2: Teacher Workload and Stress, and Theme 3: Student Behavior.

Teacher Compensation

Research participants agreed that teacher compensation is critical to teacher retention. About “half a million teachers leave their schools each year” according to Boyd et al. (2011, p.1) and salary is the most cited reason first-and second-year teachers consider leaving the profession (Hughes, 2012). Like the Hughes (2012) study, compensation was among the higher-mentioned topics by teachers in the Wellness Check and Temperature Check. Teachers appreciated the stipends provided after the COVID-10 pandemic but wondered why they were not provided during the affected school year since “teachers’ dissatisfaction with salary is exasperated by increased workloads without increased salaries” (Hughes, 2012, p.247).

One teacher stated, "I feel [the district] should compensate the employees for all the extra tasks and requirements". Another teacher stated that “money is the most important factor” in teacher retention and that “bonuses and retention incentives are vital” in keeping teachers satisfied. Keeping teachers satisfied with their salary is important because Hughes (2012) stated that teachers who are satisfied with their salary are almost twice as likely to teach until retirement. Hughes (2012, p.254) also stated that “teachers’ reported level of satisfaction with salary was related to retention”.

Comments from the study on teacher compensation also tied into teacher stress and workload. As one teacher stated, teachers are “overworked and underpaid”. While compensation may assuage other concerns shared by teachers to some degree, other themes arose as prominent concerns that must be addressed to effectively tackle teacher retention.

Teacher Workload and Stress

Research participants also agreed that the workload placed on teachers caused significant stress and increased stress without adequate support from campus and district administrators. Hughes (2012) states that higher levels of stress lead to decreased job satisfaction. Teachers expressed in the study that the demands of the job are high and that they do not always get the support they need to succeed and manage everything that is asked of them. Teachers suggested “having realistic expectations of teachers” and providing them with “more time...to plan and do work at school”. Stress was the highest mentioned factor in the Exit Survey, and respondents stated that “mental well-being” had to be considered to keep teachers satisfied and able to focus on their students. This statement coincides with studies, such as Kush et al. (2021), that state that teachers experience some of the highest levels of stress among most occupations.

Various factors can tie into the stress, such as ones mentioned in the study, including student behavior, lack of support, increasing workloads, and lack of recognition. The Wellness Check showed that the majority of teachers were expressing feelings of being overworked and exhausted. This coincides with studies that show that teachers have the lowest levels of mental well-being among all professions (Kush et al.,

2021). As stress is a top factor contributing to teacher attrition, its contributing factors should be identified and tackled.

Student Behavior

Student behavior was another contributing factor in teacher retention and satisfaction, according to research participants. According to Hughes (2012, p.247), “following salary, student discipline problems is the next most cited reason for teacher attrition”. “Zhang and Zeller (2016) also stated that student behavior is one of the reasons cited as reasons that teachers leave their schools or leave teaching as a whole. This conclusion was also expressed through the concerns shared by the teachers in the study as student behavior was the most mentioned topic in the Temperature Check and mentioned in the Wellness Check and the Exit Survey. Teachers described student behavior as “out of control” and that the district was “doing nothing” to address the concern. Teachers stated that “students are not held responsible for behavior” and that “student behavior consequences needed to be better”. Teachers want students to be held accountable for their disruptive behavior, as it contributes to a stressful environment for teachers. Factors, such as student behavior, do contribute “to a school environment that either retains or repels teachers” (Hughes, 2012, p.247).

Teachers enter the profession to make an impact on students, and “student discipline problems...might lead teachers to doubt their impact and question their professional choices” (Hughes, 2012, p.247) as student misbehavior is interpreted as a lack of motivation. Teachers in the study stated that “student behavior is interrupting...planning, curriculum, and good instructional practices”. To retain teachers

and increase their ability to focus on their love for teaching, the learning environment needs to be kept intact by tackling student misbehavior.

Purpose of the Study

This study aimed to identify and analyze the perspectives of elementary educators about teacher retention and the factors that impact teacher retention. This study describes teacher perspectives on various job factors through a wellness check, temperature check, and an exit survey with questions on campus culture, campus administrators, wellness, and teacher retention. Studies on teacher retention have shown that different factors play a part in a teacher's decision to stay or leave their profession.

