

ABSTRACT

Why Do Teachers Stay? Exploring Teacher Retention in Urban Schools

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There are nearly 250 teachers hired each school year due to attrition in Smith Independent School District (SISD). Attrition is a repetitive obstacle to finding qualified teachers for open positions. From the 2015–2016 to 2018–2019 school years, there were 1,000 teachers hired across SISD due to attrition, representing a 24% teacher attrition rate. The researcher and SISD leaders believed that there was a need for additional efforts to address teacher retention. The purpose of this study was to determine the contributing factors to high teacher retention in one elementary school in an urban, high-attrition district in Central Texas to understand what motivated the teachers to stay. A qualitative single case study with lead teacher and administrator interviews and a teacher focus group were the means used to obtain the teachers' thoughts and perceptions of the job factors that caused them to stay at their school despite high district attrition. Data analysis resulted in a priori codes derived from Herzberg's two-factor theory, which led to four emergent themes: administrator quality, the work itself/self-efficacy, autonomy and decision-making, and coworker relations. The findings in this research could provide leaders in urban school districts with information on retaining teachers at their campuses.

Why Do Teachers Stay? Exploring Teacher Retention in Urban Schools

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES	vi
LIST OF TABLES	vii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	viii
DEDICATION.....	x
CHAPTER ONE	1
Introduction.....	1
Context.....	3
Statement of the Problem.....	4
Purpose of the Study	4
Significance of the Study	5
Research Questions	6
Theoretical Framework.....	7
Limitations	8
Definition of Terms.....	9
Positionality	10
Organization of the Study	12
CHAPTER TWO	13
Literature Review.....	13
Background of the Study	13
Factors Influential in Teacher Turnover Decisions	31
Theoretical Framework.....	53
Summary	59
CHAPTER THREE	62
Methodology	62
Research Questions	63
Research Design and Methods.....	64
Site Selection	66
Participant Selection	67
Data Collection Methods	68
Data Analysis	73
Role of the Researcher	74
Provisions for Trustworthiness	75
Limitations	76
Summary	77

CHAPTER FOUR.....	78
Data Analysis and Results	78
Descriptive Data.....	79
Data Collection and Analysis Procedures.....	80
Case Study Results.....	82
Summary	108
CHAPTER FIVE	109
Implications and Discussion	109
Discussion of the Findings.....	111
Implications for Practice	120
Recommendations for Practice and Research.....	121
Conclusion	124
BIBLIOGRAPHY	126

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1. Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory: Teacher Workplace Motivation.....55

Figure 4.1. Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory Related to Teacher Workplace Motivation ..83

LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1. Participant Demographic Information	80
Table 4.2. Participant Responses and Codes	83
Table 4.3. Frequency Distribution of A Priori Codes	85

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DEDICATION

To my children, Lauren, Parker, and Abigail.

I hope that you will feel inspired by this work and know that you can do anything you desire if you work hard for it. You don't have to be the smartest—just the grittiest! God put this doctorate on my heart a long time ago, and I followed His will. My prayer for each of you is that you do the same. Dream big, ask God for His will, and then go for it! I cannot wait to see what He has in store for each of you.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

I realize that I am not leaving my profession, in truth, it has left me. It no longer exists. I feel as though I have played some game halfway through its fourth quarter, a timeout has been called, my teammates' hands have all been tied, the goal posts moved, all previously scored points and honors expunged, and all the rules altered.

Gerald Conti, former teacher, Syracuse, New York. (Dunn, 2018)

Conti wrote these sentiments in a resignation letter after a 40-year teaching career. The reasons cited for leaving were low morale, frustration with the time spent on high-stakes testing, a lack of administrative support, and the general sense of feeling disrespected and devalued as a professional (Dunn, 2018). Unfortunately, these are not the feelings of merely one teacher who decided to leave the profession early. The literature on teacher turnover shows that nearly 45% of teachers leave the field within their first 5 years (Ingersoll et al., 2018).

Teachers leave due to a lack of administrative support, limited teacher input on school decision-making, stress and burnout from high-stakes testing and accountability systems, and low salaries (Harris et al., 2019; Hughes, 2012; Ingersoll, 2001). Those who work in urban school districts face additional challenges as they must plan for and teach students with greater achievement gaps. Discipline problems, social and emotional health concerns, limited resources (especially of technology), and a lack of parental involvement and support correlate with urban teacher attrition (Berry et al., 2012; Podolsky et al., 2019).

Nearly 45% of new teachers leave their jobs within the first 5 years (Ingersoll et al., 2018); although the rate decreases after this time, the teacher attrition rate across the nation is a great concern. Extensive literature shows the adverse effects of teacher turnover on the nation's school systems (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Garcia & Weiss, 2019; Ingersoll et al., 2018), including significant organizational concerns, such as the impact of teacher turnover on school finances and student achievement. Although federal and state financial incentive programs have focused on reducing teacher attrition, they have not been successful programs (Berry et al., 2012; Figlio & Kenny, 2006; Glewwe et al., 2003; Podgursky & Springer, 2007; Ritter & Barnett, 2016; Ritter et al., 2016).

Although there is extensive literature on why teachers leave, little scholarship is available on why teachers stay, especially in urban schools (Day & Gu, 2009). Understanding the reasons for retention could provide school district leaders with information on developing proactive strategies for improving teacher retention. Existing reactive approaches have not been effective means of retaining teachers. The purpose of this qualitative study was to determine the factors of high teacher retention in an elementary school in an urban, high-attrition district to understand the reasons teachers stayed. The information gathered contributed to teacher retention practices within the school district and schools with similar demographics. Chapter One contains the context, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, significance of the study, research questions, theoretical framework, limitations, definition of terms, and organization of the study.

Context

Literature in the field of education indicates that the sizable reduction of teacher workforce has caused tremendous fiscal, logistical, and academic burdens for school districts (Carver-Thomas & Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019; Ronfeldt, et al., 2013; Synar & Maiden, 2012). The large number of teachers leaving the profession or shifting schools has created a significant challenge in finding and hiring qualified applicants to fill the vacancies (Garcia & Weiss, 2019). Texas has an average teacher attrition rate of approximately 10% (TEA, 2018), which is slightly higher than the national average of 8% (Carver-Thomas & Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019). Urban school districts in Texas and across the United States require the most, as they primarily provide education for students living with the effects of concentrated poverty (Sullivan et al., 2017). Urban districts require highly qualified teachers who stay at their schools to maintain student stability, as high teacher turnover impacts student achievement (Ronfeldt et al., 2013). Yet, every 5 years, there is a loss of over half of the teaching staff in urban, high-need school districts (Allensworth et al., 2009; Gray & Taie, 2015; Hemphill et al., 2009). Even amid increased teacher supply, urban school districts have more teacher vacancies than rural and suburban ones (Wronowski, 2018). The problem of practice addressed in this study was the disproportionately high rate of teacher attrition in urban school districts.

Smith Independent School District (SISD) is an urban, low-income, high-minority school district. Located in Central Texas, the district provides education for nearly 15,000 students and employment for almost 1,000 teachers. SISD has an average loss of 235 teachers each school year through attrition. Over 4 years (2015–2016 through 2018–

2019), 941 teachers left SISD, resulting in a 24% attrition rate, more than double the state average of 10% (TEA, 2019) and more than triple the national average of 8% (Carver-Thomas & Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019).

Despite the demographic commonalities across the district, one elementary school had nearly 14% lower attrition rates than the other SISD elementary schools. This same campus had the lowest attrition rate of any elementary or secondary campus during the same 4 years (TEA, 2019). This campus was an anomaly in the district regarding retention; thus, there was a need to explore the characteristics of the campus and its teachers to understand the factors that resulted in increased teacher retention.

Statement of the Problem

Teacher turnover in SISD has been a concern for several years, with a 24% attrition rate over the four school years from 2015–2016 through 2018–2019. During that period, the attrition rate produced the need to recruit and hire almost 1,000 teachers in replacement. High teacher turnover causes financial and organizational burdens for a district and its campuses. Most importantly, high teacher turnover harms student achievement. There was a need to understand the factors that the SISD school teachers viewed as important in their decisions to remain in the high-attrition, urban district. SISD leaders could use the information from this study to design programs and practices for retaining teachers.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the factors of high teacher retention in an elementary school in an urban, high-attrition district in Central Texas to understand

why the teachers stayed. Purposive sampling (Etikan et al., 2016) was the means used to recruit teachers from an elementary school with significantly higher teacher retention than other district schools. This unique case study commenced to obtain the teachers' perceptions of the job factors that caused them to stay at their school despite high attrition in the school's district. The findings of this research suggested programs and practices for improving teacher retention in SISD and similar districts.

Significance of the Study

The literature on teacher attrition shows three main issues. First, most researchers have used quantitative methods to understand why teachers leave (Garcia & Weiss, 2019; Hughes, 2012; Ingersoll, 2001). Quantitative research is a useful approach for gathering generalized statistics about teacher attrition; however, qualitative research would have enabled the richer, deeper insight needed to uncover trends and teachers' thoughts and opinions about attrition and retention. Second, most researchers addressed teacher attrition with a deficit-based approach, as researchers have primarily examined why teachers leave. National teacher turnover survey data show that teachers leave their jobs because of low salaries, a lack of administrator support, a lack of teacher decision-making ability, a lack of student motivation, and student discipline problems (Ingersoll et al., 2016). Teachers in urban schools list control by "other" forces, a lack of supportive and empathetic school administration, and burnout as their top reasons for leaving their districts (Wronowski, 2018).

Understanding why teachers leave is important research. Comprehending why teachers stay could enable school district leaders to understand the internal and external motivators of teacher retention to create policies and systems based on these motivators

to retain teachers. Finally, few studies address why teachers stay in the profession (He et al., 2015; Perrachione et al., 2008), and none are single-case studies within an urban school district with a high rate of teacher attrition. The goal of case study research is to understand, up close and in-depth, real-world phenomena of specific cases (Yin, 2017). Thus, a case study approach was an appropriate design for collecting information from teachers about why they chose to stay at their campus in a high-attrition district. This qualitative single case study contributed to the body of research and addressed the gaps in the literature with research on an elementary school with a high teacher retention rate within a high-attrition urban school district.

Research Questions

Herzberg's two-factor theory (Herzberg et al., 1959) was the theoretical lens used to study teachers' perceptions of the job factors that caused them to stay at their campus. The study had one central research question: Why do teachers at an urban elementary school in SISD stay when others leave at high rates? The theoretical framework enabled the formulation of the following subquestions used to inform this qualitative research study:

1. How do extrinsic (hygiene) factors contribute to teachers' decisions to stay in urban schools?
2. How do intrinsic (motivators) factors contribute to teachers' decisions to stay in urban schools?
3. Which factors correlate the most with overall job satisfaction and retention?

Theoretical Framework

Teachers who work in urban, low-income, high-minority schools have higher attrition rates than their colleagues (Moore et al., 2018). The high teacher attrition rate indicates the need to understand why teachers decide to remain at their schools for extended periods. Herzberg's two-factor theory (Herzberg et al., 1959), also known as the motivation-hygiene theory, provided the behavioral science framework for this study. With Herzberg's theory as a framework, the application of motivation psychology to the teachers' perceptions commenced to understand the teachers' retention decisions in an urban elementary school in a high-attrition district.

Herzberg's two-factor theory (Herzberg et al., 1959) is a leading theory of workplace motivation focused on two factors that indicate job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction: hygiene factors and motivation factors. Hygiene factors, which are extrinsic motivators, consist of tangible, basic needs, such as status, job security, salary, and benefits. Motivation factors are intrinsic motivators that consist of less-tangible, more personal needs, such as challenging work, recognition, and professional and personal growth. In extensive research based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs, Herzberg posited that intrinsic and extrinsic motivators have an inverse relationship. The presence of intrinsic motivators correlates with increased motivation, while the absence of extrinsic motivators correlates with reduced motivation. Workers expect extrinsic motivators, such as salary and benefits; therefore, there is neither motivation nor satisfaction in their absence. However, the presence of intrinsic motivators, such as growth potential and challenging work, provides additional inspiration.

Scholars have used Herzberg's two-factor theory to understand job satisfaction in various fields, such as nursing and manufacturing (Alshmemri et al., 2017). However, there is limited research addressing teachers' motivations for staying in the profession, and even fewer studies of teacher retention in urban, low-income, high-minority school districts. Most teachers do not enter the field of teaching for the extrinsic motivators, such as pay or benefits; instead, they pursue the work because of intrinsic motivators, such as a love of learning and children (Heinz, 2015; Thibodeaux et al., 2015). This study contributed to the literature because it presented what caused teachers to stay in the demanding field. The study's findings could provide the information to inform district-wide teacher retention.

Limitations

According to Yin (2017), a “common concern about case study research is an apparent inability to generalize from case studies” (p. 20). This study was a case study bound to one elementary school within a midsized, urban, high-attrition school district in Central Texas. The school was a positive outlier in teacher retention despite sharing the demographic makeup of SISD. The school under study had a higher teacher retention rate than other SISD schools by almost 14% over 4 years (the 2015–2016 through 2018–2019 academic years). This single case study addressed a unique and unusual circumstance, focused on the factors that differentiated this school from the other district schools concerning teacher retention. The small sample size could have been a limitation; however, there was no attempt to generalize retention factors to all urban public schools or districts. The purpose of this study was to contribute to programs, policies, and practices for teacher retention within SISD. However, this study's findings could inform

teacher retention efforts in mid-sized, urban, high-attrition school districts with similar demographics.

Definition of Terms

There are several key terms used throughout this study; the following are their definitions:

- Teacher attrition: When teachers leave the teaching profession. In this study, the term also indicates the teachers who left the district during the 4 years under study.
- Teacher retention: When teachers remain in the teaching profession.
- Teacher turnover: When teachers leave a school. This includes teachers who leave the profession, those who move to another school within the same district, and those who move to another school in another district.
- High-attrition school/district: A school or district with high rates of teachers leaving the profession or the district.
- Urban school/district: A school or a district in an urban area and a principal city with a population of 100,000 or more (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2000). In this study, urban schools and districts are low income and high minority. SISD is a mid-sized, urban, low-income, high-minority school district located in an urban area in a city with a population of between 100,000 and 250,000.
- Title I: According to the U.S. Department of Education, Title I is part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (2015). The act provides funds to school districts with high numbers or high percentages of students from families designated as low-income according to the free and reduced lunch (FRL) designation. Schools with an enrollment of at least 40% low-income students may be a school-wide program. Title I funding “ensures that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging state academic achievement standards and state academic assessments” (U.S. Department of Education, 2018)
- Computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS): A qualitative data analysis software program that provides more capabilities than manual analysis. Researchers use CAQDAS to efficiently compare categories and codes in a short amount of time (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2011).

Positionality

I am a White woman who works with a student population that consists of minority students of primarily Black and Mexican-American descent. Most of my students live below the poverty line and attend schools with performances below state expectations. I feel I can relate in some ways to the students I serve, such as years living with my family in poverty during the first 10 years of my life, moves nearly every year, and attendance at 12 different schools in my 13 years of schooling. I graduated from a low-income, high-minority school, now shut down by Texas Education Agency officials due to the inability to meet state standards for several years in a row. Yet, I still feel that my students have had different experiences than my own.

I grew up in a two-parent, middle-class home. My father had some college and did not graduate but had a commendable career as a prison warden who traveled to different locations to facilitate new prison systems. My mother, who graduated high school but did not attend college, was a stay-at-home parent for most of my childhood.

Although I went to different schools in my 13 years of education, I attended primarily White schools with primarily White teachers until middle school and high school. In our particular circumstances, my brother and I could not receive education from the same teachers ever year. I remember feeling envious of my friends in every place I lived, as they could recall all of their teachers for each grade, beginning from kindergarten, because of consistent teaching staff.

I have spent most of my career working with students in low-income areas, except for 2 years spent teaching in a high-income, predominantly White school district. I began my career as a teacher in SISD and migrated to a neighboring district because of working

conditions that I deemed unbearable. I only returned to SISD because of the opportunity to become an administrator. As an administrator, I hoped to help teachers who, like myself, felt frustrated enough to leave. As an administrator in the district, I have seen massive teacher turnover each year. There is a clear need to reduce teacher turnover within the district to provide quality educational experiences for the students who attend SISD schools.

Working in an urban environment presents many challenges; however, most of the teachers who remain in urban environments are exceptional teachers with hearts for students and families. Teachers who leave their positions list numerous reasons related to working conditions, yet they believe in their students' abilities and their own efficacy to help their students succeed. I wanted to learn more about why teachers stay in urban districts and what I could do as an administrator to retain high-quality teachers. I also hoped to inform district practices and programs for teacher retention.

This was a case study bound to a school within a district other than my own. However, the participants might have felt reluctant, intimidated, or unwilling to openly share the factors related to their retention decisions with an administrator. As the research commenced at a campus with higher-than-average district teacher retention rates, I hoped that teachers felt comfortable sharing the attributes that caused their campus to be a positive outlier. As an administrator in the district, I spend much of my time each school year hiring and training new teachers. Continual teacher turnover causes hardships on school campuses, leaving some of the most disadvantaged students—those most in need of strong teachers—to receive education from instructors with less experience and expertise.

Organization of the Study

This qualitative research study consists of five chapters. Chapter One presented the study's problem, contextual information, purpose, objectives, and definitions of key terms. Chapter Two is a review of the literature on national and state statistics of teacher turnover, the negative impact of high teacher turnover on school systems, federal and state programs for mitigating teacher attrition, and the intrinsic and extrinsic factors related to teacher attrition. Next, the chapter presents the struggles that urban school teachers face and Herzberg's two-factor theory, which the study's theoretical framework. Chapter Three includes the methodology used to conduct this study. Chapter Four presents the findings from this single case study of an elementary campus within a high-attrition urban school district. Finally, Chapter Five includes a summary, conclusions, implications, and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Teachers have the most influence on students' educational outcomes (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Hanushek & Rivken, 2006; Holme et al., 2017). The relationships that teachers form with their students contribute to students' overall social and cognitive development throughout adolescence. Teachers must remain in their positions long enough to gain experience and expertise to have the most positive influence (Ingersoll et al., 2018; Podolsky et al., 2019). However, nearly 45% of new teachers leave the profession within their first 5 years (Ingersoll et al., 2018). Teacher attrition results in the loss of human capital in schools as teachers lose the social ties needed to create a coherent vision and mission for student achievement. Despite decreased attrition after 5 years, teachers still leave the profession at high rates each year, harming school operations and climate. This chapter presents the literature on K-12 teacher attrition and teacher retention efforts foundational for this qualitative case study. The literature review includes the factors in teacher turnover decisions, urban teacher attrition, and theoretical framework. The chapter concludes with a summary.

Background of the Study

The 8% teacher attrition rate has received national attention. In addition to the percentage of teachers who leave the profession, another 8% shift schools, resulting in a total turnover rate of 16% (Carver-Thomas & Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019). As many teachers leave the profession and shift schools, district leaders struggle

to hire qualified applicants to fill vacancies. Additionally, teacher turnover is a common issue in schools with children of color who live in communities of concentrated poverty (Ingersoll et al., 2018), with a teacher turnover rate 55% higher in high-poverty schools than in low-poverty schools (Sutcher et al., 2016). Creating school environments where teachers want to stay requires understanding the magnitude of the effect of teacher attrition on public school systems.

Effects of Teacher Turnover

National teacher turnover. There is a nationwide crisis of teacher turnover in the United States. Turnover has caused the destabilization of the teacher workforce, indicating the need to retain teachers to serve students well. Research shows that teacher quality is an important school-level measure for predicting students' educational and professional outcomes (Chetty et al., 2011). According to Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2017), "Effectively retaining teachers is crucial to making sure there are enough well-prepared and committed teachers to staff all of our nation's schools and that the teachers in our classrooms have the time and experience to effectively serve all students" (p. 34). Several researchers have emphasized the gravity of teacher turnover and the related workforce trends in the United States (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Garcia & Weiss, 2019; Holme et al., 2017; Ingersoll et al., 2018). Teacher turnover is an alarming problem, and although the research may not be predictive, there is an upward trend in teacher turnover (Goldring et al., 2014; Ingersoll et al., 2018; Sutcher, 2016).

Recent trends. Teachers leave schools every year due to retirement or dismissal. However, studies show that teachers who leave preretirement comprise most of the occurrences of teacher attrition. According to Sutcher (2016), high attrition rates are the primary reason for national teacher shortages, contributing to close to 90% of the teacher demand. National statistics from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics Schools and Staffing Survey (2011–2012) and Teacher Follow-Up Survey (2012–2013), and the most recent NCE data show the reasons for teacher turnover for the 2011–2012 and 2012–2013 school years: about 18% due to retirement; 30% to voluntary, preretirement leavers; and 37% to voluntary movers (e.g., individuals who move to different schools or districts). The data suggest that educational leaders and policymakers must collaborate to retain teachers.

Two studies indicated trends and projected changes in the teacher workforce (Garcia & Weiss, 2019; Ingersoll et al., 2018). Ingersoll et al. (2018) analyzed longitudinal national teacher staffing data from the NCES from the 1980s through 2016 and found a diminishing number of older teachers in the workforce; therefore, new teachers were entering the field. As such, the overall years of teaching experience decreased from an average of 15 years to 1 to 3 years. Relatedly, Ingersoll et al. found that teacher attrition increased by more than 24%, with over 40% of new teachers leaving the field within their first 5 years of teaching.

