TEACHER RETENTION IN AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

AN INTRINSIC AND EXTRINSIC MOTIVATION CASE STUDY

by

SHEREE M. JONES

(Under the Direction of Elizabeth DeBray)

National teacher shortages has received attention in the last few years and researchers project turnover rates will grow in the upcoming years (Sorensen & Ladd, 2020; Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, & Carver-Thomas, 2016). As a result, districts and administrators are challenged with hiring highly qualified teachers (Garcia & Weiss, 2019; Partelow, 2019). This study argues that solving the teacher shortage crisis begins with understanding the factors that influence turnover and retention. The purpose of this study was to examine the intrinsic and extrinsic factors that influence teacher retention in a high-poverty, elementary school. Furthermore, Chapter 2 analyzes self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2008), to understand the underlying factors that influence teacher retention. Chapter 3 draws on case study methodology (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Stake, 1995). This study utilized semi-structured interviews to examine retention through the lens of elementary teachers. The second data collection method included online documents. Data was analyzed using a thematic analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Chapter 4 presents case study findings, including themes that developed from the semi-structured interviews and online documents. This research concludes with a discussion of the findings, implications for practice, and policy implications, based on teacher retention research.

INDEX WORDS: teacher turnover, teacher retention, intrinsic, extrinsic, high-poverty

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SHEREE M. JONES

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SHEREE M. JONES

Major Professor: Elizabeth DeBray, Chair

Committee: Walker Swain
Jori Hall
Sheneka Williams

Electronic Version Approved:

Ron Walcott
Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
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DEDICATION

To my parents, Sherry, Jerome, and late father Willie

Thank you for your continuous love and support.

Who I am today has only been possible thanks to your contributions and sacrifices.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

"Education is the great engine of personal development. It is through education that the daughter of a peasant can become a doctor, that the son of a mineworker can become the head of the mine, that a child of farm workers can become the president of a great nation. It is what we make out of what we have, not what we are given, that separates one person from another" ~ Nelson Mandela.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank God who is the head of my life and my ancestors who inspired me to help today's youth and fight for change.

I want to thank my dissertation committee members, Dr. Elizabeth DeBray, Dr. Walker Swain, Dr. Jori Hall, and Dr. Sheneka Williams. Your guidance helped me achieve this goal. Thank you for being phenomenal professors and always pushing me to move forward.

Words cannot express my gratitude to the district leaders, administrators, and teachers who participated in this study. I appreciate you allowing me to examine teacher retention within your district and school.

Without the support of my family and best-friends, this accomplishment would not have been possible. Thank you for always encouraging me to reach my educational goals. To my parents, thank you for always comforting me and showing me unconditional love. To my brothers & especially my sisters, Jenia, and Cortney, thank you for daily words of encouragement. To my daughter, Marley Day, you are my biggest blessing and the best graduation gift. I pray you stay true to yourself and follow your biggest dreams.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

LIST OF TABLES

Page

LIST OF FIGURES

Page

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The U.S. labor market has received attention since COVID-19 (BLS, 2021; Geisler, 2021). According to the Bureau Labor of Statistics (2021), between February and June 2020, employment dropped from 152.5 million to 137.8 million, a loss of 14.7 million jobs. Staff shortages have increased in sectors such as retail, business, transportation, manufacturing (Leonhardt, 2021; Mitchell et al.,2021), and the field of education (Simon & Johnson, 2015). Nonetheless, teacher shortages are a growing area of concern in K-12 education reform. Therefore, policymakers and districts have directed their attention to issues of teacher retention and turnover (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Sorensen & Ladd, 2020).

Teacher retention is an area of research that identifies why teachers remain in the teaching field (Murnane & Steele, 2007; Tio, 2017). Whereas teacher turnover refers to the "change in teachers from one year to the next in a particular school setting" (Sorenson & Ladd, 2020, p.1). The objective of this research was to examine why teachers remain in a high-poverty elementary school. Most importantly, understanding the intrinsic and extrinsic factors that influence retention could enable policymakers, district leaders, and administrators to develop initiative-taking strategies for improving retention.

This research study is divided into three sections. The first chapter highlights the statement of the problem, research question, background on teacher turnover and the study overview. Chapter 2 is a review of teacher retention literature and a theoretical framework to understand retention in elementary schools. The next chapter highlights the research design, case study methodology and data collection methods. Chapter 4 presents the research findings from the semi-structured interviews and online documents. The concluding chapter includes a

discussion of the findings, implications for practice, and recommendations for future retention research. Let us now shift to the underlying issues behind teacher retention.

Statement of the Problem

In recent years, educational researchers and school administrators have demanded attention to the teacher turnover crisis in K-12 education (Darling-Hammond, 2018; Simon & Johnson, 2015). Teacher turnover is a growing area of concern because of its negative impact on student achievement (Ronfeldt et al., 2013; Sorensen & Ladd, 2020; Watlington et al., 2010). Furthermore, teachers have the greatest influence on student achievement (Anderman & Hattie, 2013) and research indicates that turnover has a "negative impact on students' ability to graduate from school college- and career-ready" (McKenna, 2018, p.1). For this reason, school administrators are voicing concerns to carefully examine teacher turnover.

Since the late 1980s, teacher turnover has increased throughout U.S. schools, especially those serving low-income students (Simon & Johnson, 2015; Carver-Thomas et al., 2017; Ingersoll & Merrill, 2012). Teacher turnover is 50 percent higher in high-poverty schools, compared to wealthier schools (Ingersoll, 2001; Simon & Moore Johnson, 2015; Ronfeldt et al., 2013). Additionally, approximately one-third of America's teachers leave the teaching field within the first three years of teaching (NCTAF, 2002) and half leave within 5 years (Owens, 2015). This increase in teacher turnover is costing the nation approximately $7.3 billion a year (Carroll, 2015). This new estimate is $2.4 billion higher than the estimate reported by the Alliance for Excellent Education in 2005 (Carroll, 2015). Teacher turnover is not just a financial concern, but it is a national crisis because of its effects on teachers, students, and the education system at large.

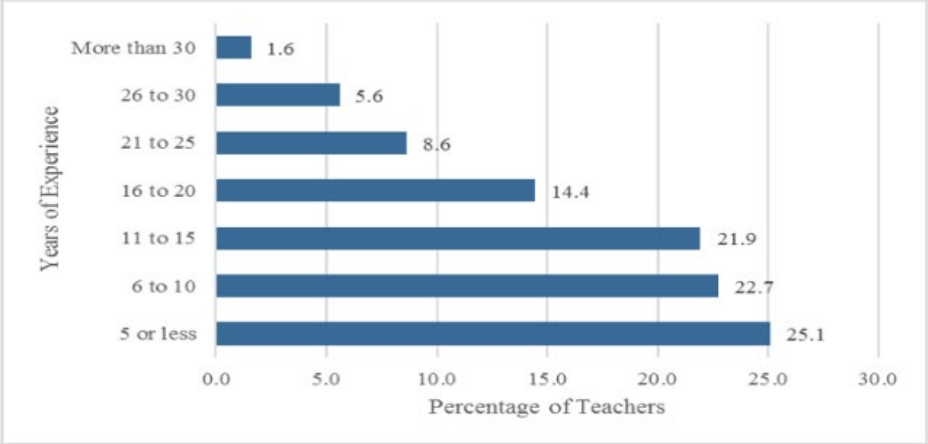
National Teacher Turnover

Recent research indicated that half a million public school teachers in the U.S. leave their schools each year (Simon & Johnson, 2015). Of the 3.4 million public school teachers, approximately 227,016 teachers move to another school district and 230,122 teachers leave the education field (Alliance for Education, 2014). During the 2011-12 school year, 84 percent stayed at the same school (stayers), eight percent of teachers left the profession (leavers) and eight percent of teachers moved to another school (movers), resulting in a total annual turnover rate of 16 percent (NCES, 2015). Recent turnover findings imply that an additional "90,000 teachers need to be hired across the U.S. each year" (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017, p.3). Additional turnover findings revealed the teacher labor market is lower in the Southeastern region of the U.S, hence southern states need more teachers (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; SREB, 2021).

Teacher Turnover within a Specific State

The Southeast hires approximately 41 percent of the national teacher workforce (Robson et al., 2019). Yet, the 2012 Schools and Staffing Survey, reported teacher turnover is higher in the Southeast (Owens, 2015; Sutcher et al., 2016). The data revealed that teacher turnover in the Southeast was 16 percent, compared to 10 percent in the Northeast. In the state of Georgia, 47 percent of teachers leave within the first five years of employment (Owens, 2015). Most compelling finding, during 2015-16, "a quarter (25.1%) of the teacher workforce, which was the largest share of teachers, had five or fewer years of experience working in Georgia public education" (Tio, 2017, p.8). ***Please see Figure 1: Years of Experience for Teachers*** (Tio, 2017).

Figure 1: Years of Experience for Teachers



Source: Tio, Rosaline. (2017). *Georgia K-12 teacher and leader workforce report executive summary. The Governor's Office of Student Achievement.* Georgia Government. https://gosa.georgia.gov/sites/gosa.georgia.gov/files/2017%20K12%20Teacher%20and%20Leader%20Workforce%20Executive%20Summary%2020180105.pdf

Teachers in Georgia reported leaving due to mandated tests, teacher evaluation, non-teaching school responsibilities, benefits, compensation, resources, leadership, and teacher preparation (Owens, 2015). Teacher complaints "helped secure a $3,000 salary increase in the 2020 state budget" (McKillip & Farrie, 2019). Will a salary increase resolve staffing shortages within Georgia's elementary schools?

Teacher Turnover within Arden County School District (Pseudonym)

Arden county, the state's most-populous county, has more than one million residents (Census, 2020). Fiscal data from 2017-18, revealed there were approximately 6,364 teachers (NCES, 2020). Teacher reports, given by Ellis Bell's principal, indicated significantly high turnover rates for elementary teachers (Principal, personal communication, May 5, 2021). In the 2018-19 school year, there were 3,312 certified elementary teachers, 433 resigned, 46 retired and 135 transferred, total turnover of 614 teachers. This retention report indicates a turnover issue among elementary school teachers in ACSD.

In 2021, board members in ACSD met to discuss retention incentives to combat teacher turnover rates. Members of the board approved a one-time payment of $1,000 for full-time staffers and $500 for part-time employees (Principal, personal communication, May 5, 2021). Though, is this retention incentive an adequate solution? If not, what will motivate teachers to continue teaching in the Southeast region, specifically in high-poverty, elementary schools. As has been noted, the aim of this research was to examine the reasons why teachers persist in a high-poverty, elementary school.

Ellis Bell Elementary School vs. Neighboring School

Chapter 3 highlights a detail description of the research site, Ellis Bell Elementary School (pseudonym), and the factors that influence retention. Ellis Bell is a K-5 school in ACSD, and is centered in a low-income community (Principal, personal communication, May 5, 2021). In brief, Ellis Bell met the following criteria: (1) low-performing, (2) high-poverty and (3) school climate rating of one to three. The literature presented in Chapter 2, suggests that teacher turnover is significantly higher in low-performing, high-poverty schools (Simon & Moore Johnson, 2015) and has a negative impact on school climate (Sawchuk, 2012). First, ASCD has classified Ellis Bell as a low-performing school, due to its low College and Career Ready Performance Index score (CCRPI). Second, it is considered high-poverty because 100 percent of the student population is eligible for free-and-reduced priced lunch (FRPL). Third, Ellis Bell received a low school climate rating from the district. Given these points, this school was an important site to conduct teacher retention research.

Ellis Bell is also located near Pine Road Elementary School. Pine Road is a K-5 elementary school in Arden County and is centered in a middle-class community. Compared to Ellis Bell, which is in the center of a low-income community. Also, Pine Road is defined as

high-poverty, hence 100% of the student population is eligible for free-and-reduced price lunch (Principal, personal communication, May 5, 2021). During the 2019-20 school year, Pine Road had a CCRPI score of 83.5 percent, compared to Ellis Bell who received a 65.9 percent. Moreover, Pine Road received a B letter grade, compared to Ellis Bell who received a D letter grade. Lastly, during 2019-2020, teacher mobility at Pine Road was 10.1 percent, compared to Ellis Bell which was 8.5% (Principal, personal communication, May 5, 2021). Data after the 2019-2020 school year is currently not available for ACSD. Nonetheless, the 2019-20 findings suggest, Pine Road is academically performing better than Ellis Bell.

It is worth noting, retention is an issue for both schools, yet Pine Road is academically performing higher than Ellis Bell. According to the Georgia School Grades Report (2022), Pine Road and Ellis Bell have the following in common:

1. Elementary schools located in Arden County
2. 100 percent of the student population is eligible for FFRPL
3. A turnover rate of 8.5 percent or higher during the 2019-2018 school year

How is Pine Road able to perform better than Ellis Bell, with turnover being an issue? Does socioeconomic status and income segregation have an impact on student outcomes?

Arden County School District & Educational Inequalities

Educational inequalities between high and low-income students creates disparities in educational resources (Bohser & Baffour, 2017; Lehrer-Small, 2021; Rothstein, 2005; Owens, 2018). As previously noted, both schools are in the ACSD, however, there is a socioeconomic difference within the communities. According to Owens (2018), in income segregated places, "high-income children access more resources and low-income children access fewer resources" (p.3). A solution is to improve low-income communities, henceforth, to increase student

performance. According to Berliner (2005), a positive correlation exist between reductions in family poverty and better academic performance (Berliner, 2005). Other researchers have discussed the benefits of low-income children attending mixed-income schools.

When low-income students attend mixed-income schools, they have access to additional resources, are exposed to a positive school culture, and receive rigorous instruction (Chiu & Khoo, 2005). Correspondingly, Ryan (2010) argued, low-income students in a middle-income school "stands a better chance of succeeding academically than he/she does in a predominantly poor school, and middle-income students are not harmed by attending school with poor students" (p. 273). Nonetheless, districts cannot control the resources that parents, and communities are able to offer schools. However, districts must distribute resources in an equitable manner, hence, to maximize student learning (Chiu & Khoo, 2005; Owens, 2018). According to Chiu & Khoo (2005), policy and district leaders that "allocate more resources to poorer students than to richer students (equalizing their resources will see higher overall reading scores" (p.575). As has been noted, districts must revisit how resources are allocated among their low-income and high-income communities. Thus, to improve student achievement and retention.

Further research is needed to understand the impact of retention on student achievement at Pine Road. Yet, the purpose of this study was to understand the underlying factors that influence retention solely at Ellis Bell. Ellis Bell has a similar student population as Pine Road, yet students are struggling academically. Resource inequality is one plausible reason for the differences in student achievement in ASCD schools. However, are scores low due to the rise of teacher shortages? Given the circumstances, Ellis Bell is a low-performing, high-poverty school with an average school climate rating, which made it an appropriate site to conduct teacher retention research.

Research Question

The research question this study addressed is: What intrinsic and extrinsic factors influence teacher retention in a high-poverty, elementary school?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine why elementary teachers remain in their positions during/in the aftermath of the pandemic. This study examined intrinsic and extrinsic incentives ACSD administrators can implement to increase teacher retention rates. Intrinsic factors include "the pleasure of being with children, the exhilaration of contributing to students' learning and the enjoyment of teaching" (Johnson, Berg & Donaldson, 2005, p.1). Whereas extrinsic factors include "salary, benefits, bonuses and public recognition for one's accomplishments" (Johnson, Berg & Donaldson, 2005, p.1). Teacher turnover studies have concentrated on extrinsic factors that impact teacher turnover, such as: (1) Salary, (2) working conditions, (3) classroom autonomy, (4) administrative and mentoring support, and (5) teacher preparation programs (Callahan, 2016; Carver-Thomas, 2018; Donaldson & Johnson, 2011; Guili & Zeller, 2016; Johnson, Berg, & Donaldson, 2005). Researchers have also examined additional factors that impact teacher retention in high-poverty, elementary schools (Ellison, Kern, & Killian, 2021; Simon & Johnson, 2015). Identifying factors of "teacher sustainability related to one's intention to remain teaching can help offset teacher turnover" (Ellison et al., 2021, p.3). This study adds to extensive turnover literature, by exploring the intrinsic and extrinsic factors that influence teacher retention in a high-poverty, elementary school. Next, this case study research design utilized semi-structured interviews and online documents, to understand the factors that influence retention.

A purposeful selection technique was employed to select teachers that have taught for three or more years at Ellis Bell Elementary School (pseudonym). A goal for purposefully selecting individuals (teachers) within a specific setting (high-poverty, elementary school), was to provide an "in-depth understanding rather than empirical generalizations" (Patton, 2002, p.230) and information needed to answer the research question (Maxwell, 2013). To gain an understanding about retention, this study examined the perspectives of teachers at Ellis Bell Elementary School. Ellis Bell is in Arden County School District (ACSD). Teacher turnover within Arden County (pseudonym) exceeds 15 percent annually (Principal, personal communication, May 5, 2021). There is limited research on why elementary teachers are leaving this specific district and what will encourage teachers to stay. Therefore, ACSD was an important district to examine the intrinsic and extrinsic factors that influence retention.

Background on Teacher Turnover

Earlier organizational management literature suggests that teacher turnover impacts student achievement by altering the quality of teachers in schools (Abelson & Baysinger, 1984). Researchers have voiced that turnover allows administrators to identify low-performing teachers and replace with effective teachers (Abelson & Baysinger, 1984; Adnot et al., 2017; Ronfeldt et al., 2013;). As voiced by Ronfeldt et al., (2013), "If the teachers who leave a school are worse than those who replace them, then turnover is assumed to have a net positive effect" (p.31). Yet, recent studies suggest there are effects beyond the distributional changes in teacher quality, such as the impact of turnover on student achievement (Gibbons et al., 2021; Ronfeldt et al., 2013).

One study conducted in New York City, collected ten years of data on 1.1 million 4th and 5th grade students (Ronfeldt et al., 2013). Findings from the study revealed that students have lower English language arts (ELA) and math scores in schools where turnover is high (Ronfeldt

et al., 2013). For example, "For a year in which turnover increases by one standard deviation, this corresponds with a decrease in math achievement by approximately 2% of a standard deviation" (Ronfeldt et al., 2013, p.18). Correspondingly, another study found lower scores in math and reading where teachers left after the first semester (Henry & Redding, 2018).

As previously stated, teacher turnover has an impact on student achievement (i.e., ELA and math scores) (Hanushek et al., 2016; Henry & Redding, 2018; Ronfeldt et al., 2013). Researchers have voiced that the impact of turnover on student achievement is most harmful in schools that serve low-performing and under-privileged students (Hanushek et al., 2016; Ronfeldt et al., 2013). Therefore, it is essential that school administrators consider implementing retention policies and high-quality induction programs (Simon & Johnson, 2015), when aiming to improve student achievement.

Study Overview

This dissertation examined teacher retention in a high-poverty, elementary school in Arden County School District (ACSD) (pseudonym). This study addressed the following research question: What intrinsic and extrinsic factors influence teacher retention in a high-poverty, elementary school? This dissertation hypothesized teacher retention is evident in schools with integrated professional cultures, effective mentoring programs and higher levels of teacher self-efficacy. The next section provides a brief overview of the study.

ACSD is one of the largest districts in the Southeastern region of the U.S. ACSD is uniquely divided into two different sections, east Arden, and west Arden. Students in east Arden County Schools (ACS) are challenged with high-poverty and socio-economic issues. High-poverty schools are classified as 76-100 percent of the student population being qualified for free and reduced priced lunch (NCES, 2022). The district has 59 elementary schools, 19 middle

schools, 18 high schools, 10 charter schools and one full-time virtual school. There are approximately 7,500 teachers (elementary, middle, and high) (NCES, 2020). In the elementary schools, teacher turnover has exceeded 15 percent since the 2015-19 school years (Principal, personal communication, May 5, 2021). Therefore, an elementary school in ACSD was an appropriate setting to conduct teacher retention research.

A qualitative research design was conducted at Ellis Bell Elementary School (pseudonym). I conducted face-to-face interviews with eight K-5 teachers that have taught at Ellis Bell for three or more years. Research suggests that most teachers leave the classroom within the first three years of teaching (NCTAF, 2002). For this reason, this research was focused on the reasons why teachers have remained in education for three or more years.

An elementary school in Arden County was purposefully selected due to the low-socioeconomic status and low-achievement scores for students. Students in west ACS scored 400 points higher on his/her SAT compared to students in east ACS. Approximately 30 percent of students in west ACS were classified as proficient or distinguished in every subject (District A, personal communication, May 7, 2017). Researchers argued the following about students' scores on the College and Career Performance Index:

> These differences are reflected in part by the two regions' differing scores on the College and Career Ready Performance Index, a state measurement of academic performance. The 57 schools west of the divide had an average CCRPI score of 86 while the 48 schools east of the divide averaged 60, the cutoff for what the state considers failing (paras. 3-4).

It has been reported, east ACS schools had 9 out of 10 students fail the state geometry test (District A, personal communication, May 7, 2017). Regarding socioeconomic status, 90 percent or more of their students qualified for free-and-reduced lunch (District A, personal

communication, May 7, 2017). Given these points, east ACS is academically performing low and has a high rate of low-socioeconomic students (District A, personal communication, May 7, 2017). Thus, indicating ACSD was an important county to conduct research, due to the increase in teacher turnover and the failing standardized test scores among high-poverty students.

Research Methods

Qualitative methods was used in this case study to explore the intrinsic and extrinsic factors that influence teacher retention. Purposeful sampling was employed to select eight teachers for semi-structured interviews. The second data collection method included online documents. Overall, the semi-structured interviews and online documents provided an in-depth understanding on the underlying factors that influence retention.

Conceptual & Theoretical Framework Overview

Chapter 2 highlights a conceptual framework to consider when analyzing teacher retention research: a) Integrated professional cultures framework, b) educational change model and c) self-efficacy. The integrated professional cultures framework addresses teacher turnover by improving mentoring programs, making changes to the recruitment process, and implementing shared responsibility (Kardos & Johnson, 2007). The educational change model includes executing effective mentoring programs and recruitment processes (Fullan, 2015). The final framework explains the importance of teachers having a high sense of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). In Chapter 2, I argue that integrated professional cultures, educational change model, and self-efficacy are interconnected. Thus, teacher retention relies on the effectiveness of each component. Furthermore, self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2008) was applied to understand teacher retention in elementary schools. Self-determination theory argues that intrinsic and extrinsic motivation drive staff performance (Deci & Ryan, 2008; Worth & Van den

Brande, 2020). For this reason, this theoretical framework was utilized to develop an understanding of the intrinsic and extrinsic factors that influence teacher retention.

Definitions of Terms

Teacher retention refers to the school characteristics and teacher demographics that affect whether teachers remain in their schools, transfer to different schools, or leave before retirement (Teacher retention, 2021).

Teacher turnover refers to the "change in teachers from one year to the next in a particular school setting" (Sorenson & Ladd, 2020, p.1). This also includes teachers who resign, transfer, or retire.

High-poverty schools refers to public schools "where more than 75 percent of the students are eligible for FRPL" (free and reduced-price lunch) (NCES, 2022).

Low-income students refer to students "whose family income was below 125 percent of the federally established poverty level for their family size" (Choy & Bobbitt, 2000, p.iii).

Low-performing schools in Georgia refers to a "school that has a College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI) score that falls at or below the 25th percentile in its grade cluster (Georgia Government, 2022).