Creswell and Guetterman's (2012) and Mintrop's (2016) qualitative study examined teacher opinions in two elementary schools with two different teacher retention rates. After a problem of practice was identified, an exploratory needs assessment (ENA) and a data review were completed. The professional knowledge base was consulted to understand the problem further and guide the study in its data collection and analysis. This study incorporated different scenarios to help teachers self-reflect on their profession and provide opinions on certain factors that affect their job.

One overarching question guided the study:

1. What are the characteristics of a teacher who is likely to return to their campus, a teacher who is at risk of leaving their campus, and a teacher who has decided to leave their campus?

Research Question Review

What are the characteristics of a teacher who is likely to return to their campus, a teacher who is at risk of leaving their campus, and a teacher who has decided to leave their campus?

The researcher sought to determine if there were characteristics that teachers have to identify which teachers are likely to stay at a campus, at risk of leaving a campus, or already decided to leave a campus. By identifying “risk factors”, districts and schools can create action plans focusing on teacher retention's main contributing factors

Question Findings

Teachers determined that compensation, teacher workload, and student behavior were the main components contributing to a teacher’s decision to remain at their current campus. This is supported by Hughes (2012) who states that salary, disruptive students, and working conditions are among the most cited reasons for teachers considering leaving the profession. As stated earlier, School A had a retention rate of 54% from the previous school year, while School B had a retention rate of 82%. Teachers from both campuses shared similar thoughts on teacher retention, as both schools mentioned student behavior, compensation, and stress as areas that needed to be addressed. While the schools did have variance in the prevalence of certain retention factors, common themes emerged.

With the Temperature Check, teachers at School A agreed at a lesser rate than School B on campus culture and campus admin questions. School B viewed its campus culture and campus leadership in a better light compared to School A. Teachers at School A stated that not being involved in campus decisions and having less campus support led

to more stress on their end. Studies show that “teacher influences over school policy can mitigate first-year teachers’ propensity to leave the profession” and create an environment of support that encourages all staff (Liu, 2007). Within the same Temperature Check, School B cited student behavior as their primary concern. As stated earlier, student behavior is one of the top reasons that cause educators to reconsider their profession (Hughes, 2012). Both schools stated two different main concerns that cause stress on teachers and can be impacted by campus administrators.

With the Wellness Check, teachers at School A felt they did not maintain a healthy lifestyle compared to School B. School B’s teachers did have a higher percentage of teachers stating they felt exhausted and stressed from work than School A’s teachers. Both schools expressed issues with teacher well-being with the majority of teachers at both schools stating that they felt stressed and took time off work due to work-related stress. With about 25% of teachers identifying stress as a contributing factor in leaving the profession, according to a study by Kush et al. (2021), addressing work-related stress and teacher well-being will be a vital step in increasing teaching retention.

With the Exit Survey, campus culture and support contributed to stress at School A. School B’s teachers also mentioned campus support and student behavior as factors that contributed to their decision to leave the district. Zhang and Zeller (2016) state that teachers agree that supportive leaders were an important factor in teacher retention as campus support can tackle and alleviate other contributing factors that cause teachers to leave the profession.

School A, which had a higher turnover rate, had themes of stress and no admin support intertwined throughout their responses, while School B had themes of stress and

student behavior in teacher responses. Both campuses shared similar ideas on increasing teacher compensation to compensate for what teachers were having to deal with in their profession. Campus culture and a stressful environment significantly affect teacher retention as teachers consider their well-being a main priority and demand to be valued. Overall, teachers who expressed feelings of stress, no support, and low mental well-being were more likely to leave or consider leaving their campus in comparison to those who felt supportive and expressed having a good mental well-being.

Insider Action Reflection

Coghlan and Brannick (2014, p.126) state that the researcher is “simultaneously in a process of self--reflection and examining their own assumptions in action and learning about themselves as events unfold.” As an administrator, who is also serving a dual role as the researcher, the data and results of the study have made an impact on how the administrative role is viewed. One of the main reflections was on how the use of surveys or teacher reflections throughout the year can be beneficial. By collecting teacher input throughout the year, administrators can get a better understanding of how teachers are perceiving the campus and different components of the campus culture.

Administrators can take this data and create plans to address any identified areas of growth. Valuable input and feedback from teachers can play a pivotal role in the growth of an administrator and of a campus.