Whereas Ingersoll et al. (2018) focused primarily on trends in teacher turnover, Garcia and Weiss (2019) analyzed the same data and data from the National Teacher and Principal Survey (2015–2016). Garcia and Weiss found that school district leaders struggled to find highly qualified teachers to fill the void from high teacher turnover. The

researchers surmised that prior estimates likely understated teacher shortage projections because they did not address the need for highly qualified teachers. By definition, a highly qualified teacher is one fully certified through a traditional education program (not alternatively certified) with more than 5 years of experience and certifications in the subjects taught. It is a challenge to find highly qualified teachers, and district leaders must often hire teachers without highly qualified teaching credentials due to the staffing needs caused by turnover and teacher shortage.

Both studies (Garcia & Weiss, 2019; Ingersoll et al., 2018) showed that most teacher shortages and the highest turnover rates exist in economically depressed school districts. Noted Ingersoll et al. (2018), “About 45% of teacher turnover takes place in just one-fourth of public schools, with high-poverty, high-minority, urban, and rural schools experiencing that highest turnover” (p. 48). The high teacher turnover causes students at high-poverty, high-minority campuses to face educational disadvantages (Darling-Hammond & Carver-Thomas, 2019). Urban campuses also have about 3% fewer highly qualified teachers than low-poverty schools (Garcia & Weiss, 2019). Such factors have resulted in a system in which the least-experienced teachers instruct the neediest students; these teachers, in turn, leave their positions at higher rates, perpetuating the problems associated with high turnover.

Analyses of teacher turnover trends contribute to the body of knowledge. However, analyzing existing teacher turnover trends cannot predict future turnover rates, as the empirical data consist of teachers’ responses to national surveys, such as the Schools and Staffing Survey, Teacher Follow-up Survey, and the National Teacher and Principal Survey. The national surveys are all quantitative instruments in which teachers

can only indicate their reasons for leaving (Darling-Hammond & Carver-Thomas, 2019).

Quantitative data do not indicate key factors such as teacher preparation, salary, the pressure of state accountability, and ant organizational factors; therefore, they may not represent the actual reasons for teacher turnover decisions. There are few or no in-depth, qualitative studies of the issues related to teacher turnover. Thus, this study focused on teacher retention in urban schools, contributed to the literature in an essential way.

Texas Teacher Turnover

Texas has a higher teacher attrition rate than the national average (TEA, 2019). According to the TEA (2019), in the 2018–2019 school year, out of 37,297 teachers, 10.43% of those educators left teaching in Texas public schools, a rate significantly higher than the national average of 8% (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019). The national average of 8% has remained consistent for the past 5 years (TEA, 2019). Texas is the fourth-highest ranking state for teacher attrition in the United States, surpassed only by Arizona, New Mexico, and Louisiana (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). Much like the national turnover statistics, if scholars factored in the mobility between campuses and districts in school districts for that school year, they could calculate approximately double the existing percentage (Sullivan et al., 2017).

Regional studies on teacher attrition have repeatedly indicated a higher teacher turnover rate in the Southern United States, particularly in cities, than in other parts of the country (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). Two sets of researchers investigated the Texas teacher movement data (Holme et al., 2017; Sullivan et al., 2017) and highlighted the staffing instability in schools across the state.

Holme et al. (2017) analyzed Texas longitudinal measures of teacher turnover by examining teacher workforce data (ERC, 2014) across 10 years, from 2004 to 2014. Holme et al. found that high-poverty and high-minority schools had two to four times more instability due to teacher turnover. Also, in accordance with national data, the researchers found that Texas schools, on average, lost more than 50% of their teachers over 5 years. Although the national statistics showed a decline in teacher attrition after 5 years, Texas had a continued loss of 72% of teachers up to the 8-year mark.

Sullivan et al. (2017) examined Texas teacher mobility data from 2011 through 2016, looking at regional turnover trends across the state. The scholars analyzed the school-level Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System data from its 2014–2015 pilot year to determine how the dimensions of teacher effectiveness correlated to teacher turnover. Consistent with Holme et al. (2017), Sullivan et al. found that, on average, 20% of Texas public school teachers moved between or left Texas public schools each year.

Several Texas regions with similar demographics (e.g., Edinburg and El Paso) had substantially lower mobility rates than the other areas. During this period, most mobility occurred due to teachers' departure from Texas public schools, although teachers moving between schools accounted for a significant proportion. The analysis of school-level Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System data indicated that the schools with high overall teacher evaluation ratings had low mobility, particularly in the planning and professional practices and responsibilities domains.

The findings in both the studies present Texas teacher turnover trends that indicate the need to explore teacher retention efforts in Texas. Consistent with national data (Darling-Hammond, 2010), these state studies show the negative impact of teacher

turnover on the state's neediest schools (i.e., schools with high-poverty, high-minority student populations). In accordance with the national data (Ingersoll et al., 2018), Holme et al. (2017) also found that 50% of teachers left the field within their first 5 years of teaching. The researchers of the presented studies examined the data over several years, identifying the trends often masked when analyzing annual teacher turnover reports. Neither study addressed the reasons teachers leave; therefore, the findings cannot provide policymakers and district leaders with insight into the factors that could cause teachers to remain in their positions.

Financial Effects of Teacher Turnover

Teacher turnover causes many issues in school districts, such as decreased student achievement (Boyd et al., 2005; Guin, 2004) and a loss of professional and student-specific knowledge (Hanselman et al., 2016). There is a large financial fallout when teachers leave (Levy et al., 2012). High turnover districts incur significant costs associated with constant separation, recruitment and hiring, new teacher training, and ongoing professional development costs (Levy et al., 2012; Synar & Maiden, 2012). The annual hiring and placement of teachers is a time-consuming and labor-intensive task that presents a financial burden to the school district. The Learning Policy Institute (2017) found that, on average, filling a teacher vacancy costs \$21,000. In 2007, the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF) reported that the national cost of public-school teacher turnover cost over \$7.3 billion per year, a figure that projections from the Learning Policy Institute noted would cost over \$8 billion in 2020 dollars.

Most school district leaders allocate 80% of their budgets to fund personnel costs. Thus, district leaders must spend time and money to understand their staffing conditions

and establish processes for retaining teachers (Synar & Maiden, 2012). Several scholars have attempted to account for turnover expenses at the district and school level to quantify district costs by creating models for inputting financial data to populate total turnover expenses (Levy et al., 2012; Ronfeldt et al., 2013). Such studies contribute to the knowledge base on the financial impact of turnover. However, they do not address all the expenses related to turnover due to the difficulties in the districts of providing the data needed to accurately calculate expenditures in all areas of turnover (Levy et al., 2012).

Levy et al. (2012) conducted a case study of 130 urban schools in Boston and used the cost of turnover model to analyze turnover expenses. The cost of turnover model included separation, recruitment and hiring, new teacher support, and ongoing professional development costs. The researchers found that professional development was the most expensive turnover cost for school districts, with over \$7 million in expenses for 611 teacher departures in one school year. These findings were consistent with the national turnover cost average (NCTAF, 2017). However, professional development was also the most difficult aspect of turnover cost to measure because professional development was not a separate factor in the district's budget. It was a challenge to disaggregate the budgetary information in each area of the model, resulting in underestimating the actual expense of turnover, which can be fiscally crippling. If school district leaders truly want to understand teacher turnover expenses, they must track associated expenses in a systematic way to reveal the true costs of teacher turnover (Barnes et al., 2007; Levy et al., 2012; Watlington et al., 2010).

Synar and Maiden (2012) used a similar model, the teacher turnover costs model, to analyze school district turnover costs over nine school years in an urban district in the

Southern United States. Like Levy et al. (2012), Synar and Maiden included separation, hiring, and new teacher training costs in their model. However, instead of using ongoing professional training costs (Levy et al., 2012), Synar and Maiden analyzed performance productivity costs based on “20% productivity gains per month, requiring 5 months to reach productivity” (p. 135). The researchers concluded that over 9 years, there was between \$3.4 million and \$4.3 million in costs for the four areas of teacher turnover in the district. The study addressed the soft cost of performance productivity, which had not received extensive research. Synar and Maiden concluded that performance productivity comprised 40.92% of the district's total turnover cost; however, they did not fully explain the factors that contributed to performance productivity and how to calculate its expense. These results were inconsistent with Levy et al. (2012) and the national average (NCTAF, 2017). Thus, the total predicted turnover expense of \$3.4 to \$4.3 million could be less because Synar and Maiden did not include the total professional development expenses for each teacher, only calculating new teacher training expenses.

There is one financial benefit of teacher turnover: the salary difference between experienced teachers and newly hired teachers (Levy et al., 2012). The salary gap is apparent when teachers with years of experience leave and novice teachers with less experience replace them. Because experienced teachers have higher salaries and more benefits than novice teachers, the difference helps to offset turnover costs. Although some researchers advocate the salary gap as a benefit to turnover (Ronfeldt et al., 2013), the findings from other studies (Levy et al., 2012; Synar & Maiden, 2012) indicate that the expenses associated with turnover outweigh the benefits.

Effects of Turnover of Student Achievement

Teacher turnover causes tremendous financial burdens in school districts; however, it also has worrisome effects on student achievement, especially in low-income, high-minority schools (Ronfeldt et al., 2013; Sorensen & Ladd, 2020). Researchers argue that when veteran teachers leave their schools, new, less-experienced, and less-effective teachers replace them (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2003; Sutcher et al., 2016). Additionally, the problems associated with such schools may not attract highly qualified teachers (Ingersoll, 2001).

Researchers began to conduct studies on teacher turnover and its effects on student achievement in the early 21st century (Boyd et al., 2005; Guin, 2004). Most researchers have correlated low student performance in high-turnover schools with state assessments; however, they have not proven a direct causal effect because factors such as poverty, working conditions, or poor leadership have created skewed results (Ronfeldt et al., 2013). Two leading studies on the causal relationship of teacher turnover on student achievement (Ronfeldt et al., 2013; Sorensen & Ladd, 2020) indicate that periods of high turnover have adverse effects on students' academic outcomes.

Ronfeldt et al. (2013) conducted a longitudinal study to analyze the average effect size of teacher turnover on student achievement in New York City. The researchers reviewed 8 years of achievement data, finding that annual, grade-specific teacher turnover of 10% decreased math scores by 0.005 *SD* and English language arts (ELA) by 0.009 *SD*. As with other scholars (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2003; Sutcher et al., 2016), Ronfeldt et al. found that low-income, high-minority schools had poorer student achievement than other schools, noting "Underserved schools tend to fill vacancies with

relatively less effective teachers” (p. 29). A unique discovery from the study was that teacher turnover harmed even the students of teachers who stayed at the same school from one year to the next. Thus, there is a need for further research to understand the negative effects of teacher turnover on the students of teachers who stay in their positions.

Sorensen and Ladd (2020) analyzed 2 decades of administrative data on middle school math and ELA teachers in North Carolina to determine school response to the loss of teachers in these core instruction areas. The researchers “neither focused on teachers who left nor teachers who joined schools, but rather on the effect of the two types of flows” (p. 13). Similar to findings by Ronfeldt et al. (2013), Sorensen and Ladd found that an increase in teacher turnover of 10% caused a decrease of 0.013 *SD* in math student performance and 0.007 *SD* in ELA student performance. Also, consistent with previous research (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2003; Ronfeldt et al., 2013; Sutcher et al., 2016), they found that teacher turnover had the most impact on economically disadvantaged students.

Consistency in the findings by Ronfeldt et al. (2013) and Sorensen and Ladd (2020) suggest the magnitude of the negative effects of teacher turnover on student achievement. These studies showed that teacher turnover has more of an impact on students in low-income, high-minority schools than their peers. Such negative effects occur, in part, to the lack of experience and expertise of teachers who replace the teachers who leave. Ronfeldt et al. and Sorensen and Ladd highlighted the need for additional research on teacher turnover, particularly in low socioeconomic school districts, to close the equity gap in student achievement that correlates with teacher turnover.

Efforts to Address Teacher Retention

History of teacher incentives. Districts provide financial incentives based on teacher performance to encourage teachers to stay and prevent the economic costs and adverse effects on student achievement of teacher turnover. Approximately 96% of U.S. public-school teachers receive salaries based on single-salary scales developed in the 1940s to provide equity for women and minority teachers (Podgursky & Springer, 2007; Ritter et al., 2016). In the 1940s, teachers were predominantly White men who received much more compensation than their female and minority colleagues. Creating a scale based on years of experience was the means used to change to single-salary scales to ensure equity in pay. In the modern world, some could argue that such a system prevents highly qualified teachers from receiving more than their colleagues who have tenure but fewer skills (Ritter et al., 2016). Advocates of teacher performance pay believe that if teachers prove themselves as highly qualified, they should receive eligibility for more pay, through incentives, rewarding their significant impact on student learning and retain them in their positions (Figlio & Kenny, 2006; Glewwe et al., 2003; Ritter & Barnett, 2016).

Since *A Nation at Risk*, a 1983 national report released on the need for sweeping reforms in public education and teacher training, policymakers have gone through several iterations of teacher incentive programs. Policymakers have incorporated teacher incentive programs into more extensive reform efforts to improve teacher retention and persuade teachers to improve student performance. However, some scholars (e.g., Berry et al., 2012; Ritter et al., 2016) suggest that policymakers rarely base national teacher

incentive programs on incentives that result in school excellence and equity. Merit pay often has a negative connotation.

Teachers may perceive a school's overall culture as unfavorable if there are negative perceptions when students' scores are not in line with the incentive plan's standards (Ritter et al., 2016). Damage to teacher relationships can also occur when certain teachers receive incentive pay and others do not; this results in declined communication and collaboration (Kohn, 1993). Also, according to Darling-Hammond (2010), measuring a teacher's "effectiveness" with measures of student achievement may not accurately indicate the teacher's actual impact on students.

Researchers have found that teacher pay-for-performance programs are insufficient to retain teachers of improving high-need schools (Berry et al., 2012; Ritter et al., 2016; Shifrer et al., 2017). Shifrer et al. (2017) studied 3,363 teachers who taught core classes (math, reading, science, and social studies) and had received financial incentives in the 2009–2010 school year in a large, urban, minority-majority school district. The researchers wanted to learn whether financial rewards positively affected student achievement and teacher retention. Upon reviewing student achievement data, Shifrer et al. found that compensation, recognition, and the nature of their work motivated teachers; therefore, financial incentives alone did not result in improved student achievement or teacher retention.

Other studies on teacher incentive programs across the United States have had similar results. For example, in Tennessee, the Nashville Project on Incentives in Teaching grant enabled middle school math teachers in majority-minority districts to earn an additional \$5,000 to \$15,000 based on their students' standardized test scores. Nearly

70% of all middle school math teachers in Nashville public schools participated. Over 3 school years (2006–2007 through 2008–2009), even with one third of the teachers earning an average \$10,000 more, there was no significant increase in state assessment scores. Additionally, half of the 300 participants left their positions within the program's year timeframe, showing that the financial incentive had little effect on retention (Berry et al., 2012). Another example is the New York City School-Wide Performance Pay Program in the 2007–2008 school year. Under the program, teachers could receive an award of up to \$3,000 if they met the performance targets for the state's standardized assessment (National Center on Performance Initiatives, 2009). According to Berry et al. (2012), "This \$56 million bonus pay system yielded no positive effect on either student performance or teachers' attitudes toward their jobs" (p. 11). Extensive research shows that teacher incentives do not correlate with increased teacher retention; however, state leaders continue to implement performance-based teacher incentives to recruit and retain highly qualified teachers (Ritter et al., 2016).

The literature search did not produce many studies on national nonfinancial teacher incentives programs. the Hanover Research Group (2014) addressed teacher incentive programs across the nation. The Hanover Research Group found that although financial incentives based on teacher performance were not successful means of retaining teachers, there were some successful programs. For instance, research indicates that mentoring and induction programs are promising workplace incentives for retaining new teachers; however, little conclusive research on the topic is available. Similarly, the Hanover Research Group suggested that career ladders, a series of progressively higher

positions attainable in one's career, are an underresearched teacher incentive potentially beneficial for retention.

Texas Initiatives for Teacher Retention

Like the national incentive efforts for teacher retention, Texas has a long history of teacher incentive initiatives. Texas teacher incentive pay programs originated in the 1980s. The teacher incentive pay programs were typically 3-year programs, but they had little effect on student performance or teacher retention. Researchers (Springer & Taylor, 2016; National Center on Performance Initiatives, 2009) examined three Texas programs to determine their effects on teacher performance and teacher retention. The findings showed that most of the teacher performance pay programs did not have a significant effect on performance or long-term retention; therefore, they did not correlate with improved student performance. However, one program positively impacted student achievement and teacher retention (National Center on Performance Initiatives, 2009). Policymakers used the successful program as a foundation for the newest teacher incentive pay program (TEA, 2019).

Springer and Taylor (2016) analyzed the Governor's Educator Excellence Grant, a 3-year, federal- and state-funded, pay-for-performance program introduced in Texas in 2005 to determine its effect on teacher productivity and retention. Educators from 99 high-poverty high-performing schools participated in the 3-year program. Members of district-formed teacher committees from each school district created an incentive pay plan based on broad TEA guidelines, and the grants ranged from \$60,000 to \$220,000. The researchers found that the teachers designed weak pay plans, none of which included a "winner-take-all" incentive pay structure. TEA indicated that the teachers should create

individual pay structures; however, most developed group pay structures. Springer and Taylor noted, “In turn, those relatively weak incentives do not appear to be associated with any significant changes in teacher productivity, although they are correlated with teacher turnover, which, in the long run, could theoretically improve student outcomes” (p. 344). According to the National Center on Performance Initiatives (2009), there was a lower teacher turnover rate in the participating schools after the Governor’s Educator Excellence Grant’s first year of implementation. However, the subsequent 2 years of the program did not show a continued decline in teacher turnover.

Researchers from the National Center on Performance Initiatives (National Center on Performance Initiatives; 2009) conducted studies on two Texas incentive plans: the state-funded Texas Educator Excellence Grant (TEEG) and District Awards for Teacher Excellence program (DATE). National Center on Performance Initiatives scholars analyzed both programs to determine their influence on student achievement and teacher retention. The TEEG was a grant initiated for 1,000 high-poverty, high-performing school districts during the 2006–2007 school year that lasted through the 2009–2010 school year. Like the Governor’s Educator Excellence Grant, the TEEG enabled educators from high-minority, high-performing schools to design and build performance pay plans within their districts to boost student achievement and reduce turnover. The TEEG provided the participating teachers with up to \$3,000 based on their individual performance and student achievement data. The researchers evaluated the outcomes at the end of the 4-year program and found no improvement in student achievement or teacher retention.

Active in Texas from the 2008–2009 to the 2010–2011 school years, DATE provided state-funded grants to district educators interested in implementing district-based incentive pay plans. In contrast to TEEG’s results, this study showed significant increases in state standardized assessments and teacher retention among the participating districts. The study also indicated decreased teacher attrition and increased student gains, with a proposed maximum award that exceeded \$6,000. The study had significant results, as it was the only of the three Texas initiatives that resulted in increased student state assessment scores and decreased teacher turnover.

In 2019, policymakers passed the school finance House Bill 3 (HB 3) in the 86th Texas Legislature. Under HB 3, teachers across Texas received increased base pay, which resulted in a minimum teacher salary increase of between \$5,500 and \$9,000 per year of service. HB 3 requires that teachers, nurses, counselors, and librarians receive 75% of the funds (TEA, 2019). Commencing in the 2020–2021 school year, HB 3 includes the implementation of a cohort model over the subsequent 3 years. This TIA is a tiered reward system in which teachers receive incentive pay based on the earning designations of master, exemplary, or recognized. Teacher designations are based on district-created plans for teachers’ performance on the Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System and student performance assessments not related to the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness. Unlike previous district-created plans, TIA requires district educators to submit their plans according to TEA guidelines and receive approval from scholars from the state’s partnership with Texas Tech University. Master teachers receive a performance pay increase of between \$12,000 and \$32,000, exemplary teachers earn between \$6,000 and \$18,000, and recognized teachers earn between \$3,000 and

\$9,000. Districts receive “points” depending on their student demographics, and rural and low-socioeconomic districts receive more points. Teachers can earn more incentive pay the more points they earn per student. The TIS is a state effort to attract and retain teachers in harder-to-staff school districts across Texas. State leaders automatically accept National Board-certified teachers as recognized and add additional recognitions to the teachers’ certifications so that teachers can carry their distinctions with them between districts (TEA, 2019).

As of the time of this study, the outcome of TIA was unknown; however, it appears as if past teacher incentive programs informed the TIA’s structure. Data from the DATE, the most successful Texas teacher incentive program, show more overall student achievement gains and teacher retention; the higher the teacher incentive pay, the higher the likelihood they stay at their campuses. When building the TIA, policymakers decided that even teachers with the lowest designation would receive between \$3,000 and \$6,000 in incentive pay, which suggests that they used the 3-year DATE report as a guide for developing the HB 3 TIA guidelines. History shows the multitude of attempts at the national and state levels were to monetarily incentivize teachers to stay in the profession. However, empirical research shows that financial incentives alone do not result in improved school excellence or teacher retention in high-need schools (Berry et al., 2012; Ritter et al., 2016; Shifrer et al., 2017; Springer et al., 2010; Synar & Maiden, 2012; Watlington et al., 2010). Past incentive programs provided teachers with additional money based on their performance according to their students’ test scores. These programs were “based on the assumption that teachers who have the chances to earn more money will adopt effective instructional practices, work harder, and achieve better

success with students" (Berry et al., 2012, p. 1), which is not always the case. Although often the first line of intervention to retain teachers, teacher incentive programs may be poorly designed or fail to address other aspects of job satisfaction that could cause teachers to stay. Thus, financial attempts at incentivizing teachers may be misguided. This study was the means used to understand incentivization related to teacher retention at the case study site.