Statement of Researcher Perspective

It is critical that researchers address his/her identity, educational background, professional experiences, and personal reasons for conducting a study. I am a 33-year-old African American female, U.S. citizen, Michigan native, life-long educator, and University of Georgia doctoral student. Studying teacher retention in elementary schools is professionally and personally important to me. For this reason, I have addressed my professional and personal reasons for conducting this research.

Professional Background

I am a Michigan State University (MSU) graduate. My bachelor's degree is in elementary education and my master's degree is in educational leadership. During my undergraduate studies, I participated in two mentoring programs, The Advantage and Break the Cycle. Both organizations improved the lives of juvenile delinquents and challenging students in Michigan, California, and Tennessee.

After receiving my bachelors and master's degree from MSU, I became a fourth-grade teacher at National Heritage Academies (NHA). Teaching at NHA provided insight on effective instructional strategies, parental involvement, teacher autonomy and administrative support. Due to accountability pressures, I gained an interest in teacher policy; henceforth I pursued a doctoral degree in educational leadership and policy.

Currently, I am a 7th year doctoral student in the Educational Leadership and Policy program at the University of Georgia (UGA) and former 5th grade teacher. In December 2021, I resigned from teaching and decided to focus on my doctoral studies. This year, my goal is to become an educational leadership professor at a major university. I believe my professional background will assist me in improving teacher retention rates across K-5 classrooms worldwide.

Personal Background

Teacher retention research is personally significant to me. Unfortunately, as a former elementary school teacher I left the workforce due to low teacher salary, lack of teacher autonomy, and working conditions. As stated by NCTAF (2002), "teachers are more likely to quit when they work in districts with lower wages and when their salaries are low relative to alternative wage opportunities" (p.10). In like manner, I received less than $36,000 during my first two years of teaching and less than $50,000 during my last two years. In addition to low

pay, teacher autonomy was limited. Teachers were encouraged to teach lessons in a certain manner (i.e., specific resources and lesson plans). Next, working conditions influenced my decision to leave the teacher workforce. As voiced by Harris (2002), teachers in low-income schools were more likely to exit if working conditions remained poor. Nonetheless, teacher salary, teacher autonomy and working conditions influenced my decision to leave K-5 education.

From August 2018 to December 2021, I taught fifth grade (all subjects) at Ellis Bell Elementary. As previously noted, I resigned from teaching due to financial reasons, lack of teacher autonomy, and poor working conditions. In Chapter 3, I highlight the limitations of conducting research at Ellis Bell. Nonetheless, one limitation included my connection to the school. For example, some teachers may have felt comfortable with providing information. Whereas other teachers required additional probing throughout the interview. Yet, majority of the participants were relaxed, open and provided vital information about teacher retention. Overall, the participants' stories were remarkably similar to my experiences at Ellis Bell. It was interesting hearing similar experiences being told from another person's view. Most importantly, it's imperative that I continue to address my professional and personal background when conducting teacher retention research.

As previously stated, teacher retention is a relevant issue because it has an impact on teachers and students. There are underlying factors that influenced my decision to leave the classroom. Yet, my professional and personal background has encouraged me to study teacher turnover and retention. I will continue to carefully examine how administrators can decrease turnover rates, specifically in elementary schools.

Significance of the Study

This case study offered strategies that district leaders and ACSD's administrators could implement to increase teacher retention rates. Participants from this study provided an in-depth understanding on what motivates him/her to continue teaching in a high-poverty, elementary school. The results of the study provided ACSD with intrinsic and extrinsic incentives that could increase teacher retention rates. ACSD's strategic plan for 2022 is to "prepare students with strong academic foundations and the skills needed to navigate life beyond graduation" (Principal, personal communication, May 5, 2021). To prepare students for a life beyond graduation, ACSD must devote their attention to teacher shortages. Evidence from this study can contribute to the development of future teacher retention strategies and prevent teacher turnover from increasing in ACSD's elementary schools.

This research study is critical because educational experts have argued that instability in the teacher workforce has a negative impact on student achievement (Ronfeldt et al., 2013) and school climate (Dillon & Malick, 2020; Sawchuk, 2012). As previously stated, roughly a half a million public school teachers leave their schools, annually (Simon & Johnson, 2015). Most recently, the COVID-19 pandemic had an impact on teacher turnover. As argued by Hawthorne (2021), an "EPI survey found that teachers are almost twice as likely to leave as they were before the pandemic" (p.1). Moreover, turnover rates are significantly higher in low-performing and high-poverty schools (Simon & Johnson, 2015; Ronfeldt et al., 2013). Consequently, high teacher turnover threatens the learning environment for all students, especially, those in low-performing schools (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Sutcher et al., 2017; Ladd & Sorensen, 2016). Given these points, teacher retention research is an urgent and critical issue to examine when aiming to improve schools.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Teacher retention is educational research that identifies the motivating factors that influence why teachers remain in the field of education (Murnane & Steele, 2007; Tio, 2017). Currently, U.S. public schools struggle with recruiting certified teachers who will remain in the classroom (Kokka, 2016; Murnane & Steele, 2007; Tio, 2017). Why should U.S. public schools focus on retaining teachers? As argued by Murnane and Steele (2007), retaining teachers is crucial if the U.S. wants to prepare "young people with the skills essential in the new economy" (p.15). Consequently, more than 30 percent of America's teachers leave the field of education during their first three years of teaching (NCTAF, 2002) and approximately 50 percent leave after five years (Donley et al., 2019). It is vital that researchers examine the underlying factors of teacher turnover, when striving to improve teacher retention rates. We will now shift to teacher turnover in the United States.

Teacher Turnover in the United States

Current research reported that half a million public school teachers in the U.S. leave their schools each year (Simon & Johnson, 2015). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2015), eight percent of teachers leave the workforce annually, and eight percent of teachers transfer to another school (within/outside of the district), resulting in annual turnover rate of 16 percent. ***Please see Appendix A: Sources of Turnover*** (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019). Another report from NCES (2014) highlighted a 2 percent increase in teacher turnover from the 1988-89 to 2012-13 school years. ***Please see Table 1: Number and percentage distribution of public-school teacher stayers, movers, and leavers: 1988-89 through***

2012-13. It is important to note that NCES has not reported national teacher attrition and mobility results since the Teacher Follow-Up Survey (TFS) conducted in 2012-13.

Table 1: Number and percentage distribution of public-school teacher stayers, movers, and leavers: 1988-89 through 2012-13.

Table 1. Number and percentage distribution of public school teacher stayers, movers, and leavers: 1988–89 through 2012–13

	Number				Percent		
Year	Total base year teachers[1]	Stayers	Movers	Leavers	Stayers	Movers	Leavers
1988–89	2,386,500	2,065,800	188,400	132,300	86.5	7.9	5.6
1991–92	2,553,500	2,237,300	185,700	130,500	87.6	7.3	5.1
1994–95	2,555,800	2,205,300	182,900	167,600	86.3	7.2	6.6
2000–01	2,994,700	2,542,200	231,000	221,400	84.9	7.7	7.4
2004–05	3,214,900	2,684,200	261,100	269,600	83.5	8.1	8.4
2008–09	3,380,300	2,854,900	255,700	269,800	84.5	7.6	8.0
2012–13	3,377,900	2,846,500	271,900	259,400	84.3	8.1	7.7

[1] Base year refers to the year in which the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) was administered. The SASS is always administered a year prior to the Teacher Follow-up Survey (TFS). The total number of base year teachers for any year is slightly lower than in previously published counts, as all teachers who responded to SASS but were ineligible for TFS (e.g., because they died or moved out of the country) were removed from the weighted count of base year teachers.

NOTE: "Stayers" are teachers who were teaching in the same school in the current school year as in the base year. "Movers" are teachers who were still teaching in the current school year but had moved to a different school after the base year. "Leavers" are teachers who left the teaching profession after the base year. Total numbers are rounded to the nearest 100. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Teacher Follow-Up Survey (TFS)," Current and Former Teacher Data Files," 2012-13; Teacher Attrition and Mobility Results From the 2008-09 Teacher Follow-up Survey, U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES 2010-353).

Since the 2012-13 school year, researchers have argued that the teacher shortage will continue to increase, especially among public school teachers (Garcia & Weiss, 2019; Sutcher et al., 2016). Researchers argue that the national teacher shortage occurs because administrators struggle to hire highly qualified teachers (Garcia & Weiss, 2019). Hence, due to the decline of graduate degrees awarded (NCES, 2021) and decline in teacher preparation programs (Partelow, 2019; Sawchuk, 2014). According to NCES (2021), between 2009-10 and 2018-19, the number of "master's degrees conferred in education declined by 20 percent" (p.1). Also, in the state of Georgia, there was a 38 percent decrease in the number of people who completed a teacher preparation program between 2008-09 and 2016-17 (Education Commission of the States, 2022). ***Please see Appendix B: Teacher Recruitment and Retention: State Profile—Georgia.*** Given these points, the teacher workforce will need to hire approximately 1.6 million teachers across

the U.S. (NASSP, 2020). In sum, a teacher shortage is evident across schools in the U.S., and there are factors that influence teacher turnover.

Factors that Influence Teacher Turnover

Teacher Salary & Financial Incentives

Preliminary work in this field focused primarily on teachers leaving the field of education due to extrinsic reasons (Johnson et al., 2005). Extrinsic rewards include bonuses, salary, and benefits (Johnson et al., 2005). Johnson et al., (2005) argued that financial incentives may initially attract people to the teacher workforce, and it can "take on increased importance when working conditions make it difficult or impossible to succeed with students" (p.1). In a recent study, researchers discussed the impact of financial incentives on teacher sustainability.

Recent research suggest that extrinsic factors, such as financial incentives has an impact on a teacher's decision to stay/leave the classroom (Ellison, Kern, & Killian, 2022; Scott et al., 2022). One teacher voiced that salary would be the primary reason he would leave the field. To illustrate this point, "We had a pay freeze for seven years straight. The cost of living was going up, and salaries were not matching, I began to question my career" (Ellison et al., 2022, p.660). Not surprisingly, other teachers also voiced that he/she continues to teach until a better opportunity arises (Ellison et al., 2022) or until compensated adequately (Scott et al., 2022). According to researchers, a relationship exists between "adequate financial compensation and benefits and teachers' intent to persist in the profession" (Scott et al., 2022). Correspondingly, Mahnken (2022), voiced a half percentage increase in teachers' salary "was correlated with a 36 percent drop" (p.1) in teacher vacancy rates. The findings also revealed that financial stressors have an impact on teacher retention in high-poverty schools (Ellison et al., 2022). Next, one

study examined the financial incentives specifically given to STEM teachers (Clotfelter et al., 2008).

A North Carolina study awarded annual bonuses to certified STEM teachers within low-income and low-performing schools (Clotfelter et al., 2008). The findings indicated that bonuses reduced teacher turnover rates by 17 percent (Clotfelter et al., 2008, p.1353). A similar study conducted in Tennessee, examined a bonus program for teachers working in low-performing schools (Springer et al., 2016). As argued by Springer et al., (2016), "even relatively small economic rewards can help mitigate the problematic exit patterns of teachers in high-need schools" (p.217). Other research has highlighted the relationship between teacher socioeconomic status, salary, and teacher turnover.

Johnson et al. (2005) suggested, "pay matters more to the teacher who does not have the down payment for a house she wants to buy than it does to another who entered teaching at mid-career and has a military pension to supplement his salary" (p.6). Whereas Harrell et al. (2019), argued that an individual will pursue a teaching opportunity, once salary and benefits "compare favorably" (p.146) with other job opportunities (Ehrenberg & Smith, 1997). Overall, financial incentives have an impact on teacher turnover (Johnson et al., 2005; Springer et al., 2016). Another factor that influences turnover is working conditions (Donaldson & Johnson, 2011; Harris, 2002).

Working Conditions

Today's schools are in desperate need of equitable and adequate academic funding (Baker, 2018; Darling-Hammond, 2019; Teacher B & Johnson, 2021; The Century Foundation 2020). According to Teacher B and Johnson (2021), U.S. schools have "have hundreds of billions of dollars of unmet capital construction needs that local districts cannot make up" (p.1).

Consequently, because of inequitable funding (Darling-Hammond, 2019), schools need textbooks, desks, and computers (Clayton et al., 2005). Students are also faced with large class sizes and high teacher-to-student ratios (Harris, 2002; Hattie, 2005; Krieger, 2003). For this reason, working conditions can play a key role in teachers leaving the field of education (Donaldson & Johnson, 2011; Harris, 2002).

Poor working conditions is defined as "as a list of specific items pertaining to a teacher's workplace and including both material conditions and social and cultural elements of the work environment" (Geiger & Pivovarova, 2018, p.607). One study revealed that working conditions had a negative impact on how long teachers in Teach for America (TFA) remained in the teaching workforce (Donaldson & Johnson, 2011). Teachers in another study reported that working conditions such as, less access to resources, poor facilities, and larger class sizes influenced his/her decision to leave the teacher workforce (Harris, 2002). In a recent study, teachers expressed that better working conditions "decreased likelihood of intending to move or leave" (Grant, Jeon, & Buettner, 2019, p.305). It has also been suggested working conditions, such as heavy workloads have an impact on teacher attrition (Zavelevsky & Lishchinsky, 2020).

As previously mentioned, participants in one study discussed the impact of heavy workloads on his/her decision to remain in the field. A novice teacher voiced, "The amount of paperwork and pages that I print and save is simply insane, and the hours don't end when the students go home" (Zavelevsky & Lishchinsky, 2020, p.8). Recent research suggests that teachers in under-resourced schools have "to take on additional responsibilities without having access to the resources they need to meet those responsibilities" (Dixon, Griffin, & Teoh, 2019, p.10). For this reason, an implication could include improving facilities, providing adequate resources, decreasing class sizes, and adjusting the workload given to teachers, to decrease

turnover rates. In addition to working conditions, literature suggests that classroom autonomy has an impact on teacher turnover (Ingersoll, May, & Collins, 2016)

Classroom Autonomy

Researchers have examined the relationship between classroom autonomy and teacher turnover. Providing teachers with classroom autonomy has a substantial impact on teacher turnover (Ingersoll et al., 2016; Murnane & Steele, 2007). As argued by Ingersoll et al., (2016), "teachers in schools with higher levels of classroom autonomy had significantly lower turnover, after controlling for the background characteristics of the teachers and schools as well as school performance, rewards, or sanctions" (p.46). A more recent study by Ingersoll, May, and Collins (2019), also examined the impact of classroom autonomy on teacher retention.

According to researchers, a key driver in the teacher turnover crisis, is classroom autonomy (Downey, 2019; Ingersoll et al., 2019; Murnane & Steele, 2007). In simpler terms, autonomy and teacher voice plays a significant role in a teacher's decision to remain or leave the classroom (Dixon et. al, 2019; Ingersoll et al., 2019). Recently, the lack of autonomy has decreased due to accountability pressures and reforms (Dixon et. al, 2019; Ingersoll et al., 2019). Teachers are often held responsible for "issues, decisions, and outcomes over which they may have little, or even diminishing, control --- leading to higher teacher turnover" (Guggino & Brint, 2010, Ingersoll & Collins, 2017; Ryan et al.,2017; as cited in Ingersoll et al., 2019, p.32). Given these points, classroom autonomy and teacher voice can influence teacher sustainability within the classroom. Conversely, research suggests teacher retention is higher in schools where classroom autonomy is present (Kokka, 2016). To illustrate this point, Kokka (2016) argued that classroom autonomy influenced teachers' job satisfaction and longevity. Nonetheless, research suggests that increasing teachers' classroom autonomy can positively impact retention.

Administrative Support

The third underlying factor for teacher turnover is administrative support. Researchers have voiced that a relationship exists between administrative support and teacher turnover (Boyd et al., 2011; Hughes et al., 2015). Teachers from one study voiced that his/her administrators were supportive and encouraging (Boyd et al., 2011), hence influencing his/her decision to stay. In contrast, administrators that are "less dependable, consistent, and skilled at scheduling and enforcing rules and standards" (Russell et al., 2010, p.11), influenced teachers to leave. As a result, researchers have examined the impact of administrative support on teacher retention.

A recent study examined teacher retention policies utilized in highly effective districts. Using semi-structured interviews, researchers explored district/administrator strategies for improving teacher retention (Shuls & Flores, 2020). Findings from the study revealed that highly effective districts did not have specific retention polices. Instead, the district promoted teacher voice, improved recruitment strategies, and most importantly increased administrative support (Shuls & Flores, 2020). According to researchers, a common theme across the district interviews, a supportive administrative team (Shuls & Flores, 2020) led each school building. Findings also revealed, "teachers who taught in schools where there was supportive, informative, and encouraging leadership were more likely to reveal positive attitudes towards teaching, something that has been proven to lead teachers to remain in the field longer" (Shuls & Flores, 2020, p.8). In a similar study, researchers found that adequate support from administration, reduced the odds of teachers exiting the profession by approximately 48% (Ronfeldt & McQueen, 2017; Shuls & Flores, 2020). In simpler terms, research supports that improving teacher-to-administrator relationships can decrease teacher turnover rates (Carver Thomas, 2018; Hughes et al., 2015; Shuls & Flores, 2020).

Mentoring Support

There is a growing body of literature on the impact of mentoring support on teacher retention. According to Bey & Holmes (1990), "mentoring in education is an old practice of experienced teachers passing on their expertise and wisdom to new colleagues faced with the challenges of merging theory and practice" (p.51). Likewise, mentoring support is a form of a support provided by colleagues, in which an "experienced practitioner works to help a novice teacher enter a profession and become highly proficient" (Villani, 2009, p.6). It has been reported that successful mentoring programs can improve teacher retention rates (Callahan, 2016; Maready et al., 2021; Villani, 2009). As voiced by Callahan (2016), mentoring programs have "reduce issues of teacher isolation and mentoring programs advance the professional growth of new teachers, improving student learning, and reducing the attrition rate of new teachers" (p.7). It has been argued that having a mentor teacher is a way of encouraging new teachers to commit to the teacher workforce (Bey & Holmes, 1990).

Carver-Thomas (2018) reported that one reason for high teacher turnover is inadequate mentoring support. Yet, teacher residency programs that provide ongoing mentoring are effective in retaining teachers (Carver-Thomas, 2018). Participants in one study reported that having "mentoring programs implemented on their campuses in conjunction with formal mentoring, benefited with the retention of novice teachers" (Gordon, 2017). In a similar study, researchers examined the impact of mentoring support by pairing first-year teachers with a mentor (Caven, Torossian, & Durodoye, 2022). Mentors in this study completed 25 hours of professional development, centered on effective mentoring strategies (Caven et al., 2022). The findings revealed the following about the impact of mentoring support for teachers:

> Teachers who met at least an hour a week with their mentor were more likely to be retained than those who met less frequently, but two hours a week was not better than one. New teachers who spent substantial time discussing classroom management or teaching evaluations with their mentors were less likely to stay in their jobs than those who did not (Caven et al., 2022, p.1).

Given the circumstances, research suggests that implementing effective mentoring programs can help reduce teacher turnover (Callahan, 2016; Maready et al., 2021; Gordon, 2017; Villani, 2009).

Teacher Preparation Programs

The final underlying factor for teacher turnover is teacher preparation programs. Researchers have argued that schools with effective teacher preparation programs improved teacher retention rates (Goldhaber & Cowan, 2014; Guthery & Bailes, 2022; Guili & Zeller, 2016; Kent, 2005). To illustrate this point, approximately "One-fourth of teacher retention likelihood is explained by teacher preparation" (Guili & Zueller, 2016, p.85). Researchers argue that retention depends on the type of preparation teachers receive (i.e., alternative training or four-year certification program) (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Guili & Zueller, 2016).

Educational researchers have argued that continuation in the teaching field is significantly lower for teachers hired through alternative programs, compared to teachers who completed a four-year teacher education program (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Kent, 2005; Redding & Smith, 2016). According to Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2017), alternatively certified teachers "were 25% more likely to leave their schools than were full-time teachers who entered through a regular certification program" (p.1). Currently, there is an increase in staffing among alternatively certified teachers in low-income schools

(Redding & Smith, 2016). Also, alternatively certified teachers leaving the workforce negatively impacts student outcomes (Redding & Smith, 2016). Teacher turnover rates will gradually decrease over time if teacher preparation programs include a community-based urban teacher preparation model (UTP) (Lee, 2018). To explain, UTP models include "school and community-immersive teaching and learning" (Lee, 2018, p.120) with an expectation that teachers will continue to teach in low-income schools. Researchers continued to argue that teacher preparation programs, such as UTP models is one way to retain highly qualified teachers.

As has been noted, teacher preparation programs are designed to recruit highly effective and highly qualified teachers. NCTAF (2002) argued that preparation programs that disregard teaching and mentoring strategies fail to support teacher learning and "typically breed a sense of failure in their recruits" (p.12). Moreover, empirical evidence suggests teachers remain in the field of education when they feel well-prepared (Darling-Hammond, Chung, & Frelow, 2002). Earlier literature findings revealed the following about teacher preparation programs:

> Teachers' views of their preparation varied across individual programs, with some programs graduating teachers who felt markedly better prepared. Finally, the extent to which teachers felt well prepared when they entered teaching was significantly correlated with their sense of teaching efficacy, their sense of responsibility for student learning, and their plans to remain in teaching (Darling-Hammond, Chung, & Frelow, 2002, p.2).

As previously mentioned, a relationship exists between teacher preparation and teacher turnover. An implication includes improving teacher preparation programs, to improve teacher retention rates. The next section highlights the impact of COVID-19 on teacher turnover.

The Impact of COVID-19 on Teacher Turnover

After national school closures due to COVID-19, "schools reopened in the fall of 2020 using combinations of in-person, hybrid, and remote learning models" (Zamarro et al., 2021, p.2). Teachers faced challenges in remote and in-person schooling (Bastian & Fuller, 2021; Carver-Thomas et al., 2021; Rosenberg & Anderson, 2021; Walker, 2021). Teachers in remote settings had to adjust curriculum for virtual instruction and ensure that families could access school resources (Bastian & Fuller, 2021), thus increasing teacher workloads (Carver-Thomas et al., 2021). In-person schools required teachers to make schedule changes, "implement new public health measures, and take on additional health risks for themselves, family colleagues, and students" (Bastian & Fuller 2021, p.1). Ultimately, teaching challenges during the pandemic, influenced teachers' decisions to leave or remain in the teacher workforce (Bastian & Fuller 2021; Diliberti et al., 2019).

One study examined teacher turnover in six school districts during COVID-19. According to researchers, over a three-year span, teacher turnover declined from 17.3 to 12.6 percent (Rosenberg & Anderson, 2021). Researchers argued turnover was higher among novice teachers in high-poverty schools Rosenberg & Anderson, 2021). As a result, students in high-poverty schools, "experienced the greatest increase in staff stability compared to prior years" (Rosenberg & Anderson, 2021, p.3). Likewise, another study examined teacher turnover for veteran teachers, in high-poverty schools.

According to researchers, 43 percent of teachers over the age of 55 voiced he/she considered leaving because of COVID-19, compared to 23 percent for all respondents (Zamarro et al., 2021). As argued by Kini (2020) increased turnover is likely for teachers over the age of 55, staff with underlying health conditions, or staff who lives with someone with health

conditions. In simpler terms, staff would rather "leave the profession, rather than put themselves or loved ones at risk" (Kini, 2020, p.1). Moreover, teaching during a pandemic added to teachers' stress-levels (Bastian & Fuller 2021; Diliberti et al., 2021). For this reason, researchers have focused on factors that influenced teacher turnover, such as stress (Diliberti et al., 2019; Rosenberg & Anderson, 2021).