By reflecting on the needs of new teachers through the lens of the study, it will be important that they are provided opportunities before the school year begins to have a better understanding of what teaching will actually be like. As a campus leader, it will be vital to be able to guide new teachers through predictable and unpredictable obstacles and

help them create a more realistic mindset of what their experience will be like so that they are not shocked and surprised by all that encompasses teaching. The study has shown me that there is always growth to be made as a campus leader and that input from teachers and other stakeholders is essential if one is to address the needs of the campus and continue to grow the strengths of the campus. The study has created a desire to ensure that all stakeholders are in an environment where all they can share their opinions and feel that they are heard. Leadership cannot be done in isolation and effective leaders spend time listening and reflecting.

Overall Summary

Data collected and analyzed through this qualitative research study utilized three different forms of data that incorporated teacher input. Data from two campuses with different retention rates were used in order to allow for comparison between the two schools. A temperature check, wellness check, and exit survey information were used from both campuses.

Overall, the data and findings of the current research study confirm the importance of understanding the everyday needs of teachers across campuses and determining the needs of teachers at individual campuses. Three themes emerged, teacher compensation, teacher workload, and student behavior. Teachers are willing to share their needs when provided the opportunity and thus provide valuable insight into their thoughts on returning to teach in the future. The research can help other campuses and school districts create strategic plans to address teacher retention issues specific to their campuses and districts.

Conclusion

The primary purpose of this study was to provide descriptors of teachers at varying places in their decision to stay and leave their campus. While the data did not present itself in a way to track a teacher's views through a school year or across data points, it did provide a comparison of a school with a low retention rate and a campus with a high retention rate.

An analysis of the qualitative data was presented in this chapter. Chapter IV presented an overview of the study, and findings from the data captured from data from two different campuses, addressing the research question. The data included a temperature check, wellness check, and exit survey. Various themes supported by specific examples were obtained during the data collection process.

The data collected from teacher participants in this study provided important insight into the teachers' perspectives on different topics that impact their jobs. The next chapter contains a summary of the findings, implications of the findings from this study on various factors, and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER V

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Summary of Findings

The study aimed to identify characteristics of teachers with different opinions on staying or leaving the teaching profession. Two elementary campuses within the same district with different teacher retention rates were compared using teacher input on a temperature check, wellness check, and exit survey. Teacher retention has been identified as a recurring and increasing issue affecting campuses within the researched district. The research question has been restated below:

- What are the characteristics of a teacher who is likely to return to their campus, a teacher who is at risk of leaving their campus, and a teacher who has decided to leave their campus?

There was a difference between the campuses regarding how their teachers responded to the various questions and prompts. With the Temperature Check, teachers at School A, the campus with the lower teacher retention rate, felt that they had good relationships with their coworkers and supervisors since their responses to statements mentioning professional relationships had at least 70% agreement among the teachers. However, teachers at School A felt unrecognized by the campus and their co-workers for the effort they put into their job. The teachers also said that the amount of work they have had left them feeling exhausted and stressed and that the workload is “not worth it”. By looking closer at teacher opinions on campus leadership, teachers at School A felt that the leadership treated them as a professional but felt that decisions were made by campus leadership without teacher input and that a positive school culture was not being

promoted. One respondent for School A, who completed the district Exit Survey, agreed with all of the campus leadership statements but strongly disagreed that the district had teachers' well-being in mind and agreed that the work was stressful and not worth the stress.

When analyzing School B, the campus with the higher retention rate, teachers agreed more strongly on statements about feeling valued than the teachers at School A. However, the teachers did not feel that the district had their well-being in mind and still felt that they needed to be recognized for the effort they put into their work. Two areas stood out when looking at teacher opinions on campus leadership: teachers did not feel their input was being asked for and used on decisions that would affect the campus, and teachers felt that leadership was not supporting their decisions on student behavior. Overall, teachers at School B felt more valued and respected as professionals than teachers at School A. The one area teachers at School B rated lower than teachers at School A was in the area of student behavior support. School B also had two teachers who also responded to the Exit Survey. One teacher strongly disagreed with all campus leadership statements and only agreed to having a positive relationship with their coworkers. The second teacher strongly disagreed that campus leadership understood all the issues teachers faced and felt the district did not consider their well-being.

The trends seen in the teacher responses to the statements were further supported by their statements to the open-ended responses in the Temperature Check. Teachers at School A mentioned that their campus needed to include staff input into campus plans and initiatives. They also mentioned that campus administrators should be more involved with what the teachers have to do every day to understand what is asked of teachers.

Teachers at School B stated that students were not being held responsible for their behaviors and that the behavior was affecting the learning environment. The teachers stated that they would like to see campus administrators more present in the classrooms and the hallways in order to tackle student behavior issues. While there were some differences between the two campuses, both had teachers mention increasing pay and compensation as a way the district could improve in retaining teachers.