Factors Influential in Teacher Turnover Decisions

The research suggests that teachers leave their positions because of extrinsic and intrinsic reasons. Extrinsic reasons for leaving included a lack of support from school leaders (Boyd et al., 2011; Grissom & Bartanen, 2019; Ladd, 2011), working conditions (Grissom, 2011; Harris et al., 2019; Hughes, 2012), state accountability pressures (Ryan et al., 2017; Von Der Embse et al., 2016), and low salaries (Aragon, 2016; Long, 2019; Podolsky et al., 2019). Intrinsic reasons included a lack of professional growth and development opportunities (Cohen & Hill, 2001; Dallas, 2006; DuFour, 2010; Fulton et al., 2005; Garcia & Weiss, 2019; Jordan, 2020; Kaplan et al., 2015; Krasnoff, 2014; Lasagna, 2009), a lack of autonomy and decision-making abilities (Glazer, 2018; Grant et al., 2020; Gwaltney, 2012; Kemper, 2017), and teachers' lack of belief in their abilities to do the work (Edinger & Edinger, 2018; Perera et al., 2019). This portion of the literature review presents the extrinsic and intrinsic factors that suggest that despite knowledge of what motivates teachers to leave, there is little in-depth understanding about why they might stay.

Extrinsic Factors

Herzberg's two-factor theory (Herzberg et al., 1959) indicates that extrinsic factors correlate with job satisfaction. Extrinsic factors are necessary for doing work, such as working conditions, policy, supervision, and salary. Extrinsic factors do not necessarily result in increased satisfaction; however, their absence results in dissatisfaction. The primary extrinsic factors related to teacher turnover decisions are working conditions, including administrator quality, coworker relations, state accountability, pressures, and salaries.

Working conditions. Teachers face many challenges in the workplace. Researchers have studied teachers' working conditions and analyzed the areas with a negative impact on teacher retention. Research shows a correlation between working conditions and teacher turnover (Harris et al., 2019; Hughes, 2012; Ingersoll, 2001). School leadership (Boyd et al., 2011; Grissom, 2011; Ladd, 2011) and job stressors (Hughes, 2012; Thibodeaux et al., 2015) are the primary factors that correlate with turnover.

Ingersoll (2001) examined the causes of teacher turnover to extend theory and research of this topic, which, up to that point, had focused on teacher turnover as a function of teachers' characteristics. Ingersoll studied teacher turnover from an organizational perspective and used national teacher turnover data obtained through NCES to analyze teacher staffing survey responses from 1984 to 1994. Ingersoll looked for the organizational characteristics in the survey responses that showed teachers' reasons for leaving. The researcher found consistencies with prior empirical research that indicated that teacher characteristics, such as specialty field and age, strongly correlated

with turnover. Ingersoll also found that school characteristics and working conditions had the most impact on turnover. Retirement was the reason for a relatively minor amount of teacher turnover compared to the teachers who left because they felt dissatisfied or sought to pursue better careers. The data show that inadequate support from school administration, student discipline problems, limited faculty input in school decision-making, and low salaries correlate with high turnover rates. Based on these findings, Ingersoll disproved the theory that school staffing shortages correlated with demographic trends. Policy response had focused on attempts to increase teacher quality with an assortment of recruitment strategies. However, the data suggested that teacher turnover correlates with excessive teacher demand resulting from many teachers' departure for reasons other than retirement. Instead of focusing on recruitment in response to turnover, scholars must address the working conditions that cause teachers to leave.

Hughes (2012) also researched the teacher retention factors related to working conditions. Hughes considered how teacher, school, and organizational characteristics correlate with teacher retention, information schools can use to address the problem. In the study, 782 teacher participants in elementary, middle, and high schools completed surveys in a state in the Southern United States. According to the findings, 83.5% of the surveyed teachers planned to teach until retirement; of those who planned to leave teaching, 41.86% hoped to advance within the field of education. New teachers were less likely to plan to teach until retirement than teachers who had taught for 10 or more years. Overall, Hughes suggested that increasing teacher retention requires districts to improve the organization by increasing salaries, reducing teacher workloads, and enhancing parent and student participation and cooperation levels.

Administrator quality. Teachers leave schools for many reasons, but scholars have found school leadership quality to be a significant predictor of teacher retention (Boyd et al., 2011; Corbell et al., 2010; Grissom, 2011; Ladd, 2011; Thibodeaux et al., 2015). In a Learning Policy Institute (2017) study, 25% of teachers said their administrator did not encourage and acknowledge staff, communicate a clear vision, or run the school well. There is even more of a need to understand the link between effective school leadership and teacher turnover in low-income, high-minority urban school districts.

Grissom (2011) examined the links between principal effectiveness as components of teachers' working conditions, satisfaction, and turnover in low-income, urban schools. Grissom used data from the Schools and Staffing Survey and the Teacher Follow-up Survey to review data from 6,900 schools across the United States. The researcher constructed a measure from survey responses to Likert-scale questions to capture administrator performance. The aspects of administrator performance analyzed included setting clear expectations, providing support and encouragement, and recognizing staff members for a job well done. According to Grissom, school principals' effectiveness "is an important component of teacher working conditions; average teacher ratings of principal effectiveness are strong predictors of teacher job satisfaction and 1-year turnover probability in the average school" (p. 26). Additionally, there were stronger correlations in the urban, low-income schools. This research shows that effective leaders promote students' success indirectly by creating school environments conducive to learning. Whereas effective principals build and maintain stable teacher workforces, ineffective principals often lose teachers. Although this was a study helpful in establishing the correlation between principal effectiveness and teacher turnover, it was

limited by its methodology. Therefore, there is a need for additional research on teachers' perspectives of the impact of effective school leadership on their decisions to stay in their positions.

Thibodeaux et al. (2015) examined whether principals' leadership behaviors impacted teachers' intentions to remain in the profession. The researchers administered a Likert-scale survey to identify teacher characteristics and working conditions, such as principal leadership, teacher intention, teacher job satisfaction, teacher mentoring, intrinsic motivators, and self-reported factors (open-ended questions) focused on teachers' intentions to stay in the profession. They conducted the research in five school districts and administered the survey to 212 K-12 teachers in a Southern U.S. state.

Consistent with previous research (Boyd et al., 2011; Corbell et al., 2010; Grissom, 2011; Ladd, 2011), Thibodeaux et al. found that principal leadership is a critical factor in teacher retention, as the participating teachers listed a lack of administrative support as a top reason for leaving the profession.

Further research on working conditions is necessary, as most researchers (Grissom, 2011; Hughes, 2012; Ingersoll, 2001; Thibodeaux et al., 2015) have relied on data drawn from surveys. There is a need to understand teachers' perceptions of the effect of working conditions on turnover and retention decisions with qualitative methods. Using qualitative methods, researchers could hear directly from teachers, and the teachers could expound upon their reasons in ways not provided by surveys.

Coworker relations. Coworker relationships are an integral part of most people's everyday working lives (Basford & Offermann, 2012). A kind, supportive coworker can ease the strain of a hectic day, whereas a hostile, uncooperative colleague can augment

on-the-job stress. Fernet et al. (2009) sought to discern if the association between work motivation and coworker relationships affected burnout. The researchers collected data from 533 college employees at two time points 2 years apart through the administration of the Quality of Interpersonal Relationships Scale. Fernet et al. asked the participants to indicate on the Quality of Interpersonal Relationships Scale the extent to which each of the items correlated with their relationships with their coworkers using the instrument's 4-point scale. The participants also completed questionnaires on burnout and work motivation. On these questionnaires, the participants reported coworker relationships as critical, especially for those who exhibited less self-determined work motivation.

According to Fernet et al., "The more employees reported high-quality relationships with coworkers and the more they valued and enjoyed their work, the less they experienced burnout symptoms over time" (p. 12). Because burnout eventually causes employees to leave their positions, and because employee relationships are a means of alleviating burnout, there was a need to address coworker relationships to understand their impact on teacher retention.

Basman and Offerman (2012) studied coworker relationships and their impact on motivation and job retention. The researchers collected employee survey data from 677 locations of a large U.S. service-sector organization, with a total of 69,501 employees participating. The researchers used five scales from the company's attitude survey to examine the employees' intent to stay, motivation, and perceptions of their coworker relationships. All the scales had a 6-point Likert scale that ranged from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. The results of the study show the significance of coworker relationships. According to Basman and Offerman, "Good coworker relations exert a

positive impact on employee motivation and employee intent to stay" (p. 814). Overall, the findings suggest that building good coworker relationships is another avenue for improving workplace outcomes. Although this study indicates the significance of coworker relationships and employees' intent to stay, there is a need for further research using qualitative measures to understand the impact of these relationships on employees' intent to stay. Similarly, because schools differ in many ways from other workplaces, it is necessary to understand the impact of coworker relationships on teachers' intentions to remain in their positions.

Accountability Pressures

History. Since the publication of *A Nation at Risk*, a 1983 report presented by the National Commission on Excellence in Education, U.S. /educational systems have been under a microscope. The report suggests that U.S. students lag behind those in other countries. Following *A Nation at Risk* was a series of federal school reforms signed into law, with stressful effects on K-12 schools, particularly the teachers.

Directly after *A Nation at Risk*, President Reagan passed an educational reform that included a component to reward good teaching through merit-based pay and promotion (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). In 1989, President George H. Bush held an education summit for the standards and accountability movement, with President George W. Bush signing the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act into law in 2002. NCLB required accountability for school performance through standards-based testing reforms and presented sanctions against schools where the students and educators did not meet annual yearly progress (AYP) goals (U.S. Department of Education, 2019).

In 2009, President Barack Obama signed the Race to the Top initiative for K-12 reform in which educators had to meet certain criteria to receive federal funding through grants. In 2015, President Obama reauthorized the 1960s Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), implemented by President Kennedy as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA; U.S. Department of Education, 2019). ESSA focused on assessing student achievement through multiple measures and is eligible for reauthorization in the 2020–2021 school year.

Due to the school reforms, teachers have felt the pressure to increase and correlate student achievement with accountability standards, with diminished autonomy over the core of their work (Wronowski & Urick, 2019). Podolsky et al. (2019) expressed dissatisfaction with school assessments. They found that the effect of accountability measures on teachers' curriculum and teaching was the third-most listed reason for leaving the profession. Two recent studies (Ryan et al., 2017; Von Der Embse et al., 2016) have addressed the stress and burnout caused by high-stakes accountability measures.

Stress and burnout. With each educational reform, teachers have experienced more pressure for their students to meet the standards of state and federal accountability systems. Researchers (Ryan et al., 2017; Von Der Embse et al., 2016) have begun to study teacher stress and its correlation with high-stakes accountability. Ryan et al. (2017) examined the relationships between test-based accountability policy, teacher stress, teacher burnout, and teacher turnover intentions by surveying 1,866 teachers across three states. The researchers used five quantitative tools to measure the amount of test accountability that the teachers faced: educator stress, burnout, teacher turnover, and

occupational burnout and extreme stress. They found that “there was a direct significant effect for accountability on both teacher migration and teacher attrition. Accountability also directly affected test stress and burnout, which both predicted both kinds of teacher turnover” (Ryan et al., 2017, p. 6).

Ryan et al. (2017) addressed the accountability policy pressures related to test-based accountability. The study had important findings because “the effect of test-based accountability policies on negative teacher outcomes is an important next step in depicting how policy influences stress and teacher professional longevity” (Ryan et al., 2017, p. 9). There is a need for further research to address how to curb the stress caused by state testing and accountability to improve teacher retention.

Von Der Embse et al. (2016) examined the teacher stressors of test-based accountability policies, their impact on overall job satisfaction, and the influence of self-efficacy on job satisfaction despite the pressures of high-stakes testing. In a study of 1,242 teachers from 100 school districts within one state in the Southeastern United States, the researchers used the Educator Test Stress Inventory to measure educator stress correlated with high stakes testing and policies. The teachers used the Educator Test Stress Inventory to rate themselves in three categories: sources of test stress, manifestations of test stress, and sources of manifestations based on statements such as, “I feel pressure from parents to raise student test scores,” and “I perspire or sweat during standardized test periods.” (Von Der Embse et al., 2016, p. 310). The teachers also completed the Teachers’ Self-Efficacy Scale to assess teaching efficacy. Job satisfaction underwent assessment with a 5-point Likert scale. The results indicated a relationship between teacher job satisfaction and test stress. The results also showed that efficacy in

classroom management and student engagement were mediating factors. The researchers suggested strengthening teachers' efficacy in classroom management and student engagement areas to cope with the stressors of high stakes testing accountability practices.

Taken together, Ryan et al. (2017) and Von Der Embse et al. (2016) showed a relationship between teacher job satisfaction and high-stakes test stress; ultimately, this correlation could cause burnout and teacher attrition. This is an important finding, showing that high stakes testing and accountability measures contribute to stress and burnout that causes teacher attrition. Additionally, researchers have found that turnover is a more serious issue in schools with lower accountability ratings (Feng et al., 2010).

According to Podolsky et al. (2019),

The skills needed to teach in these schools are greater because teachers must be experts in diagnosing student learning, differentiating instruction to address gaps while accelerating progress, and supporting a range of social, emotional, health, and psychological needs, in addition to sometimes complex academic needs. (p. 10)

In the current educational system, state testing and accountability pressures remain. Thus, there is a need to expand research on this topic with qualitative methods to understand the components of state testing and accountability that teachers feel cause the most stress. Such information could enable district leaders to ease these burdens and retain teachers.

Salary

Individuals often enter the teaching profession because they want to help children succeed; however, inadequate pay for teachers contributes to premature attrition. Of note, 40% to 50% of new teachers leave the field within the first 5 years of teaching (Ingersoll et al., 2018). According to Buckley et al. (2004), "School administrators and educational

researchers have long known [that] hiring bright new teachers is only part of the problem—the attrition of both new and experienced teachers is as great a challenge for schools and school systems” (p. 1). Low teacher salaries may be the primary reason many college students do not want to choose education as a career, and many novice teachers leave the field (ACT, 2015; Learning Policy Institute, 2017).

Highly qualified teachers should receive compensation comparable to professionals with similar qualifications; however, this is not the case. The wages of teachers relative to college graduates have steadily decreased over the past decade (EPI, 2018). Nationally, teachers receive, on average, 21% less compensation than similarly educated and experienced professionals (Long, 2019). In 2018, the average starting salary for new teachers in the United States was around \$39,000; by 2019, that number had decreased by 2.9%. As a result of these salary inequities, more than 500,000 teachers around the nation have rallied, walked out, or gone on strike in the past 2 years.

According to Hendricks (2014), “Conventional wisdom suggests that paying teachers more will likely improve students’ outcomes by attracting and retaining more teachers or by influencing current teachers’ efforts” (p. 50). Several studies show a relationship between teacher pay and teacher retention; however, cumulative data suggest that while salary is an important factor, working conditions have more of an impact on teachers’ decisions to stay or leave (Hanushek & Rivkin, 2007; Podolsky et al., 2019).

Podolsky et al. (2019) reviewed federally collected nationally representative survey data from the 2011–2012 and 2012–2013 school years to identify the driving factors in teacher recruitment and retention. The participants identified salary as a reason for leaving the profession; however, it was near the bottom, the eighth out of 10 reasons.

The teachers listed other reasons for leaving, such as pursuing a career besides K-12 teaching, dissatisfaction with accountability measures, dissatisfaction with teaching as a career, and dissatisfaction with school administrators. Podolsky et al. analyzed survey data (Schools and Staffing Survey, 2012), finding that out of the teachers who left the profession, 67% would consider returning with salary increases.

The impact of salaries on teacher retention is unclear; however, it appears that base salary increases correlate with decreased teacher attrition. Hendricks (2015) studied how to adjust base salaries to attract and retain effective teachers. Hendricks utilized district staffing datasets from 1995 to 2012 from 165 Texas public school districts to reconstruct district salary schedules and measure each district's distribution of teacher hires. The researcher focused on teachers with bachelor's degrees, who comprised about 80% of the sample. Hendricks reconstructed the salary schedules and experience levels over the years to analyze whether changes in a district's salary schedule affected the distribution of experience among new teacher hires. Hendricks found a 1% increase in teachers' base salaries correlated with a 0.04 to 0.08 percentage point increase in hired teachers. Pay had the most effect on hire rates for teachers with 2 to 3 years of experience, less of an effect on teachers with more experience, and no impact on teachers with 0 to 1 year of experience. The findings suggest that school district leaders could consider paying teachers more earlier rather than later in their careers to attract and retain teachers.

Texas teacher salary. No studies correlate the high teacher attrition rate in Texas to poor salaries; however, the results suggest that lower wages contribute to teacher attrition. According to the Rockefeller Institute of Government (2019), Texas ranked

23rd in the nation in teacher pay. Texas's median teacher salary is \$57,679, about \$22,000 less than New York, the number one state for teacher compensation. Garcia et al. (2009) analyzed 3 years of data from the TEA Academic Excellence Indicator System from 1,200 Texas school districts during the school years 2003–2004 to 2005–2006. The researchers looked at the school district and teacher characteristics associated with teacher turnover—specifically, the relationship between pay and teacher turnover rates. The study's findings indicated that low salaries correlated with high teacher turnover.

The turnover rate was nearly twice as high in the poorest-paying school districts as the best-paying school districts during each academic year of study. There is a need for more research focusing on urban schools and their relationship with salary and turnover rates. Also, although Garcia et al. provided an overall picture of Texas turnover data related to salary, they did not account for the numerous other reasons teachers leave. Research shows that most teachers do not leave their positions based solely on salary (Boyd et al., 2011; Glazer, 2018; Grant et al., 2020; Grissom & Bartanen, 2019; Gwaltney, 2012; Kemper, 2017; Ladd, 2011; Ryan et al., 2017; Von Der Embse et al., 2016). Garcia et al.'s study was significant because they used Texas turnover rates and teacher salaries consistent with similar national studies (Ingersoll, 2008; Long, 2019).

Hendricks (2014) used 1996–2012 TEA panel data to analyze Texas turnover rates among teachers with bachelor's degrees to find the connection between teacher pay and student achievement, which the researcher correlated with teacher retention. Similar to Hendricks' (2015) later research, the scholar discovered the greatest pay effect for less-experienced teachers. The pay effect decreased with experience and did not impact teachers who had taught for 19 years or more. Hendricks (2014) concluded that

increasing teacher pay could improve student achievement because teachers' average experience increases with retention. Although Hendricks suggested that teacher experience and retention have a significant impact on student achievement, the researcher did not prove a true correlation. However, other researchers (e.g., Ronfeldt et al., 2013; Sorensen & Ladd, 2020) have had similar results.

It is a generally accepted claim that good student outcomes require high teacher quality; thus, there is a critical need to retain high-quality teachers. District leaders must increase teachers' salaries to close the pay gap between teachers and other equally educated professionals to attract and retain highly qualified educators. However, as shown by multiple studies on why teachers leave the profession, salary increases are not key determinants in teacher retention decisions. Rather, working conditions and job satisfaction have more impact than salary.

Intrinsic Factors

The proper approach to work motivation requires a careful distinction between extrinsic and intrinsic rewards (Herzberg et al., 1959; Wernimont, 1966). According to Herzberg et al. (1959), workers find intrinsic rewards satisfying and motivating. Professional growth and development opportunities, autonomy and decision-making abilities, and self-efficacy are the primary intrinsic factors in teacher turnover decisions.

Professional Growth and Development

Although research indicates the benefits of professional development and growth opportunities for teachers and students, there is insufficient literature on how these factors contribute to teacher retention. According to Garcia and Weiss (2019), failing "to

provide teachers with broad access to effective training and professional development, as well as to learning communities where their professional judgment is considered, we hurt teachers' effectiveness, sense of purpose, and career advancement opportunities" (p. 1).

Such failure likely has an impact on teacher retention. According to Lasagna (2009), teachers may choose to leave urban, at-risk schools because they lack expertise in teaching inner-city children, have concerns about functioning in poor environments, and believe that students in urban environments do not perform well academically. Krasnoff (2014) stated,

Although teacher morale is down across the United States, those educators expressing higher job satisfaction had one particular trait in common: They were more likely to have benefitted from effective professional development opportunities and collaborative time with fellow teachers. Researchers reported that in schools where professional learning is centered around job-embedded collaboration with a focus on student results, teachers feel less isolated and experience a greater sense of confidence and job satisfaction. (p. 14)

Similarly, Cohen and Hill (2001) claimed that high-quality professional development is the most cost-effective tool for improving teacher quality and student performance.

Garcia and Weiss (2019) drew upon national public-school teacher data to report on professional development supports for teachers. They found that only 50.9% of teachers had been released from their teaching duties to attend professional development and that just one third felt satisfied with their professional development. Garcia and Weiss showed that 11.1% of teachers had an input in determining the content of their professional development. The teachers in high-poverty schools lacked the key resources and professional development opportunities provided to low-poverty schools. The data obtained during the study indicated a relationship between professional development support and teacher retention. The data also suggested that many teachers who remain in

the field receive support early in their careers through mentoring and induction programs; such teachers had supportive work environments where they received professional development and support.