Teaching is a stressful profession and COVID-19 "added more stress" (Diliberti et al., 2019, p.1). One survey revealed "K-12 public school educators were the most likely to report higher levels of anxiety, stress and burnout during the COVID-19 pandemic" (Walker, 2021, p.4). According to Carver-Thomas et al., (2021), one superintendent voiced the following about teacher workloads causing stress:

> Their biggest complaint is that "I cannot stay on top of it all. I cannot stay on top of it all. I am trying to juggle constantly." It is a constant that I hear, "I'm tired, I'm stressed, [and] I'm overwhelmed," and I do not see it ending anytime soon (p.22).

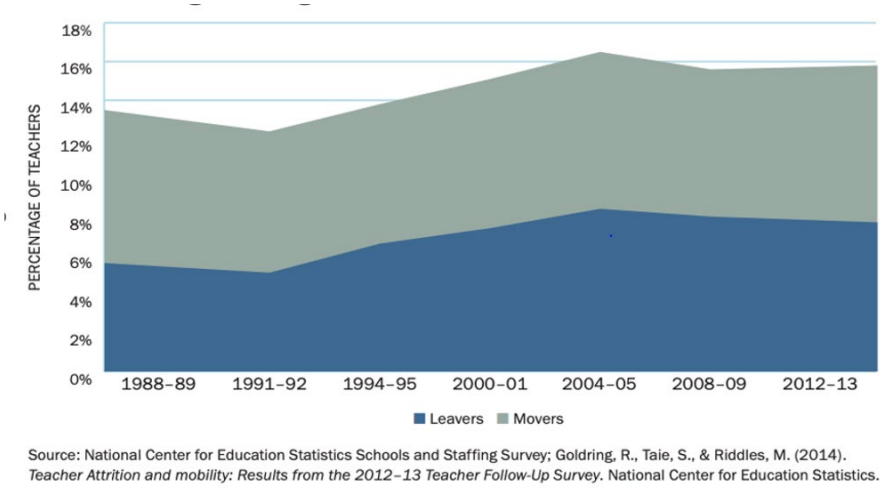
Likewise, one study surveyed 1,000 public school teachers about his/her decision to leave the teaching profession (Diliberti et al., 2019). The findings revealed that half of the public-school teachers exited the profession because of stress from the pandemic (Diliberti et al., 2019). Research suggests that the effects of the pandemic "could further worsen" (Carver-Thomas et al., 2021, p.6) in high-need and low-income schools (Rosenberg & Anderson, 2021). Therefore, the U.S. will need a highly qualified teacher workforce to undo the damage from the pandemic.

Patterns of Teacher Mobility

The patterns of teacher mobility are classified into three categories: (1) leavers, (2) movers, and (3) stayers (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Marvel, 2007; NCES, 2014; Shen, 2997). Leavers are teachers who have left the teacher profession (Shen, 1997).

Movers are teachers who have moved within/out of the district (NCES, 2014). Stayers are teachers who have remained in the same school (Shen, 1997). As an illustration, from 1988 to 2013, the rate of teachers leaving and moving in/outside of the district has increased (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; NCES, 2014). According to Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond, 2017, teacher turnover has increased "substantially over the past two decades" (p.1). **Figure 2: Rate of Leaving Teaching Has Increased** illustrates how 8% of teachers left the teacher workforce, another 8% moved within or out of the district, resulting in a turnover rate of 16% (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; NCES, 2014).

Figure 2: Rate of Leaving Teaching Has Increased



Source: National Center for Education Statistics Schools and Staffing Survey; Goldring, R., Taie, S., & Riddles, M. (2014). *Teacher Attrition and mobility: Results from the 2012–13 Teacher Follow-Up Survey.* National Center for Education Statistics.

Source: Carver-Thomas, D., & Darling-Hammond, I., (2017) & NCES, (2014). Teaching attrition and mobility: Results from the 2012-13 Teacher Follow-Up Survey. National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved from https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/product-files/Teacher_Turnover_REPORT.pdf

Teachers are inclined to change schools that fall under the following three conditions: (1) Schools with lower test scores, (2) schools with lower income students, or (3) schools with higher percentages of minority students (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). First, test scores and low-income schools have an impact on teacher mobility (Simon & Johnson, 2015). Next, researchers have reported that teachers are more likely to leave low-income schools or schools that have a substantial proportion of minority students (Simon & Johnson, 2015). As

previously mentioned, the factors that influence teacher mobility varies across districts. The next section highlights the impact of turnover on student achievement.

The Impact of Teacher Turnover on Student Achievement

A growing body of literature has examined the impact of teacher turnover on student achievement. For instance, one study examined the effects of teacher turnover on fourth and fifth-grade students in New York City (Ronfeldt et al., 2013; Sawchuk, 2012). Sawchuk (2012) voiced, "students taught by teachers in the same grade-level team in the same school did worse in years where turnover rates were higher, compared with years in which there was less teacher turnover" (p.1). Finally, students in grades where teacher turnover was high, scored lower in math and ELA (Sawchuck, 2012). A similar study revealed that teachers have a significant impact on math and reading scores for low-performing students (Barr et al., 2006). For this reason, Ronfeldt et al. (2013), suggested districts introduce financial incentives to increase teacher retention and improve student achievement. Most importantly, literature suggests that teacher retention has a positive impact on student achievement (Barr et al., 2006; Ronfeldt et al., 2013; Sawchuk, 2012), therefore it is imperative for districts to consider implementing effective policies to decrease turnover rates. Next, research suggest that teachers have an impact on students' non-cognitive outcomes.

Teacher Influences on Students' Non-Cognitive Outcomes

Educational literature has highlighted the impact of teacher influences on students' non-cognitive outcomes. One study highlighted students' perceptions of his/her teachers (Reddick et al., 2011). Students were able to differentiate between the teachers who had high and low expectations. To demonstrate, Reddick et. al (2011) argued the "lack of concern and low expectations from some teachers generated a self-fulfilling prophecy of underachievement

among students" (p.605). Therefore, the authors voiced the importance of teachers holding grand expectations for students (Reddick et. al, 2011).

Other scholars have argued that teachers bring prior knowledge of student background to the classroom, thus advancing students' educational experiences (Mitchell, 1998). Researchers have voiced that students often succeed when teachers have addressed his/her emotional, social, psychological, and academic needs (Mitchell, 1998). For this reason, districts must recruit and retain qualified teachers, so they can prepare students to be productive citizens (Mitchell, 1998), hence, to improve student achievement. The next section reviews the impact of teacher turnover on student outcomes within high-poverty schools.

Teacher Turnover in High-Poverty Schools

Students in high-poverty schools are currently experiencing the greatest increase in staff instability (Rosenberg & Anderson, 2021). Teacher turnover is 50 percent higher in high-poverty schools, compared to affluent schools (Simon & Moore Johnson, 2015; Ronfeldt et al., 2013). It has been reported that 40 to 50 percent of teachers in high-poverty schools leave his/her school within the first 5 years (Darling-Hammond, 2004). Moreover, the NCES (2015) reported, "a higher percentage of teachers from high-poverty schools (12 percent) than from mid-low or low-poverty schools (6 percent each) moved to other schools between 2011-12 and 2012-13" (p.1). ***Please see Appendix C Percentage of public-school teacher movers and leavers, by 2011-12 school poverty level: 2011-11 to 2012-13*** (NCES, 2015). It is imperative for administrators in high-poverty schools, to carefully examine the factors that influence teacher turnover.

Factors that Influence Turnover in High-Poverty Schools

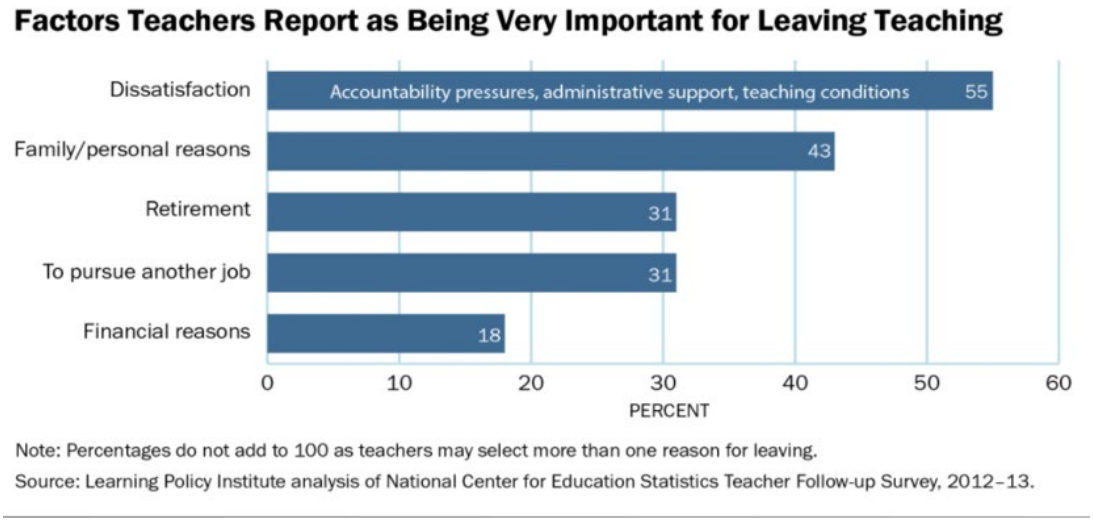
Teachers leave high-poverty schools because of poor working conditions (Donaldson & Johnson, 2011; Simon & Johnson, 2015), for better paying jobs (Moore-Johnson & Birkeland,

2003), accountability pressures and lack of administrative support (Donaldson & Johnson, 2011). The factors mentioned above have led to an increase in teacher turnover (Moore-Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Simon & Johnson, 2015). This increase in teacher turnover in high-poverty schools is common among early career teachers in high-poverty schools (Darling-Hammond, 2004; Rosenberg & Anderson, 2021). In one study, 32 percent of teachers in high-poverty schools had less than three years and were more likely to exit the profession (Rosenberg & Anderson, 2021). Consequently, high turnover rates in high-poverty schools interrupts student achievement and school climate (Donaldson & Johnson, 2011). A policy implication includes the implementation of effective retention strategies, hence, to improve teacher job satisfaction.

Teacher Job Satisfaction and Retention

Researchers have argued that teacher job satisfaction has an influence on retention (Toropova et al., 2021; Worth & Van den Brande, 2020). Teacher job satisfaction is "tied to teachers' work performance, including teachers' involvement, commitment, and motivation to the job" (Satgent & Hannum, 2005, p.175). Earlier research suggested that highly satisfied teachers are less likely to transfer or exit the profession, compared to dissatisfied teachers (Perie & Baker, 1997; Choy et al., 1993). Findings from the 2012-13 Teacher Follow-Up Survey revealed that 55 percent of teachers were dissatisfied with his/her job (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; NCES, 2014;). ***Figure 3: Teachers Report as Being Very Important for Leaving Teaching*** (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; NCES, 2014) illustrates teachers being dissatisfied due to dissatisfaction, family/personal reasons, retirement, other careers, and financial reasons. (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; NCES, 2014).

Figure 3: Teachers Report as Being Very Important for Leaving Teaching



Darling-Hammond, L., Sutcher, L., & Carver-Thomas, D. (2017). Teacher turnover: Why it matters and what we can do about it. Learning policy institute. https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/teacher-turnover-brief

Correspondingly, current research suggests public school teachers are dissatisfied with their teaching salary (NCES, 2018), thus leading to job dissatisfaction and turnover. ***Please See Appendix D: Percent of public-school teachers who agree or disagree that they were satisfied with their teaching salary, by selected school and teacher characteristics: 2015-16.*** Public school teachers that were dissatisfied with teacher salary, voiced that stress, salary, and burnout led to his/her dissatisfaction with the profession (NCES, 2018). To illustrate this point, please see ***Figure 4: Public-school teachers who are satisfied or dissatisfied with their teaching salary.*** Most compelling finding, approximately 52 percent of teachers voiced he/she was not satisfied with the salary (NCES, 2018). Additionally, participants expressed that he/she was no longer enthusiastic about the profession, compared to when he/she first entered the classroom (NCES, 2018). The findings from the National Teacher and Principal Survey (NCES, 2018) revealed that that job satisfaction has an impact on turnover.

Figure 4: Public-school teachers who are satisfied or dissatisfied with their teaching salary.

Statement	Teachers who are Satisfied with their teaching salary	Dissatisfied with their teaching salary
The stress and disappointments involved in teaching at this school aren't really worth it	17.9	30.2
The teachers at this school like being here; I would describe us as a satisfied group	82.1	70.1
I like the way things are run at this school	79.9	67.4
If I could get a higher paying job I'd leave teaching as soon as possible	23.2	44.7
I think about transferring to another school	23.4	38.0
I don't seem to have as much enthusiasm now as I did when I began teaching	36.7	52.0
I think about staying home from school because I'm just too tired to go	19.5	30.9

NOTE: Teachers who agree are those who answered "strongly agree" or "somewhat agree" to the statements. Teachers who disagree are those who answered "strongly disagree" or "somewhat disagree" to the statements.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Teacher, and Principal Survey (NTPS), "Public School Teacher Data File," 2015-16. https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ntps/tables/ntps1516_18051502_t1n_rev.asp

As previously stated, teacher job satisfaction has an influence on teachers' career decisions (Jeon & Wells, 2018; Toropova et al., 2021; Worth & Van den Brande, 2020). One study found that childhood teachers felt they were inadequately paid for his/her work, henceforth influencing his/her decision to leave (Jeon & Wells, 2018). Research suggests that districts make organizational changes (Jeon & Wells, 2018) and implement strategies to improve teacher job satisfaction (Satgent & Hannum, 2005; Worth & Van den Brande, 2020). Most importantly, effective strategies aimed at improving job satisfaction could increase teacher retention rates.

Conceptual Framework

Integrated Professional Cultures

The first step in this conceptual framework is the implementation of integrated professional cultures. Researchers Kardos & Johnson (2007) argued that teacher retention is caused by organizational factors. To explain, organizational factors such as, inadequate administrative support, poor discipline, decision-making, and low salaries contributes to staff instability (Kardos & Johnson, 2007). Additionally, teachers left the workforce due to teacher dissatisfaction (Worth & Van den Brande, 2020) or a better job opportunity (Ehrenberg & Smith, 1997; Kardos & Johnson, 200). An implication for teacher retention is the use of integrated

professional cultures. Integrated professional cultures is a "two-way interaction about teaching and learning" (Kardos & Johnson, 2007, p.1) among novice and veteran teachers. Novice teachers in integrated professional cultures feel supported by veteran teachers (Kardos & Johnson, 2007), thus reducing feelings of isolation and thoughts of leaving the workforce.

Kardos & Johnson (2007) examined teacher experiences in four states: California, Florida, Michigan, and Massachusetts. Study findings revealed that novice teachers had negative experiences during the beginning of his/her career. To illustrate this point, approximately 50% of the novice teachers reported that he/she planned his/her lessons and taught his/her classes alone (Kardos & Johnson, 2007, p.2094). According to Kardos and Johnson (2007), novice teachers "work as solo practitioners, are expected to be prematurely experts, and able to work without the support of a school-based network" (p.2100). The literature highlighted the importance of integrated professional cultures implementing collective responsibility collaboration, shared voice, and increasing teacher autonomy.

It has been reported that teachers will remain in the education workforce when his/her schools have implemented the following strategies: (1) two-way interaction between novice and experienced teachers, (2) understand the needs of novice teachers, and (3) develop shared responsibility between staff and students (Kardos & Johnson, 2007). What does the literature say about the impact of professional cultures on teacher retention? According to Kardos and Johnson (2007) new teachers who experience integrated professional cultures were more likely to continue to teach in public schools and remain teaching at his/her given school. Therefore, educational institutions should consider implementing integrated professional cultures, to improve teacher retention rates. The next step in this conceptual framework is Fullan's (2015) educational change model.

Educational Change Model

In Chapter 12 *The Teaching Profession and Its Leaders,* Fullan (2015), discusses the importance of the hiring and induction process. Fullan (2015) argued that teacher retention is an issue that needs to be addressed by adjusting the recruitment process for novice and veteran teachers. Furthermore, "If districts established efficient and effective hiring practices coupled with solid mentoring/induction programs, they could cut the attrition rate of 33% or 46% in half and get better career-long teachers" (Fullan, 2015, p.246). The author suggests that the hiring practice mentioned above had a significant impact on teacher retention in one district (Fullan, 2015). The author continued to argue that the district made improvements by focusing on recruitment strategies, professional development, and school organization (Fullan, 2015). Additionally, Fullan (2015) examined the impact of mentoring programs on teacher retention.

Empirical evidence suggests that effective mentoring programs have a positive impact on teacher retention (Fullan, 2015). Results from the New York City study indicated that teacher retention is high in schools where effective mentoring programs are present (Fullan, 2015). Fullan (2015) states, "the mentoring model implemented in 2004-2006 period shows an attrition rate of 12% after 6 years of teaching, compared with the national rate, of as we have seen, of 46% leaving within the first 5 years" (p.247). New York amended their previous mentoring model by implementing new principles. The basic principles included the following:

> Ensure that all mentoring programs develop and maintain a high-quality selection process. Address systemic and infrastructure issues that affect new teachers (e.g., new teacher workload, student data systems). Leverage systems of change by building on mentor skills, knowledge, and experience (Fullan, 2015, p.247).

Overall, Fullan (2015) suggests that policymakers and administrators view teacher retention through an educational change model. Fullan (2015) believes the effective recruiting strategies and effective mentoring programs can improve teacher retention rates. The next step of the framework is to help teachers develop self-efficacy.

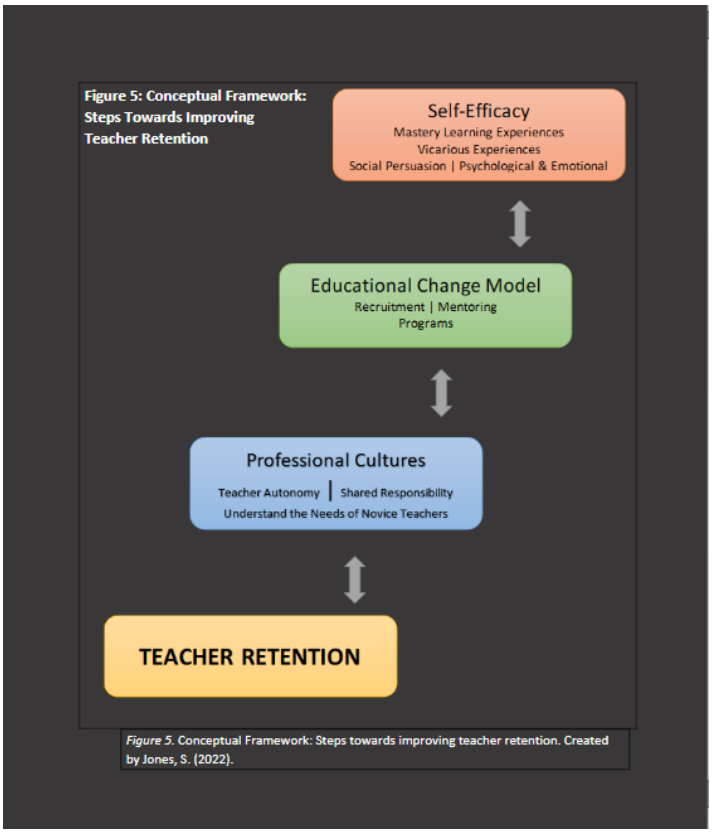
Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is defined as a set of beliefs in ability to organize and execute a specific task (Bandura 1997). Self-efficacy is categorized into four sources: (a) Mastery learning experiences, (b) vicarious experiences, (c) social persuasion, (d) psychological and emotional states (Bandura, 1997; Milner & Hoy 2003). First, mastery learning experiences include teachers demonstrating "their own success, thus proving that they are competent teachers" (Gavora, 2010). Second, vicarious experiences included learning from others through observations (Bandura, 1997; Gavora, 2010; Hattie, 2005). Third, social persuasion includes teachers learning from the success of another teacher (Bandura, 1997; Gavora, 2010). Lastly, psychological, and emotional states can have an impact on a teacher's self-efficacy judgement (Gavora, 2010). Scholars have argued that the four sources of efficacy are evident within a teacher with high self-efficacy (Milner & Hoy, 2003). Most compelling evidence, teachers with a higher sense of efficacy are more likely to remain teaching (Milner & Hoy, 2003; Hoy & Spero, 2005). For this reason, it is critical to examine teacher retention through a self-efficacy lens.

As previously stated, districts should consider implementing integrated professional cultures, educational change model, and self-efficacy to improve teacher retention rates. ***Please see Figure 5: Conceptual Framework: Steps Towards Improving Teacher Retention*** for a visual representation of how integrated professional cultures, educational change model, and

self-efficacy are interconnected (Jones, S. 2022). The following section analyzes, self-determination theory, a theoretical framework that can influence staff retention.

Figure 5: Conceptual Framework: Steps Towards Improving Teacher Retention

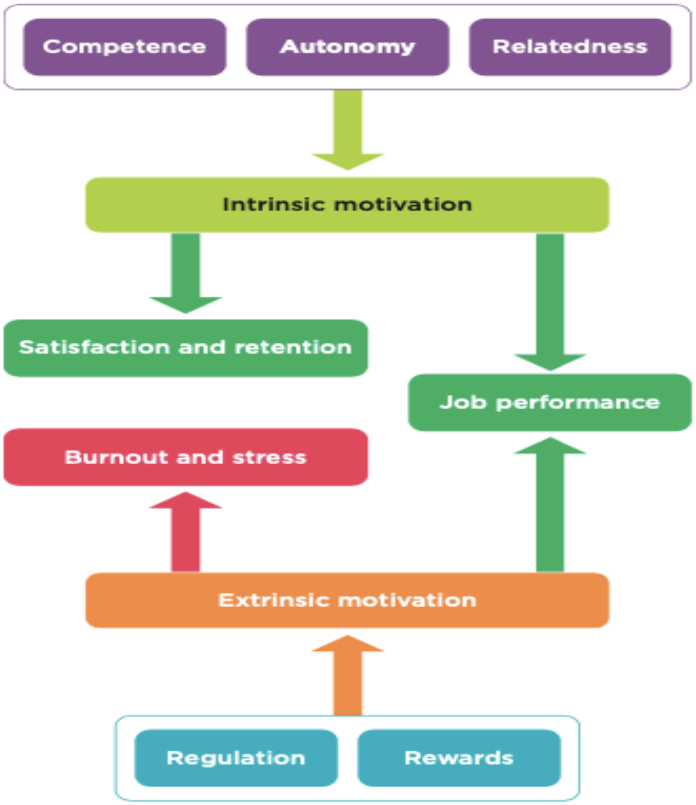


Theoretical Framework

This study utilized self-determination theory (SDT) which is a theory based on "human motivation, development, and wellness" (Deci & Ryan, 2008, p.182). The theory argues that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation drive job performance (Deci & Ryan, 2008; Worth & Van den Brande, 2020). Staff that possess intrinsic motivation are thought to be more likely to have job satisfaction (Worth & Van den Brande, 2020). Additionally, intrinsic motivation will increase when the following needs are present: (1) Competence, (2) autonomy, and (3) relatedness (Worth & Van den Brande, 2020). In contrast, staff that rely on extrinsic motivation are at risk of burnout (Worth & Van den Brande, 2020). Self-determination theory suggests that

a positive relationship exists between autonomy, job satisfaction, and retention (Deci & Ryan, 2008; Worth & Van den Brande, 2020). ***Please see Figure 6: Self-Determination Theory: Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation (Worth & Van den Brande, 2020)*** for additional information about the motivating factors that influence retention.