The Wellness Check provided further information on teachers' feelings of stress and burnout and teacher suggestions to improve employee retention. School A's teacher reported not feeling happy, but a low percentage had serious thoughts of quitting their job. Teachers stated they had taken time off work due to work-related stress and that the amount of work has left them feeling exhausted. These responses are similar to School B, whose teachers reported similar practices. One of the differences between the two schools was that School B's teachers agreed that they maintain a healthy lifestyle while School A's teachers did not. School B's teachers also reported having serious thoughts of quitting their job more than School A's teachers despite their higher retention rate.

When looking at individual teacher responses, School A's teachers mentioned money and compensation as suggestions to improve retention. School B's teachers also mentioned improved compensation and providing time for teachers to complete their work. Based on the suggestion responses compared to the statements, it can be implied that teachers are willing to handle the amount of work they are asked to do if they are compensated appropriately and feel appreciated for their hard work and effort.

The Exit Survey provided further insight into why teachers chose to come into the district in the first place and why they chose to leave. For School A, most teachers chose

the district due to an employment opportunity, and for the compensation teachers were being given. For School B, the majority came to Irving for an employment opportunity. Teachers from both schools agreed that they received adequate training from the district to manage the classroom they were in successfully. Outside of promotion and retirement, the reason for teachers leaving the two schools was due to inadequate support. When looking into individual responses, teachers mentioned being disappointed in the support they were receiving from campus and district leadership, especially when there were behavior struggles in the classroom. Teachers also mentioned being overwhelmingly stressed and not receiving support when needed. The Temperature Check, the Wellness Check, and the Exit Survey showed that teachers need to feel supported by their administrators and receive higher pay to be satisfied. Teachers at School A mentioned not being involved in campus decisions as a specific area their campus needed improvement on, while teachers at School B mentioned student behavior as an issue at a higher rate than teachers at School A. The following sections mention implications based on the research results and recommendations for future research.

Implications

The following section describes three areas to support teacher retention by identifying and addressing concerns shared by teachers: 1) teacher and principal preparation programs, 2) campus leader considerations, and 3) district-level considerations.

Teacher Preparation Programs

While the study focused on what campuses and districts can do to support teachers further and keep them in the profession, teacher retention can begin to be

addressed in teacher preparation programs. Throughout the collected data pieces, teachers shared how they felt stressed, overworked, and undervalued. Specifically, in the Wellness Check, teachers at School A stated they did not feel they were maintaining a healthy lifestyle and were bothered by feelings of pain, anxiety, and stress. Teachers from both schools even reported taking time off work due to work-related stress. Studies such as Hughes (2012) and Kush et al. (2021) have stated that teachers face a high level of stress, and that stress can lead to low job satisfaction.

In order to address the inevitable stress that can arise from teaching, teacher preparation programs can provide courses to future teachers that focus on mental and physical health and well-being so that teachers can join the profession with skills to manage stress and other overwhelming feelings. Schonert-Reichl (2017) states that high levels of stress harm teachers' physical health and mental well-being. Therefore, teachers would benefit from understanding the warning signs they have themselves when they are feeling stressed or burnt out and what to do to alleviate those feelings. Schonert-Reichl (2017, p.143) also states that mindfulness, "an attentive, nonjudgmental, and receptive awareness of present-moment experiences", can help teachers reduce stress and burnout by regulating emotions.

One of the main causes of stress from the study was student behavior. Teacher preparation programs should provide teachers with multiple tools to address student behavior. Teachers need to know how to set expectations and routines to address most behavior concerns and learn how to incorporate social-emotional learning to be proactive in addressing student needs. Teachers need skills not only on growing students academically, but also emotionally and behaviorally.

Another step that teacher preparation programs can focus on is obtaining from local district teachers all of the tasks they work on throughout the year and ensuring student-teachers know how to complete those tasks and gain experience in tasks such as ARDs and tracking HB4545 minutes so that student teachers have a better understanding of what their future job will entail. At times, teachers join the profession without being adequately prepared for the many required tasks beyond planning and teaching. Livers et al. (2021, p.30) state that “[teachers] frequently experience cognitive dissonance between their assumed knowledge and the reality that their teacher preparation programs provide through courses and practicum experiences.” Therefore, student-teachers must be provided opportunities to experience the many tasks that teachers do and get a better sense of what being a teacher involves. In addition, preparing ahead can alleviate stress related to doing something for the first time or facing an unknown task.