There is extensive research on new teacher induction and mentoring programs that indicates such programs can effectively support new teachers. As of 2019, 79.9% of first-year teachers in the United States work with a mentor, and 72.7% participate in teacher induction programs (Garcia & Weiss, 2019). The goal of teacher induction and mentoring programs is to improve teaching performance and retention. Fulton et al. (2005) described four objectives of new teacher induction programs: (a) build new teacher knowledge, (b) integrate new teachers into the school community and culture, (c) support the constant development of all teachers, and (d) encourage professional dialogue. New teachers supported through induction programs successfully keep students on task, use effective student questioning practices, adjust classroom activities to meet students' interests, maintain positive classroom atmospheres, and demonstrate successful classroom management (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

Ingersoll and Strong (2011) reviewed 15 empirical studies on the effects of support, guidance, and new teacher orientation programs. Nearly all of the studies showed that new teachers who participated in induction had higher student achievement scores and greater retention than those who did not. An exception to this pattern, however, occurred in urban, low-income schools, where new teachers had significant, positive effects on student achievement but no effects on teacher retention or classroom practices. This is a finding supported by Ingersoll and Smith's (2004) national study on the effects of induction on teacher retention. Ingersoll and Smith determined that the

impact of induction differed by school poverty level, with induction having a strong impact in low-poverty schools and no effect in high-poverty schools. There is no single explanation of why this occurred, but the researchers noted that an induction program's efficacy might differ depending on the school setting. Although new teacher induction and mentoring programs are effective to support teachers in most schools, there is a need for additional research on the impact of these programs on teacher retention in high-poverty schools.

Researchers have studied professional learning communities (PLCs) and their effects on teacher retention (Brill & McCartney, 2008; Brown & Wynn, 2009; Jordan, 2020; Simos, 2013). PLCs are “an ongoing process in which educators work collaboratively in recurring cycles of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the students they serve” (DuFour et al., 2010, p. 10). The teacher development system enables teachers to work together to find a common consensus on the best approaches to achieving student success. PLCs were a research-based, widely accepted strategy for improving teaching and learning in schools during the NCLB era (East, 2015). There are three main ideas used to guide PLCs’ meetings: (a) ensuring that all students learn, (b) creating a culture of collaboration, and (c) focusing on results (DuFour et al., 2005). Research shows that PLCs are an effective way to improve teacher retention. Brown and Wynn (2007) found that improved teacher retention correlated with school leaders who prioritized professional growth by implementing PLCs. Additionally, Dallas (2006) found that PLCs implementation in an urban school resulted in improved collegial relationships, problem-solving and planning, teacher resilience and confidence, and effective curriculum implementation.

Jordan (2020) organized monthly PLCs meetings for newly hired teachers at a high-poverty, urban school district. Jordan conducted a case study to determine the extent to which newly hired teachers felt that PLCs resulted in increased job satisfaction and teacher retention. Each participating teacher received an online survey about areas of needed support to complete before the first PLC meeting. Jordan used the participants' answers to tailor each meeting. After ending the monthly PLC meetings, Jordan interviewed 14 of the teacher attendees and asked them about the benefits of PLC meetings for teachers. There were three emergent themes: Teachers want to share their struggles with their colleagues, teachers want to connect and have fellowship with their colleagues, and teachers need support from administrators and colleagues. Jordan did not necessarily prove that the teachers who attended the monthly PLC meetings had higher retention rates; however, the teachers shared perceptions of how PLCs provide positive support for teachers' professional development and growth.

There is research on teacher retention and how it correlates with professional development and growth opportunities for new teachers; however, scant research exists on the effects of these opportunities on retaining experienced teachers. This study addressed teachers' perceptions on how ongoing professional development and growth opportunities for teachers on their campus contributed to their retention, regardless of their years of teaching experience.

Autonomy and Decision-Making

The autonomy and power given to teachers to influence classroom and school-wide decisions contribute to teacher turnover decisions. Teacher autonomy consists of a teacher's degree of freedom, independence, power, and discretion over in-classroom

curriculum, teaching, and assessments and school-wide school operations, organization, and staff development (Gwaltney, 2012). Decision-making is a factor associated with teacher autonomy (Glazer, 2018). Many experienced teachers have expressed the desire for more autonomy in their practices and teaching. However, at the same time, novice teachers demand less independence because they feel overwhelmed and isolated (Grant et al., 2020).

Grant et al. (2020) studied the correlation of teacher autonomy with teacher attrition using psychological theories of development and the gradual release of responsibilities to the teaching profession. The researchers recognized that although new teachers need supportive structures for explicit guidance, experienced teachers “might meet such direction with resistance and resentment” (Grant et al., 2020, p. 102). Grant et al. used graduated autonomy models from outside the field of education to create a framework for teacher autonomy based on teacher proficiency levels in areas such as planning and preparation, classroom environment, instruction, and professional responsibilities. School administrators can incorporate the Gradual Teacher Autonomy (GTA) framework into their evaluation systems to measure teacher autonomy at different stages of the school year and teachers’ careers to ensure that they give teachers the right amount of autonomy in each of the GTA model’s key areas. The GTA model is a holistic approach beneficial for relieving the stress of too much or too little autonomy for new teachers, experienced teachers, and administrators. However, as with any evaluation tool, the GTA is a successful framework only if the evaluators and teachers buy in to the framework’s developmental perspectives.

Glazer (2018) studied why invested, experienced teachers leave the field of teaching and the significance of autonomy and decision-making in their decisions to leave. Glazer defined teacher leavers as educators who invest much into teaching for several years but still decide to leave. Autonomy is a recurring theme in teacher attrition work (Borman & Dowling, 2008); therefore, Glazer was not surprised to find teacher autonomy repeatedly mentioned by the participants. Glazer sought to understand what teacher autonomy meant in the context of attrition. The researcher found that the teachers did not want complete freedom: They wanted the autonomy to “govern [their] own pedagogical choices, to use [their] own professional judgment,” and to continue to successfully teach in their own ways (Glazer, 2018, p. 66). The teachers felt that the imposed curriculum was an obstacle to their professionalism and judgment.

Researchers of teacher autonomy and decision-making emphasize that school leaders must “afford teachers the flexibility and opportunity to shape schools into the kinds of workplaces that aspiring teachers seek” (Kemper, 2017, p. 60) to attract new teachers to the profession and satisfy existing teachers so they stay. Glazer (2018) noted that “understanding teachers’ ideals may be fertile ground for further attrition research, both as a way of better understanding why some teachers leave the classroom, and thus also, why some teachers stay” (p. 69); this was precisely the purpose of this study.

The Work Itself/Teacher Self-Efficacy

The work itself/teacher self-efficacy is another factor in teachers’ decisions to stay or leave their positions. Teachers who perceive themselves as effective in reaching and teaching students are likely to have high self-efficacy and feel satisfied with their jobs (Boyd et al., 2005, 2008; Hanushek et al., 2004), reducing the rate of attrition

(Klassen & Tze, 2014). Ineffective teachers “become dissatisfied with teaching, leading to increased absenteeism, illness, and ultimately attrition” (Perera et al., 2019, p. 186). Teachers with strong efficacy can better deal with challenging students and are more committed to teaching than low-efficacy teachers (Edinger & Edinger, 2018). Scholars must study the importance of efficacy in teacher retention to find practices for promoting self-efficacy.

Edinger and Edinger (2018) analyzed the knowledge gaps in teacher job satisfaction and included teacher efficacy as a component. The researchers used quantitative measures related to teacher efficacy to administer surveys to teachers from three elementary schools. The participating teachers indicated the extent to which they believed they could affect student performance with the 12-item Ohio State Teacher Efficacy Scale, a measure for instructional strategies, classroom management, and student engagement. The results showed that teacher efficacy positively correlates with job satisfaction. High levels of teacher efficacy correlate with significantly higher job satisfaction levels, as shown with the 28% variance in job satisfaction. Edinger and Edinger noted that administrators should strive to understand that teacher job satisfaction is not just a factor dependent on student achievement; rather, it is a vital component of positive working conditions, culture, and support. The researchers also suggested that administrators can improve teacher efficacy and practice with teacher training and professional development programs. They also recommended that teachers improve their self-efficacy by seeking activities at their campuses and districts that cause them to feel valued, confident, and successful. Although Edinger and Edinger shed light on teacher efficacy and its correlation with job satisfaction, they did not prove that teacher efficacy

directly correlates to teacher turnover or retention decisions. Interviews on teacher efficacy would be a beneficial means of understanding the correlation.

Teachers with high self-efficacy express greater job satisfaction and lower stress levels than teachers with low self-efficacy (Barni et al., 2019). According to Ladd (2011), urban educators who display stronger feelings of efficacy have long-lasting and robust engagement with the education profession; therefore, they are more likely to stay. Urban teachers face obstacles and adverse experiences; thus, there is a need to understand the correlation between teachers' self-efficacy and coping behaviors (Helfeldt et al., 2009).

Conclusion

The research on teacher turnover decisions indicates that many extrinsic and intrinsic factors contribute to teachers' decisions to stay or leave their positions. Teacher attrition causes most of the teacher shortage in the United States. Thus, there is a need to spend more money on creating positive working conditions in schools, reducing high-stakes testing and accountability measures (Berry et al., 2012; Podolsky et al., 2019; Wronowski & Urick, 2019), decreasing workload, and increasing parent involvement (Hughes, 2012) rather than recruiting (Hughes, 2012; Ingersoll, 2001).

School leadership is a primary reason teachers remain in or leave their jobs (Boyd et al., 2011; Grissom & Bartenen, 2019; Ladd, 2011). There is mainly quantitative research on the impact of leadership on teacher job satisfaction and retention. It is necessary to understand which leadership aspects to address based on teachers' perceptions to improve teacher retention. Similarly, researchers substantially cite intrinsic motivators, such as professional development and growth opportunities, autonomy, and decision-making, as the most-impactful factors in teacher turnover decisions (Edinger &

Edinger, 2018; Glazer, 2018; Grant et al., 2020; Gwaltney, 2012; Kemper, 2017; Perera et al., 2019). However, the data show that teachers rarely receive the opportunity to get involved in such practices (Garcia & Weiss, 2019). For this reason, future research should focus on the aspects of each of these areas that teachers perceive as important for teacher retention.

Overall, although extrinsic factors are important in teacher retention efforts, the research shows that “committed urban educators appear to have high intrinsic motivation and are drawn to the students and the environments because of their personal educational experiences” (Hong, 2012, p. 421). Still, it is unclear whether intrinsic factors are sufficient to retain teachers at struggling schools (Cochran-Smith, 2006). This study focused on understanding extrinsic and intrinsic factors and how each element contributed to teachers’ decisions to stay in their urban schools to suggest effective teacher retention programs and practices.

Theoretical Framework

Herzberg’s Two-Factor Theory

Herzberg’s two-factor theory (Herzberg et al., 1959) was this study’s theoretical framework. Herzberg’s two-factor theory is a leading theory in workplace motivation that focuses on the two factors that indicate job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction: hygiene factors and motivation factors. Hygiene factors are extrinsic motivators representing tangible, basic needs, such as status, job security, salary, and benefits. Motivation factors are intrinsic motivators representative of less-tangible, more emotional needs, such as challenging work, recognition, relationships, and professional and personal growth.

Herzberg et al. (1959) researched the two-factor theory of job satisfaction for over 5 years. At the time, employee strikes, slowdowns, and grievances indicated that employers needed insight into their workers' job perceptions (Herzberg et al., 1959). The researchers reviewed over 2,000 writings published between 1900 and 1955 to create their research design (Stello, 2011) to define the characteristics and job attitudes of dissatisfied workers. Their literature review enabled Herzberg et al. to hypothesize that they could not measure job dissatisfaction and satisfaction on the same continuum.

Herzberg's major study included 203 accountants and engineers at nine sites within a 30-mile radius of Pittsburgh (Herzberg et al., 1959). In semistructured interviews, participants described the good and bad aspects of their jobs and rated, on a scale of 1 to 21, the impact of each experience on how they felt about their jobs. The researchers then categorized the data into high sequences and low sequences. High sequences affected job attitude, and low sequences had a minimal impact on job attitude. Overall, the researchers identified many dissatisfaction sources and that only certain factors contribute to satisfaction. Herzberg et al. found that low-sequence factors rarely existed in high sequences, with the exception of salary, which was a factor found in both. Although salary was a factor mentioned with similar frequency in both high and low sequences, the researchers found that salary is primarily a dissatisfier. The participants who mentioned salary as a satisfier referred to instances of appreciation and recognition for jobs well-done; therefore, salary was not a factor on its own.

From this work, Herzberg et al. (1959) created the two-factor theory with the hygiene factors of supervision, interpersonal relations (coworker relations), physical working conditions, salary, company policy and administration, benefits, and job

security. The other set of factors, referred to as motivators, are achievement, recognition, the work itself, responsibility, and job advancement. Herzberg et al. claimed that hygiene factors exist on the same plane as motivators and that they are not polar opposites of one another. For example, attempting to satisfy an employee by offering a higher salary does not mean the employee will feel satisfied; it just means the employee is no longer dissatisfied. Employers must motivate employees by first attending to hygiene factors. However, true satisfaction occurs by ensuring that motivators exist that enable employees to achieve goals meaningfully related to doing the job.

In this study, the two-factor theory was the basis used to ask questions about the hygiene and motivating factors with an impact on increased teacher retention in an elementary school in a high-attrition, urban school district to understand teachers' reasons for staying in their school. Herzberg's theory facilitated the extrapolation of the factors from the extensive literature review on the intrinsic and extrinsic factors of teacher turnover and create a framework. These intrinsic and extrinsic factors (see Figure 2.1) provided a lens through which to conduct the qualitative case study.

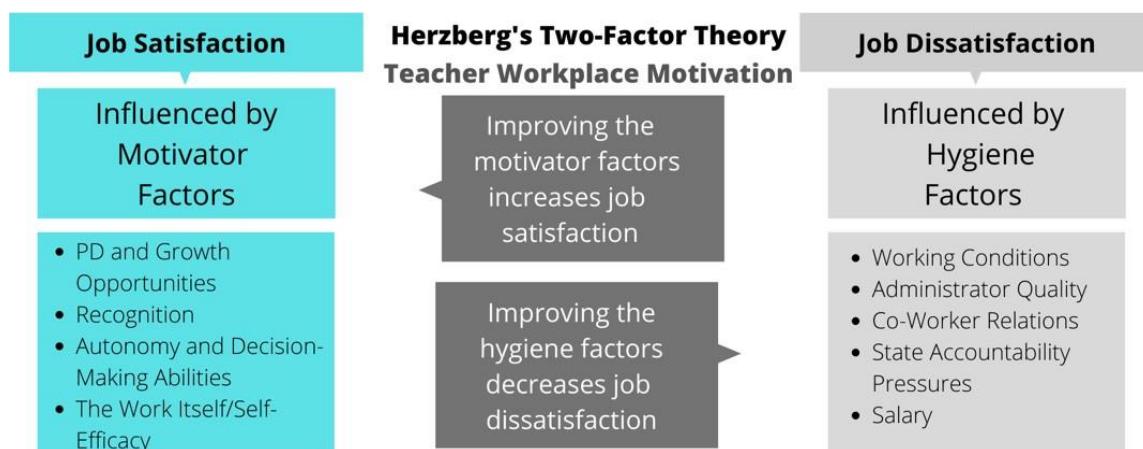


Figure 2.1. Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory: Teacher Workplace Motivation

Scholars have not often used Herzberg's two-factor theory as a framework for analyzing teacher turnover and retention, but there are a few notable studies (Adrianzen, 2012; Winfield, 2019; Wood, 2014). Both Winfield (2019) and Adrianzen (2012) used Herzberg's theoretical framework to explore why K-12 public school teachers stay in their positions. Wood (2014) used the theory as a lens for analyzing teachers' reasons for leaving their positions.

Adrianzen (2012) studied teachers from two elementary schools in Illinois, one in a low-income district and one in a high-income school district. The researcher developed a two-part, self-administered teacher survey instrument using a Likert-scale format with 20 questions. The participating teachers used the instrument to rate their perceptions of the importance of the factors related to Herzberg's theory in their decisions to stay in their schools. Participants also rated if they thought that their school and district leaders should consider these factors. The second part of the survey was a demographic questionnaire with 15 questions about the teachers' levels of experience, gender, and ethnicity, as well as the intention to stay in their schools. Last, the researcher held a focus group with three to six teachers from both schools and asked questions about their retention decisions. Overall, Adrianzen found that the teachers at both schools listed motivator factors related to self-efficacy—the work itself—as primary reasons for remaining in their positions. The only statistically significant difference in the survey data was participation in curriculum decisions and working in the neighborhood, with higher rates of these factors in the high-income school. The high-income school teachers valued hygiene factors, such as relationships with their colleagues, students, parents, and communities. The teachers from the low-income school reported the lack of parental

support and cohesive staff as frustrating and overwhelming. Low-income teachers also listed the lack of recognition as a dissatisfier.

Winfield (2019) focused on teacher retention in three low-income, urban schools in Missouri. The researcher conducted semistructured interviews with 10 teachers who had worked in their positions for at least 5 years. Winfield asked open-ended questions informed by Herzberg's two-factor theory to understand the teachers' perceptions of the impact of these factors on their decision to remain in their positions. The participating teachers noted that many issues related to hygiene factors contributed to turnover: ineffective school leadership, concern over the curriculum, inadequate pay, subpar working conditions, and challenges caused by students' negative home and environmental circumstances. The motivators that emerged included authentic relationships with their students and the work itself, with teachers stating that they felt they were role models who made a difference in their students' lives. Winfield's findings aligned with Herzberg et al. (1959) and Adrianzen (2012). Winfield noted that although hygiene and motivators are important factors for employee job satisfaction, motivators contribute more to why employees (teachers) commit to their profession; thus, motivators have a greater impact on retention.

Like most researchers (e.g., Garcia & Weiss, 2019; Hughes, 2012; Ingersoll, 2001), Wood (2014) took a deficit approach to understand the effect of Herzberg's motivators and hygiene factors on teacher turnover. Wood analyzed the experiences of five former teachers who had taught at one rural, low-income South Carolina school district for 5 years. Using structured interviews, the researcher asked open-ended questions to gain the teachers' perceptions of the factors contributing to their decisions to

leave the school district. Wood asked the teachers to think back to their experiences, discuss concerns about their former school district's attrition rates, and suggest ways to retain teachers in their former district. The reasons participants reported for leaving included exhaustion and burnout from work overload, feelings that district and campus leaders did not hear or consider their ideas, and high-stakes testing and accountability. Like teachers in other studies (Hanushek & Rivkin, 2007; Podolsky et al., 2019), Wood's participants considered salary a factor but did not cite it as a primary reason for leaving.

The researchers of the aforementioned three studies used Herzberg's two-factor theory as a framework for analyzing teachers' turnover decisions (Adrianzen, 2012; Winfield, 2019; Wood, 2014). Those studies showed that the teachers listed motivators, such as autonomy, decision-making, and self-efficacy (the work itself), as top reasons teachers for remaining in or leaving their positions. Teachers considered salary, a hygiene factor, as part of their overall job satisfaction; however, money was not a primary consideration in teachers' decisions to stay or leave their positions (Adrianzen, 2012; Wood, 2014). All three researchers used qualitative methods to analyze Herzberg's factors and their correlations with teacher turnover, but only two (Adrianzen, 2012; Winfield, 2019) had an asset-based approach. Adrianzen (2012) and Winfield (2019) interviewed teachers who remained in the profession despite the hardships associated with teaching. Although Winfield (2019) analyzed the teachers remaining in low-income, urban schools for 5 years, none of the researchers studied a positive outlier school in a low-income urban district to determine the hygiene and motivators that correlate with teacher retention, as in this study.

Summary

School district leaders must understand intrinsic and extrinsic motivators to retain good teachers, especially in low-income, high-minority urban districts (Darling-Hammond et al., 2019; Ingersoll et al., 2001, 2011; Ronfeldt et al., 2013). This literature review presented a summary of the background of this study's topic, the effects of high teacher turnover, and national and state efforts to address teacher retention. Teacher turnover costs the United States billions of dollars each year (NCTAF, 2017). However, more importantly, teacher turnover has adverse effects on student achievement and district working conditions (Ronfeldt et al., 2013; Sorensen & Ladd, 2020).

Teacher turnover is a complex issue with many factors. This literature review presented the extrinsic factors, such as working conditions, state testing and accountability pressures, and salary, impacting teachers' decisions to stay or leave their positions. However, intrinsic factors correlated more with overall job satisfaction and retention among teachers (Ladd, 2011). Teachers who had autonomy, decision-making abilities, and growth opportunities have enhanced self-efficacy, and teachers with high self-efficacy feel more effective in reaching and teaching students (Glazer, 2018; Ingersoll & May, 2016; Kemper, 2017).

Although this literature review included statistics on urban teacher turnover, the focus was on the factors affecting teacher turnover in urban schools. There are more teacher hiring deficits in urban low-income, high-minority school districts, as many experienced teachers choose to work in less-needy schools (Moore et al., 2018; Papay et al., 2017; Wronowski, 2018). Urban schools often have outdated school facilities and resources and limited access to student technology (Eslinger, 2014). Even more

challenging are the challenges in urban schools that result from the students' social-emotional, socioeconomic, disciplinary, and parental needs (Bottiani et al., 2019; Jeyne, 2007; Smolkowski et al., 2016). Together, these factors result in stress and burnout that ultimately cause teachers at urban schools to leave at higher rates than their counterparts (Boyd et al., 2008; Darling-Hammond, 2010; NCTAF, 2007).