Figure 6: Self-Determination Theory: Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation



Source: Worth & Van den Brande, 2020. Teacher autonomy: how does it relate to job satisfaction and retention. National Foundation for Educational Research. https://tdtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/teacher_autonomy_how_does_it_relate_to_job_satisfaction_and_retention-1.pdf

Successful Models to Improve Teacher Retention

Various districts have made substantial efforts to improve teacher retention rates. The New Teacher Project (TNTP, 2012) voiced that districts that intend to increase teacher turnover rates must consider "increasing salaries, reducing teacher workloads, and strive to improve parent and student participation and cooperation levels" (p.2). The District of Columbia Public Schools

(DCPS) made changes within teacher benefits and compensation "by tying bonuses and raises to classroom performance" (TNTP, 2012, p.4). Findings from the DCPS study indicated that teacher retention in DCPS is higher than its non-DCPS counterparts. Teacher retention is higher in DCPS because the district retains its best teachers "mainly because it keeps far fewer low performers compared to other districts" (TNTP, 2012, p.6). Aside from bonus programs, other districts have increased teacher autonomy to increase teacher retention.

One study indicated that increasing teacher autonomy would have a positive impact on teacher retention. Ingersoll et al., (2016) suggested the following about the relationship between teacher autonomy and turnover:

> Teachers in schools with higher levels of classroom autonomy all had significantly lower turnover. Teachers in these schools strongly depended on how much autonomy teachers were allowed in their own classrooms over key issues: selecting textbooks and other instructional materials; choosing content, topics, and skills to be taught (p.48).

It has been reported that teacher retention is higher in schools where there are higher levels of classroom autonomy (Ingersoll et al., 2016). In addition to increasing classroom autonomy, other districts have studied the impact of mentoring strategies on teacher retention.

Current literature has identified the relationship between mentoring strategies and teacher retention. Schools require novice teachers to have mentors during their first two years of teaching. However, retention studies indicate that novice teachers leave within the first five years of teaching (Callahan, 2016). One solution to retaining new teachers is through mentoring programs (Fullan 2015; Kardos & Johnson, 2017). Callahan (2016) argued the following about mentoring programs and teacher attrition:

> Mentoring programs have historically proven to reduce issues of teacher isolation and mentoring programs advance the professional growth of new teachers, making them more effective in a shorter amount of time, improving student learning, and reducing the attrition rate of new teachers" (p.7).

Furthermore, bonus programs, increasing teacher autonomy and mentoring programs have been noted to have a positive impact on teacher retention (Callahan, 2016; Fullan 2015; Kardos & Johnson, 2017). For this reason, districts and administrators must consider the intrinsic and extrinsic factors mentioned above when implementing retention strategies.

Summary

Teacher retention is a growing area of concern due to its impact on student achievement (Anderman & Hattie, 2013; Ronfeldt et. al., 2013) and school climate (Dillon & Malick, 2020; Sawchuk, 2012). Additionally, researchers have voiced the importance of improving retention rates in high-poverty schools (Simon & Johnson, 2015). It important to note, high teacher turnover threatens the learning environment for all students (Sutcher et al., 2017; Ladd & Sorensen, 2016). Future retention strategies that could decrease teacher turnover include: (1) Implementation of integrated professional cultures, (2) educational change model, (3) self-efficacy, and (4) self-determination theoretical framework. As previously noted, research suggests the following strategies have a positive impact on student and teacher outcomes (Fullan, 2015; Kardos & Johnson, 2017; Milner & Hoy, 2003; Worth & Van den Brande, 2020). Given the circumstances; teacher retention was an issue before the pandemic. Therefore, it is critical for administrators and districts to implement effective strategies to prevent further teacher shortages. Let us now shift to Chapter 3, which highlights the methodology utilized for this retention research.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This case study focused on the experiences of elementary teachers who have remained teaching in an elementary school for three or more years. The purpose of this study was to examine why elementary teachers remain in their positions during/in the aftermath of the pandemic. This study utilized self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2008), which argues that intrinsic and extrinsic motivation influences teacher retention in schools. A case study design was applied to gain an in-depth understanding from teachers in a high-poverty school. Semi-structured interviews sought teachers' opinions about turnover and retention. Online documents, such as incentive flyers, provided an understanding on the extrinsic factors that influence retention. This chapter includes the research questions, research design, case study overview, data collection, data analysis, data quality and methodological limitations.

Research Question

The research question this study addressed is: What intrinsic and extrinsic factors influence teacher retention in a high-poverty, elementary school?

Research Design

What is the case?

The methodology selected for this study was a case study. A case study is an in-depth analysis of a case such as, an individual(s), event, activity, program, or process (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). The case in this study was Ellis Bell Elementary School (pseudonym). In order to gain a better understanding of teacher retention in elementary schools, this study examined the perspectives of elementary teachers. It is important to note, a case study research design must treat participants as a case of a group of people within a specific

setting and not as a sample of a larger population (Maxwell, 2013). As argued by Maxwell (2013) purposefully selecting individuals "that can provide you with the information you need to answer your research question is the most important consideration in qualitative selection decisions" (p.97). This teacher retention research purposefully selected an elementary school (the case); therefore, a case study approach was appropriate for this study.

Why is a case study appropriate for this research study?

A case study design is applicable when exploring or describing how and why an issue or event has occurred (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Merriam, 1988; Rowley, 2002; Yin, 1994). Crowe et al., (2011) stated the case study approach is particularly useful to employ when there is a need to obtain an in-depth appreciation of an issue, event, or phenomenon of interest, in its natural real-life context" (p.1). In other words, if the focus of a study is to understand a specific issue, a case study is appropriate. The focus of this study was to develop an understanding on why elementary teachers persist at a high-poverty, elementary school. Specifically, what intrinsic and extrinsic factors influence teacher retention in a high-poverty, elementary school.

Case studies are also appropriate if a bounded system can be identified as the primary focus on the investigation (Merriam, 1988). A bounded system is an "examination of a specific phenomenon such as a program, an event, a person, a process, an institution, or a social group (Merriam, 1988). This research examined the experiences of elementary teachers, within Arden county. This teacher retention study has a bounded system; thus, a case study approach was appropriate.

Design Option

This teacher retention case study utilized a single design. A single case is appropriate when the case is unique or has something special to reveal (Rowley, 2002). The intrinsic and

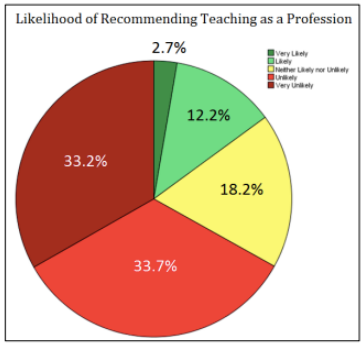
extrinsic factors that influence teacher retention revealed special findings. Please refer to Chapter Four for a review of the research findings.

The next component of the research includes organizing the case study into one category, instrumental research design. Case studies are instrumental if the researcher intends to obtain an in-depth understanding of the issue (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Stake, 1995). I wanted to obtain an in-depth understanding of the factors that influence teacher retention in elementary schools. For this reason, this retention study utilized an instrumental design. Let us now shift to the case study overview.

Case Study Overview

Earlier research has indicated that elementary schools have higher levels of teacher turnover, compared to secondary schools (NCES, 1995). Also, elementary school teachers are less inclined than middle school teachers to encourage teaching as a profession (Owens, 2015).

Please see Figure 3: Likelihood of Recommending Teaching as a Profession.



Source: Owens, S.J. (2015). *Georgia's teacher dropout crisis: A look at why half of Georgia public school teachers are leaving the profession.* Georgia Department of Education. https://www.gadoe.org/External-Affairs-and-Policy/communications/Documents/Teacher%20Survey%20Results.pdf

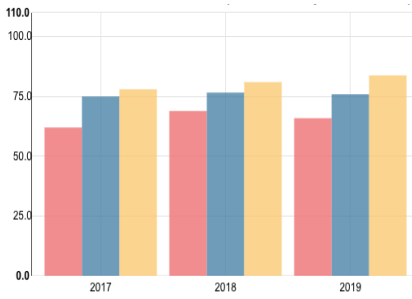
Approximately 33.7 percent of teachers are very unlikely to recommend teaching as a profession (Owens, 2015). As voiced by one elementary school teacher, "I love my time with my students, but I would never choose this path again. Which makes me incredibly sad" (Owens, 2015, p.2). Given these points, I examined teacher retention data in Arden County School District (ACSD) (pseudonym), a large district in the Southeastern region in the U.S.

Description of the School

There are 59 elementary schools in ACSD and teacher turnover in ACSD's elementary schools has exceeded 15% since the 2015-19 school years (Principal, personal communication, May 5, 2021). Therefore, an elementary school in ACSD was purposefully selected to develop an in-depth understanding of teacher turnover and retention. I selected a school by reviewing data from the 2015-19 Georgia School Report Card, available through the Governor's Office of Student Achievement. Furthermore, Ellis Bell Elementary School (pseudonym) met the following criteria: (1) Low-performing, (2) high-poverty and (3) school climate rating of one to three. As previously argued in Chapter 2, teacher turnover is significantly higher in low-performing, high-poverty schools (Simon & Moore Johnson, 2015; Ronfeldt et al., 2013) and has a negative impact on school climate (Sawchuk, 2012).

The first criteria includes identifying whether a school is low performing, by examining the CCRPI score. CCRPI is an annual measure of how well "schools, districts, and the state are helping students achieve their goals" (GADOE, 2022, p.1). If an elementary school has a CCRPI score of 66.1 or less, it is considered low performing (Georgia Government, 2022). During the 2016-17 school year, Ellis Bell had a CCRPI score of 62 percent, compared to 65 percent in the 2018-19 school year***. Please see Table 2: CCRPI Scores (2017-19)*** (Governor's Office of Student Achievement, 2019), a representation of Ellis Bell's scores during 2017-19. Ellis Bell is coded red, Arden County is yellow, and the state of Georgia is coded blue.

Table 2: CCRPI Scores (2017-2019)



2019	D
2018	D
2017	D
2016	F
2015	F

Grade conversion	
A	90 - 100
B	80 - 89.9
C	70 - 79.9
D	60 - 69.9
F	0 - 59.9

Resource: Governor's Office of Student Achievement. (2019). *Georgia school grades report 2018-2019*. Georgia Government.

Ellis Bell is identified as a high-poverty school. High-poverty schools are defined as 76-100 percent of the student population being qualified for free and reduced priced lunch (NCES, 2010). To illustrate this point, Ellis Bell has 100% of students eligible to participate in the Free and Reduced-Price Lunch Program (NCES, 2020). The last criteria include the school climate rating. The school climate star rating is a "diagnostic tool to determine if a school is on the right path to school improvement" (GADOE, 2021, p.1) and "a measure of student, teacher, and parent perceptions of a school's climate" (GADOE, 2022, p.9). Ellis Bell received a three-star rating during the 2018-19 school year. According to the school climate index (GADOE, 2022), a three-star rating is considered average, indicating room for improvement.

Who are the research participants?

The research participants in this case study were K-5 elementary teachers that are currently teaching in a high-poverty, elementary school. *Sample size: How many research participants should be included in the study?* Research suggests there is no specific answer, however sample size in case studies range from four to five participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). I conducted interviews with eight teachers (via phone). This sample size allowed room for participant withdrawal, due to unforeseen circumstances (i.e., COVID-19 or family emergencies).

Recruitment Process

The initial step was to introduce the study to the principal at Ellis Bell Elementary school and get written permission to conduct research. After receiving written permission from the principal, I completed Arden County School District (ACSD): Application to Conduct Research. ACSD denied my first application, due to my subject being a high-interest topic. Next, I completed the University of Georgia's Human Research, IRB (Institutional Review Board) application and received approval to conduct research. I resubmitted an application to ACSD and email ACSD's research department my IRB approval letter. ACSD approved my second application and stated they were interested in participating in my retention research. Ellis Bell's principal provided a staff roster of eligible participants. Teachers were eligible to participate in the study if he/she taught at Ellis Bell for three or more years. Consent forms were emailed and electronically signed by all participants. The consent forms were kept in a locked file, on my personal computer. ***Please see Appendix F: Informed Consent Form***. After obtaining consent from participants, I began collecting data via semi-structured interviews and documents.

Data Collection

For a case study, the data collection process requires gathering multiple sources of data. Researchers can obtain evidence from interviews, focus groups, and observations (Crowe et al., 2011). It has been suggested that six essential sources of evidence are appropriate for case study designs: (1) Documents; (2) archival records; (3) interviews; (4) direct observation, (5) physical artifacts and (6) participant observation (Stake, 1995; Tellis, 1997; Yin 1994). This teacher retention study gathered data through semi-structured interviews and online documents.

Semi-Structured Interviews

In this case study, I interviewed K-5 elementary teachers. As has been noted, teachers were eligible to participate in the study if they taught for three or more years. Research suggests teachers leave the teacher workforce within the first three years (NCTAF, 2002). As previously mentioned, elementary teachers were purposefully selected due to elementary schools having higher teacher turnover rates, compared to middle and high schools. Elementary teachers provided an in-depth understanding of the factors that influence teacher retention. A combination of open-ended and structured interview questions were the primary source to gain a better understanding of teacher retention.

Semi-structured interviews are closed and open-ended questions that are often complemented with *how* and *why* questions. As an illustration, Adams (2015) stated, "The dialogue can meander around the topics on the agenda—rather than adhering slavishly to verbatim questions as in a standardized survey—and may delve into totally unforeseen issues" (p.493). This teacher retention research was centered on *why teachers remain teaching in high-poverty, elementary schools.* Therefore, semi-structured interviews was an appropriate data collection method for this research.

The semi-structured interviews flowed effortlessly like a normal conversation. Qualitative research literature suggests that in-depth interviews allow the participant and the interviewer to engage in conversation and average one-and-a-half to two hours in length (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). In this retention study, the semi-structured interviews lasted between 30 minutes to one-and-a-half hours in length. This time length allowed for prolonged engagement with the research participant and provided a deeper understanding of the factors that influence teacher retention. ***Please see Appendix F Interview Protocol: Semi-Structured Interview Guide*** for a detailed list of interview questions. Prior to conducting interviews, I asked for written

approval via consent forms to voice record the interviews. Interviews were recorded for transcription purposes. Confidentiality was maintained using pseudonyms (i.e., participant names, school, county, and personal identifiers). Transcriptions will be deleted after the dissertation has been finalized. The second data collection method included online documents.

Online Documents

Documents are classified as letters, agendas, newspaper articles or memos (Tellis, 1997). I gathered teacher retention documents from the following sources: (1) ACSD's website, (2) ACSD's 2022 strategic plan, (3) online incentives and (4) teacher recruiting flyers. One benefit associated with using documents is that it allows the researcher to make inferences (Tellis, 1997). The online documents allowed me to make inferences about the factors that influence teacher retention. Online documents, such as teacher recruitment flyers or family volunteer postings, provided an understanding of the factors that influence teacher retention.

Data Analysis

There was one analysis approach that aligned with this retention research, thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is the process of identifying themes or patterns within qualitative research (Braun & Clarke, 2012). An advantage to using thematic analysis is that it allows the researcher to examine the perspectives of participants and explore unanticipated insights (Nowell et al., 2017). Thematic analysis allowed me to develop new insights on the factors that influence teacher retention. Moreover, I utilized the six-phases in thematic analysis; (1) Familiarization, (2) coding, (3) generating themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) write up (Braun & Clarke, 2012).

First, I revisited the transcriptions, took meaningful notes, and got familiar with the data. Second, I highlighted specific phrases in the interviews and create codes to describe the content.

For example, a teacher stated he/she needs a bonus to continue working. Therefore, I highlighted the phrase *needs a bonus* and created a code. After creating codes, I generated appropriate themes. To illustrate this point, codes included sign-on bonuses and monthly gift cards. I combined the codes into a common theme, such as financial incentives. The next step was to review themes and make sure it is an accurate representation of the data.

As argued by Braun & Clarke (2012), it is imperative for researchers to check his/her themes and "explore whether the theme works in relation to the data" (p.60). For example, I explored the following question: Did teachers voice a need for financial incentives to encourage him/her to work in high-poverty schools? If so, how does the theme, financial incentives, work in relation to the data? Furthermore, in Chapter 4, participants expressed that financial incentives plays an important role in his/her decision to stay/leave the classroom. According to the theoretical framework self-determination theory, employees that rely on financial incentives are at risk of burnout (Worth & Van den Brande, 2020). This finding suggest that participants at Ellis Bell may be at risk of burnout, if he/she relies solely on financial incentives. Please see Chapter 5 for more information on how the themes connect to the theoretical and conceptual framework. The next step was to define and name themes.

After defining and naming themes, I determined that financial incentives was a better theme name than *incentives*. Financial incentives reference the financial factors that influence retention, whereas incentives is a broader theme. The last step of the thematic analysis was to write up an analysis of the data. The write up section must include an introduction, methodology section, findings, and conclusion (Braun & Clarke, 2012). This retention research includes an introduction, case study methodology, qualitative research findings, and conclusion.

Data Quality

Validity in qualitative research is defined as data that is credible, plausible, trustworthy and can be defended when challenged (McMillian & Schumacher, 2006). Validity in qualitative research means checking "for the accuracy of the findings by employing certain procedures" (Creswell & Cresswell, 2018, p.199). To check the accuracy of the findings, I utilized multiple validity procedures. Multiple validity procedures include: (1) Triangulation, (2) member checking and (3) clarifying research bias.

How are you ensuring you will have a quality study?

First, I used triangulation by examining evidence from the semi-structured interviews and documents. The use of triangulation "builds a coherent justification for themes" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p.200). For example, a document stated teachers would receive a $1000 end-of-the-year bonus. Correspondingly, in the semi-structured interviews, three teachers stated he/she continues teaching in high-poverty schools because he/she needs the end of the year bonus. One theme from the online documents and semi-structured interviews included financial incentives. Please see Chapter Four, for a list of themes that derived from the semi-structured interviews and online documents.

The next validity procedure included member checking. Member checking involves taking the final report back to the research participants and "determining whether these participants feel that they are accurate" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p.200). For example, I showed the research participant that a common theme was better opportunity. Specifically, participants voiced that he/she would leave the classroom for a better opportunity. I asked the participant if he/she felt if this is an accurate theme and allowed him/her to provide feedback.

The final validity procedure included clarifying the bias the researcher brings to the study. According to Creswell & Creswell (2018), "this self-reflection creates an open and honest narrative that will resonate well with readers" (p.200). My interpretation of the findings was shaped by professional and personal background. To illustrate this point, I received a low salary during ten years of teaching. As a researcher, I should not let that experience have an impact on this teacher retention research. It is critical that I continue to address my background and experiences before interpreting research findings.

Experts in the Field

This retention study consisted of three expert researchers at the University of Georgia in the Department of Lifelong Education, Administration, and Policy (LEAP). The chairperson is an expert in "politics of federal education policy, policy implementation, and interest group politics/policy networks" (UGA, 2022a, p.1). The second expert is an assistant professor in the Department of Lifelong Education, Administration, and Policy. His research is "focused on issues of educational equity, poverty, and inequality" (UGA, 2022b, p.1). The third expert is a professor in the department of LEAP and Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methodologies. Her area of expertise includes "qualitative research methods, program evaluation, and mixed methods research" (UGA, 2022c, p.1). The final expert is a chairperson and professor in the Department of Educational Administration at Michigan State University. Her area of expertise includes "rural education, school desegregation, and educational opportunity for African-American students" (MSU, 2022, p.1). The academic experts in this study have offered constructive feedback on my writing and research. This retention study is relevant, urgent, thought-provoking, and unique due to the academic expertise provided by the expert researchers.

Methodological Limitations & Critiques

The Limitations of Using One School

A limitation of case study methodology is its reliance on a single case design (Tellis, 1997). This study was limited to eight teachers in an elementary school. Furthermore, the study explored teachers' thoughts regarding the factors that influence retention in high-poverty schools. This small sample size could be considered a limitation. Though, there was no attempt to generalize teacher retention factors to all high-poverty, elementary schools. Also, the opinions mentioned in this study may not necessarily represent the opinions of all elementary teachers. Additional limitations of conducting research in one school might include: (1) Participant consent and early withdrawal (2) participant honesty and (3) the researcher's relationship to the school.

First, teachers may agree to participate in the study but due to unforeseen circumstances they may have to withdraw. For example, a participant may have to withdraw because of severe illness or family emergency. Second, there is a possibility that teachers will not be honest or fail to disclose information during the interviews. As argued by Dean and Whyte (1958), researchers should recognize that informants can and do withhold information. The last potential limitation includes my relationship to the school. I am a former elementary teacher in Ellis Bell Elementary School. There is a possibility that my connection to the school could have an impact during the interview process. For example, teachers may feel extremely comfortable and provide a significant amount of information, whereas other teachers may require further probing. As a researcher, I must consider the limitations of conducting research in one school and be prepared for participant withdrawal, dishonesty, and my personal impact on the study.

Critiques of a Case Study

Researchers have voiced the critiques of utilizing a case study (Crowe et al., 2011). For example, in a patient safety study, undergraduate students accrued a large amount of data. Consequently, enormous quantities of data can result in study limitations (Crowe et al., 2011). Researchers suggest avoiding collecting enormous quantities of data, hence, to ensure that adequate time is available for data analysis (Crowe et al., 20111). In this study, I collected data from eight participants. This amount of data allowed me to set enough time aside to complete a data analysis. In addition to avoiding enormous quantities of data, lacking scientific rigor is the second critique within case study research.

Researchers can address the second limitation by "including the use of theoretical sampling; respondent validation; and transparency throughout the research process" (Crowe et al., 2011, p.7). As previously stated, this study utilized member checking (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), also known as respondent validation, to enhance worthiness and validity. Research suggests that case studies have critiques (Crowe et al., 2011; Creswell & Creswell, 2018), though, the methodology is necessary to develop an in-depth analysis of specific individuals (i.e., elementary teachers) in a specific setting (a high-poverty school).

Conclusion

This case study researched examined the factors that influence retention, through the lens of K-5 teachers. A case study design was an appropriate method to develop a better understanding of teacher retention in elementary schools. Research suggest that purposefully selecting a setting/individuals, provides researchers with information needed to answer the research question (Maxwell, 2013). As has been noted, this case study research purposefully selected an elementary school (the case) in a specific setting (a high-poverty area) therefore, a

case study approach was appropriate for this study. Also, if the focus of a study is to understand a specific issue and has something special to reveal (Rowley, 2002), a case study design is appropriate. This case study was useful because it allowed the participants to offer useful information about teacher retention. The online documents also revealed special findings about teacher retention, thus indicating that a case study design is appropriate. Next, this study utilized one analysis approach, thematic analysis.

Thematic analysis allows researchers to identify themes or patterns within qualitative research (Braun & Clarke, 2012). There were themes that derived from the semi-structured interviews and online documents. Themes from the interviews included teacher autonomy and administrative support. Whereas themes from the online documents included financial incentives and parental engagement. Overall, thematic analysis allowed me to identify extrinsic and intrinsic factors that influence retention. Next, to check the accuracy of the qualitative findings, I utilized multiple validity procedures.