Principal Preparation Programs

As teachers from both schools listed support from campus administration as ways for the district to improve and retain teachers, it is essential that principal preparation programs take into consideration what is shared by teachers to improve future principals’ abilities to support teachers. One of the main complaints from teachers was that student behavior was out of control. Principal preparation programs would need to be able to teach future principals how to handle student behavior and create a school environment that is proactive in supporting students with behavioral issues. Creating a strong student culture is not easy, but they are “the foundation upon which students develop virtuous action” (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2012, p.169). The preparation programs will need to guide

rising leaders to develop a vision and know how to guide a campus to create a system to promote that vision.

Not only is it essential to focus on creating a positive school environment for the children, but it is also essential to create one for the teachers. One teacher stated that their principal “did not make new staff members feel comfortable or as an important part of the school community”. Future principals will also need to be supported in building a positive staff environment on the campus, making the staff members feel involved in campus decisions, and ensuring teachers are being treated as professionals. Marzano and Waters (2009) state that effective leaders include all stakeholders in establishing goals and critical decisions. Principal preparation programs need to stress the importance of creating buy-in from teachers when implementing change to not only have their support but also to treat them as the professionals they are.

The programs must also focus on teaching future principals how to coach teachers who might need support with classroom management to prevent student behavior from escalating. Bambrick-Santoyo (2012, p.65) states that teachers “develop most quickly when they receive frequent feedback and opportunities to practice”. Therefore, aspiring principals need to learn how to identify key action steps, provide effective feedback to teachers, and help them grow. Those in principal preparation programs could be teachers with effective classroom management skills, but they need to be able to transfer and teach that knowledge to other teachers who need it.

Campus Leadership

As campus leaders, it is important to understand that administrative behavior such as “unclear expectations, inconsistency, indecisiveness, lack of opportunities for input,

lack of follow-through, and failure to provide essential resources” (Blase, 1986, p.29) can create added stress and work on teachers. Throughout the study, many of those behaviors were mentioned by the teachers. As stated earlier, teachers stated in the study that they did not feel supported by their administrators and that they were not included in the decision-making process that affected them and their classrooms. It will be necessary for campus leaders to use surveys throughout the year and take input from teachers in order to identify areas of need so that plans can be created to provide support. Teachers need to feel supported, valued and included as key stakeholders in the decision-making. Studies show that high levels of leader support can increase teacher retention (Liu, 2007).

Teachers also reported stress and workload as an area of concern in the study. Campus leaders need to identify ways to relieve that stress and workload. For example, teachers stated that “more planning time or planning periods” would be beneficial so that teachers would not feel the need to work past their contract hours or on the weekend to catch up. One recommendation made by the research participants was to cut down on meetings and non-essential PD sessions to give the “gift of time” to teachers. Bambrick-Santoyo (2012) states that campus leaders must be open to feedback and look for potential warning signs of challenges that can impact teachers.

One of the main concerns shared by a campus in the study was student behavior as it was becoming “out of control and interrupting...good instructional practices”. Bambrick-Santoyo (2012) mentions that to create a strong student culture, the vision and its details need to be planned, and the entire campus needs to be implementing the plan to be the most effective. Campus leaders need to guide teachers on what the expectations for students will be and how students will be given opportunities to practice those

expectations in order for them to be successful. According to the teachers in the study, campus leaders also need to be more present in the school, whether in the classrooms to help coach teachers and identify areas of support or in the hallways to help reinforce campus expectations and model the campus culture for teachers and students. The campus leader also needs to monitor and provide feedback where needed. Building consistency and virtue will be key as effective leaders “transform their vision into meticulously built systems that operate across every single classroom” (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2012, p.168).

District Leadership

Just like with campus leaders, it is recommended that districts use surveys and take teacher input. The district in which the research was conducted had different examples that helped get teachers' feedback. The Temperature Check allowed the district to identify how teachers were feeling at a specific moment in the year, and the information was shared with campus leaders so that they could address areas of need. The Wellness Check allowed the district to identify ways to support teachers' mental and physical well-being and determine which campuses needed more support than others. Finally, the Exit Survey allowed the district to collect information from departing teachers about what initially attracted them to the district and the reason for their departure.