Finally, the literature review presented a theoretical framework for examining the intrinsic and extrinsic factors in teacher job satisfaction. Herzberg's two-factor theory indicates that two sets of factors, hygiene and motivation, affect job satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Hygiene factors fulfill teachers' basic needs, such as salary and benefits. Motivators are the factors fulfilling for teachers' emotional needs, such as professional and personal growth (Herzberg et al., 1959).

The research suggests that the United States has a tremendous teacher turnover problem, which negatively impacts students. Leaders and policymakers have attempted to mitigate turnover with various (primarily financial) approaches; however, the problem remains, including at higher rates in Texas. Moreover, although the literature indicates why teachers stay, there are no in-depth studies on teacher retention in an urban school in a high-attrition district that is a positive outlier in teacher retention. Therefore, this is a needed study.

Chapter Three addresses the methodology used to determine the factors contributing to atypical teacher retention at an elementary campus within an urban, low-income, high-minority school district in Central Texas to understand what motivates teachers to stay. The chapter presents the single case study and includes the following

sections: research questions, research design and methods, participant selection, site selection, data collection methods, data analysis, limitations, and summary.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

This chapter provides a thorough review of the methodology used for this qualitative single case study. The purpose of this research was to identify and understand the factors that contributed to high teacher retention in an elementary school in an urban high-attrition district. The data gathered provided information for teacher retention practices within the school district. There are extant evidence and research about why teachers leave (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019; Ingersoll et al., 2018) but little research on teachers who remain in their positions. Most scholars of teacher retention have used quantitative tools, such as surveys and questionnaires, which did not answer *how* and *why* questions. A review of the literature on teacher turnover indicated the need for qualitative studies on teachers' decisions to remain in high-poverty, urban schools and the factors in their decisions to stay. In this qualitative single case study, semistructured interviews and focus groups were the means used to obtain teachers' and administrators' perceptions on the motivating factors for the higher-than-average teacher retention at the campus.

Purposive sampling ensured an appropriate sample to focus on an elementary school with significantly higher teacher retention rates than others in the district. This unique case study commenced to obtain information on teachers' perceptions of the job factors that caused them to stay at their school despite high attrition rates in the school's district. This qualitative study suggests the programs, policies, and actions in which

school district leaders can engage to increase teacher retention in urban schools. The study's objectives were:

1. To determine the working conditions that motivated teachers to stay.
2. To determine the specific campus programs and practices that motivated the teachers to stay.
3. To determine any factors related to salary or incentives contributing to the teachers' decisions to stay.
4. To determine how school leadership contributed to teachers' decisions to stay.
5. To determine how professional development and growth opportunities contributed to the teachers' decisions to stay.
6. To determine how teacher autonomy and decision-making opportunities contributed to the teachers' decisions to stay.
7. To determine how the work itself/teacher self-efficacy contributed to the teachers' decisions to stay.
8. To determine how to improve the existing programs and practices to promote teacher retention across the district.

This chapter contains the following sections: research questions, research design and methods, participant selection, site selection, data collection methods, data analysis, limitations, and summary.

Research Questions

Some researchers (e.g., Yin, 2017) have proposed that researchers use a theoretical framework to inform questions in case study research. The theory enables scholars to define the selection and parameter of cases. In this qualitative case study, Herzberg's two-factor theory (Herzberg et al., 1959) was the theoretical lens used to study teachers' perceptions of the job factors in their decisions to stay at their campus. This research had one guiding research question: Why do teachers at one urban

elementary school in Central Texas decide to stay when other teachers within their district leave at high rates? Application of the theoretical framework commenced to formulate the following guiding subquestions:

1. How do extrinsic (hygiene) factors contribute to teachers' decisions to stay in urban schools?
2. How do intrinsic (motivators) factors contribute to teachers' decisions to stay in urban schools?
3. Which of these factors correlates the most with job satisfaction and retention?

Research Design and Methods

A qualitative single case study was the approach used to guide this study's research agenda. According to Gubrium and Holstein (2002), "Qualitative research aims to understand the richness and complexity of social experience by attending closely to the actions, interactions, and social contexts of everyday life. It involves speaking with people in depth about their thoughts and feelings" (p. 1155). Gubrium and Holstein further explained qualitative methods:

Qualitative methods are used to answer questions about experience, meaning and perspective, most often from the standpoint of the participant. These data are usually not amenable to counting or measuring. Qualitative research techniques include small-group discussions for investigating beliefs, attitudes and concepts of normative behavior; semi-structured interviews, to seek views on a focused topic or, with key informants, for background information or an institutional perspective; in-depth interviews to understand a condition or experience (p. 1155)

Qualitative methodology was the chosen approach because it enabled in-depth and extensive understanding (Jamshed, 2014) of the teachers' decisions to stay in an

urban elementary school in a high-attrition district. Qualitative methodology enabled interviews with teachers to answer the *how* and *why* questions of this phenomenon.

The study included multiple perspectives within a single case study bound to one elementary school in a high-attrition, midsized urban district in Central Texas. According to Baxter and Jack (2008), “Rigorous qualitative case studies afford researchers opportunities to explore or describe phenomenon in context” (p. 544). The case study design has a foundation of constructivist views that the dependence of truth on perspective (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2017); thus, it was an appropriate approach for studying teachers’ perspectives on retention decisions. An advantage of the case study approach is the “close collaboration between the researcher and the participant” that enables the participants to share their perspectives (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 545). This case study had an intrinsic design because the case itself had the classification of *a* unique or unusual situation—the percentages of teacher attrition were unique compared to the other schools in the district.

According to Yin (2017), after defining the case, a researcher must make other clarifications in a process called bounding the case. Case studies are bound by the particular place, people, and time period covered in the case study. Yin stated, “Bounding the case in these ways will help to determine the scope of data collected and, in particular, how you will distinguish data about the subject of the case study (the phenomenon) from the data external to the case (the context)” (p. 31). This was a case study bound by place: one elementary school with low teacher attrition in a high-attrition district. The study was also bound by time, as the data collected focused on district teacher attrition rates in an elementary school that was a positive outlier for four

academic years (2015–2016 through 2018–2019). Data sources were semistructured interviews with lead teachers, a focus group with teachers, and semistructured interviews with the two campus administrators. Only teachers employed at the campus during the selected timeframe participated in the study.

Site Selection

Identifying and negotiating access to research sites and subjects are critical parts of the qualitative research process (Devers & Frankel, 2000). Purposive sampling was the sampling approach used for this qualitative research study. According to Devers and Frankel (2000), “Purposive sampling strategies are designed to enhance understandings of selected people or groups’ experiences” (p. 264). The participants worked at an elementary school within a midsized, urban district in Central Texas. There was little variance in demographic composition across the school district. Like the rest of the district, this was a Title I school with a majority of students classified as minority, low-income, and at-risk. However, despite the commonalities, the elementary school was unique, as a review of the district staffing data showed a 14% lower teacher attrition rate than the other schools in the district.

Deviant sampling was the purposive sampling approach used to seek rich information and gain important insight into the phenomenon under study. Deviant sampling focuses on unique or unusual cases of notable outcomes and successes (Devers & Frankel, 2000). This case study pertained to high teacher retention success at this school. According to Etikan et al. (2016), deviant sampling is “often used when researchers are developing “best in practice” guidelines” (p. 2). Studying an elementary school deviant in teacher retention compared to the other campuses within the same

district informed future practices within the district and similar urban school districts. In some cases, deviant case sampling reflects the purest form of insight into the phenomenon under study (Baran & Jones, 2016).

Participant Selection

Sampling is an essential component in any research study, and a researcher must carefully consider whom to include as participants during the design process (Baran & Jones, 2016). The participants worked at the case study campus from the 2015–2016 through 2018–2019 academic years. The study focused on teachers' perceptions of the job factors influential in their retention decisions; however, the principal and the assistant principal also participated in individual interviews after the teacher interviews and teacher focus group.

Before sampling and data collection, it was necessary to obtain Baylor University and district Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval to conduct the study. The campus principal was the first individual contacted, with all the information needed to understand the research and the individuals the researcher wanted to participate. The principal granted approval, after which the eligible teacher participants and the assistant principal received e-mail requests to participate. Each participant learned about the use of an audio-recorder to record the meeting before the interview commenced. The teachers received all the participant rights before their interviews.

Researchers must address privacy and confidentiality when designing and implementing research (SAGE, 2018). In this study, the district, campus, and participants remained anonymous, with no data linked to any identifiers. The participants, district, and

campus received pseudonyms in the interview transcripts to maintain confidentiality.

NVivo was the data analysis software used to code and analyze the data.

Data Collection Methods

Semistructured interviews and a teacher focus group were the two data collection methods. According to Yin (2017), “Interviews are an essential source of case study evidence because most case studies are about human affairs or actions. Well-informed interviews can provide important insight into such affairs and actions” (p. 121). Similarly, focus groups are “designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment” (Krueger & Casey, 2017, p. 2). Although labor-intensive, both methods enabled the participants to provide their insights into and perspectives of the phenomena under study.

There was a need to consider the order of conducting the methods in the case study design. First, semistructured interviews using an interview protocol commenced with the lead teachers from the PK-5 grade levels from August 2020 to October 2020. Next, the participating PK-5 teachers from the selected site joined a focus group. Last were interviews with the school principal and assistant principal from the selected site with a semistructured interview protocol. Only the teachers employed at the site school from the 2015–2016 through 2018–2019 academic years were eligible to participate.

Semistructured interviews were the first data collection method used in this case study. According to Jamshed (2014), “Semistructured interviews are in-depth interviews where the respondents have to answer preset open-ended questions” (p. 87).

Semistructured interviews have the following characteristics: conducted conversationally with one respondent at a time, contain closed- and open-ended question styles often

accompanied by follow-up *why* or *how* questions, and last approximately 60 minutes; the dialogue may provide new insights that emerge from the participants' responses.

Researchers follow a guide to conduct semistructured interviews, but they also have the flexibility to explore topics in the conversation divergent from the guide (Newcomer et al., 2015).

Semistructured interviews were appropriate for this case study because they enabled the participants to answer freely instead of quantitative research, which aims to identify specific, narrow questions or test hypotheses based on a few variables. Interview participants were free to expound on their answers instead of providing limited responses. An interview guide provided direction for the interview, with the flexibility for participants to speak freely about their perceptions of job-related retention factors. Such flexibility enabled exploration of the job-related retention factors of the phenomenon as they emerged in the discussion.

A focus group was the second means of data collection. Data from the semistructured interviews with the lead teachers enabled the creation of a second interview guide focused on the main factors and themes extrapolated from the lead teachers' responses. Led by an interview guide with questions to deepen understanding, the focus groups were meetings with small groups that lasted approximately 90 to 120 minutes. Focus groups typically have the following characteristics: (a) a small group of people, who (b) possess certain characteristics, and (c) provide qualitative data (d) in a focused discussion (e) to understand the topic of interest (Krueger & Casey, 2015).

According to Newcomer et al. (2015), Focus groups have an elastic agenda and open-ended questions that allow extended probing. Making up in depth, what they lack in

breadth, focus groups enable the moderator not only to pursue detailed inquiry into existing opinions but also to obtain reactions to new ideas and conduct group brainstorming, if desired. (p. 492)

Focus groups were the second qualitative data collection method chosen because “focus groups work particularly well to explore perceptions, feelings, and thinking about issues, ideas...and opportunities” (Krueger & Casey, 2015, p. 7). The focus groups' findings enabled an informed understanding of the phenomenon for recommendations for district-wide teacher retention programs, policies, and practices.

Last, interviews with the school principal and assistant principal followed analysis of the focus group findings. These occurred after the focus groups because there was a need to interview the teachers separately from school administrators so they could speak openly about teacher retention factors. Also, there might have been information gathered from the interviews and the focus groups that required clarification, especially regarding school leadership or working conditions. Asking the school leaders these questions provided the insight needed to understand the phenomenon from multiple perspectives. A semistructured interview protocol guided interviews with the principal and assistant principal. However, there was also flexibility provided during the interviews to understand the phenomenon.

Semistructured interviews and a focus group provided a broad understanding of the phenomenon under study. According to Carter et al. (2014), researchers can use interviews and focus groups in qualitative studies to “increase the validity of study findings through triangulation and the collection of data from all study participants using both methods, beginning with the interviews and followed by focus groups, or vice

versa” (p. 546). Triangulation entails using multiple methods or data sources in qualitative research to develop a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. This study employed method triangulation, the use of multiple methods of data collection about the same phenomenon, and data source triangulation, the collection of data from different types of people, including individuals and groups. Method triangulation was appropriate for the semistructured interviews, field notes, and focus groups used to collect data about the phenomenon. Data sources triangulation commenced, as the interviews with the lead teachers, teachers, and administrators enabled insight into the phenomenon. Triangulation was an essential part of this research to ensure that the case study accurately presented the participants’ perspectives (Yin, 2017).

Before each interview, participants received a consent form with the study’s purpose, activities, risks and benefits, confidentiality protocol, compensation, researcher contact information, and consent. Each participant knew that they could withdraw from the study at any time without negative consequences. The interviews’ guiding questions contained themes from the theoretical framework, Herzberg’s two-factor theory (Herzberg et al., 1959), to understand teachers’ perceptions of the job factors that caused them to remain at a campus in a high-attrition district for 4 or more years. A thorough literature review on teacher turnover factors also contributed to the guiding questions.

The semistructured interview questions were:

1. What working conditions caused you to stay at this particular campus for 4 or more years?
2. What specific campus programs and practices were factors in your decision to stay?
3. Are there any factors related to salary or incentives that contributed to your decision to stay?

4. How has school leadership contributed to your decision to stay?
5. How have professional development and growth opportunities contributed to your decision to stay?
6. How have autonomy and decision-making opportunities contributed to your decision to stay?
7. How has your own self-efficacy, or the “work itself,” contributed to your decision to stay?
8. What are your suggestions for improving teacher retention programs and practices across the district?

These questions were parts of the initial interview guide, enabling further exploration of the participants’ answers with follow-up questions. According to Adams et al. (2015), “The interview guide, no matter how extensive its preparation, should still be considered a work in progress. It remains subject to change for this reason: in the field, as feedback quickly begins to accumulate, adjustments will need to be made” (p. 499). The participants could tell stories about the influence of certain job-related factors in their retention decisions.

Audio-recording of all the interviews and the focus groups occurred with the participants’ consent. Jamshed (2014) said, “Recording of the interview is considered an appropriate choice” for qualitative interview data collection because “the recording of the interview makes it easier for the researcher to focus on the interview content and verbal prompts and thus enables the transcriptionist to generate “verbatim transcripts” of the interview” (p. 87). There were also manual field notes taken during the interviews and focus groups. Transcription of the audio-recordings commenced after the interviews and focus groups with pseudonyms.

Data Analysis

Constant comparative methods allowed the researcher to compare interview statements, thematically code responses, categorize data, and make meaning from the interview statements as they occurred (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Data from each interview informed a more tailored interview protocol for the next interview. According to Srivastava and Hopwood (2009), qualitative data analysis “is constantly on the hunt for concepts and themes that, when taken together, will provide the best explanation of “what’s going on” in an inquiry” (p. 77). As such, an iterative approach was apt to revisit and connect the data with emerging insights to develop meaning.

After each lead teacher interview, the interview transcript's input into NVivo 2020 software facilitated an iterative analysis of the transcript. The iterative analysis consisted of reading each transcript line by line several times to deduce meaning and understand the participants' lived-experiences and perceptions. A priori codes from Herzberg's theory (Herzberg et al., 1959) enabled classification of the participants' responses according to their most-aligned codes. In this case study, co-occurring responses underwent placement into more than one code, when applicable. The initial lead teacher interview codes and new interview questions enabled the explication of the focus group discussion with the classroom teachers. Finally, the process recommenced after the focus group data underwent coding to inform the questions for the administrators' interviews. The cumulative process enabled the development of strong overall results for the campus.

There are no fixed formulas to use as guides in a case study. Yin (2017) stated, “Much depends on a researchers' own style of rigorous empirical thinking, along with sufficient presentation of evidence and careful consideration of alternative

interpretations” (p. 165). Manual analysis of the data outputs was a means to connect the participants’ responses to a priori codes. Additionally, CAQDAS was the software utilized to code and categorize data reliably. According to Baxter and Jack (2008), “Using a database improves the reliability of the case study as it enables the researcher to track and organize data and retrieve it at a later date” (p. 554). Yin (2017) noted that patterns that emerge from CAQDAS “will still be conceptually more primitive (lower) than the initial ‘how’ and ‘why’ research questions that might have led to your case study in the first place” (p. 166). Therefore, in this case study, the researcher was the primary analyst with the software used as an aid. According to Baxter and Jack (2008),

The advantage of using a database to accomplish this task is that raw data are available for independent inspection. Using a database improves the reliability of the case study as it enables the researcher to track and organize data and retrieve it at a later date. (p. 554)

By combining the features of manual and electronic thematic coding and analysis from both the researcher and third-party analysis software, a researcher can better ensure reliability (Welsh, 2002).

Only the researcher had access to the district, campus, and participants chosen for this qualitative single case study to ensure privacy and confidentiality. The participants and school received pseudonyms in the transcripts. There were no risks foreseen for participants of this study.

Role of the Researcher

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2003), research is an instrument of data collection. Qualitative data mediation is As the primary instrument of data collection, there was a need to communicate potential bias in the study. Because I am a White

woman employed as an administrator in a low-income, high-minority school district, my experiences with the challenges of replacing teachers as they leave this urban district influenced my views of teacher turnover. My position as a district administrator and previous role as a teacher who left the district (undoubtedly for some of the same reasons as other teachers) likely contributed to my interpretation of the data. The provisions of trustworthiness presented in the following section were the means used to counter the above frameworks.

Provisions for Trustworthiness

Many qualitative research critics hesitate to accept its trustworthiness; however, frameworks for ensuring qualitative research rigor have been around for years. Guba (1981) proposed four pursuits for a trustworthy qualitative study: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Scholars have respected and represented Guba's qualitative research constructs over the years.

Credibility is one of the most important factors in establishing trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I triangulated the methods and participants through semistructured interviews with lead teachers and campus administrators and teacher focus groups to achieve credibility. All the participants worked at the campus during the timeframe under study. The use of different methods in harmony addressed the methods' individual limitations and the use of their respective benefits (Brewer & Hunter, 1983; Guba, 1981). Qualitative studies have unique findings, but they provide examples applicable to larger populations (Stake, 1994). Thick descriptions of the phenomenon under investigation were the means used to ensure the study's transferability. Thick description is an in-depth form of writing that researchers use to vividly describe the

characters and their actions, contexts, emotions, feelings, and relationships (Denzin, 1989). Thick descriptions of study participants and their perceptions as teachers who had decided to stay in an urban, low-income, high-minority school in a high-attrition district enables readers to analyze common elements and determine transferability. Triangulating the methods and reporting the findings in thick detail, including the research design and implementation, data collection and analysis, and the inquiry process, enables other researchers to repeat the study and find similar results. Thus, this is a dependable study.

Last, the concept of confirmability is “the qualitative investigator’s comparable concern of objectivity” (Shenton, 2004, p. 72). There were steps taken to ensure that the participants’ experiences, not the researcher’s, provided the study’s findings. Triangulation was the means used to reduce researcher bias. I admitted my predispositions in this study, a key criterion for confirmability (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Likewise, there is a diagram that shows the theoretical framework for this study.

Limitations

According to Yin (2017), “A common concern about case study research is an apparent inability to generalize from case studies” (p. 20). This was a case study bound to one elementary school within a midsized, urban, high-attrition school district in Central Texas. All the schools throughout the district had the same demographic makeup; however, this school was a positive outlier in teacher retention, with almost 14% higher teacher retention over 4 years (2015–2016 through 2018–2019 academic years) than other district schools. This single case study addressed a unique and unusual circumstance, as it focused on the teacher retention qualities that differentiated this school from the others in the district. The small sample size may have been a limitation.

However, there was no attempt to generalize the teacher retention factors as representative of all urban public schools or districts. This study will contribute to teacher retention programs, policies, and practices within the school district. Additionally, these findings could contribute to teacher retention efforts in other midsized, urban, high-attrition school districts with similar demographics.

Summary

This chapter presented the methodology of this qualitative single case study. The purpose of the study was to determine the factors that contributed to high teacher retention in one elementary school in an urban high-attrition district to understand teachers' reasons for staying. Semistructured interviews occurred with each PK-5 lead teacher from the school. Additionally, there were focus groups with teachers from all grade levels and semistructured interviews with the campus principal and assistant principal. Only the teachers employed at the campus during the 2015–2016 through 2018–2019 academic years were eligible to participate. The interview guide included eight open-ended questions with the opportunity to expand upon new insights from each audio-recorded interview and focus group session. Each audio-recording underwent transcription, analysis, and coding manually and with CAQDAS. This study aimed to contribute to teacher retention programs, policies, and practices within the school district and provide insight into retention practices for school districts with similar demographics.

CHAPTER FOUR

Data Analysis and Results

This chapter presents the findings from this qualitative research study. The purpose of this study was to determine the factors contributing to high teacher retention in one elementary school in an urban, high-attrition district to understand what motivated the teachers to stay. The sources of data were semistructured interviews with teachers and administrators and focus groups. All the participants had worked at the campus during the 2015–2016 through 2018–2019 academic years.