This case study employed the following validity procedures: (1) Triangulation, (2) member checking and (3) clarifying research bias. For example, I examined the qualitative research findings, allowed participants to review transcriptions, and clarified personal biases. The validity procedures were necessary when verifying the accuracy of findings. Moreover, this research examined the perspectives of eight teachers. It is important to note, this small sample size could be considered a limitation. Also, the perspectives discussed in this research may not necessarily represent the opinions of all elementary teachers. Given the circumstances, the opinions mentioned in this study offered vital information about the factors that influence teacher retention. Next, Chapter Four highlights the research findings from the data collection methods.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH FINDINGS

This chapter focuses on the findings from this case study. The purpose of this study was to examine why elementary teachers remain in their positions during/in the aftermath of the pandemic. This case study addressed the following research question: What intrinsic and extrinsic factors influence teacher retention in a high-poverty, elementary school? Most importantly, this research identified intrinsic and extrinsic incentives K-5 administrators can implement to increase teacher retention rates.

The data collection methods included semi-structured interviews and documents. Participants within this study included K-5 elementary teachers that worked full-time during the 2021-22 school year. The theoretical framework, self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2008; Worth & Van den Brande, 2020), was used to formulate semi-structured interview questions for this case study. For example, before the pandemic, what were the greatest rewards in your job? Furthermore, this chapter includes three sections. The first section includes descriptive data about the participants. The final two sections present the case study findings, including themes that developed from the semi-structured interviews and documents.

Descriptive Data

This study included semi-structured interviews from eight participants. All participants have been in the field of education for over eight years. Additionally, every participant has taught at Ellis Bell for more than three years. The participants are responsible for teaching grades K-5 and subject matters vary from English Language Arts, Math, Science, Social Studies, Art, Special Education, and Media. Table 3 provides additional descriptive data for each participant.

Table 3: Descriptive Data of Participants

Name	*Gender*	*Subject*	*Years in Education*	*Years at Ellis Bell*
Teacher A	Male	All subjects	30 years	4 years
Teacher B	Female	All subjects	23 years	22 years
Teacher C	Female	All subjects	7.5 years	7.5 years
Teacher D	Female	Reading & Math	8 years	8 years
Teacher E	Female	Reading & Math	11 years	6 years
Teacher G	Female	All subjects	12 years	6 years
Teacher H	Male	Media	16 years	16 years
Teacher J	Female	Special Education	20 years	10 years

This study examined retention from the perspectives of teachers who have remained in the classroom for 3 years or more. As has been noted, all participants have been in the field of education for more than seven years and taught at Ellis Bell for more than three years. Thus, indicating that all participants were eligible to participate within this study. The next section introduces the case study findings from the semi-structured interviews and online documents.

Case Study Findings

The first section presents a review of the qualitative analysis and findings, including themes that developed during the coding process. The final sections include an extended review of the research findings that derived from the semi-structure interviews and documents.

Review of the Qualitative Analysis

The interview process included 12 semi-structured interview questions that would further examine the research question. The interview questions allowed participants to provide information about the factors that influence their decision to remain in the field of education. The interview questions were categorized under the following sections:

1. Introductory Questions
2. Intrinsic and Extrinsic Rewards (Before COVID-19)
3. Intrinsic and Extrinsic Rewards (During/In the Aftermath of COVID-19)
4. Challenges (During/In the Aftermath of COVID-19)
5. School Support (During/In the Aftermath of COVID-19)
6. Reducing Teacher Turnover in Elementary Schools
7. Teacher Expectations and Job Satisfaction
8. Closing Question

The analysis process included coding the retention data, to understand the information. After conducting interviews, thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2012) was applied to develop new insights on the factors that influence teacher retention. After reviewing participant responses, themes were created to represent the retention data. A theme was created for each semi-structured interview question. ***Tables 4 through 14*** highlights the themes for each interview question and the participant responses for each theme.

Research Findings (Semi-Structured Interviews)

Semi-structured interview questions were used in this retention study to develop an in-depth understanding of the intrinsic and extrinsic factors that influence teacher retention at Ellis Bell Elementary School. As previously mentioned, thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2012) was applied to develop an understanding on the factors that influence teacher retention and the reasons for turnover. This section includes the research question, semi-structured interview questions, and themes that were established from each question. It is important to note, themes varied across each interview category.

Research Question: What intrinsic and extrinsic factors influence teacher retention in a high-poverty, elementary school? To examine the above research question, the following semi-structured interview questions were utilized to better understand the factors that influence teacher retention.

Table 4: Introductory Question

Introductory Question: What attracted you to the field of education?		
Theme	**Participant Responses**	**Total Number of Responses**
Passion for teaching	• I love learning and working with kids • I love teaching, it is my purpose	4
Philanthropy	• I wanted to give back to the community • It is important for me to work in my community	3
Family tradition	• I come from a family of educators; I always knew I would become a teacher • My great grandmother was a teacher	2

Introductory Question: What attracted you to the field of education? The top three reasons why participants were attracted to the field of education included: (1) A passion for teaching, (2) philanthropy, and (3) family tradition. First, four participants voiced that he/she had a passion for learning and teaching. As stated by Teacher D, "I knew that from like a young age, I just liked working with kids." Correspondingly, Teacher G voiced that she always had a love for teaching. Next, three teachers mentioned philanthropy as the greatest reward.

A participant mentioned that at an early age, their household would have discussions about the community and politics. Teacher A stated, "it sparked something in me that wanted me to give back to my community and I've always seen education as the ground basis for everything." Likewise, two participants expressed that his/her love for the community is why he/she has remained in the field. Furthermore, two participants stated that family tradition was the reason they wanted to become teachers. As stated by Teacher B, "My grandmother was a

teacher and my great, great cousin was a teacher back when they were doing the one room schoolhouses." Other reasons mentioned by one participant, include life's purpose and flexibility (i.e., summer and holiday vacations). The next semi-structured interview question asked participants to reflect on the greatest intrinsic rewards in his/her job before COVID-19.

Rewards (Before COVID-19): Before the pandemic, what were the greatest intrinsic rewards in your job? Before the pandemic, the top three intrinsic rewards mentioned by participants included: (1) Building rapport, (2) student engagement, and (3) being a positive influence for students.

Table 5: Intrinsic Rewards Before COVID-19

Intrinsic Rewards (Before COVID-19) Before the pandemic, what were the greatest rewards in your job?		
Theme	**Participant Responses**	**Total Number of Responses**
Building rapport	• It is important for me to be there for my students, they do not have support at home • I enjoy building relationships with my students' families	5
Student engagement	• They were excited about learning before the pandemic, and I felt like I was making a difference • I love seeing my students' light bulb go off	3
Positive influence	• It is rewarding to know that you can be a positive influence in their lives	1

First, more than half of the participants voiced that building rapport with students and family is the greatest intrinsic reward in their job. Teacher C voiced the following about building rapport with students:

> Being able to talk with the students. At my school there are kids that do not have a lot of support at home. And so being able to be that support for them while they are at school, that is really rewarding. I think for me, it is all about the rapport that I have with the kids that is the most rewarding part to me.

Correspondingly, Teacher J expressed that her rapport with students and families made the student learning process easier. Next, three participants stated that student engagement was the greatest intrinsic reward.

Teacher J expressed that seeing students excited about learning, made her excited to teach and that she was making a difference in her students' lives. Correspondingly, Teacher C expressed that seeing students learn classroom material is intrinsically rewarding. The final intrinsic reward included being a positive influence for students. As voiced by Teacher D, "The students that we serve, like some of them, well, quite a few of them have like questionable home lives. And so, it is rewarding to know that you can be a positive influence in their lives." Overall, participants expressed that building rapport, student engagement, and being a positive influence for students were the greatest intrinsic rewards before the pandemic. Next, participants were asked to reflect on the greatest extrinsic rewards in his/her job before the COVID-19.

Rewards (Before COVID-19): Before the pandemic, what were the greatest extrinsic rewards in your job? Before the pandemic, the greatest extrinsic rewards mentioned by participants included: (1) Teacher support, (2) financial incentives, (3) family schedule, and (4) mentorship.

Table 6: Extrinsic Rewards Before COVID-19

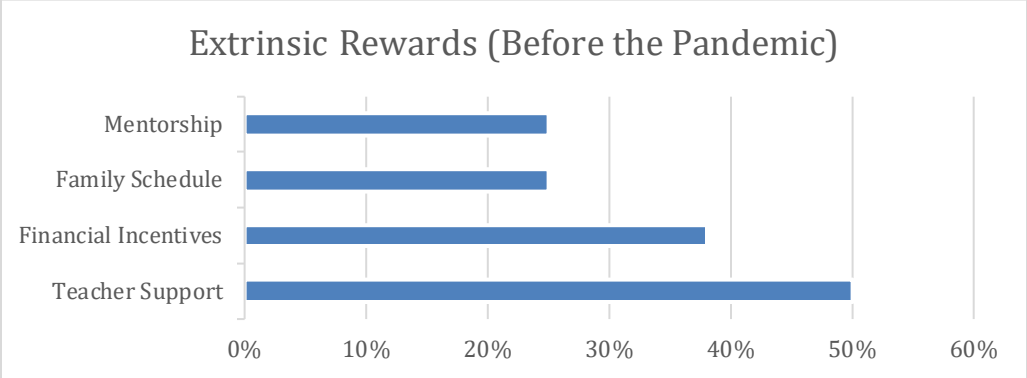
Extrinsic Rewards (Before COVID-19) Before the pandemic, what were the greatest rewards in your job?		
Theme	**Participant Responses**	**Total Number of Responses**
Teacher support	• Being able to help other teachers progress in the classroom • It was easier to collaborate with your colleagues • Parents participated in their child's learning	4
Financial Incentives	• Having a stable paycheck is nice • Public loan forgiveness is big for me	3
Family Schedule	• Being able to accommodate the family's schedule • I love having my child attend school where I work	2
Mentorship	• Kids go to middle school and come back to ask for advice • My former students still seek advice from me	2

First, four participants mentioned that teacher support (from administrators, teachers, and parents) was the greatest extrinsic reward before the pandemic. Teacher H voiced it was rewarding to help other teachers "progress along their field in the classrooms." Regarding parent support, Teacher E voiced that "parents were more involved" before the pandemic. Teacher E continued to voice that parents believed it was a non-negotiable for their child to go to school and for parents to be engaged in their student's learning. The second greatest extrinsic reward mentioned by three teachers included financial incentives, such as paychecks and benefits.

As stated by Teacher D, "Having a stable paycheck is nice. Like it is not a great paying job, but you do get benefits like insurance retirement and public service loan forgiveness is a big one for me because I have a lot of student loans." Another participant felt terrible for mentioning paycheck as an extrinsic reward. Yet, she believed paychecks are extrinsically rewarding. Next, being able to accommodate the family's schedule was mentioned by two participants.

Teacher B voiced that teaching allowed her to be on her son's schedule. She continued to express that the teacher schedule is the main reason she continues to teach. Furthermore, two participants explained that former students seeking mentorship was the greatest extrinsic reward before the pandemic. As expressed by Teacher A, "The children that have left Ellis, come back to the school because they still seek the mentorship. Also, I continue to see students that I want to offer more consulting to about college and funding for college." Correspondingly, Teacher stated that former students will graduate from high school and share his/her success story. Teacher H continued to express that these mentorships between staff and students are extrinsically rewarding. Other rewards mentioned by one participant included student achievement, structure, and accountability.

Figure 10: Extrinsic Rewards (Before the Pandemic)



Next, participants discussed the greatest intrinsic rewards in his/her job during/in the aftermath of COVID-19.

Rewards (During/In the Aftermath of COVID-19): During/in the aftermath of the pandemic, what were the greatest intrinsic rewards in your job? During/in the aftermath of the pandemic, the greatest intrinsic rewards mentioned by participants included family schedule and student engagement.

Table 7: Intrinsic Rewards During/In the Aftermath of COVID-19

Intrinsic Rewards (During/In the Aftermath of COVID-19) During/in the aftermath of the pandemic, what were the greatest rewards in your job?		
Theme	**Participant Responses**	**Total Number of Responses**
Family schedule	• I was able to spend more time with my kids who were not in school • I was able to keep my children safe while still working	4
Student engagement	• It was nice seeing students apply what they learned in virtual setting to the real world • They enjoy completing activities online because it gave them something to do	2

First, four teachers expressed personal reasons such as family's schedule was the greatest intrinsic reward during/in the aftermath of the pandemic. For example, Teacher E expressed that she was able to stay home with her daughter, who was not in school. Teacher E continued to voice that working from home allowed her to keep her daughter safe during/in the aftermath of

the pandemic. Moreover, Teacher A expressed the following about his family's schedule and spending more time at home:

> As an educator, although I was working, I was able to peek more into their classroom and their learning environment and hear their work, their communication with their teachers. So that was a huge reward, was to be able to see my children who were in kindergarten and first grade, and second grade at the time, see their learning process and be a part of it.

Furthermore, student engagement was the second greatest intrinsic reward mentioned by two participants. One teacher expressed that students were not as engaged during virtual learning. Yet, when Ellis Bell transition back to in-person learning, it was rewarding to see students "take what we were trying to do online and be able to do it in the classroom" (Teacher C). Another participant expressed that students that come from instable homes, were excited to return to in-person learning (Teacher D). According to Teacher D, "They like the fact that they get to participate in whatever things we have going on, because they have a lot more opportunities than they would at home." Overall, being able to teach from home and student engagement were the most common intrinsic rewards mentioned by participants. The following interview question asked participants to discuss the greatest extrinsic rewards before the pandemic.

Rewards (Before COVID-19): During/in the aftermath of the pandemic, what were the greatest extrinsic rewards in your job? During/in the aftermath of the pandemic, the greatest extrinsic rewards expressed by participants included: (1) No rewards, (2) financial incentives, and (3) supporting students. First, one extrinsic reward mentioned by three participants were no rewards due to stress caused by the pandemic. One participant voiced that because of in-person learning during the pandemic, you could not keep your family safe. To illustrate this point,

Teacher J expressed that she has family members with underlying health conditions. Teacher J continued to express that she was stressed and afraid of bringing the virus home to her family.

Another participant could not think of any extrinsic rewards because of the school's grading system. Teacher H voiced the following about not being able to fail students:

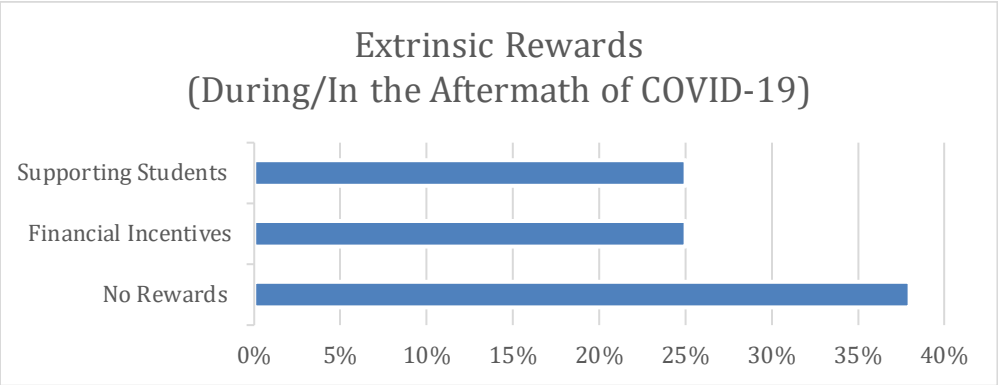
> Kids can, they are borderline skipping grades. Like it is far less obstacles that they need to overcome to go to the next grade level. I think it hurts because they get to a grade level where they cannot automatically go anymore. They cannot skip it. They got to pass and do the work and they cannot do it. And I cannot give you that reward yet. As far as the elementary kids, I wonder how they are surviving, during the pandemic because they were allowed to pass onto the next grade level and yet they may not have necessarily been ready.

Given these points, participants believed that extrinsic rewards did not exist because of stress and the school's grading system. Yet, three participants believed that job security, stable paycheck, and supporting students were the greatest extrinsic rewards.

One participant stated that the greatest reward was being able to teach from home and "if you contracted Covid, you got the time off, the stability of knowing that I was still getting a check when so many people were not" (Teacher B). Similarly, Teacher G voiced being able to work full-time while others were not, was the greatest extrinsic reward. Furthermore, two participants voiced that being able to support students was the greatest extrinsic reward during/in the aftermath of COVID-19. To illustrate this point, Teacher D expressed that providing support for students who were struggling at home was the greatest reward. In like manner, Teacher B expressed that supporting students with constant instruction during challenging times was the greatest extrinsic reward. In sum, some participants voiced that no rewards were evident during

the pandemic. Whereas other participants voiced that financial incentives and supporting students were the greatest rewards during/in the aftermath of the pandemic.

Figure 11: Extrinsic Rewards (During/in the Aftermath of COVID-19)



The following question asked participants to discuss the greatest intrinsic challenges in his/her job during/in the aftermath of COVID-19.

Challenges (During/In the Aftermath of COVID-19): During/in the aftermath of the pandemic, what were the greatest intrinsic challenges in your job? During/in the aftermath of the pandemic, the greatest intrinsic challenges expressed by participants included: (1) Personal factors, (2) low staff morale and (3) social media.

Table 8: Intrinsic Challenges During/In the Aftermath of COVID-19

Intrinsic Challenges (During/In the Aftermath of COVID-19) During/in the aftermath of the pandemic, what were the greatest challenges in your job?		
Theme	**Participant Responses**	**Total Number of Responses**
Personal factors	• Having somewhere for my kids to go while I work • Not being able to bring my children to work	3
Staff morale	• The people at work no longer talked to each other • COVID-19 separated people, no one showed they cared about each other	2
Social media	• Kids can access whatever they want, they are not looking at positive influences • You could not control what students were looking at on social media during virtual learning	2

First, personal factors such as childcare, created financial burdens for teachers. To explain, during virtual learning, teachers reported to work and instructed their students via computers. Yet, during simultaneous teaching (a combination of virtual and face-to-face instruction), teachers were no longer allowed to bring their children to work, therefore creating a financial burden for teachers. As voiced by Teacher G, "My greatest challenge was having somewhere for my child to go." Next, a second personal factor included participants having to assist their sons/daughters while working from home.

Teacher C voiced that it was difficult balancing her son's schoolwork and instructing her students. Whereas another participant expressed that personal factors such as health concerns was the great greatest intrinsic challenge. Teacher E voiced the following about health concerns:

> I felt like it was unfair that I had to expose myself to COVID-19 and I could bring it home because they were forcing us to be in a building versus teaching at home until we were able to figure out what was going on. I feel like that was a challenge having to determine am I going to go to work or make money to take care of my family? Or do I care about my family's health more and not to go to work?

Teacher E, continued to express that choosing between staying safe or going to work was the greatest intrinsic challenge during/in the aftermath of the pandemic.

The second greatest intrinsic challenge mentioned by two participants was staff morale. One participant expressed that administrators are not hospitable, which trickles down to the staff. Teacher J stated, "you spend so much time at your job, seems like you would want to have a family-oriented type environment where you felt people were concerned about you." Correspondingly, another participant voiced that after COVID-19, teachers no longer talked to each other. As voiced by Teacher E, "When things happen, deaths, people get sick, we didn't

hear about it, people kind of separated, they kind of felt like they were by themselves." Teacher E continued to voice that staff members no longer supported one another; thus, staff morale was no longer evident.

The third greatest intrinsic challenge mentioned by two participants was the influence of social media on students. One participant communicated that social media had a negative influence on students during the pandemic. Teacher H voiced the following about the influence of social media on students:

> I think the attention spans for kids have just gotten shorter. The communication between adolescents it is just bad. It is borderline disrespectful. I think a lot of it has to do with the social media aspect because once you put technology in children's hands, they can access whatever they want to. Whether we are trying to police it or not, they are not looking at positive influences on social media outlets. Whether it is breaking things in the school or intentionally trying to embarrass teachers or other classmates.

Correspondingly, another participant voiced that not being able to monitor how students were using technology and social media during virtual learning was the greatest intrinsic challenge (Teacher A). According to Teacher A, having to sit on a computer for five to six hours a day and not being able to control what students were doing on the computer was "draining at times." To summarize, participants expressed that teacher morale, personal factors and the influence of social media were the greatest intrinsic challenges during/in the aftermath of the pandemic. The following question asked participants to discuss the greatest extrinsic challenges in his/her job during/in the aftermath of the pandemic.

Challenges (During/In the Aftermath of COVID-19): During/in the aftermath of the pandemic, what were the greatest extrinsic challenges in your job? During/in the aftermath of

the pandemic, the greatest extrinsic challenges expressed by participants included: (1) Teacher burnout, (2) testing accountability and (3) access to technology.

Table 9: Extrinsic Challenges During/In the Aftermath of COVID-19

Extrinsic Challenges (During/In the Aftermath of COVID-19) During/in the aftermath of the pandemic, what were the greatest challenges in your job?		
Theme	**Participant Responses**	**Total Number of Responses**
Teacher burnout	• Virtual and simultaneous teaching was challenging and stressful • We spent too many hours on the computer • Students were not motivated and that was hard on everyone	4
Testing accountability	• Administration wanted to see results; it is all about the data • Our principal wanted test scores to increase	2
Access to technology	• Many students did not have access to devices	1

First, four participants communicated that teacher burnout was caused by simultaneous teaching, student motivation, and student engagement. Teacher A voiced that simultaneous teaching was extremely challenging. Teachers spent hours teaching on the computer, resulting in teaching burnout. Similarly, Teacher D expressed that it was challenging to teach virtually to kindergartners for eight hours a day. As voiced by Teacher D, "They're little, and we could not do a lot of hands on and collaborative activities, and it's just different through the screen." Whereas one participant expressed that teacher burnout was caused by the lack of student motivation.

Teacher H voiced that students were aware of the no failing policy and teachers had to allow students to go to the next grade level. "I have had conversations with them, and they feel why do I have to do work? They are going to pass me anyway." (Teacher H). Though Teacher B expressed that teacher burnout was due to lack of student engagement. Teacher B stated that the greatest challenge was "trying to keep everybody engaged at the same time." In sum, participants voiced that teacher burnout, caused by simultaneous teaching, student motivation, and student

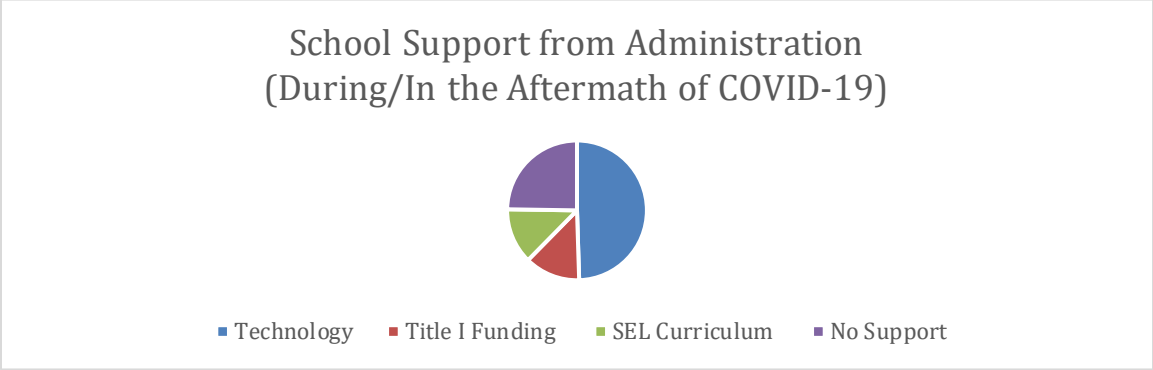
engagement were the greatest intrinsic challenges. Additionally, participants communicated that testing accountability was the greatest intrinsic challenge during/in the aftermath of the pandemic.