The surveys can also be used to see how district leaders can support and guide principals in handling campus situations and issues. District leaders can use campus results to identify areas of growth for campus leaders and provide them with the tools to support their campus needs. Just like teachers and students need feedback and guidance,

campus leaders also need support to succeed and grow themselves. Effective district leaders should alter how principals and district leaders approach leadership since campus leadership has a correlation with average student achievement (Marzano & Waters, 2009).

Also, similar to suggestions for campus leaders, the district needs to ensure that teachers feel supported and valued. They need to be involved in the decision-making process as this will help create buy-in while recognizing teachers as professionals. For example, including teachers in decisions that affect insurance, lesson planning, work schedule, and other similar areas can be beneficial in creating teacher buy-in and having their voices heard and respected. Marzano and Waters (2009) state that effective district and campus leaders include all relevant stakeholders in decision making.

Another implication is that districts must provide adequate compensation for teachers and create career opportunities for them. Through the surveys, teachers stated that their compensation did not match the job's demands. The Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA) was created by Texas state legislatures in order to compensate effective teachers and make it possible for teachers to earn a six-figure salary (“House Bill 3 Texas School Finance”). As different districts are participating in the TIA, not all districts are current participants and have local criteria for how teachers can qualify for the incentive. Districts need to identify barriers preventing them from raising teacher salaries or other ways to compensate teachers, such as healthcare benefits, degree compensation, and mental health days.

Districts need to be able to support and grow teachers who want to move into other areas of education, such as administration or curriculum. Some teachers want to

eventually move out of the classroom and take on a leadership role, but they need support and opportunities to search for those opportunities in other districts. Teachers in the study did not feel there were available opportunities for them outside of the classroom within the district. The district should focus on building pipelines such as “employee referrals, internal pipelines, and university partnerships” (“National Best Practices”, 2016) in order to promote career advancement through training, mentorships, and college programs.

Teachers are tasked to juggle many different roles, and adjustments need to be made. Districts need to review teachers' workloads and identify ways to streamline, remove, delegate, or support the different roles teachers must take on so they can focus on growing students. The workload can also be addressed by districts finding time for teachers to be able to complete their work during contract time. This can be done by increasing the length of their school day and compensating teachers accordingly or creating times throughout the school year where students either have a school holiday or early release day so that teachers can have a workday to catch up on things they do not have time to complete during the day with students present since they are teaching. Teachers in the study mentioned how they are expected to work beyond school hours and on the weekend to keep up with the amount of work they need to do. A high workload can lead to stress, a primary reason that “teachers become dissatisfied and leave their positions” (Schonert-Reichl, 2017, p.141).

Insider Action Researcher

Action researchers aim to not only address a problem of practice, but to generate new knowledge (Coghlan & Brannick, 2014). The study provided valuable information to the researcher in order to grow as a campus leader. Throughout the study, teachers’

voices were heard. Teachers need to feel that they are valued by the different levels of leadership within the campus and within the district as well. Therefore, campus and district leadership need to be aligned in how they listen to teachers and what they do with that information.

Teachers need to feel that their needs are actually being addressed and not just collected. Their specific needs need to be met and it is important that campuses and districts are not just addressing what leadership believes teachers' needs are. By not addressing the needs voiced by teachers, leadership runs the risk of having teachers feel unsupportive and that they are not being heard. Teachers need to be able to provide input and be a part of important decisions, especially those that ultimately impact them and their students. Whether it is through surveys, town halls, or committees, teachers need to know how they can voice their thoughts, opinions, and concerns and expect some form of acknowledgment that they were heard and trust that leaders will take that they shared into consideration. Studies, such as Goddar et al. (2015), state that leaders serve as a catalyst for change and should use their influence to meet the needs of their teachers.

Recommendations for Future Research

As the education landscape continues to change, schools and districts need to find and implement ways to retain effective teachers in the classroom. Research, such as Hughes (2012), needs to continue on teacher retention as the educational field changes. A research study that follows a set group of teachers from a campus or district throughout a school year can be beneficial in obtaining further information on teacher retention. This type of study could include interviews and surveys throughout the year that allows for responses to be compared to see how a teacher's thinking changes as the school year

progresses. By tracking the same teachers throughout the year, at the end of the year, if any teachers decide to leave the campus, further analysis can be done to see what might have been the turning point for a teacher to decide to leave the campus.

To go further, the study can begin by finding teachers on the same level in thinking about returning the next year to see how teachers with similar mindsets might change throughout the year based on their unique experiences. In addition, participants can be selected based on an end-of-year survey similar to the Temperature Check in this study.