The study had one guiding research question: Why do teachers at one urban elementary school decide to stay when other teachers within their district leave at high rates? Herzberg's two-factor theory (Herzberg et al., 1959) was the theoretical framework used to formulate the following subquestions for this qualitative research study:

1. How do extrinsic (hygiene) factors contribute to teachers' decisions to stay in urban schools?
2. How do intrinsic (motivator) factors contribute to teachers' decisions to stay in urban schools?
3. Which of these factors correlate the most with job satisfaction and retention?

Chapter Four contains four sections presented in both narrative and table form. The first section provides descriptive data about Central Elementary School (CES), the case study site, and the participants. The second section presents the data collection and data analysis methods. The third section shows the case study's results, including the themes, constructed with Herzberg's two-factor theory, that emerged from the interviews and focus group. Finally, there is a summary of the results.

Descriptive Data

This research was a single case study bound to one elementary school within SISD, a midsized urban school district in Central Texas. At the time of the study, CES had 375 students in the prekindergarten through fifth grades. The school is a Title I campus, with 95.7% of the students identified as economically disadvantaged. In the 2018–2019 school year, the last year there was an assigned rating, the campus had an overall TEA accountability rating of a B. The school under study and one other school had the same high accountability rating—the highest in the district—with other schools having much lower ratings. The campus demographics by ethnic group were 23.5% Black, 60.3% Hispanic, 8.7% White, and 7% two or more races.

CES had the highest teacher retention rate for an elementary or secondary school in the district for the 2015–2016 through 2018–2019 academic years. During those 4 school years, the district had an overall teacher attrition rate of 24%; in contrast, CES had a 13% attrition rate, a difference of 11%. SISD’s overall average attrition for the 4 years under study was 24%, and the case study site had 13%, a difference of 14%. The campus employed 27 teachers, one counselor, two instructional specialists, and two administrators, for a total of 32 professional staff members. Of the 32 professional staff members, 15 participated in the study, one man and 14 women. There were seven Hispanic and eight White participants ranging in age from 35 to 71 years with a median tenure of 7 years. The school district, campus, and each participant received pseudonyms to ensure their anonymity (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1
Participant Demographic Information

Participant	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Number of years taught at CES	Position
Mario	55	M	Hispanic	11 years	Lead Bilingual Pre-Kindergarten
Kelly	44	F	White	12 years	Lead Music
Maria	43	F	Hispanic	7 years	Lead 4th and 5th grade
					Math/Science/Social Studies/Bilingual
Jasmine	53	F	Hispanic	12 years	Lead 4th and 5th grade
					ELAR/Bilingual
Jennifer	55	F	White	7 years	Lead 2nd grade
Kim	42	F	White	4 years	Lead 3rd grade
Lana	45	F	Hispanic	7 years	Lead Bilingual Kindergarten
Rosie	38	F	Hispanic	6 years	Kindergarten
Veronica	35	F	Hispanic	6 years	2nd grade
Becky	50	F	White	13 years	All grades P.E.
Angelica	45	F	Hispanic	6 years	2nd grade
Karen	55	F	White	6 years	Kindergarten
Carol	68	F	White	10 years	All grades SPED
Melissa	71	F	White	9 years	Principal
Joy	35	F	White	7 years	Assistant Principal

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

A detailed investigation of the teachers' perceptions of why they chose to stay at CES followed the receipt of Baylor University IRB and school district IRB approval for this study. Next, there were letters of introduction sent via e-mail to the staff members invited to participate; all who accepted received confidentiality agreements. Data collection occurred via a thorough literature review, interviews, and a focus group discussion. Each semistructured interview with seven lead teachers lasted between 30 and

45 minutes. The second data collection method was a focus group discussion with six teachers having various backgrounds and years of experience. The focus group lasted approximately 60 minutes. Last, there were two campus administrators interviewed with a semistructured interview protocol, and these interviews lasted approximately 60 minutes.

Based on the research questions, the interview questions were the means used to explore the participants' perceptions of the factors that contributed to job satisfaction and their decisions to remain at CES. The purpose of the interviews was to uncover the participants' experiences and perceptions of the campus during the specified academic years. All the participants shared their experiences, thoughts, and beliefs on the factors that caused them to stay at CES for 4 or more years, with suggestions on how to improve teacher retention in the school district.

There were two mock interviews conducted with the semistructured interview protocol before the study's implementation. The trial interviews provided the opportunity to work out errors from poorly written or executed questions before the actual interviews. Data collection occurred after work via Zoom conferencing software in environments free from distraction and conducive to recording. The interviews and the focus group session occurred between October and November of 2020. The data underwent audio-recording, video-recording, transcription, deidentification, and input into the qualitative analysis software NVivo 2020. Member checks were means to ensure the accuracy of participants' perceptions in the interviews.

After each lead teacher interview, the interview transcript underwent input into the NVivo 2020 software program and iterative analysis commenced. The iterative

analysis process consisted of reading each transcript line by line several times to deduce meaning and understand the participants' lived experiences and perceptions. A priori codes from Herzberg's two-factor theory (Herzberg et al., 1959) allowed for classification of the participants' responses according to their most-aligned codes. In this case study, the co-occurring responses underwent placement into more than one code when applicable. Formulation of the initial lead teacher interview codes and new interview questions were means to explicate the focus group discussion with the classroom teachers. Finally, this process occurred again after coding the focus group data to inform the administrators' interviews. This cumulative process enabled the development of strong overall results for the whole campus.

Case Study Results

Each emerging theme underwent analysis to understand its connection to Herzberg's two-factor theory (Herzberg et al., 1959) and validate the results of teachers' perceptions of the job satisfaction factors in their decisions to remain at CES. Herzberg's theory suggests that hygiene factors, such as company policies, supervisor quality, salary, coworker relations, and working conditions, do not motivate employees; however, their presence minimizes dissatisfaction. Motivating factors related to the job, such as the work itself, recognition, responsibility, and advancement, can produce satisfaction, as employees fulfill their needs for meaning and personal growth (Syptak et al., 1999). Herzberg postulated that after attending to the hygiene factors, employers should focus on creating motivating factors to promote continued job satisfaction and productivity.

Figure 4.1 is an interpretation of Herzberg's original theory of workplace motivation and teachers' workplace motivation.

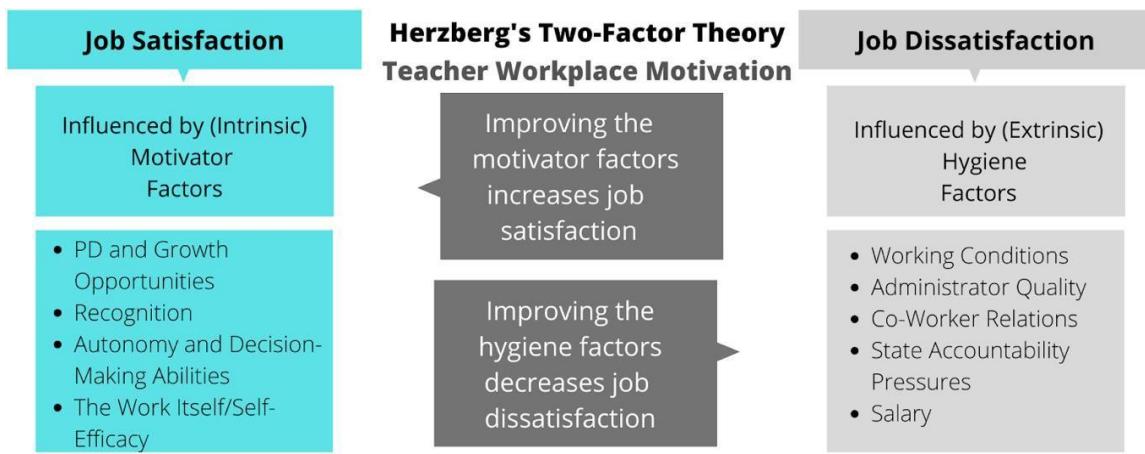


Figure 4.1. *Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory Related to Teacher Workplace Motivation*

There were multiple facets of Herzberg's theory analyzed to answer Research Questions 1 and 2 to answer Research Question 3: "Which of these factors correlate the most with job satisfaction and retention?" This study presents only the most frequented codes from the data as part of this case study's results. The following are the factors of the theoretical framework addressed in order of frequency: administrator quality, the work itself/teacher self-efficacy, coworker relations, and autonomy and decision-making abilities. Table 4.2 presents the combined participant responses and codes from the data analysis.

Table 4.2
Participant Responses and Codes

Herzberg's factors (a priori codes)	Participant responses
Flexible leaders/administrator	Quality (extrinsic/hygiene) Comfortable with administrators Happy with my boss Principal invested in me Understanding administrators Supportive principal

(continued)

Herzberg's factors (a priori codes)	Participant responses
Flexible leaders/administrator	Encouraging administrators Supports teacher growth Fair leaders Administrators listen Respectful and welcoming leaders Open-door policy with administrators Allows for teacher input on decisions Good instructional feedback
The work itself/self-efficacy (intrinsic motivator)	My calling/passion/ministry Feel needed Love what I do/love my students and families Good teacher Love when the students understand what I have taught/student growth Making a difference Feel good about myself Connection to students and families Love the grade/subject that I teach Believe all students can excel Part of this school community
Coworker relations (extrinsic hygiene)	Everyone gets along Supportive of each other Second home/one big family Great teammates Teachers have each other's backs All help each other out We all belong Collectively work together toward campus goals Friends, not just co-workers
Autonomy and decision-making ability (intrinsic/motivator)	Teachers have a voice All perspectives are heard Feel comfortable sharing ideas Feel heard, even when changes can't be made Flexibility Opinions matter In charge of my own students and classroom Trusted to make decisions on my own Teachers' ideas are implemented

Note. The table represents the response and themes derived from Herzberg's two-factor theory as deducted from lead teacher interviews and teacher focus group discussion for this study.

Table 4.3 presents the research results with an outline of the emerging theme and participant responses in the order of data collection (i.e., lead teachers, teachers, and administrators, where applicable).

Table 4.3
Frequency Distribution of A Priori Codes

Emerging theme	Overall total	Lead teachers	Teachers	Administrators
School leadership (H)	72	40	15	17
The work itself/self-efficacy (M)	31	26	5	0
Autonomy and decision-making (M)	30	21	2	7
Coworker relations (H)	29	15	9	5
Professional development and growth (M)	23	19	2	2
Working conditions (H)	13	8	4	1
Salary (H)	6	6	0	0
State accountability (H)	0	0	0	0

Note. (H) = hygiene (extrinsic) factors, (M) = motivator (intrinsic) factors.

Theme 1: Administrator Quality

The participants indicated that administrator support, a hygiene (extrinsic) factor, contributed to their decisions to stay at CES. Administrator support was the most frequently coded theme across all three participant groups. The lead teachers cited good school leaders as a reason for staying at their campus a total of 40 times across the study; teachers listed good school leaders 15 times across the study. The administrators' answers underwent coding 17 times, as they mentioned the practices they used to encourage teacher retention at their campus.

Lead teachers. In the first open-ended interview question, the lead teachers discussed why they chose to stay at CES for as long as they had. Four of seven (57%)

participants responded that they stayed because of their administrators. The lead teachers mentioned the following administrator attributes during their interviews: (a) invested in their staff, (b) make you feel comfortable, (c) positive, (d) supportive, (e) responsive, (f) allows teachers' voices to be heard, (g) puts family first, (f) works with staff to problem-solve, and (g) provides resources and training when needed.

Jennifer listed a principal invested in her who cares about her as her top reason for staying at CES. She said,

It all came down to a boss because I knew she had my back. I had her 100%, total respect, [and] to me that is everything. And you can handle behavior issues, you can handle all kinds of things as long as you've got that.

Jennifer's statement that "it all came down to a boss" indicated that she placed a high value on this extrinsic factor.

Jasmine responded that she stayed at the school because of her administrators and how comfortable they made her feel. She stated, "Well, it's always been the administration. I've always been comfortable with my administrators, and I've never really had a problem. So, I felt very comfortable, and I've always stayed." Jasmine's quote indicated that she acknowledged administrator quality as an essential aspect but that, unlike Jennifer, she placed more value in feeling comfortable with her administrator. Jasmine's and Jennifer's responses suggest that administrator support has multiple facets and that each participant valued different leadership aspects.

In each of the lead teacher interviews, if participants did not lead by stating that the administrator was the most significant influence on their decision to stay at the campus, they were to discuss administrator quality. The participants described if their campus administrators' role contributed to their decisions to stay at CES. Lana mentioned

that she appreciated the principal's positivity, good listening skills, supportiveness, and responsiveness:

Our principal is super positive, very open. She listens, and she's always been a very good motivator. [She's] very positive and always listening to what we need and supportive in the sense that if she said, "Tell me what you need and I'll try to get it," she's very, very quick to answer. And so, I think that is very important, too. So, we like that. I feel blessed to have that support from her.

Lana later provided an example of how the principal considered her voice and choice:

For example, at the end of the last school year, back in June, she asked me if I wanted to move classrooms. She said, "What do you want? What do you need? Tell me, what would you like to do?" And she was open for me to decide what I wanted to do. And I said, "Yeah, I want to change classes." So, that is good that we feel acknowledged and know [that] they understand our needs. That was important to me, having that autonomy in that aspect; it wasn't too strict.

Lana did not initially mention administrator support as a top reason for staying; however, her responses indicated that it was an important factor. Lana's response contributed to describing the role of a supportive principal.

Like many other participants in the study, Maria emphasized that the administrators prioritized family and discussed the impact of such leadership on her decision to stay at CES. She recalled that when she first arrived at the campus, she had a child in elementary school and two children in high school. She reported that the administrators provided her with the flexibility she needed to attend to her children, saying,

The principal really made it a point to tell everybody, not just me, but everybody, that she knew that family came first and that any time we had an emergency come up or if we had one of our own kids' programs [that] we wanted to go to that she would make everything possible for us to be able to maybe leave for an hour and come back.

While other participants noted the administrators' sentiments of family first, Maria's experience indicates family first while in crisis, which was a particularly

important factor in her decision to remain at CES. Maria's sentiment correlates with Jennifer's idea of principals "having your back." Overall, the teachers appreciated the administrators allowing them to tend to their families when needed, whether for a crisis or parental involvement.

Maria described another facet of administrative support. She noted that the administrators worked with her when she felt unhappy in her position and offered her a solution. Maria loved her school and her colleagues at CES; however, she had considered leaving the school for a position in a different grade level. At that time, she taught a self-contained fourth-grade class and wanted to departmentalize by teaching one subject to achieve a more manageable workload. She looked into moving to a middle school to fulfill this need, but when the administrators heard about her dissatisfaction, they worked with her to ensure that she remained at the campus and felt happy in her role. Maria explained,

But what she did, what both administrators did for me, [was that] they said, "Look, we know that you want to change and [that] something needs to change for you to be happy." So they got with my co-teacher, a fourth-grade bilingual teacher, and they kind of sat us both down, and they said, "Hey, would you guys be willing to have one of you teach reading, writing, and social studies and the other one teach math and science? And of course, the other teacher was like, "Yes, I do not want to teach math anymore." And so, it just [was] kind of a blessing that [it] happened.

Maria's quote suggests that the administrators' openness and willingness to problem-solve with her when she felt dissatisfied impacted her decision to stay. Maria's example was one of the clearest indications of the administrators' support for changing a teacher's course. Maria might have sought to solve her dissatisfaction by leaving the campus entirely if the administrators had not supported her.

Mario, another lead teacher, discussed the administrators' willingness to provide the resources and professional development needed to become a stronger teacher. He said,

The administrators ask you, "What do you need?" If you need to go to a training session, you can go. You just have to say that you need to go to this training because you need this for your classroom, and they're going to let you go.

Like Maria, Mario indicated that the administrators attended to and promptly responded to his needs when asked.

Teachers. The teachers who participated in the focus group discussion answered similar questions as the lead teachers. The focus group commenced by encouraging anyone who felt comfortable to discuss why they had decided to stay at CES. Like the lead teachers, the teachers began by focusing on the administrative actions that contributed to their decision to stay. In addition to the administrator attributes indicated by the lead teachers, the teachers in the focus group highlighted: integrity, professional growth and leadership encouragement, and an open-door policy.

Like several lead teachers, Angelina reported that the administrators' family-first mentality was her main reason for staying at CES. She said that compared to her last campus, this was a refreshing change:

The administration was very flexible with the fact that I have two kids, and every time that I needed to leave for any reason, because of their school activities or personal activities, they were flexible with me. That makes a big difference.

Rosie agreed, saying the "administration is very supportive and understanding of family, and that's one thing we have; they are both very supportive." Karen said,

Yes. It's a family matter. They understand that we have lives, that we have a life outside of school and that we have kids and that we have things to attend and things to do and [that] the kids get sick. And that's a big part. They're very

understanding in that specific area.

The teachers mentioned the family-first mentality repeatedly throughout the study, indicating its importance in their decisions to remain at CES. Becky echoed the sentiments of some of the lead teachers of the supportive administrators and compared the leaders at CES to the others she had encountered in her 26 years of teaching at various schools throughout SISD. She said,

I've been in the district [for] 26 years, and I've worked in some pretty hostile environments. And I can say that [CES] has not had [hostile environments] like other places. I've worked under 11 principals now. That's a lot in 26 years, and so I can tell you that that makes all the difference in the world, a supportive environment.

Like lead teacher Jennifer, Becky indicated that she valued the supportive environment created by the campus leaders. Becky noted that she considered the school campus the best she had worked at in the district. The support she received was a difference-maker for her in staying at CES.

Carol, in particular, referenced the school leaders' integrity. She said that she admired the administrators at the campus because they refused to be "gossipy" or overly critical. Carol also noted the administrators' integrity by referencing their open-door policy: "If you need to talk, no matter what it is about, some conflict you have or whatever, they're there for you. And that's what I appreciate." Karen added to Carol's comment by mentioning that one of the principal's nonnegotiables was that she did not tolerate gossip. Karen explained, "Like everyone else has said, I've worked in environments where if you are not in the clique, then you're not in, and it's very, very stressful. We don't have that here." Karen and Carol, like lead teacher Jasmine, described how the campus administrators made them feel comfortable.

The participants then provided examples of how the administrators had supported them. Becky noted that teaching elementary physical education for 26 years enabled her to take on more responsibility and growth by assuming the role of the district's physical education (PE) coordinator. Becky noted that the position sometimes required her to leave work early to meet with other district PE teachers. She said, "In times past, it has been hard to get time to go to [the] meetings that I needed to go to with other administrators, or I wasn't allowed to go at all. But our campus administrators have been super supportive of my other professional needs. That's impressive." Rosie agreed with Becky that the school leaders encouraged professional growth and leadership skills and that the principal wanted all the teachers to succeed. Rosie said, "She is always having that talk with us, saying, 'What do you guys need from us to grow?' She wants us all to be successful, including the students." According to Becky and Rosie, growth opportunities were important components in their decisions to remain at the campus. As with lead teacher Mario, they felt as if their administrators helped them meet their needs and grow their abilities to teach and learn.

Administrators. During interviews, the campus administrators answered open-ended questions about teacher retention at their campus. The administrator described why she thought that the participating teachers had remained at the campus for as long as they had. The administrators showed the attributes the teachers had described and discussed the themes presented in the following sections, such as decision-making.

Melissa, the campus principal, recalled a meeting where the assistant superintendent of human resources said that a school's leader indicates teacher retention.

She said at the time, "No, that's not it." However, the more she thought about it, the more she believed that the school administrators are the top reason teachers stay at campuses.

Melissa explained that she had worked hard during her tenure at the campus to create a caring and family-like atmosphere where everyone felt valued. She said,

I tried to take care of the teachers. If they needed to be off for something, I let them off. If they needed to be gone for a little while to handle a problem with their children and come back, I did that because I needed them here teaching.

Melissa's quote aligns with what the lead and classroom teachers expressed about the campus administrators always putting family first.

Melissa then discussed her efforts to grow teachers into leaders by working side-by-side with them. She also tried to grow them as leaders by including them as much as possible in campus decision-making. With the open-door-policy mentioned by the teachers, Melissa allowed anyone to meet with her about anything at any time. She recalled a time when she worked for a principal who was a dictator and said,

She just made life miserable for everyone, and I swore that if I ever had an opportunity in a principal position [that] I would not treat people that way. And that's been my goal ever since. You know, you've got to turn around, and you've got to have them behind you. You don't want to turn around and not have a team behind you. So, you just have to get in there and do everything with them.

Melissa's quote aligned with the teachers' comments about feeling supported by their administrators.

Melissa noted that she had high expectations for the teachers but always tried to have fun. She knew that school leaders sometimes use their authority to write teachers up for every little thing they do wrong, but that was not her style. She gave an example of lesson plan expectations to illustrate this point:

Some principals wouldn't allow teachers to go home if their lesson plans weren't done by five o'clock on a Friday. You know, [as for] me, I need a good lesson

plan, and if somebody need[s] to take a week to get it done, as long as it's done by Monday at eight o'clock, I [am] fine with that.

Melissa also mentioned that she tried to shield the teachers when she felt that the district leaders overstepped their boundaries. She said, "A lot of times the district said, 'Oh, they have to do this, this, this.' If I didn't feel like it was really necessary, I didn't make them do it." The teachers did not mention this particular aspect of leadership; however, they might not have understood the extent to which the administrators protected them from district-related mandates. Yet, overall, Melissa's quote aligned with both sets of teachers who described feeling supported by their administrators.

Joy, the assistant principal, responded by first recognizing the work Melissa had done to create a family-like environment for the teachers. She elaborated by stating, "It's not an 'I gotcha' atmosphere, where I'm going to write you up. It's an 'I got you' atmosphere, where I have your back, and we are in this together, and we're a family." Joy's statement aligned with lead teacher Jennifer's feeling of the campus administrators "having her back," a quality that contributed to her decision to stay at CES.