Teacher B voiced that administrators wanted student test scores to continue to increase. According to Teacher B administrators were focused on student data and wanted teachers "to produce." Similarly, as voiced by Teacher H, "It is more about scores. It is about data instead of it being about making an overall better student." Teacher H continued to express that education is no longer about learning to read, it is about data and scores. On the contrary, one participant mentioned that students having access to technology was the greatest challenge.

As has been noted, an additional extrinsic challenge included access to technology. To explain, older students were given devices, but kindergartners were not. According to Teacher D access to technology was a barrier for kindergarten. Teacher D continued to express that this technology barrier caused the following issues for teachers: (1) Student participation, (2) attendance, and (3) parent engagement. Nonetheless, the greatest extrinsic challenges included teacher burnout, testing accountability and access to technology. The following question asked participants to discuss school support during the pandemic.

School Support (During/In the Aftermath of COVID-19): During/in the aftermath of the pandemic, how were you supported by administration, teachers, and your students' parents? During/in the aftermath of the pandemic, participants stated administration provided support by offering the following: (1) Technology, (2) Title I funding and (4) Social and Emotional Learning Curriculum (SEL).

Figure 12: School Support from Administration (During/In the Aftermath of COVID-19)



First, half of the participants voiced they received support from administration. Two participants voiced that administration made technology accessible for staff. According to Teacher A, "administration provided support by giving us the technology and at least making sure that we had the tools to start to be effective in our online teaching" (p.4). Similarly, Teacher H communicated that administration did a "better job of putting technology on people's hands, making it accessible all around." On the contrary, one participant voiced that administration provided Title 1 funding for virtual learning.

Teacher B expressed that administration gave teachers $200 for virtual teaching materials. Teachers were allowed to buy any materials using the school's Amazon account. Furthermore, one participant voiced administration provided support by implementing a new social and emotional learning curriculum (Teacher E). According to Teacher E students were dealing with challenges at home. For this reason, administration implemented a program to help students navigate through social and emotional issues. Teachers were responsible for teaching lessons that would build emotional wellness. On the contrary, two participants stated they did not receive support from administration.

As previously mentioned, participants expressed that administration did not provide teachers with support. Teacher J stated the following about the lack of support from administration:

> The administration, when we would meet through teams, they would tell us, if there is anything that you need let me know. And I remember an instance, I reached out and nobody really responded. I mean, it was like no response. I was like, okay, that is not being supported.

Correspondingly, Teacher D expressed that teachers did not receive any support from the main administrators (principal and assistant principal). Teacher D expressed that administrators did know how to support teachers because everyone was navigating through the challenges of the pandemic. To summarize, majority of the participants expressed administrators provided teachers with technology, Title I funding, and SEL curriculum.

Next, six participants voiced that they received support from other teachers. More than half of the participants mentioned that teachers collaborated and shared knowledge with other teachers. They would "help try to push the agenda of overall building better students" (Teacher H). Correspondingly, Teacher G explained that teachers would share and analyze lesson plans with one another. Another participant voiced teachers would plan together and share ideas on how to keep students engaged (Teacher B). On the contrary, one participant voiced that teacher collaboration was different during virtual learning, compared to in-person learning.

According to Teacher A virtual collaboration was different from being able to collaborate within the building. Teacher A communicated the following about teacher collaboration during in-person learning:

> You felt a little more isolated, obviously, because you are just working from home and the only time, you are really communicating with them is obviously in the teacher's meetings and those are online and there is more distractions when people are working from home and have their children in the background.

Nonetheless, participants expressed that teacher collaboration was present during/in the aftermath of the pandemic. Yet, collaboration was more present during in-person learning. Next, half of the participants expressed they received support from parents.

Four participants voiced parents supported teachers by communicating with teachers and being active in his/her child's learning. To elaborate, parents had direct access to teachers during virtual learning. One participant stated, "they didn't have to go through a channel of emailing or calling the school" (Teacher A). Teacher A continue to express that parents would request a meeting during virtual instruction and redirect students to pay attention. Likewise, another participant described the parental support as "having a classroom mom or dad with you" (Teacher C). Teacher C conveyed an open line of communication between parents and teachers was evident during the pandemic.

Furthermore, during in-person learning two participants stated that parents would bring in supplies and treats for students. As stated by Teacher G, "The parents seemed to step up and provided supplies. Everybody wanted their child to be safe." Whereas Teacher B communicated that parents would help make goodie bags for students that participated in face-to-face instruction. On the contrary, four participants voiced that they did not receive support from parents. Teacher E stated that parents were dealing with personal challenges. Parents were "trying to survive, they just felt like, oh, here's a teacher with another problem that I have to deal with" (Teacher E). Comparably, Teacher D expressed parents were hard to track down and they

did not take their child's attendance seriously. In contrast, Teacher H voiced parents never offered their services or help. Overall, the amount of support received from parents varied across all participant interviews.

Reducing Teacher Turnover in Elementary Schools: When you hear teachers discuss teacher turnover, what factors are consistently mentioned? When participants discuss turnover, the following factors are consistently mentioned: (1) Administrative support, (2) student behavior and (3) teacher workload.

Table 10: Reducing Turnover

Reducing Teacher Turnover in Elementary Schools When you hear teachers discuss teacher turnover, what factors are consistently mentioned?		
Theme	**Participant Responses**	**Total Number of Responses**
Administrative support	• Administrators do not have a good relationship with teachers • Administrators want veteran teachers to comply • My principal is not the forgiving type, she holds grudges	7
Student behavior	• Behavior just took a huge spike • Students are out of control	4
Teacher workload	• There is too much paperwork • Too many meetings and paperwork to complete	4

First, seven participants expressed the lack of administrative support has an impact on teacher turnover. For example, two participants voiced that certain administrators and teachers do not collaborate well with one another. According to Teacher G, "A veteran teacher may be used to doing it one way," yet the administrator wants the veteran to comply and teach in a certain matter. For this reason, teachers may leave the school (Teacher G). Likewise, Teacher J stated, "half of the people that left the building, I believe left because of lack of support from administration." Other participants discussed how the lack of support affected administrator-teacher relationships.

As voiced by Teacher B, there is a lack of support and the primary administrator is "not the forgiving type, she holds grudges, and you'll be paying for sins years later." In like manner, Teacher E expressed that the principal is not a compassionate person and did not communicate serious matters to the staff. Teacher E voiced the following:

> Teachers felt like things that were going on, they were not informed of. An example could be a COVID outbreak. If a teacher had interactions with that student, they felt like they should have been notified. The principal was following a protocol, but people just felt like their safety was not being taken into consideration. So that was a reason people left.

Similarly, one participant voiced that administration did not protect teachers during COVID-19. According to Teacher H, administration "did not do enough for the students who remain sick and who might not follow" safety protocols. For this reason, seven participants felt that lack of administrative support was the primary reason for an increase in turnover rates.

Next, four participants mentioned that student behavior is the second leading factor for teacher turnover. Teacher E stated the following about student behavior:

> A lot was behavior. The students were just coming back into the building. So, they are dealing with new people. They are starting to interact with people. And the behavior just took a huge spike. And it was a lot for some teachers, where they just felt like it was not worth continuing to teach.

Correspondingly, Teacher D mentioned behavior of students has a significant impact on turnover. Teacher G also expressed that student behavior is an issue and that students often butt heads with staff members. For this reason, participants believe that student behavior has caused an increase in teacher turnover at Ellis Bell.

Furthermore, four participants communicated teacher workload is consistently mentioned when teachers discuss teacher turnover. As voiced by Teacher C, workload is one reason for teachers wanting to resign from Ellis Bell. According to Teacher A, teachers are overwhelmed by the "paperwork, obviously lesson planning, and too many meetings that appear to be unnecessary." Also, Arden County changes curriculum every two to three years, resulting in too much work for teachers (Teacher H). For this reason, participants voiced that teacher workload has an impact on turnover. Next, participants were asked to reflect on the measures implemented by the district, to reduce turnover rates.

What measures, if any, have your district implemented to reduce teacher turnover rates during this time? The measures implemented by the district to reduce teacher turnover rates included financial incentives and district lesson plans.

Table 11: Reducing Turnover – District Level

Reducing Teacher Turnover in Elementary Schools What measures if any have your district implemented to reduce teacher turnover rates during this time?		
Theme	**Participant Responses**	**Total Number of Responses**
Financial incentives	• District gave teachers raises and bonuses • District increased salary steps • Sign-on bonuses for special education teachers	4
District support	• Teachers were responsible for reviewing district plans • We had to analyze and vet the district plans	2

First, four participants conveyed the district implemented financial incentives such as raises and bonuses to increase retention rates. For example, the district gave teachers raises and an increase in salary steps (Teacher H). Two participants voiced the district gave sign-on bonuses to special education need teachers. Additionally, the district offered bonuses to teachers that taught summer school during the pandemic (Teacher J). It is important to note, bonuses will

attract teachers but not necessarily retain them (Teacher J). Teacher J continued to voice the following about bonuses not being an effective measure:

> If people get hired, you have a situation where they go ahead, and they get hired into the district and they only stay that one year. Then they end up leaving the district, even though they were able to get this raise. When they saw the amount of work and the lack of support, I think people are just like, money is not everything. I am not sure if this would be useful information, but I did hear of a special education teacher that got hired, like the beginning of the school year. And during pre-planning, first week of school already quit and her sign on bonus was more than $5,000. Then the teacher quit. So obviously they must have made the job duties and responsibilities sound easy. Which was not what they expected after they started. Cause sometimes you can be promised something when they hire you and then once you get into the building, it stops.

For this reason, Teacher J felt that the financial incentives is not an effective measure.

According to Teacher D, financial incentives are helpful but are not enough for teachers who are determined to leave the field of education. Also, sign-on bonuses are not effective when administrators are hiring substitute teachers versus highly qualified teachers (Teacher H). As an illustration, Teacher H stated the following about sign-on bonuses for substitutes and certified teachers:

> I tell you for qualified individuals who might have had a teaching background that really wanted to settle. Yes and no. I am seeing more subs being hired as full time and I do not know if that is the best thing to do because you have students who are coming out of college, who are outright asking to be teachers. And yet, we get a couple of them. Subs, no knock on who they are as people, but the qualifications are a little bit strenuous when we are talking about being a full-time teacher. And you are asking to apply the curriculum, that the county and your admin require. That is a little tough. I do not know if the training that they have been receiving solidifies that I do not know (p.4).

Given this point, Teacher H continued to express that bonuses are effective for highly qualified teachers but not for substitute teachers who may not continue in the profession.

Conversely, two participants voiced the district implemented lesson plans to reduce turnover rates. To explain, the district created ELA and Math lesson plans for K-5 teachers. Yet, teachers were responsible for reviewing and analyzing the plans (Teacher A). Teacher B stated,

"Arden County has someone that does the daily math for you, but then the teachers must go through and gauge the integrity of it." Teacher B continued to express the district lesson plans increased teachers' stress levels.

Equally important, teachers are not "reinventing the wheel as much anymore" (Teacher A). Whether this measure is effective varied across participant interviews. Teacher G felt the district lesson plans gave teachers more time to focus on classroom management. Additionally, the lesson plans were universal and gave all teachers the same blueprint (Teacher A). As voiced by Teacher A, teachers no longer had to guess what to teach. Whereas Teacher B expressed that teachers having to vet and analyze district lesson plans caused teachers to have to do more work. As stated by Teacher B, "And so if that's someone's job to do the lesson plans for me, why do I have to go back over their work." Therefore, Teacher B felt the district plans were not effective. To conclude, half of the participants believed the district lesson plans were an effective measure. Next, participants discussed the measures implemented by the school, to reduce turnover rates.

What measures, if any, have your school implemented to reduce teacher turnover rates during this time? Do you think those measures have been effective? The measures implemented by the school to reduce teacher turnover rates included the following: (1) Administrative support, (2) work-life-balance, and teacher recognition.

Table 12: Reducing Turnover – School Level

Reducing Teacher Turnover in Elementary Schools What measures if any have your school implemented to reduce teacher turnover rates during this time?		
Theme	**Participant Responses**	**Total Number of Responses**
Administrative Support	• We had double planning time, which created more paperwork	1
Work-life-balance	• We were finally able to leave early like other schools	1
Teacher Recognition	• Monthly teacher celebrations • They would give us snacks and tacos for lunch	3

First, one participant voiced that administration offered additional planning time during the school day (Teacher B). As voiced by Teacher B, administration tried to "be a little more teacher friendly with the more planning time so you can get a little more done in school and not have to take so much home." This measure was not considered effective because administration gave teachers additional work during the double planning periods (Teacher B). The second measure implemented by the school to reduce turnover rates included work-life-balance, hence early teacher dismissal.

Prior to the pandemic, teachers were expected to remain in the building until 3:45 p.m., yet school was dismissed at 2:45 p.m. Furthermore, teachers had to stay later than other teachers in the district, thus causing teacher burnout. According to Teacher A teachers could not "get to appointments, they couldn't get to their kids, and it just wasn't realistic anymore." As a result, teachers left the profession. For this reason, during/in the aftermath of the pandemic, administrators allowed teachers to leave after dismissal. Teacher A believed that early teacher dismissal was an effective measure. Next, the third measure mentioned by one participant included increasing teacher morale by offering prizes and gifts.

Administration tried to recognize teachers more during staff meetings (Teacher C). Administration would offer gifts and prizes to teachers that had the highest I-Ready math and ELA scores. Yet, Teacher C stated, "any gift or any type of prize is wonderful, but we can only get so many jeans passes or so many things like that, but it's not quite as high on our list of prizes." Also, administration would offer teachers extended lunch or snacks (Teacher C). Teacher C continued to express that prizes, gifts and lunches were not an effective measure implemented by the administration. Meanwhile, three participants voiced that the administration did not implement any measures to reduce teacher turnover.

When teachers left Ellis Bell, administration would order IEP teachers to fulfill lead teacher roles (Teacher E). Thus, IEP teachers were pulled away from his/her original assignment and duties (Teacher E). Administration voiced to IEP teachers that teacher quality has shifted, thus making it harder to hire teachers (Teacher E). Given this point, Teacher E believed administration did not "put any incentives to get people to stay or to get new people" and they were content with making IEP teachers the lead teacher. Additionally, Teacher C believed that administration has not done anything to reduce turnover rates. Likewise, Teacher G voiced administration has not "done anything and the school itself, the cultures changing." Overall, three participants argued that administration has not implemented any measures to reduce teacher turnover rates. Next, participants reflected on the factors that contribute to him/her remaining in the classroom.

Teacher Expectations and Job Satisfaction: In the current environment, what are the factors that are contributing most to your staying in teaching? The most mentioned factors contributing to teachers staying in teaching included the following: (1) Passion for teaching, (2) financial factors and (3) personal obligations.

Table 12: Teacher Expectations and Job Satisfaction

Teacher Expectations and Job Satisfaction In the current environment, what are the factors that are contributing most to your staying in teaching?		
Theme	**Participant Responses**	**Total Number of Responses**
Passion for teaching and philanthropy	• My love for children is why I teach • Teaching is my calling	4
Financial factors	• I need my health insurance and other benefits • I am the person responsible for bringing home income and until my other job brings home just as much money, I cannot leave	3
Personal obligations	• I must work because I have a child	1

First, four participants voiced their passion for teaching and giving back to the community is the reason they continue to teach. According to Teacher H, his passion for

teaching and love for children is why he continues teaching at Ellis Bell. Moreover, two participants voiced they love children and teaching children is their purpose in life. Another participant voiced that he enjoys teaching yet being able to give back to the community is the most principal factor. To illustrate this point, Teacher A stated the following about giving back to the community:

> It is a philanthropic effort for me. I like spending the beginning of my day working in a school now because it is in my community. I work in the Black community. I want to change lives there and what better way to do it than from 7:30 in the morning till 2:30 in the afternoon.

In addition to passion for teaching and philanthropic reasons, three participants voiced that financial reasons are the motivating factor for staying in teaching.

One participant expressed that health insurance benefits is the most contributing factor for continuing to teach. As an illustration, Teacher J stated the following:

> Until my personal business can bring in more than what I bring home from Arden County, I stay for that. Also, I have a husband that does have underlying conditions. I carry the health insurance. It is not time to leave, but I will be honest if the business was bringing in more than what I was bringing home, I will figure it out.

In a comparable manner, another participant expressed that she is solely responsible for bringing in income for the household (Teacher D). Hence, a stable salary is why she continues to teach. Also, Teacher H stated, "pay helps me take care of my family at home." Therefore, financial incentives has an impact on a teacher's decision to remain/leave the classroom.

The final factor mentioned by one participant included personal obligations. This participant expressed that she has a son in elementary school. Teacher B discussed that her son is

the primary reason she must continue working. Yet, Teacher B has considered leaving every year. Given this point, the next section includes whether participants have considered leaving the classroom.

Figure 13: Factors Contributing Most to your Staying in Teaching

Have you considered leaving teaching? If so, why? Six participants voiced that he/she has considered leaving teaching. The reasons for leaving the classroom varied across all interviews.

Table 13: Teacher Expectations and Job Satisfaction Part Two

Teacher Expectations and Job Satisfaction Have you considered leaving teaching?		
Theme	**Participant Responses**	**Total Number of Responses**
Better opportunities	• I would leave for a better opportunity or a teacher support position • I may leave and become a baseball coach	4
Teacher workload	• Too many demands • I would leave because of the demands, paperwork, and meetings	3
Financial factors	• Pay is important • Teacher salary needs to be increased	3

First, one participant said that better opportunities would be the motivating factor for leaving. Teacher A voiced that he had an opportunity to work in the entertainment industry with well-known R&B and rap artists. Yet, due to philanthropic reasons, he has not left the education field (Teacher A). Another participant expressed that a sports opportunity would be the reason he would leave the classroom. As stated by Teacher H, "my true passion is baseball, that's what I would want to do and if the situation ever comes to where I become full-time it might be a

situation where I might leave." On the contrary, other participants voiced that he/she would leave teaching for a teacher support position.

Teacher G mentioned she has considered not teaching but would rather help support teachers outside of the classroom. Teacher G continued to express that student behavior, salary, and lack of support from parents are the primary reasons for considering leaving the classroom. Teacher D also voiced that the teacher expectations, teacher salary and teacher demands would be the motivating factor leaving. As stated by Teacher D, "It's definitely crossed my mind just because of the demands of the job, like all the extra stuff, the paperwork, the lesson plans, the insane expectations." Another participant expressed the demands of the job would be the reason for leaving. To illustrate this point, Teacher B stated the following:

> I am actively looking now and because I am not feeling it. I do not feel appreciated, and I feel overwhelmed, and my work is throwing my work life balance off. I would like to find a job where at the end of my day, I do not have to go home and think about, oh, I got to do lesson plans, I got to do grades, I got to call parents. It is too much (p.4)

Given this point, majority of participants expressed that they would leave teaching due to better opportunities, teacher workload, and financial factors. On the contrary, one participant communicated she is unsure if she would stay.

As previously mentioned, one participant stated that she is unsure if she would leave the classroom. According to this participant, teaching autonomy has shifted over the years, therefore affecting her decision to remain or leave the field. As an illustration, Teacher E voiced the following about teacher autonomy:

> To be honest, I am on the fence of if I want to continue to be a teacher. And the reason being is I feel like when I first started teaching the expectations of doing what is in the best interest of the student was at the forefront. I feel like I was supported. I feel like when I had conversations with the administration it was well, what is your opinion? Well,

> we must do this because this is what the district is requiring. As a teacher, if I were to give my opinion, well, I know this student, I work with this student, this is not what is in the best interest of the student. I feel like we do not take that into consideration. So that makes me feel like what am I doing? Am I helping children? Or am I hurting them? I am having thoughts on if I want to continue to be a teacher. I do not know (p.5).

Teacher E continued to express that she is unsure whether to continue teaching. However, the lack of teacher autonomy would be the primary reason for why she would leave teaching.

The final participant voiced that she has not considered leaving teaching. Teacher C voiced that if she won the lottery, she would use the money to improve her classroom. Overall, majority of the participants stated they have considered leaving for distinct reasons. Whereas two participants stated they are unsure or would not leave the classroom. Next, participants discussed the importance of salary when deciding to stay/leave the field of education.

What role does salary play in your decision to stay/leave the field of education? Five participants voiced that salary plays a key role in their decision to stay/leave the field of education. The reasons why salary is important varied across participant interviews. First, one participant voiced that salary is the main reason he continues to teach (Teacher H). Teacher G also voiced that salary plays a huge role in her decision to stay/leave the field of education. In like manner, Teacher D stated the following about the importance of salary:

> Well, the stability of the salary is why I stay. Like I am the only income for my house. I have four kids and I must have a stable income. So, it is important. But it' less then I feel teachers deserve. And it is also why I would pursue something different. Like inflation has been difficult. Like after the pandemic, inflation hit hard and that is like a big reason that what we make is not enough, because our salary is not increasing, everything else is increasing.

Correspondingly, another participant expressed that teachers do not make enough money and he has considered leaving for a better opportunity.

According to Teacher E, it is important to think about other job opportunities that would not negatively impact his households' wants/needs. As stated by Teacher E, "What are jobs that I would be able to do, that makes the same amount of money that would not change my household. I am just sticking with the profession because I have not found a job that supports the salary that I have." Therefore, salary has an impact on Teacher E's decision to stay/leave the profession. In like manner, Teacher B mentioned, "if I wasn't making this consistent salary, I would've been gone." On the contrary, three participants believe salary does not play a role in his/her decision to stay/leave the profession.

One participant stated that she makes more money before she entered the profession (Teacher C). She is also aware that there are jobs that will pay employees more. Furthermore, Teacher J argues that teachers do not enter the profession to make money, thus salary is not important. The final participant voiced that salary is not a key factor because giving back to children attracted him/her to the profession. As stated by Teacher A, "My motivating factor was the children. I still just do it for that reason and spiritually and personally, I think God rewards me for that." Teacher A believes that salary is not a significant factor in his decision to continue or leave the profession. Given the circumstances, more than half of the participants believe that salary is important. Whereas the remaining participants believe salary does not play a significant role in his/her decision to stay/leave the workforce.

Closing Question: What can policymakers/administrators do to encourage teachers to remain in the field of education? Participants discussed the following strategies for policymakers and administrators to consider when encouraging teachers to remain in the field of education: (1)

Support teachers, (2) offer teacher autonomy, (3) increase financial incentives, (4) value teachers and (5) support families and communities.

Table 14: Closing Question

Closing Question What can policymakers/administrators do to encourage teachers to remain in the field of education?		
Theme	**Participant Responses**	**Total Number of Responses**
Support Teachers	• They should adopt a school and listen to teacher concerns • Have real conversations with teachers and ask them what they need	4
Teacher Autonomy	• Administrators should trust our professional knowledge • They should offer more autonomy to teachers	4
Financial Incentives	• It is simple, pay teachers more • Create budgets that provide teachers with additional money	3
Value teachers	• Retention comes down to how you feel at work • They should recognize us more	3
Support families/communities	• Our families need more support • They should give parents/communities additional assistance and resources.	2

Four teachers voiced that policymakers/administrators should support teachers by talking and listening to teachers. For example, one participant discussed that policymakers should come into the schools and have personal conversations with teachers. Teacher E stated the following about administrators having conversations with teachers:

> Come into the schools and just have one on one conversations. That is not about work, you know, how are you doing? What are some things going on in your life that we can support you with that has nothing to do with school. Just making it more personable would help. I feel like they should talk more with the staff to try to find things that can keep teachers. I feel like if they were to have more conversations with teachers, they could figure out that teachers are unhappy and what things at a particular school would make those teachers happy to keep them there. I feel like when teachers leave it is oh this person left. But why did they leave? That is not being asked." (p.6).