Another recommendation for future research is one similar to the original design of this study. A study using Mintrop's (2016) design can be beneficial in identifying areas of need and applying interventions throughout a school year. For example, teachers at varying points in their careers can be chosen. Then, as their areas of need or barriers to returning are identified through interviews, surveys, or observations, interventions can be implemented to support those teachers. Data can then be collected to determine if those interventions were effective. This would inform us on how a similar cycle could work for campuses and districts to implement. Recommendations for future research also include the following:

- How certain leadership styles or qualities affect teacher retention or teacher job satisfaction
- How much compensation do certain teachers find suitable
- The difference between what teachers, campus leaders, and district leaders see as essential factors in teacher retention

Conclusion

Teacher retention is a growing and recurring issue for campuses and districts across the country, with the issue expected to worsen over time (Zhang & Zeller, 2016). Issues such as student behavior, teacher stress, and teacher compensation need to be addressed by those directly involved with teachers. Teacher preparation programs and campus leaders can prepare teachers for the school year and provide them with the support they need to be successful. Principal preparation programs can prepare aspiring leaders to meet the needs of their campus and provide support where needed. District leaders can implement district-wide change and provide resources and support where needed. Campuses and districts must implement plans to increase teacher retention and bring new teachers into the field. Campus leaders directly influence teachers and can know and understand their teachers better, support them as needed, and invite them into the decision-making process. District leaders need to be able to make changes and meet the needs of their teachers and their campus leaders.

This study provided us further insight into how our teachers think and what they need to be successful and satisfied in their current position. The results of this study will be of particular interest to school administrators and policymakers responsible for creating policies and programs to improve teacher retention. However, more studies are needed to provide further insight into the issue of teacher retention to allow campus and district to make effective changes. Over the next few years, there will be an increase in the demand for teachers as enrollment continues to rise in Texas and as more teachers become eligible for retirement (“Supply and Demand for Educators in Texas”). It is also estimated that elementary teaching positions will add the second-highest number of jobs

in the state by the decade's end. However, change must come soon as the teacher shortage will increase yearly.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

WELLNESS CHECK STATEMENTS AND QUESTIONS

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel happy and am not bothered by feelings of pain, anxiety, sadness, stress, or burn-out.				
I feel that I maintain a healthy diet and lifestyle (exercise, diet, sleep).				
I manage my money well (good budgeting, planning).				
I am more likely to learn and thrive from stress than react and cope poorly.				
The amount of work I have has led me to feel exhausted and stressed.				
I have taken off work because of work-related stress.				
I have had serious thoughts of quitting my job.				

Based on your selection for “I have had serious thoughts of quitting my job”, please explain the primary reason why.

Do you have suggestions to improve employee retention?

APPENDIX B

TEMPERATURE CHECK STATEMENTS AND QUESTIONS

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
My coworkers care about and support each other when times are difficult or stressful.				
I have positive relationships with other staff members at my school/department.				
My supervisor takes the time to show interest in my goals and values.				
I am recognized for the amount of effort I have made in my job.				
My school/department leader has my well-being in mind.				
The district has my well-being in mind.				
Although the amount of work I have has led me to feel exhausted and stressed, I feel valued by my team.				
I look forward to going to work.				
The work that I do is stressful, but it's worth it.				
Campus leadership makes decisions that support student learning.				
Campus leadership is aware of issues and concerns that teachers face.				
Campus leadership regularly seeks my input when making decisions that impact the work I do.				
Campus leadership treats me like a				

professional and empowers me to make decisions about my teaching.				
Campus leadership understands how to use relevant data to guide school improvement and teacher effectiveness.				
I feel comfortable going to campus leadership with my concerns.				
Campus leadership supports my decisions about student behavior.				
Campus leadership is visible and promotes a positive school culture.				

Based on your responses, please share any specific ideas for improvement.

What does the district do well?

How can the district improve?

APPENDIX C

EXIT SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. What was the primary reason for your resignation from the district?
2. As a teacher in the district, do you find that you received the requisite training and skills needed to successfully manage the classroom(s) you are now leaving?
3. As a teacher in the district, did you feel prepared to teach in a multicultural setting?
4. What would have better prepared you to work in the school that you are now leaving?
5. When you were first hired, what was your primary reason for accepting a posting with the district?
6. Is there anything else you would like to share regarding your decision to leave?