Joy noted that administrators who work alongside and encourage teachers to be leaders impact teacher retention; the lead teachers and focus group teachers also mentioned these qualities. Joy said,

We really help with tutoring and with student achievement, too, [so] it's not all on the teachers. So, we're in there. We're doing tutoring groups, and the teachers see that we're in there, and we're in the weeds with them.

Joy's statement aligned with Melissa's statement when she mentioned how they "get in there and do everything with [the teachers]" to support the teachers and make them feel like members of a team.

The teacher participants mentioned multiple times that the administrators always put family first. When asked about the family-first mantra echoed by the lead and classroom teachers, Melissa stated, “This job is hard enough, but you’re [also] trying to take care of your kids and husband and job and everything else we have. We have to work to make it easier for the teachers.” Joy mentioned that the mantra had a personal significance. She noted that she had started working at the campus right before getting married. She had two children while working at the campus. She said,

I want to do for my teachers what I want done for me because my family comes first. And having young children and knowing that if the daycare calls and they’re sick, I can go take care of them. And so it’s just like that golden rule: I want to do unto others as I want done to myself. So, I think that’s where it comes from.

Joy treated others as she wanted to be treated herself; this has contributed to the school, as the teachers described the feeling of family as a top reason for staying at the campus.

Overall, the participants in all three groups indicated that administrator quality was the most crucial aspect of teacher retention. The lead teachers mentioned the aspects of quality administration more frequently than the other two participant groups. Each group member described the leadership aspects the most important to them and contributed to a list of the administrator attributes that teachers find the most valuable. Administrator quality was an essential factor because the administrators impacted so many aspects of the job; it was challenging to differentiate where leadership stopped and other factors began.

Theme 2: The Work Itself/Self-Efficacy

The second most common theme was the work itself/self-efficacy, a motivator (intrinsic) factor. The lead teachers described work-related enjoyment or job 26 times,

and the classroom teachers mentioned these factors five times. Herzberg discussed “the work itself” as a factor of job satisfaction (Herzberg et al., 1959). However, this study showed that the teachers often correlated teaching ability with student growth; this caused them feel that the work itself was an essential factor. In teaching, teaching ability and student growth often exist side-by-side. Thus, in this research, the work itself and self-efficacy were paired components.

Lead teachers. During the lead teachers’ interviews, the work itself and self-efficacy emerged as the second most-frequent theme in the study. Many and repeated responses of the lead teacher became subthemes correlated with the work itself/self-efficacy theme: (a) my passion/calling/ministry, (b) love the students/my work/what I do, (c) love when my students learn, (d) making a difference, (e) feel good about myself, and believe all students can excel.

Jennifer expressed her passion for her work and her ability to teach. She said that she felt that teaching was social work, her “work and witness,” where she felt needed. She mentioned that she felt more needed at CES because of its low socioeconomic status. She said, “I just know that I’m needed more in a school like this and [that] I can make a bigger difference in a school like this than if I went to a higher socioeconomic district with more affluent families and kids.” She noted that teaching was her way of helping and, she enjoyed helping the students who needed it the most. Jennifer said,

What I really want to convey is that every day I tell myself, “I’m going to teach these kids, I’m going to make a difference.” That’s my whole goal. That’s why I’m here. I’m not here for the district. I’m not here for the State of Texas. I’m here because it’s my passion, and I love the kids, and I love it when they understand things. I’m not here for test scores; I’m not here for anything. I’m here for that connection with the kids and to get them as far as I can get them. I just want to make sure that’s understood.

Like most teachers, Jennifer held the work itself in high regard and believed in her efficacy to help her students.

Kelly had similar responses to Jennifer: She felt that teaching was her calling in life. She said that her calling to teach was partly why she had never considered transferring to another school or leaving the district. Kelly admitted that teaching the school presented additional and more challenging work but that she felt it was her ministry:

I guess to me, I feel like a lot of times, people might pass over students from this socioeconomic background or from these racial ethnicities, [or] different things like that. But I think [that] every kid deserves the opportunity to learn. And I think that every kid not only deserves the opportunity to learn, but has the ability to excel when given the same chances as other people. So, I'm trying to provide those same experiences and chances that they might get at other places.

Although Kelly felt that she had to work harder to stay at a campus such as CES, she also found teaching low-income, minority students highly rewarding. Her excellent work for her students indicated her efficacy, which, in turn, contributed to her decision to stay.

Three of the four (75%) bilingual lead teachers indicated helping and working with the Hispanic students and families in their school as part of their reason for staying at CES. Maria personally invested in helping her bilingual students and Spanish-speaking families because she said they reminded her of her upbringing. She remarked, “I feel like I am serving the population that was like me when I was their age. That is what I really like about this school. I just feel like I am important to them.” Her relationships and the good that she affected with her work (i.e., the work itself) positively contributed to her decision to remain.

Mario discussed his passion for working with Hispanic students and their families. He confirmed that his students and their families were his top reason for staying at CES. Mario stated,

It is very nice talk[ing] to the parents and feel[ing] like [I'm] at home because most of them talk to me in Spanish. I think that most of it is that I feel very good at the end of each year see[ing] the growth of the children and how I [have] made connections with those families. Also, sometimes they ask me for things outside of school, like, "Can you help me fill out this paperwork that I have for Social Security or for a doctor?" For that kind of stuff. It feels very good, like you are part of that growth in the community.

Like Maria, Mario's relationships with his parents, even outside the school building walls, contributed to his decision to stay at the campus. Mario noted that helping the students and knowing that they rely on him had a lot of significance.

The lead teachers discussed their beliefs in their teaching abilities by making comments such as, "I have always been told that I am a rock-solid teacher and that I do a great job," and, "I am very, very good at teaching reading." Other participants offered statements such as, "I love the grade level that I teach, and I feel really, really comfortable teaching this grade level. So, I feel confident," and "I think that when I am given a student with needs, such as a behavioral student, it is because I am doing nice work and they appreciate me." Up to this point, the participants had mainly described teacher self-efficacy in their relationships with their students and families, which was an interesting discovery. Teachers' primary job is, of course, to educate. The findings from this study indicate that teachers' central beliefs in their abilities exist not just in the ability to teach; even more importantly, they believe in their ability to build and maintain relationships with their students and their families.

In line with responses such as “I make a difference,” Kim said, “When I realized that I could make a difference, it made the difference in me.” She recalled a time when she was 5 minutes late to work, and her students asked her where she was when she arrived at the classroom. She said that the students worried about her when she was not there. Although she felt like she had good teaching ability, she knew that her students’ worry indicated that she had made a difference where it mattered most: in their lives and hearts.

Teachers. The teachers in the focus group did not mention the work itself and self-efficacy as much as the lead teachers; however, they did provide insight into how they felt about their work. Becky said, “These kids at [CES] are the best kids. That really makes a difference.” Karen stated,

I love the kids here. The kids are very receptive, they really want to learn, and they hear everything you say, and their parents are interested in knowing what we’re teaching, and they really listen to you. They really, really want to hear what you have to say.

Angelina remarked,

We all love what we do. We love the students. I don’t think you could survive if you don’t really have a calling for children. Our purpose, why we choose to be teachers, [it] is [that] we like it. We like what we do.

The teachers’ sentiments aligned with lead teachers’ responses, as they indicated that they remained in their positions because they loved their students and jobs.

All the participants identified the work itself/self-efficacy as a significant reason for remaining in their positions. The lead teachers mentioned the work itself/self-efficacy significantly more than the administrators and the focus group teachers. Overall, the teachers felt that their jobs were “a calling.” They believed in their abilities to work with

the subset of students in attendance at CES (low-income, minority). They did not want to leave their positions because they felt that they brought value to their students and their families.

Theme 3: Autonomy and Decision-Making Abilities

The third most-frequent theme in the study consisted of the motivator (intrinsic) factors of teacher autonomy and decision-making. The lead teachers cited autonomy and decision-making 21 times, the teachers cited them two times, and the administrators mentioned them seven times. Administrators decide how much teacher autonomy and campus-wide decision-making to give to teachers. Thus, several responses co-occurred under the administrator quality and autonomy and decision-making themes.

Lead teachers. During the lead teacher interviews, autonomy and decision-making often arose. If not brought up naturally, there was a request for teachers to describe if they felt the school leaders listened to and considered their voices and opinions in the school's decision-making processes. All seven (100%) of the lead teachers felt that the school leaders listened to their voices. They commented on the topic by stating, "I feel very comfortable at this campus because we do have a say so," and "Sometimes the administrators can't do what we want, but at least we can always speak our voice." Maria elaborated on how the administrators allowed the teachers to regularly exercise decision-making:

I feel like I'm heard at this school. Any idea or anything that I bring to the table, it's really looked at as important. And [the administrators] don't dismiss it. They look into it. They're like, "Oh, that's a great idea. Let's explore it." And so, they go with it. I feel like at another school they'd be like, "Yeah, we don't really have time." So, I think that [the administrators] listen to their teachers if they have something to bring to the table.

Maria indicated that the administrators decided to listen to the teachers and allow them to share in school-wide decision-making. The teachers also mentioned this theme when they discussed administrator quality and decision-making/autonomy.

Jennifer laughed at herself as she discussed her perspective on teacher voice and how the administrators allowed her to voice her opinion:

They know me, I am the devil's advocate. I'm going to be the one [who] says, "But what about this?" And they let me do that, and they know that I really do have the children's best [interests] at heart, and so I feel like my voice is heard.

She mentioned that she knew that the administrators could not always do anything about certain decisions because of district mandates. Still, even in these instances, she felt that the administrators heard the teachers' voices. She said, "They'll let me speak my piece, and then they'll say, 'OK, but this is what the district said.' And then we all say, 'OK, well, that is what we will do.'" Although the teachers knew that they could not always have the final say in campus decisions, they still valued that the administrators asked them to participate in the decision-making process.

Kelly described the ability to make decisions across the campus, even as a noncore content teacher. She never felt that she could not say something because she was a music teacher. She said, "I definitely feel like I have a voice across the campus as well. And that's been nice." According to Kelly, there is a campus environment supportive of respect and decision-making involvement. The participant described, "It's a very respectful environment in general, where everybody has the right to be heard, and everybody can speak for what they feel is important when it comes to different decisions across the campus." The teachers' statements indicate that the administrators had fashioned a campus environment conducive to hearing and valuing teachers' opinions

while making campus decisions. The teachers also suggested that the staff members have open relationships with one another.

Regarding autonomy within her classroom and instructional content, Kelly said,

It's a huge relief for me to be able to say, "This is what works well for this school" and to [have the ability to] pick the songs and not have somebody telling me what I have to do. That's a huge part of my reason for staying here. I'm allowed to make those choices in my room, and [the administrators] trust [me] to be able to do that. So, when I see something that's working, I'm allowed to push further into [it].

Specific to campus-wide decision-making, some teachers wanted the autonomy to make classroom decisions by themselves without micromanagement from administrators. Again, decision-making depends on the leadership style of the administrators.

Teachers. The classroom teachers described autonomy and decision-making in a similar way as the lead teachers. Carol said, "I feel like they hear our voice if we have a concern. Or, if we need something, they hear it, and they don't just hear it and let it drop, they do address it. So that's great." Rosie said, "We are very fortunate that we can voice how we feel or what we think." Veronica stated, "When the administrators say, 'Please let us know what you need,' they mean that even when it comes to listening to what we have to say." The teachers had similar sentiments as the lead teachers, indicating that administrators set the tone for how much autonomy and decision-making to allow the teachers.

Administrators. The campus administrators discussed how they incorporated teachers' voices and created opportunities for teachers to make decisions collectively. The administrators preferred when everyone got involved in making decisions and collaborated to find solutions to campus and grade-level problems.

When asked about involving teachers in campus decision-making, Melissa said that, depending on the circumstances, she sat down with all the grade-level staff members, posed the problem or question, and asked for feedback. She said, “We throw our ideas out, they throw theirs back out, and we compromise until we have what we think is going to work. Then we go home and sleep on it.” As the principal, she said that she had the responsibility of making the final decision but always made decisions by considering the teachers’ input.

Joy described the goal of raising teacher-leaders and said,

We really try to raise teacher-leaders. We include them in the decision-making processes, like if there’s something going wrong, we ask them for suggestions [for] how we can improve [it]. And it’s never a “No.” It’s always, “What can we do together to make this better?” And if something is not working, we stop because we don’t believe in doing something that’s not working. Let’s stop. Let’s regroup. Let’s brainstorm again and go at it another way.

Joy involved the teachers in decision-making processes and allowed them to make mistakes and try again; this aligned with the lead teachers’ and focus group teachers’ indications that they felt heard. Joy communicated to the teachers that she would never just reply, “No.” She showed them that she considered their opinions and wanted to work with them to find solutions.

On the topic of teacher autonomy, Joy said that she and the principal always asked teachers, “What is the best way to do this?” Using teachers’ responses, they would reevaluate the situation. She supported teachers and encouraged them to share their opinions and make choices in their roles. She and the administrator would never say, “This is our plan, and this is what we are doing”; they would say, “Let’s create this together.” Joy’s sentiment aligned with the data collected from the lead and classroom teachers, who said they felt supported and that their opinions mattered.

Across all the groups, the participants considered decision-making/autonomy a contributing factor in their decisions to remain at their campus. The lead teachers mentioned factors relating to decision-making and autonomy more than the other two groups' participants. Overall, the participants expressed the need to hear and consider teachers' voices when making major campus decisions. Decision-making was a term discussed more when considering campus-wide decisions. In contrast, the participants mentioned autonomy more when discussing how the administrators trusted them to do what was best for the students, both pedagogically and instructionally. In all, the teachers felt that the administrators involved them in the decision-making process and trusted them to do what was best for their students, which significantly contributed to their decisions to stay at CES.

Theme 4: Coworker Relations

The teachers' professional and social relationships were essential factors in teacher retention at CES. All the participants discussed having positive relationships with their coworkers. The theme of coworker relationships was the fourth most frequent theme, as lead teachers cited it 15 times, focus group teachers cited it nine times, and the administrators cited it five times. The participants of all three groups mentioned "family" or "second home." The participants' relationships with their coworkers contributed to the workplace's family feel. The following sections present the participants' comments.

Lead teachers. All (100%) of the lead teachers mentioned the importance of their teammates and coworkers. The lead teachers' responses for the theme of coworker

relations focused on (a) everyone gets along, (b) supportive of each other, and (c) we all help each other.

Kim responded that her coworkers were her top reason for staying at the campus. She said,

I got to [CES], and I stayed because of my team members. I've been on three different levels, so I've got friends downstairs and upstairs, and we depend on each other because our job is hard. But if it wasn't for them, I might have tried to switch to an easier school. Being able to build those relationships, work together, plan together, and then depend on each other when things get tough have been very important to me.

Although all the teachers mentioned some aspect of coworker relations when discussing remaining at CES, Kim particularly focused on the importance of coworkers in her decision to stay. She noted that did not want to let down or disappoint her coworkers, showing the true bond and accountability that she shared with her colleagues.

Mario also described the collective responsibility he felt at the campus:

The goals that we set, they are not only for me, they're goals for the school also. I feel part of that process, like this is my challenge, and I want to try to get through this with these students and teachers. I'm working to help the school reach the goals that we have set.

Similarly, Kelly felt that the teachers at the campus helped each other out when needed and that there was never a sense of interference. She said, "It's not like, 'Well, that's another teacher's student, so I'm not going to mess with her kid.' No, if you see a kid having an issue, you're going to talk with them, you know?" She felt that the school had a collaborative nature and that the teachers and administrators often used the mantra, "We are a team." She felt that there was always someone to help her when she needed it.

Like Kelly, Jennifer also valued workplace collaboration and teamwork at the school. She said that she adored her teammates, and they worked well together. She knew

that everyone at the school “ha[d] each other’s backs” and that they would all pull together to help each other. She noted,

If we all help each other and all work together and can all depend on each other, we can withstand anything. Here, it’s just everybody helping everybody out because it takes a village to do everything. So, yeah. That is really important to me.

The participants felt that they worked well together as a team, both among grade levels and as a whole campus.

Maria felt fortunate to have a good relationship with her team. She said that all her coworkers worked well together and could depend on each other. She noted that in addition to being great colleagues, they are friends who sometimes socialize after work. Maria said her coworker relationships significantly contributed to her decision to stay at the school. She said, “I just think that’s what really has helped me stay at [CES] these years. [It] is because I have a group that I get along really, really well with. My partner teacher and I are really close friends, too.”

Teachers. The teachers in the focus group made comments about their relationships in the school, such as, “This is like our second home,” “It is a really supportive group of teachers,” and “It feels comforting, and it feels like everyone wants you here.” Rosie noted that before she joined CES, she worked as a substitute teacher at all of the SISD campuses. When she felt ready for her first teaching job, she knew that CES was a good fit for her because “it felt so homey.” She said that all of the teachers got along well and the school felt like a second home.

Similarly, Karen said,

I’ve been [at SISD] for 20-something years. I’ve been at three schools, and then I was in a different district for a while [before] I came back here. I decided [that]

this place is like coming home. It is like our second home. So, when I'm driving to work, I feel like I'm just going to my second home.

Other participants also alluded to the family-like atmosphere indicated by Rosie and Karen. When discussing her teammates, Veronica's thoughts aligned with some of the lead teachers by saying she felt that all of the teachers and the administrators got along and worked well together. She described her team and said, "We plan every single week together, and sometimes, even before we plan, we talk for hours. I get along with everyone professionally." Clearly, coworker relationships were an important extrinsic factor for the participants.

Administrators. The administrators addressed if they felt their school environment conducive to strong interpersonal relations. These participants discussed the aspects of coworker relations, and the emergent themes were (a) interviewing for the "right-fit" teachers, (b) the small size of the school and grade-level teams, (c) friendships among teammates, and (d) having fun with and treating the staff.

Melissa discussed how she promoted coworker relationships among her staff. She said that she was a fan of the TRIBES safe environment program and conscious discipline training, both of which she provided to the students and the teachers. She said, "We created lifelong guidelines of how we were going to treat each other." She used the training sessions to inform teachers how to talk to students from trauma; in turn, the teachers learned how to speak to each other.

Melissa also discussed the benefit of having teachers from a grade level participate in interviews for vacancies in their grade level to hire good fits for their team. She said, "We have to have an agreement. 'Do we think this is a good fit or not?' And we

listen to that.” Although not explicitly mentioned by the teachers, including teachers in hiring decisions are an essential aspect of providing decision-making opportunities and making them feel heard and considered.

Joy thought that the school’s small size contributed to the close relationships. Only three teachers per grade level contributed to maintaining the intimate and “family-like” atmosphere referred to by the participating teachers. Joy also recognized the amazing teams on the campus. She said, “We do have some really, really rock-solid teams, like our fourth and fifth grade and our first grade. They’re not only teammates; they’re friends. They go to dinner and they’re family and that makes a difference.” Joy’s statement was noteworthy because, as an administrator, Melissa also recognized the importance of coworker relations in the workplace.

When discussing coworker relations, Joy added,

One more thing that we haven’t talked about that I think is really important is that we laugh a lot. And I think laughter brings us together. Working in [SISD] is hard. And if anyone says it is not, then they’re lying. And so, I think that you have to have a spirit of laughter, and it makes the days easier. And that has helped too, that we laugh a lot in success.

Melissa noted that having fun along the way was another aspect of creating an environment conducive to strong coworker relationships. She worked hard to incorporate jeans days for the teachers and gave them treats and food to have fun. She recalled,

There was one particular chocolate cake the whole staff loved, and I would get it when I could. If I could afford it in the school budget, I would pay for it there, or, if not, I would go get it on my own. So, it’s just little things all along the way.

Although the participating teachers did not mention the small treats, it was an important part of creating the family-like environment mentioned throughout the study.

In summary, coworker relationships significantly contributed to the teachers' decisions to remain at CES. All participants described the collaborative atmosphere, teamwork, congeniality among teammates, and the family-like atmosphere at CES. The lead teachers mentioned the factors of coworker relations more than the participants in the other two groups. Still, participants in each group discussed the importance of enjoying their workplace and feeling as if the school was a "second home."

Summary

Chapter Four presented the findings from this qualitative single case study on teacher retention at CES. The chapter presented findings from the lead teacher interviews, a teacher focus group discussion, administrator interviews, and the emergent based on the study's theoretical framework. All the teachers interviewed expressed satisfaction with CES and shared the factors in their decisions to remain at the campus.

A priori coding and analysis based on Herzberg's two-factor theory (Herzberg et al., 1959) were the means used to analyze the results. The four emergent themes, in order of frequency, were: (a) administrator quality, (b) the work itself/teacher self-efficacy, (c) autonomy and decision-making abilities, and (d) coworker relationships. All the participants indicated the importance of the four factors in their decisions to remain at CES. The participants referenced other themes from Herzberg's theory throughout the interviews and focus group discussion, such as professional development and growth opportunities and salary; however, they did not bring up these themes frequently enough to indicate that they were factors important to teacher retention. The final chapter focuses on the themes from the single case study interviews, focus group discussion, and the extensive literature review to suggest ways to strengthen teacher retention practices.