In like manner, Teacher B voiced policymakers/administrators should listen to teacher suggestions, make teachers feel validated, and "at least pretend to care." Given this point,

participants shared that it is imperative that policymakers/administrators have authentic conversations with teachers, thus, to reduce teacher turnover.

Next, four participants voiced that policymakers/administrators should offer teachers a greater amount of teacher autonomy. For example, Teacher D stated that if leaders "understood what goes on in a classroom, they would understand that if a teacher is good at their job, they know what their students need best." Therefore, policymakers/administrators should offer more autonomy to teachers. Also, Teacher B mentioned that leaders should just let teachers teach instead of focusing on standards being met. Teacher B continued to voice that standards and classroom expectations contribute to student learning, "but a lot of its tedious and it's too much." Another participant expressed that leaders could offer autonomy by refraining from micromanaging and trusting teacher judgement.

Teacher C expressed that teachers are held to a high standard with completing lesson plans. However, it is unnecessary for leaders to micromanage every detail within lesson planning. On the contrary, one participant discussed increasing teacher autonomy by reducing the number of teacher evaluations. Teacher A stated, "I feel like teachers when they reach a certain point of tenure. They should be given respect to teach and not be evaluated 10-15 times a year." Given these points, participants expressed that an important strategy for policymakers and administrators to implement is to offer teachers more autonomy.

Third, three participants communicated policymakers/administrators should increase financial incentives, such as teacher pay. According to Teacher G, the first thing policymakers should implement to reduce turnover rates is paying teachers more. Likewise, Teacher A communicated teacher salaries should increase and be comparable to other careers. Teacher A continued to voice policymakers must create "budgets that provide teachers additional money,

stipends, rewards, and all kinds of other things that can increase their salaries." Correspondingly, Teacher E stated the following reason for why increasing teacher pay is important:

> I feel like one of the biggest things is to pay teachers. My reasoning for that is teaching has changed over the years, but I feel that the pay really has not, teachers are required to do more. We must spend a lot of our personal time, or I am sorry our work time during our personal time. And I just feel like we are not compensated for that.

In general, participants shared that revisiting teacher pay scales is a key factor to consider when aiming to reduce teacher turnover.

The fourth strategy mentioned by three participants included making teachers feel valued. For example, policymakers/administrators must value teachers to eliminate retention issues. As argued by Teacher C, "Retention comes down to how you feel at work. If you do not feel valued, if you do not feel that what you are doing is even making a difference, then you do not have a need to or want to stay" (Teacher C). Additionally, Teacher E stated leaders can make teachers feel respected and valued by having more celebrations for them. Conversely, Teacher A expressed that teachers would feel respected and valued once the community respects the teaching profession. Teacher A stated the following about respecting teachers:

> The community needs to show respect to K-12 teachers. Oftentimes you hear the term teacher, and it symbolizes something. It is not as a respected field. It needs to be respected the same way as lawyers and doctors. Educators must put in a lot of education and a lot of teacher educators have advanced degrees. They spend a lot of their time in schooling and training and programs. And that needs to be respected (p.8).

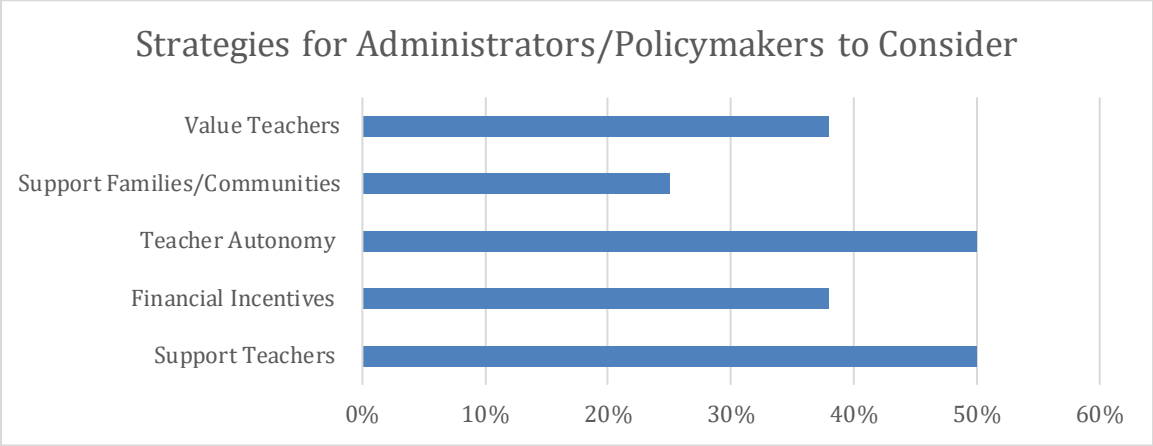
Given these points, participants expressed that administrators/policymakers should value and respect teachers, hence, to reduce teacher turnover rates.

The final strategy, mentioned by two participants, included offering families and communities additional support to improve teacher turnover. For example, Teacher G voiced the following about offering families and communities support:

> I think families like the families at Ellis, need more support because it is a cycle. If they receive more support, I think it would help. Cause if the family is lacking, their kids are lacking and they come to school and whatever they are lacking at home, they bring it into the school (p.4).

Furthermore, Teacher H expressed that offering families and communities support is imperative because "family's lives are at stake, students, community as well as our teachers and administration, it's all being affected." Moreover, one participant expressed that teaching is bigger than test scores and that students are experiencing challenges within the community (Teacher H). For this reason, policymakers/administrators should offer families and communities additional support. Hence, to improve student lives and reduce turnover rates.

Figure 14: Strategies for Administrators/Policymakers to Consider



Research Findings (Documents)

The second data collection method included online documents, to further examine the research question. The documents provided information about the factors that influence a

teacher's decision to remain in the field of education. Data was analyzed using one approach, thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2012). The following themes were developed from the online documents: (1) Financial incentives, (2) teacher recruitment, and (3) family engagement.

Financial Incentives

During the 2021-22 school year, Arden County posted an online document indicating that new special education teachers would receive up to a $5,000 signing bonus (Principal, personal communication, May 5, 2021). For confidentiality purposes, this document is excluded within this paper. Also, this signing bonus could be an extrinsic factor that would encourage special education teachers to accept employment at an elementary school. Yet, this incentive excludes general education (K-5) teachers. It is important to note, that since the 2021-22 school year, Arden County did not post any financial incentives information for general education teachers. The second financial incentive, competitive salaries, was mentioned in teacher recruitment flyers. Please see the following section for more information about competitive salaries for incoming teachers.

Teacher Recruitment

During the 2022-23 school year, Arden County posted virtual career fair flyers for the following specialty groups: (1) Special education teachers, (2) world language/dual immersion teachers, (3) career technical and education teachers and (4) elementary teachers. The virtual career fair flyer included four extrinsic incentives for future applicants: (1) Competitive salaries, (2) world class training and development, (3) opportunities for growth, and (4) wellness programs. The most compelling finding was the mention of competitive salaries. Competitive salaries is an extrinsic incentive that was used to attract new teachers. According to the *Teacher*

(190 Day) Salary Schedule 2022-23 School Year, the annual salary for a first-year teacher is $52,316. Yet, the annual salary in ACSD'S neighboring district for a first-year teacher is $51,048. The findings indicate that ACSD pays first-year teachers approximately $1,268 more than other districts. In brief, ACSD utilized extrinsic incentives, such as competitive salaries, to attract new teachers.

Family Engagement

The final documents used to further examine teacher retention in ACSD included online information available for parents. The online information was sent from the ACSD's parent-teacher app, school website and Twitter reminders. First, the parent-teacher app was designed to help parents easily access school information from his/her phone. The features in the app included the following features: (1) Headliners and announcements, (2) links to additional apps and web pages, (3) school nutrition, (4) bus information, and (5) school calendars. Next, the school/district communicated information to parents through the school's website. The website includes information about remote learning, student activities, campus portal, and launchpad. Lastly, parents can access school information on the school's Twitter page. The Twitter page includes monthly reminders and upcoming volunteer opportunities for parents.

The findings from the online family engagement documents indicate that parents can easily access school information from his/her phone. It is noteworthy to mentioned, participants were not asked whether these family resources are effective. Yet, participants did voice that during/in the aftermath of COVID-19 it was a challenge to communicate with parents. As previously voiced, parents were experiencing obstacles at home due to COVID-19. For this reason, ACSD has taken initiative to make school information easily accessible to families.

Summary

In summary, participants offered useful information about the factors that influence teacher retention at Ellis Bell Elementary. As previously mentioned, all participants have been in the education field for seven years or more. Furthermore, half of those interviewed voiced that a passion for learning and teaching was the primary reason he/she entered the education field. Next, over half of the participants expressed that before the pandemic, the greatest intrinsic reward in teaching was building rapport with students and families. The extrinsic reward mentioned by most participants included supporting teachers (i.e., support from administration, teachers, and parents). Whereas, during/in the aftermath of COVID-19, the greatest intrinsic/extrinsic rewards in teaching, varied across interviews.

Half of the participants expressed that during/in the aftermath of COVID-19, the greatest intrinsic reward in teaching was being able to be a parent/teacher at home. Yet, the most mentioned extrinsic reward included financial incentives, such as job security and a stable paycheck. Next, teachers discussed challenges while teaching during/in the aftermath of the pandemic. The most mentioned intrinsic challenge included personal factors such as, health concerns. Though, extrinsic challenges included teacher burnout from virtual learning. Participants later discussed the support he/she received from administration, teachers, and parents. Participants voiced that administration provided teachers with technology and Title I funding for classroom supplies. Teachers supported teachers by sharing knowledge about simultaneous teaching. Regarding parental support, participants communicated that he/she did not receive adequate support. Given these points, participants were then asked about factors that influence teacher turnover.

The reasons for teacher turnover are consistently mentioned throughout schools. Participants voiced that the lack of administrative support has a significant impact on turnover. For this reason, the district/administration implemented school measures to decrease turnover rates. Yet, participants expressed measures such as district created lesson plans were not an effective measure.

During the final minutes of the interview, certain participants reiterated that his/her love for learning and children is the reason he/she continues to stay in teaching. Yet, others continue to stay due to financial reasons. Given these points, over half of the participants voiced that he/she has considered leaving teaching. Participants expressed that he/she would leave due to better opportunities, work demands, and student behavior. Moreover, salary plays a key role in more than half of the participants' decision to stay/leave the field of education. All things considered, participants expressed that intrinsic and extrinsic incentives have an impact on a teacher's decision to remain/leave the classroom. The following chapter provides an in-depth discussion of the research findings and implications for future research.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

For the past few decades, teacher shortages has affected K-12 schools in the United States (NCES, 2015; Sutcher et. al, 2016). The national average of teacher turnover could see an approximate increase of 25 to 54 percent (Perna, 2022). As a result, the U.S. will need to hire approximately 90,000 teachers (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017, p.3). This shortage is profoundly concentrated within the southeastern region (SREB, 2021). Specifically, in the state of Georgia, approximately 47 percent of teachers leave within the first five years of employment (Owens, 2015). On a district level, turnover exceeded 15 percent during the 2019-2020 school year in Arden County (Principal, personal communication, May 5, 2021). For this reason, understanding the factors that influence turnover and retention is critical.

The purpose of this case study was to examine the factors that influence teacher retention in an elementary school, located in the southeast region of the United States. During the 2015-19 school years, turnover in Arden County's elementary schools exceeded 15 percent. Therefore, indicating Arden County School District (ACSD) was an important county to conduct teacher retention research. An elementary school in ACSD, Ellis Bell, was selected due to the following criteria: (1) Low-performing, (2) high-poverty and (3) school climate rating of one to three. As noted in Chapter 2, teacher shortages are higher in low-performing, high-poverty schools (Simon & Moore Johnson, 2015) and has a negative impact on school climate (Sawchuk, 2012). Overall, this study's aim was to develop an in-depth understanding of the factors that influence teacher retention, thus, to reduce turnover rates in ACSD.

There was one guiding research question within this case study: *What intrinsic and extrinsic factors influence teacher retention in a high-poverty, elementary school?* Self-

determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2008) provided the framework for this case study's interview questions. A brief list of interview questions included:

1. Before the pandemic, what were the greatest intrinsic/extrinsic rewards in your job?
2. During/in the aftermath of the pandemic, what were the greatest challenges in your job?
3. What measures, if any, have your school/district implemented to reduce teacher turnover rates during this time?

Purposeful sampling (Maxwell, 2013) was utilized to select elementary teachers (the case) in a specific setting (an elementary school). Eight teachers at Ellis Bell were purposefully selected to develop an in-depth understanding of this teacher retention issue. Teachers were invited to participate in this case study if he/she has taught at Ellis Bell for three or more years. Earlier research has indicated that teachers exit the profession within the first three years (NCTAF, 2002). For this reason, this study sought to examine teachers' perspectives about the factors that influence retention.

The data collection methods included semi-structured interviews and documents. Participants within this study included K-5 teachers that worked full-time during the 2021-22 school year. A semi-structured interview protocol guided participant interviews to discuss his/her experiences in teaching. Additionally, participants expressed the reasons why he/she has remained in the profession, despite the increasing staff shortages in Arden County. Most importantly, participants offered useful suggestions for policymakers and administrators to consider when intending to increase retention rates. Next, the final data collection method, online documents, presented useful insight on how Arden County is addressing teacher turnover and retention.

The semi-structured interviews and online documents was analyzed using a thematic analysis approach. Thematic analysis allowed me to develop new insights on the intrinsic and extrinsic factors that influence teacher retention. The six-phases in thematic analysis were applied to better understand the data: (1) Familiarization, (2) coding, (3) generating themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) write up (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Themes that emerged from the semi-structured interviews varied across each interview category. For example, intrinsic/extrinsic rewards in teaching before the pandemic included the following themes: (1) A passion for teaching, (2) philanthropy, and (3) family tradition. Whereas themes that emerged from the online documents included: (1) Financial incentives, (2) teacher recruitment, and (3) family engagement. Nonetheless, the themes from the semi-structured interviews and online documents provided valuable information about the factors that influence teacher retention.

In this chapter, a discussion of the findings and implications for practice is presented. The following section includes recommendations for practice and research. The next section highlights the relationship between the research findings and the theoretical/conceptual framework. The concluding section includes a conclusion that summarizes the key points within this qualitative case study.

Discussion of the Findings

Introductory Questions

The interview initiated with asking participants what attracted them to the field of education. Participants expressed that a passion for learning, contributing to the community, and family tradition initially attracted him/her to the field of education. The findings revealed that factors such as a passion for student learning and positive partnerships with families and

communities are important characteristics for novice teachers to have. Most compelling finding, half of the participants stated that he/she was originally attracted to the field of education because of his/her passion for teaching. This finding suggests that intrinsic factors, such as passion, is what drives teachers to the field of education. This question led me to the following follow-up questions: How long have you been a teacher? How long have you taught at this school?

Participants voiced that he/she has been in education between seven to thirty years and taught at Ellis Bell between 4 to ten years. Perhaps, participants have remained in education, due to his/her passion for teaching. It is important to note that passionate teachers tend to remain in the classroom longer, compared to teachers that do not have a passion for student learning. (Loewus, 2021; Serin, 2017; TASB, 2023). What are passionate teachers? Serin (2017) voiced that "passionate teachers are committed to creating an effective learning environment and increase the learning potential of students" (p.60). It is worthy to note, that passionate veteran teachers alone will not solve the shortage crisis. An older staff population also indicates a need for educational reform policies.

Earlier reform policies included school reconstitution, which aimed to improve student achievement (Cohen, 2015). School reconstitution included the following: (1) Identifying schools that are underperforming, (2) requiring all staff to reapply for their position, and (3) recruiting new teachers (Doherty and Abernathy, 1998; Peterson, 1998). Ellis Bell was not categorized as a failing school during the 2019-2020. Yet, the school did receive a low CCRPI score, hence Ellis Bell is underperforming. This finding indicates that Ellis Bell could benefit from an effective reform policy. Recent research suggest that school reconstruction is a solution for resolving student outcomes and retention (Spitser, 2007). However, there are other methods

for improving student and teacher outcomes. The second possible strategy includes improving recruitment strategies.

Current research suggests that recruiting and retaining highly qualified teachers has a positive impact on student outcomes (Krimbill, Kearney, & Scott, 2022; Lew, 2021). According to Rockoff (2004), "raising teacher quality may be a key instrument in improving student outcomes" (p.252). Therefore, during the hiring process, administrators should "develop a process to identify, hire, and support" (Lew, 2021, p.1) qualified teachers. Correspondingly, Bryk (2010) argued, "schools are only as good as the quality of faculty, the professional development that supports their learning, and the faculty's capacity to work together to improve instruction" (p.24). Considering these points, districts can assist teachers by recruiting capable teachers and implementing programs that are centered on professional growth. The next interview question asked participants to discuss the greatest intrinsic and extrinsic rewards before the pandemic.

Rewards (Before COVID-19)

Participants to discuss the greatest intrinsic and extrinsic rewards in his/her job before COVID-19. Participants expressed that the following were the greatest intrinsic rewards: (1) Building rapport with students and families, (2) students' engagement, and (3) being a positive influence. More than half of the participants voiced that building rapport with students and families was the greatest intrinsic reward. This finding indicates that positive partnerships with students' families is critical for student learning and teacher retention (Barton, Eshardi, & Winthrop, 2021; Ingram, Wolfe, & Lieberman, 2007). Therefore, it is critical that districts have programs that assist teachers that are centered on building rapport with students, families, and communities.

Consequently, teachers may feel ill-equipped with building partnerships with students' parents or the community. To explain, teachers may not know how to include families within the student learning process. For this reason, researchers have argued the importance of districts creating professional developments that train teachers and schools on how to build positive family and community partnerships (Barton, Eshardi, & Winthrop, 2021; Ingram, Wolfe, & Lieberman, 2007). As previously argued, building positive family/community partnerships has a positive impact on student learning and teacher retention.

Furthermore, participants also voiced the greatest intrinsic rewards in his/her job before the pandemic. The top three greatest extrinsic rewards reported were teacher support, financial incentives, and family schedule. It is important to note that half of the participants voiced that teacher support was the greatest extrinsic reward. Teacher support in this study is defined as support received from administration, teachers, or families. As previously mentioned, participants voiced that the support he/she received from administration, teachers and parents had a significant impact on student learning and his/her job satisfaction. Likewise, researchers have argued that teacher retention rates increase when teachers receive adequate support (Barton, Fueller, & Williams, 2007). Therefore, it is imperative that administrators provide the following opportunities to teachers: (1) Teacher-to-teacher collaboration, (2) mentor support for novice and veteran teachers, and (3) parent volunteer opportunities. Most importantly, the supportive strategies mentioned above could positively impact teacher retention. The next question asked participants to describe the greatest rewards in his/her job during/in the aftermath of the pandemic.

Rewards (During/In the Aftermath of COVID-19)

Regarding intrinsic rewards, during/in the aftermath of COVID-19, participants mentioned family schedule and student engagement. Yet, half of the participants voiced that family schedule was the greatest reward. When discussing family schedule, participants also mentioned work-life-balance. Thus, indicating that work-life-balance plays a significant role in one's decision to stay/leave the classroom.

Work life balance is defined as the "the ability of an employee to strike balance between work life and personal life" (Jerath, Kumar, & Gunjan, 2019). Furthermore, participants voiced that virtual learning allowed him/her to spend more time with family. This finding suggests that virtual learning was beneficial and created a sense of work life balance. According to researchers, work life balance is an important aspect of any profession or employment (Jerath, Kumar, & Gunjan, 2019, p.461). Therefore, it is imperative for districts/administrators to support employees' work life balance, to reduce turnover rates.

The greatest extrinsic rewards reported included financial incentives, such as stable paychecks. Three participants expressed that having a career that offers a steady paycheck was the greatest reward during the pandemic. According to participants, maintaining a job was difficult for Americans during COVID-19. As previously mentioned, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2021) documented that employment dropped from 152.5 million to 137.8 million, a loss of 14.7 million jobs. Thus, indicating that job security was a challenge for Americans. For this reason, participants believed that stable paychecks and job security were the greatest extrinsic rewards. In addition to job security concerns, participants dealt with other challenges during the pandemic.

Challenges (During/In the Aftermath of COVID-19)

Participants were asked to discuss the challenges in his/her job during/in the aftermath of the pandemic. Intrinsic rewards mentioned by participants included personal factors and low staff morale. Majority of the participants voiced personal factors was the greatest intrinsic challenge during the pandemic. Personal factors included childcare and health concerns. As previously mentioned, one participant expressed that simultaneous teaching created a childcare burden on homelife. To explain, it was hard for teachers to find childcare for their children during the pandemic. As has been noted, during virtual learning, Ellis Bell allowed teachers to bring their children to work. Yet, during simultaneous teaching, teachers were no longer allowed to bring their children to work. Teachers were compelled to choose between working or staying home to take care of their children. Additionally, another personal factor included health concerns. To explain, teachers felt that face-to-face teaching during the pandemic put his/her life at risk. Given these points, if the U.S. faces another pandemic, it is imperative for administrators to consider childcare and health concerns for teachers. Next, participants discussed the greatest extrinsic challenges during/in the aftermath of the pandemic.

Extrinsic challenges mentioned by participants included teacher burnout, testing accountability and access to technology. Half of the participants expressed that teacher burnout was the greatest extrinsic challenge during/in the aftermath of COVID-19. Participants voiced that burnout was due to the demands of virtual/simultaneous teaching and lack of student engagement. For this reason, districts/administrators should reconsider the expectations of teachers/students during unprecedented times. For example, is expecting kindergartners to be on the computer for 8 hours a day, a realistic expectation? A reasonable solution is to host virtual learning for 4 hours or less day. The remainder of the day could be used for student projects, at

home workouts or social emotional activities for families. The second reason for teacher burnout was caused by lack of student motivation.

According to participants, students were not motivated during/in the aftermath of COVID-19. As voiced by one participant, students were aware of the no-failing policy (Teacher H). The no-failing policy allowed students to receive a failing grade and move on to the grade level. As a result, students were not motivated to complete assignments, tests, or engage in classroom activities. Researchers have argued that social promotion has a negative impact on student outcomes (Jimerson & Renshaw, 2012; Lynch, 2013; Chen, 2022).

Furthermore, social promotion is not an adequate strategy because it "allows students to advance to the next school grade, even when their test scores and overall academic achievement don't prove a student's preparedness for the next academic year" (Chen, 2022, p.1). Earlier research indicated that social promotion "undermines students' futures when they fail to develop critical study and job-related skills" (Lynch, 2013, p.271). Therefore, districts must reconsider social promotion and implement effective strategies to improve student outcomes, which could reduce teacher burnout. To summarize, participants expressed that teacher burnout caused unnecessary stress during the pandemic. To gain a better understanding of how teacher challenges were addressed, the following question asked participants about school support.