CHAPTER FIVE

Implications and Discussion

Teacher turnover in SISD has been a concern for several years. Over the 4 years from 2015–2016 through 2018–2019, SISD had a 24% teacher attrition rate. During that time, district leaders recruited and hired close to 1,000 teachers to replace those who had left. High teacher turnover presents financial and organizational burdens for a district and its campuses (Levy et al., 2012; Synar & Maiden, 2012). Most importantly, high teacher turnover harms student achievement (Boyd et al., 2005; Guin, 2004; Ronfeldt et al., 2013). There was a need to understand the crucial factors in teachers' decisions to remain in this high-attrition urban district. District leaders could use the information from this study to design teacher retention programs and practices.

The purpose of this study was to determine the factors that contributed to high teacher retention in one elementary school in an urban, high-attrition district in Central Texas to understand why its teachers stayed. Purposive sampling (Etikan et al., 2016) was the means used to focus on an elementary school with significantly higher teacher retention rates than the other schools in the district. This unique case study was a means to obtain information on teachers' perceptions of the job factors influential in their decisions to stay at their school despite the high attrition in the school's district. District leaders, administrators, and policymakers could use the results from this study to improve teacher retention practices. This study had one guiding research question: Why do teachers at an urban elementary school in Central Texas decide to stay when other

teachers within their district leave at high rates? Herzberg's two-factor theory provided the framework for the study's subquestions:

1. How do extrinsic (hygiene) factors contribute to teachers' decisions to stay in urban schools?
2. How do intrinsic (motivators) factors contribute to teachers' decisions to stay in urban schools?
3. Which factors correlate the most with job satisfaction and retention?

Purposive sampling ensured a qualified sample for this a single case study of one elementary school with teacher retention rates significantly higher than the rest of the district. The study's inclusion criterion was employment at the case study campus during the 2015–2016 through 2018–2019 academic years. There were 15 participants in the study: seven lead teachers, six teachers, and two administrators.

Semistructured interviews and a focus group were the means to obtain the perspectives of the lead teachers, teachers, and administrators at CES. A semistructured interview protocol guided individual interviews with seven lead teachers to uncover their personal experiences and perceptions of what caused them to remain at the case study site despite the high attrition in the rest of the district. The interview data contributed to focus group discussion questions for further insight into the dominant responses and to clarify other responses. A focus group discussion occurred with six classroom teachers about the factors of their retention at CES. Last, the responses from the focus group and the lead teacher interviews led to questions for one principal and one assistant principal. A semistructured interview protocol was the means used to obtain their perceptions of the factors that they felt contributed to the teacher retention at their campus. The

administrators also answered several questions about how their leadership contributed to teacher retention.

All the interview and focus group transcripts underwent review line by line numerous times to deduce meaning. A priori coding derived from Herzberg's two-factor theory (Herzberg et al., 1959) commenced to classify the participants' responses according to the codes with which they most aligned. After a priori coding for each group of participants, categorization of the data occurred based on frequency to determine the most important factors for all the groups. Of all themes of Herzberg's two-factor theory, the top themes, in order of frequency, were: (a) administrator quality, (b) the work itself/teacher self-efficacy, (c) autonomy and decision-making abilities, and (d) coworker relations. This final chapter contains the conclusions, implications for practice, and recommendations for practice and research.

Discussion of the Findings

This section presents an interpretation of the results compared to the literature review and theoretical framework. The discussion indicates how the findings substantiate, confute, or enhance knowledge within this discipline.

Research Question 1: Extrinsic (Hygiene) Factors

The study's guiding research question was, "How do extrinsic (hygiene) factors contribute to teachers' decisions to stay in urban schools?" The two extrinsic (hygiene) factors that emerged most frequently during a priori coding were administrator quality and coworker relationships.

Factor 1: Administrator quality. Every participant emphasized administrator support as a reason for remaining at the case study site. Overall, administrator quality was the most important factor.

Collectively, the administrators were the most-referenced factor, whether directly or indirectly, during the interviews and the focus group discussion. Many participants noted that the administrators were their main reason for staying at the campus; for example, lead teacher Jasmine said, “Well, it’s always been the administration.” The participants also indirectly mentioned the school leaders when discussing other aspects of the theoretical framework. For example, when asked about her autonomy and decision-making abilities at the campus, an intrinsic motivator factor, lead teacher Jennifer said, “They’ll let me speak my piece.” She noted that the administrators allowed her to weigh in on campus decisions. Interestingly, the teachers rarely mentioned anything about the support they received from administrators in terms of academics. This omission indicates that the teachers considered relational aspects of administrator quality as more important than academic support.

According to Herzberg’s theory (Herzberg et al., 1959), good extrinsic factors must exist in the workplace before motivation factors can emerge. This study’s findings aligned with the theory, as the extrinsic factor of administrator quality was the most frequently mentioned—and, therefore, the most important—factor for teacher retention. This study suggests that there must be good quality administrators before motivation factors are possible. However, specific to teacher retention, the study showed that administrator quality affected all other aspects of the theory, whether extrinsic or intrinsic (except for the work itself/self-efficacy). Unlike Herzberg, who relied on studying

workplace dynamics in factories with supervisors, teaching is a relational profession that requires good leaders. Good leaders set the tone for all the other hygiene and motivation factors.

The findings aligned with the research identifying school leadership quality as one of the most critical predictors of teacher retention (Boyd et al., 2011; Corbell et al., 2010; Grissom, 2011; Ladd, 2011; Thibodeaux et al., 2015). Research shows the importance of good school leaders in retaining high-quality teachers, especially in urban schools (Grissom, 2011). This study showed that effective leaders promote student success indirectly by creating school environments conducive to learning. Effective principals build and maintain stable teacher workforces, whereas ineffective principals often lose teachers. According to Darling-Hammond and Sykes (2003), “Great school leaders create nurturing environments in which accomplished teaching can flourish and grow” (p. 13); this is a statement applicable to the CES administrators.

This study not only aligned with the literature on the impact of quality administrators on teacher retention but contributed to the research by indicating the attributes of a good administrator. The findings showed that good administrators invest in their staff, make teachers feel comfortable, remain positive, support staff, are responsive, consider teachers’ voices, put family first, work with staff to problem-solve, and provide resources and training, when needed. There has been mainly quantitative research on administrator quality and teacher retention, which has not provided the qualities of a strong administrator. The leadership attributes uncovered in this study will enable future researchers, district leaders, and administrators to understand the qualities that teachers feel administrators must possess to retain teachers on their campuses.

Factor 2: Coworker relations. The second most frequent extrinsic (hygiene) factor in the study was coworker relations, which was the fourth most important factor for teacher retention at CES. All the teacher participants mentioned aspects of teamwork at the case study campus, describing an overall sense that CES was their “second home.” For example, teacher Karen said, “When I am driving to work, I feel like I’m just going to my second home.” Overall, the teachers felt that everyone worked together for the good of the school and promoted the students’ success. All the teachers mentioned collaborating and working well with their grade-level teammates and other team members and teachers across the school. Lead teacher Kim said,

I got to [CES], and I stayed because of my team members. I’ve been on three different levels, so I’ve got friends downstairs and upstairs, and we depend on each other because our job is hard. But if it wasn’t for them, I might have tried to switch to an easier school. Being able to build those relationships, work together, plan together and then depend on each other when things get tough has been very important to me.

This finding aligned with Herzberg’s theory (Herzberg et al., 1959), which indicates that employees feel satisfied with their jobs when they have healthy, amiable, and appropriate relationships with their colleagues.

This finding also aligned with the research indicating that part of a teacher’s satisfaction is working and planning with other teachers and colleagues and socializing during lunch breaks and meetings. Allensworth et al. (2009) stated, “Teachers are more likely to stay in schools where they respect their colleagues and feel that there is a climate of collective responsibility and innovation in the school” (p. 25). According to Basford and Offermann (2012), “Coworkers can greatly affect organizational climate, helping to build energized, productive workplaces or to destroy them” (p. 809). Positive coworker relationships enable individuals to satisfy their functional and psychological needs and

commitment to their organization. This study contributed to the research because there have been no studies on coworker relations and teacher retention in a K-12 setting.

Research Question 1 produced findings that provided insight into the extrinsic factors that mattered most to the teachers in their decisions to stay at their campus: administrator quality and coworker relations. Consistent with the research (Grissom, 2011), administrator quality was one of the most important components of teacher working conditions and a strong indicator of teacher job satisfaction and turnover probability. In particular, the leadership attributes found in this study are qualities significant for future research on teacher retention, especially in urban, low-income, high-minority schools. Similarly, research indicates that coworker relationships are an important means of combating burnout because they enable employees to value and enjoy their work, resulting in improved retention (Fernet, 2010). Overall, both administrator quality and coworker relations are essential aspects that district leaders should consider to retain teachers in their school districts.

Research Question 2: Intrinsic (Motivators) Factors

The study's second research question was, "How do intrinsic (hygiene) factors contribute to teachers' decisions to stay in urban schools?" The two intrinsic (hygiene) factors that emerged most frequently during the a priori coding were the work itself/self-efficacy and autonomy and decision-making.

Factor 1: The work itself/self-efficacy. Most of the teachers in this study mentioned the work itself or some aspect of how they felt about their teaching abilities in this urban school as reasons for staying. These intrinsic (motivators) factors were the

second most important factors overall and the first most important intrinsic (motivators) factors to teacher retention. For example, Jennifer said,

I just know that I'm needed more in a school like this and [that] I can make a bigger difference in a school like this than I could if I went to a higher socioeconomic district [where there are] more affluent families and kids.

This finding aligned with the notion that teachers stay in education because they enjoy their work and believe in their abilities to make a difference in their students' lives.

These findings aligned with the research that found that higher levels of teacher self-efficacy related to significantly higher job satisfaction levels (Edinger & Edinger, 2018). This finding also showed that teachers who enjoy what they do and believe that they do it well are more likely to remain in the profession (Boyd et al., 2005, 2008; Hanushek et al., 2004). Herzberg's two-factor theory (Herzberg et al., 1959) focuses on "the work itself" as a factor of job motivation. However, this study showed that teachers frequently correlated their teaching ability and their students' growth, which caused them to feel that "the work itself" was an essential factor. The finding was significant because utilization of "the work itself" as a factor for this study showed that "the work" that teachers do differs from the work done in other professions. Teachers' work is not to create an inanimate object, as was factory workers' role in Herzberg's study; instead, teachers work with children. Teachers do relational work; therefore, it is not entirely intrinsic work. The relational nature of teachers' work affected the theory's outcome in this case study and is, perhaps, a shortcoming of Herzberg's two-factor theory.

Factor 2: Autonomy and decision-making. Autonomy and decision-making were the third most important teacher retention factors in the study and the second most important intrinsic (motivators) factors to teacher retention. The participating teachers

indicated that their abilities to make decisions for the campus and have the autonomy to make classroom and curriculum decisions for their students were essential factors in their decisions to stay at CES. Every teacher commented that the administrators solicited their feedback in campus decision-making. For example, Maria said,

I feel like I'm heard at this school. Any idea or anything that I bring to the table, it's really looked at as important. And they don't dismiss it. They look into it. They're like, "Oh, that's a great idea. Let's explore it." And so, they go with it. I feel like at another school they'd be like, "Yeah, we don't really have time." So, I think that they listen to their teachers if they have something to bring to the table.

The research and this study indicated that school administrators must "afford teachers the flexibility and opportunity to shape schools into the kinds of workplaces" to satisfy and retain teachers (Kemper, 2017, p. 60).

When asked about autonomy, the teachers felt that they could make decisions within their grade levels and classrooms to best meet their students' needs; their administrators did not dictate their choices. For instance, Kelly said,

It's a huge relief for me to be able to say, "This is what works well for this school." And to pick the songs and not have somebody telling me what I have to do. That's a huge part of my reason for staying here. I'm allowed to make those choices in my room and trusted to be able to do that. So, when I see something that's working, you know, I'm allowed to push further into that.

This finding aligned with research indicating that teachers want the freedom to govern their pedagogical choices and use their professional judgment (Glazer, 2018).

Entrusting teachers to make the decisions they feel are most appropriate for their classrooms, whether disciplinary, instructional, or organizational, gives them ownership of their work and pride in the outcomes (Gwaltney, 2012). Autonomy is significant in teachers' decisions to remain at a campus or district. According to Glazer (2018), teachers do not want complete freedom; however, they want to "govern their own

pedagogical choices [and] to use their own professional judgment” (p. 66). As indicated, the amount of freedom allowed by campus administrators reflects the factors of autonomy and decision-making. Although autonomy and decision-making are motivator factors in Herzberg’s theory (Herzberg et al., 1959), the hygiene factor of administrator quality is needed to affect teacher retention.

Research Question 2 provided insight into the intrinsic factors that mattered the most to teachers in their decisions to stay at their campus: the work itself/self-efficacy and autonomy and decision-making. Campus and district leaders must understand teachers’ perceptions of the intrinsic factors contributing to workplace satisfaction and retention to promote and encourage teacher retention. Teachers often enter education for the work itself: teaching and learning alongside students. However, this study contributed to that claim and Herzberg’s theory. This study’s findings aligned with and contributed to the research on teacher autonomy and decision-making. In accordance with other studies, this study showed that teachers want to get involved in decision-making directly affecting their positions and campuses and to have the ability to make decisions about pedagogy for their students.

Research Question 3: Factors Most Related to Job Satisfaction and Retention

Similar to job satisfaction and retention, the participants’ responses indicated that administrator quality was the most important factor for job satisfaction and retention. Research indicates that administrator quality, a hygiene factor in Herzberg’s two-factor theory (Herzberg et al., 1959), is the most important factor of teacher retention (Boyd et al., 2011; Corbell et al., 2010; Grissom, 2011; Ladd, 2011; Thibodeaux et al., 2015). As indicated in Chapter 4, participants in all the groups mentioned administrator quality two

times more than any other factor across, suggesting that hygiene factors are important factors in teacher job satisfaction and retention. The work itself/self-efficacy and autonomy and decision-making were the next most important motivators; this indicates the importance of motivators but that they cannot exist without the hygiene factor of a quality administrator. The rest of the factors were a mix of motivators and hygiene factors, showing that all factors affected the teachers' job satisfaction and retention.

This study addressed the four most frequently stated factors. The participants infrequently mentioned the other hygiene factors; thus, the findings do present them in depth: (a) working conditions, such as building conditions, parental support, and resources; (b) state accountability; and (c) salary. The only motivating factor too infrequently mentioned to include in the study was professional development and growth opportunities. A review of the literature on teacher retention showed that all of these factors, except for accountability, contribute to teachers' decisions to stay in their positions. However, in this study, they did not hold as much importance as the four factors revealed in the findings. For example, the participants mentioned the importance of salary. However, since SISD provides pay competitive with other school districts in the area and because this was a study on teachers' decisions to stay at a particular campus rather than in the district, salary was not a primary factor in the teachers' decisions to remain at CES. Similarly, the teachers noted the importance of professional development and growth, and, according to research, these factors have value (Garcia & Weiss, 2019; Krasnoff, 2014; Lasagna, 2009). However, the primary aspect of training mentioned by the participants was an Apple grant awarded to the school that included teacher training.

Herzberg noted that employers must provide hygiene factors to avoid job dissatisfaction (Herzberg et al., 1959); however, employees consider motivating factors, such as the work itself, as more important. This study showed that administrator quality was the most critical factor in teacher retention in a low-income, high-minority urban school. Teachers can enter and stay in the profession for the work itself to make a difference in children's lives, but they could do that at any school. However, the teachers in this study remained at the campus because they received support from a high-quality administrator with the attributes listed in this study. The findings of this study show that quality administrators invest in their staff; make teachers feel comfortable; remain positive, supportive, and responsive; consider teachers' opinions; put family first; work with staff to problem-solve; and provides resources and training, when needed.

Implications for Practice

This study's findings suggest how to make changes at the campus and district level to retain teachers in urban, low-income schools. Administrators can create campus environments to nurture teachers and make them feel valued and welcomed. This research shows that campus leaders who invest in their teachers, make teachers feel comfortable, have positive dispositions, support teachers, remain responsive, consider teachers' opinions, put teachers' families first, work with teachers to problem-solve, and provide teachers with resources and training when needed create environments where teachers feel like they are part of a work family. Feeling like part of a work family could cause teachers to remain in their positions. Campus leaders must also hire teachers who are good at academia and have a passion for the work itself. Campus leaders must help teachers remember their "why" to provide continued encouragement to continue striving

for the work itself. This study also suggests the need to examine the aspects of a “quality administrator” to align with what teachers value in their administrators.

District-level administrators must hire principals for their campuses who possess the attributes indicated in this study. The findings suggest the need to hire campus leaders with more than the abilities or accolades on their professional resumes. It is important to find administrators who have superior leadership qualities and hearts for working with people.

Universities and other principal preparation programs should train principals during their coursework on the attributes that teachers find the most appealing in a school leader as concluded from this study. If perspective principals have a better understanding of which characteristics teacher value most in their principals, they can be proactive in ensuring they enter their leadership roles prioritizing these attributes. In addition, if aspiring principals understand, prior to entering the field, that creating conditions in which their staff members enjoy coming to work and feeling as if they are part of an extended family is a major key to retaining teachers, they are more likely to be successful with retaining teachers to their campuses.

Recommendations for Practice and Research

Based on the results from this study, the suggestions for future research are:

1. Empirical research and the findings indicate that principal leadership has a critical impact on teacher retention (Boyd et al., 2011; Grissom, 2011; Ladd, 2011). Administrators can indirectly impact student learning by creating environments where teachers feel supported, involved, and part of a work family (Grissom, 2011). School district leaders should hire school

administrators who embody the attributes of a quality administrator and provide professional development for the leadership attributes found in this study to new and existing school administrators.

2. Empirical research and the findings from this study indicate that teachers with strong self-efficacy who believe the work itself is one of the most critical aspects of the job can deal with challenging students and have a substantial commitment to teaching (Edinger & Edinger, 2018). Teacher self-efficacy is vital to teacher retention in urban, low-income, high-minority schools. Teacher self-efficacy also correlates with increased job satisfaction (Barni et al., 2019). The study showed that teacher self-efficacy is an essential factor in relational and academic aspects. As such, campus administrators should examine their processes to ensure they hire teachers who embody self-efficacy and commitment to teaching. Administrators should also continue to cultivate self-efficacy through teacher training to support teachers' practice (Edinger & Edinger, 2018).
3. Empirical research and the findings from this study indicate that good coworker relationships are fundamental to organizational effectiveness (Basford & Offermann, 2012). Therefore, administrators should focus on improving their employees' work experience. Administrators should design and incorporate interventions to teach and reward good coworker relationships into training at all levels, job expectations, and team building to increase desirable workplace outcomes.
4. Empirical research and the findings from this study indicate that decision-

making and autonomy are important retention factors (Glazer, 2018; Grant et al., 2020; Gwaltney, 2012; Kemper, 2017). Research and the findings from this study show that administrators should provide teachers with autonomy and decision-making according to their abilities and experience levels (Grant et al., 2020). Teachers seek involvement in decision-making even when they don't necessarily "get their way," as they just want to be part of the process and feel heard on the matters that impact their jobs. Therefore, school administrators should receive training on the degree of autonomy needed by teachers on their campuses with a framework, such as the GTA framework. (Grant et al., 2020). Frameworks such as the GTA could enable school administrators to measure teacher autonomy and decision-making over the academic year. Administrators should also involve teachers in campus-wide decision-making as often as possible.

5. This study was one of a few studies where the tenants of Herzberg's two-factor theory (Herzberg et al., 1959) provided the framework for researching teacher retention in urban schools. However, the findings differed slightly from the literature. This study showed that the extrinsic hygiene factor of administrator quality is the top reason why teachers stay in their positions; other scholars have found motivators as the most essential. However, since Herzberg's two-factor theory indicates that hygiene factors must exist for teachers to feel happy with motivators, this study's findings did not entirely differ from the theory. As such, researchers could conduct studies similar to this one with Herzberg's theory to delve into teachers' perceptions of the

differences between hygiene and motivating factors and their correlation with retention.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to determine the factors that contributed to high teacher retention in an elementary school in an urban high-attrition district to understand why the teachers stayed. There is extensive research on egregious teacher attrition. This was a unique study because it addressed to the lack of empirical literature on teacher retention in urban low-income, high minority schools. This study also contributed to the research because it was an in-depth qualitative study on why teachers stay in these types of schools rather than why they leave. Scholars have primarily approached teacher retention from a deficit approach, using quantitative measures, such as exit surveys after they have already left, to examine why teachers leave. However, this study had an asset-based approach, as interviews with teachers were means to learn why they stayed.

District and campus administrators could take a proactive approach and utilize this study's findings for retaining teachers in their districts.

This study contributed to research on administrator quality, indicating the attributes that teachers find the most important in a quality administrator. Campus administrators could use the findings to understand these essential administrator attributes to adjust their priorities. District administrators could use the results of this study to understand the attributes they should seek when hiring quality administrators and train current and new administrators to retain teachers.

Herzberg's two-factor theory (Herzberg et al., 1959) is a theory little used to study teacher job satisfaction and retention; however, it was the theory addressed in this

study in a unique way. Although the findings ultimately align with the theory's tenets, this study contributed to areas of the theory, such as the need to define "supervisor quality (administrator quality)." Also, administrator quality emerged as an almost all-encompassing tenant, which suggests that it influences all the other factors of the theory. These findings also indicated that the intrinsic factor of the work itself requires redefinition when discussing teaching and other social professions.

This study's findings suggest that there is hope for urban, low-income, high-minority schools with high teacher attrition rates. With certain factors in place, such as quality administrators capable of leading teachers with humility and creating campus environments conducive to a sense of belonging and family, teachers might stay in their positions.

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