School Support (During/In the Aftermath of COVID-19)

Participants were asked about the support received from administration, teachers, and students' parents. First, half of the participants stated he/she were supported by administration through the access of technology, Title I funding and Social and Emotional Learning curriculum (SEL) for students. Yet, half of the participants voiced that he/she was not supported by administration. For this reason, districts/administrators must consider how to support teachers

within/outside of the classroom. Administration could support teachers by having authentic conversations with teachers. For example, ask teachers the following questions: (1) How are you feeling today, (2) What can I do to make your job easier, and (3) Is there anything I can do to support your work-life balance? The questions mentioned above could be used to support teachers and build teacher-to-administrator-relationships. The next section briefly reviews how teachers supported other teachers.

Participants were supported teachers by an increase in teacher collaboration and shared knowledge. Specifically, more than half of the participants voiced that other teachers would share and analyze lesson plans. Participants continued to voice that collaboration was more present during in-person learning and not as evident during virtual learning. Teachers often felt alone and stressed during virtual learning because he/she could not effectively collaborate with other teachers. In a virtual setting, administrators could set aside adequate time for teachers to collaborate with one another, hence, to reduce teacher stress and burnout.

Lastly, half of the participants stated they were not supported by students' parents. Participants expressed that receiving support from parents was impossible during the pandemic. To explain, parents were dealing with challenges during COVID-19, therefore having an impact on student outcomes. It is important to note, Ellis Bell does provide low-income families with weekly meals from a local food distribution center. However, families need additional support such as, job assistance, housing, and educational resources. As previously mentioned, participants believe the lack of parental support has an impact on student outcomes. This finding revealed that additional parental support is necessary, to improve student outcomes and turnover. The following section questioned participants about factors that are consistently mentioned when teachers discuss turnover.

Reducing Teacher Turnover in Elementary Schools

When you hear teachers discuss teacher turnover, what factors are consistently mentioned? Participants expressed the most mentioned factors are lack of administrative support, student behavior and teacher workload. Next, participants were later asked about any measures that were implemented to reduce teacher turnover. According to participants, the district implemented financial incentives and district lesson plans. Majority of the participants confirmed the measures were not effective. As voiced by one participant, financial incentives may attract teachers to the workforce but it will not encourage them to stay. For this reason, it is critical that districts not only implement extrinsic factors, such as bonuses. Districts must also address the following when aiming to reduce turnover: (1) Lack of district, administrative, and parental support, (2) student behavior management and (3) teacher workloads. As previously argued, the factors mentioned above have an impact on a teacher's decision to stay or leave the classroom.

On a school level, administrators implemented additional planning time for teachers. Majority of the participants expressed that the additional planning time created more paperwork for teachers. One participant voiced that teachers had to vet and analyze district lesson plans which caused teachers to have to do more work. Participants communicated that allotting teachers with additional planning time is a nice gesture. Though, adding to teachers' workload by making him/her do more paperwork is counter effective. Moreover, if the district continues to create lesson plans for teachers, they must consider not making teachers vet and analyze every detail within the lesson. Eventually, making changes to this measure could reduce teacher burnout and increase job satisfaction.

Teacher Expectations and Job Satisfaction

The next question asked participants about the factors that are contributing most to him/her staying in teaching. The consistently mentioned factors included passion for teaching, financial reasons, and personal obligations. Most compelling finding, four participants expressed that passion for teaching and love for children has the greatest impact on his/her decision to continue teaching. Therefore, administrators must consider hiring teachers that care for children and have a passion for teaching. On the contrary, administrators ought to avoid hiring teachers that solely apply for financial reasons. As previously discussed, teachers that are attracted to the field due to financial incentives do not stay long-term. Thus, extrinsic incentives alone are not enough to keep teachers in the classroom. Given these points, teachers were later asked if he/she has considered leaving teaching.

More than half of the participants voiced that he/she has considered leaving teaching. The reasons for why he/she would leave included better opportunities, teacher workload, and teacher pay. Participants were then asked to discuss the role that salary plays in his/her decision to stay/leave the field of education. More than half of the participants voiced that salary plays a key role in their decision to stay/leave the field of education. The reasons why salary plays a crucial factor varied across participant interviews.

Majority of the participants voiced that salary is important due to family and home life reasons. As previously discussed, the pandemic created challenges for parents/families. So, it is important that teachers receive adequate pay for his/her services. I believe, teachers should receive a salary that accommodates the cost of housing, childcare, education, and other life expenses. Unfortunately, this is not the reality of educators. Allegretto (2022) stated the following about teacher pay during/in the aftermath of the pandemic:

> Simply put, teachers are paid less (in weekly wages and total compensation) than their nonteacher college-educated counterparts, and the situation has worsened over time. Prior to the pandemic, the long-trending erosion in the relative wages and total compensation of teachers was already a serious concern. The financial penalty that teachers face discourages college students from entering the teaching profession and makes it difficult for school districts to keep current teachers in the classroom. Trends in teacher pay coupled with pandemic challenges may exacerbate annual shortages of regular and substitute teachers. Providing teachers with compensation commensurate with that of other similarly educated professionals is not simply a matter of fairness but is necessary to improve educational outcomes and foster future economic stability of workers, their families, and communities across the U.S. (p.1).

Overall, research supports that teachers are underpaid, and this issue will have an impact on future turnover rates. It is important to note, extrinsic incentives are not the primary solution. Yet, it is a crucial factor to consider when seeking to improve turnover rates.

Final Interview Question

The final question asked participants what policymakers/administrators can do to encourage teachers to remain in the field of education. Participants expressed that policymakers/administrators should do the following: (1) Support teachers, (2) offer teacher autonomy, (3) increase financial incentives, (4) value teachers and (5) support families and communities. Participants continued to voice that leaders must support teachers by having authentic conversations with teachers. As previously mentioned, administrators should ask teachers how they can be better supported within/outside of the classroom. Thus, to improve teacher-to-administrative relationships.

Next, administrators must trust teacher judgment and respect their professional knowledge, by increasing teacher autonomy. For example, administrators should avoid talking down to their employees. Instead, trust teachers' professional judgement and allow teacher creativity within the classroom. Majority of the participants expressed that he/she does not like being micromanaged by administration. Not surprisingly, one study revealed that

"micromanaging makes teachers want to quit" (We Are Teachers, 2022). Hence, a retention strategy is to improve administrator-to-teacher relationship and eliminating micromanagement approaches.

Third, districts must increase financial incentives. For example, teacher salary should be comparable to other careers. Research suggests that the current teacher salary is not comparable to other careers (Allegretto, 2022). As a result, college students are not attracted to the teacher workforce (Allegretto, 2022; Garcia & Weiss, 2019). This lack of attraction to college students could result in a continuous decline in qualified teachers. As previously mentioned in Chapter 2, the teacher workforce will need to hire approximately 1.6 million teachers across the U.S. (NASSP, 2020). Districts must consider increasing teacher salaries, to make teaching an attractable career. The next strategy includes making teachers feel valued.

Majority of the participants expressed that he/she did not feel valued. Teacher A expressed that teachers would feel valued and appreciated if the community respected the profession. It is important to note, teachers spend a lot of their time in schooling (i.e., pursing teaching certificates and advanced degrees). Yet, the teaching profession is not merely respected, when compared to other professions. According to the Varkey Foundation (2020), out of 14 professions, primary school teachers ranked 11th overall. On the contrary, doctors ranked first, lawyers ranked second, and engineers ranked third (Varkey Foundation, 2020). The rankings indicate that teaching is not a respected career across the world. When aiming to improve teacher retention rates, policymakers/communities should value teachers, hence, to reduce teacher turnover rates. Finally, leaders should address challenges within students' families and offer continuous support.

Recent research suggests that only 47 percent of teachers feel prepared to engage families within the classroom (Caspe, 2021). According to researchers, a national survey of teacher preparation programs found that 51 percent of programs offer courses in family and community engagement (Caspe, 2021; NAFSCE, 2021). This finding suggests that family and community engagement topics is not represented fairly in teacher preparation coursework. Thus, indicating teachers will not receive support on how to properly engage families within the classroom. For this reason, educational leaders must reconsider the required courses within teacher preparation programs. Most importantly, I believe if policymakers and administrators implement the factors mentioned above, teacher turnover rates will decrease.

Discussion of the Online Document Findings

The second data collection method, online documents, provided information about the factors that influence teacher retention. Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2012) was utilized to analyze the online documents. This analytical approach allowed me to identify themes and patterns within this retention research. Furthermore, three themes were established from the online documents: (1) Financial incentives, (2) teacher recruitment, and (3) family engagement.

Financial Incentives

As previously revealed, Arden County posted online documents indicating that new special education teachers would receive a signing bonus of $5,000 (Principal, personal communication, May 5, 2021). This extrinsic incentive might attract special education teachers to accept employment. However, will sign-on bonuses encourage special education teachers to remain at Arden County? Teacher G voiced that a new special education teacher accepted the signing bonus but resigned two months later due to the demands of the job. This finding indicates, sign-on bonuses can attract new teachers, however, it may not impact a teachers'

decision to remain in the classroom. Districts should consider offering bonuses twice a year (December and May) for teachers that have remained in the classroom.

Teacher Recruitment

Arden County also posted virtual career fair flyers for specialty groups, such as, special education and career technical teachers. The virtual career flyers included extrinsic incentives for future applicants. One of the extrinsic incentives included competitive salaries. Regarding competitive salaries, ACSD pays first-year teachers approximately $1,268 more than other districts. Yet, participants voiced that teacher salary is low across all school districts. Participants continued to voice that salary plays a role in his/her decision to leave/stay in the classroom. Given these points, it is crucial for districts to revisit the teacher pay scale. Teacher salary must include the cost of living and allow employees to live comfortably. In sum, one solution to the teacher shortage is to increase teacher pay.

Family Engagement

The final documents included providing families with online school information. Families of Ellis Bell can retrieve school information through the school app, school/district website and Twitter. Arden County has done an excellent job with making sure families can easily access school information. However, participants within this study voiced that one challenge during/in the aftermath of the pandemic was communication with parents/families.

Arden County must reconsider how they communicate with families. It is important to note that not all families have access to the internet. Therefore, families may need additional reminders via paper or phone call. Whereas other families may benefit from face-to-face communication, such as monthly parent-teacher conferences. Nonetheless, building positive family-school partnerships is vital when intending to improve student outcomes. Most

importantly, improving the communication between teachers and families could have a positive impact on teacher retention rates.

Connection to Theoretical Framework

This retention study utilized self-determination theory (SDT), created by researchers Deci and Ryan (2008). SDT was used to predict the factors that influence teacher retention. The theory suggests that intrinsic and extrinsic motivation drive job performance and retention (Deci & Ryan, 2008; Worth & Van den Brande, 2020). According to researchers, staff that are intrinsically motivated tend to have job satisfaction and remain in the profession (Worth & Van den Brande, 2020). Likewise, findings from this study revealed that intrinsically motivated teachers, have remained in the classroom for 7 years or more. In contrast, extrinsically motivated teachers tend to leave the classroom.

Worth and Van den Brande (2020) voiced, staff that solely rely on extrinsic motivation are at risk of burnout. Correspondingly, participants voiced financial incentives are necessary, but he/she has considered leaving for a better opportunity. This research finding substantiates previous findings in the literature. Teachers that are extrinsically motivated may leave the profession (Worth & Van den Brande, 2020). Therefore, self-determination theory suggest employers increase staff's competence, autonomy, and relatedness.

First, competence refers to the skills needed to perform well (Worth & Van den Brande, 2020). As previously discussed, participants stated parental support and student engagement was a challenge during/in the aftermath of the pandemic. Administrators could improve staffs' competence by offering additional trainings on parent and student engagement. Second, autonomy refers to the direction over one's own decisions (Worth & Van den Brande, 2020). As previously mentioned in Chapter Four, participants expressed he/she would like administrators to

trust his/her professional knowledge. Hence, administrators should avoid micromanaging teachers, by increasing teacher autonomy.

Lastly, relatedness is defined as the support received from colleagues Worth & Van den Brande, 2020). Participants stated he/she received support from teachers ,yet there was a lack of support from administrators. As previously mentioned, administrators must discover new strategies to improve administrator-teacher relationships. Nonetheless, self-determination theory suggest that competence, autonomy, and relatedness have an impact on job satisfaction and retention (Deci & Ryan, 2008; Worth & Van den Brande, 2020). For this reason, administrators and policymakers must consider the components of self-determination theory when aiming to improve teacher retention rates.

Connection to Conceptual Framework

In Chapter Two, a conceptual framework, *Steps Towards Improving Teacher Retention* (Jones, 2022) was introduced to highlight the steps that could positively impact teacher retention rates. The steps within the framework included the following: (1) Integrated professional cultures, (2) educational change model, and (3) self-efficacy.

Integrated Professional Cultures

First, integrated professional cultures is defined as a "two-way interaction about teaching and learning" (Kardos & Johnson, 2007, p.1). Research suggests that teachers that experience high levels of autonomy and shared responsibility, will remain in the workforce (Kardos & Johnson, 2007). As previously mentioned, a lack of teacher autonomy at Ellis Bell, had an impact on teachers' decision to stay/leave the classroom. It is imperative that administrators consider implementing integrated professional cultures, to reduce teacher turnover rates. The next step in the conceptual framework is Fullan's (2015) educational change model.

Educational Change Model

The educational change model created by Fullan (2015), addresses retention by adjusting the recruitment process and mentoring programs for new and veteran teachers. Research suggests that districts could cut the turnover rate in half by establishing effective hiring programs, "coupled with solid mentoring/induction programs" (Fullan, 2015, p.246). The online documents revealed that Arden County relies on virtual career fairs to recruit teachers. The recruitment fair flyers offered extrinsic incentives such as competitive salary. Yet, mentoring programs were not mentioned within the online documents. As previously mentioned, effective hiring practices and mentoring programs have a significant impact on turnover rates (Fullan, 2015). Therefore, administrators could implement effective hiring practices and mentoring programs, to decrease turnover rates. The last step of the framework is to assist teachers with developing a high sense of self-efficacy.

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is the last step within the conceptual framework. Bandura (1997) defines self-efficacy as a set of beliefs in ability to organize and execute a specific task. As previously cited, the four sources of self-efficacy include: (a) Mastery learning experiences, (b) vicarious experiences, (c) social persuasion, (d) psychological and emotional states (Bandura, 1997; Milner & Hoy 2003). All four sources are necessary, when helping teachers develop a sense of self-efficacy.

Researchers have argued that teachers with a higher sense of efficacy are more likely to remain in the classroom (Milner & Hoy, 2003; Hoy & Spero, 2005). First, participants voiced feeling successful when administrators allowed him/her to demonstrate that he/she were competent teachers (mastery learning experiences). Second, participants expressed that he/she

enjoyed collaborating with other teachers (vicarious and social persuasion experiences). Lastly, participants voiced that he/she has a passion for learning and teaching (psychological and emotional experiences). Moreover, a passion for learning and teaching can anticipate teaching success (Gavora, 2010). Most importantly, the four sources of efficacy are apparent within a teacher with high self-efficacy (Milner & Hoy, 2003). All things considered, districts must consider implementing integrated professional cultures, educational change model, and self-efficacy to increase teacher retention rates. The following section highlights implications for practice for policymakers, districts, and administrators to consider, when striving to improve the turnover crisis.

Implications for Practice

The primary goal of elementary schools is to provide an equal and quality education to all students. It is important to note, families, districts, and administrators rely on teachers to provide this quality education to students. Yet, this research indicates that retaining highly qualified teachers is not only a challenge for Ellis Bell Elementary, but for all schools across the United States. Participants within this study expressed that student behavior, teacher workload, and lack of administrative support are often associated with teacher burnout and turnover. Therefore, educational leaders should consider the intrinsic and extrinsic factors that have an impact on teacher turnover. Districts and administrators should consider the following, hence, to increase teacher retention rates: (1) Build a positive school culture, (2) offer a competitive salary and (3) increase teacher autonomy.

Build a Positive School Culture

A positive school's culture "consists of the underlying influences and attitudes within the school-- based on the norms, traditions and beliefs of the staff and students" (Raudys, 2018, p.3).

Current research suggests that building a positive school culture has an impact on student outcomes and teacher turnover (CFCR, 2019). Researchers have also argued that teachers in high-poverty schools, prefer to work in an environment where a positive culture is present (Simon & Moore Johnson, 2015). In one teacher turnover study, researchers Simon and Moore Johnson (2015), found that teachers in high-poverty schools, prefer to work in schools where elements of a positive school culture are present. Given these points, what are the principal elements within a positive school culture? According to Robbins, Alvy, and Peterson (2009), administrators aiming to build a positive school culture must consider the following six strategies:

1. Developing a sense of what the school should and could be
2. Recruiting and selecting staff whose values fit with the school's
3. Resolving conflicts, disputes, and problems directly as a way of shaping values
4. Communicating values and beliefs in daily routines and behaviors
5. Identifying and articulating stories that communicate shared values
6. Nurturing the traditions, ceremonies, rituals, and symbols that communicate and reinforce the school culture (p.34).

In Chapter Four, participants within this study expressed that student behavior, teacher workload and lack of administrative support would be the reason he/she would leave the classroom. One solution is for administrators to reevaluate the school's culture. To explain, leaders should reflect on the following questions:

1. Is the current behavioral management system effective? If not, can districts, administrators, and teachers collaborate, thus, to create an effective behavioral management system?

2. How can administrators minimize teacher workloads, yet maximize student learning?
3. How can administrators better support teachers and improve administrator-teacher relationships?

Reflecting on the questions mentioned above could improve student behaviors, minimize teacher workloads, and build strong administrator-teacher relationships. Overall, building a positive school culture is a key factor to consider when aiming to improve teacher retention rates.

Offer a Competitive Salary

It is understood that teachers are underpaid across the U.S. (Harrell et al, 2019; Walker, 2022). Most compelling finding, teachers are making approximately $2,179 less than they did a decade ago (Walker, 2022). One special education teacher voiced the following about her salary during COVID-19:

> The demands at school—especially over the past two years—have gotten overwhelming and we are not compensated properly for it," she says. "True, no one goes into this profession for the money, but teachers in many parts of the country barely make enough to live, and that's insane...and they are being pushed out of the profession (Walker, 2022, p.1).

Researchers have expressed that an individual will pursue a teaching opportunity, once salary and benefits "compare favorably" (Harrell et al., 2019, p.146) with other job opportunities (Ehrenberg & Smith, 1997). It is important for policymakers to consider creating bills that will increase teacher salaries across the U.S. Yes, extrinsic factors such as salary and benefits will not merely solve the turnover crisis. However, teachers cannot afford the cost of living (Perry, 2019; Walker, 2022). The White House acknowledge this issue and implemented a plan to increase teacher salaries (Perry, 2019).

In 2022, the Biden-Harris Administration has taken initiative to invest and support educators, thus, to decrease teacher shortages. In 2022, President Biden implemented a $130 billion American Rescue Plan for K-12 schools. According to the plan, districts would be responsible for the following:

1. Investing in teacher pipeline programs
2. Increasing compensation for teachers (The White House, p.1)

In like manner, The American Teacher Act, introduced in December 2022, would "incentivize states and school districts to increase the minimum K-12 teacher salary to $60,000" (Stanford, 2022, p.1). Is $60,000 an adequate salary for teachers? Have policymakers considered the cost of living when adjusting teacher salaries? According to Representative Federica Wilson, D-Fla, $60,000 is the minimum and she hopes states will go "higher than the minimum" (Stanford, 2022, p.1). The financial incentives mentioned above could have a positive impact on student outcomes and retention. However, the retention plans do not include any intrinsic factors such as, teacher autonomy.

Increase Teacher Autonomy

Participants within this study expressed that the teacher autonomy has an impact on his/her decision to stay/leave the classroom. Not surprisingly, teachers feel stressed out in environments where he/she is micromanaged by administrators (We Are Teachers, 2022). Morris (2023), stated the following about micromanaging:

> If you have not figured it out already, teaching is a difficult job. But the part that makes it almost impossible is the amount of teacher micromanaging that goes on. When supervisors feel the need to oversee even the smallest details, thus giving teachers extra busy work, they are sending a clear message that we are not trusted to do our jobs. This is

> one area that is easy to fix and does not cost a thing, in fact, it might even save schools money by getting rid of administrators who spend most of their time bothering others for no good reason (p.1).

Furthermore, a relationship exists between teacher autonomy and turnover. As previously voiced by Ingersoll et al., (2016) teachers in schools with higher levels of classroom autonomy had significantly lower turnover rates. This finding indicates there is a need for higher levels of teacher autonomy within schools. Most importantly, administrators should avoid micromanaging teachers and instead trust their professional judgement. Afterall, increasing teacher autonomy is free and could save schools money. Hence, money which could be used to improve working conditions, teacher salaries, or future retention research.

Recommendations for Practice and Research

There is a growing body of research on teacher retention within K-12 schools. Also, researchers are now considering the factors that motivate teacher retention within schools. As previously noted, the findings of this study offered districts and administrators with vital information about factors that could increase teacher retention rates within elementary schools. Future retention research could analyze the intrinsic and extrinsic factors that motivate teacher retention within high-achieving schools. For example, researchers could reflect on the following questions:

1. What are high achieving schools doing to improve teacher turnover rates?
2. What does teacher autonomy look like within high-achieving schools?
3. What is the behavioral management system within high-achieving schools?
4. How does high-achieving schools build family-school-community partnerships?

5. Does the current teacher salary take into consideration the cost of living, childcare, and health care expenses?

The questions mentioned above includes a brief list of reflection questions for researchers to consider when conducting retention research.

Further teacher retention research could include a case study that highlights a positive school culture during/in the aftermath of COVID-19. Data collection methods within a study centered on school culture, could include interviews from teachers, administrators, and district leaders. Understanding the factors that influence retention from the perspectives of administrators and district leaders could be insightful. As has been noted, a school's culture has a significant impact on student outcomes and teacher turnover (Harper, 2018). Schools can prepare for challenges, such as teacher turnover or a pandemic, by implementing a positive school culture. Given these points, a major area of research is to examine a school that continued to have a positive school culture during/in the aftermath of a pandemic.

Conclusion

This case study research revealed that extrinsic and intrinsic factors have an influence on teacher retention. First, extrinsic factors such as financial incentives is important, yet increasing salaries is not the primary solution. For example, research participants expressed a need for salary increases, but he/she may still leave the classroom for a better opportunity. This finding relates to the components of self-determination theory; thus, financially motivated staff are more prone to leave the workforce. Given these points, policymakers and administrators must devote their attention to solving the teacher turnover crisis, by implementing effective teacher retention strategies.

It's imperative for districts to consider retention strategies such as, increasing staff's competence, autonomy, and relatedness. In Chapter 2, self-determination theory highlights the relationship between competence, autonomy, relatedness, and retention. Also, research participants discussed how parental involvement, lack of autonomy, and staff relationships impacted teacher turnover within Ellis Bell. Given these points, districts can address retention by implementing the following strategies: (1) Offer additional parent-student engagement trainings (competence), (2) trust teachers' professional knowledge (autonomy), and (3) improve administrator-teacher relationships (relatedness). The strategies mentioned above is one way that leaders can build a positive school culture.

In Chapter Four, participants discussed issues such as, student behavior and teacher workloads. It's important to note, behavior and heavy workloads could have an impact on a school's culture. Nonetheless, administrators must build a positive school culture by implementing effective behavioral management policies and minimize teacher demands. Most importantly, administrators must immediately address issues that affect student and teacher outcomes. Hence, issues such as behavior and teacher workloads.

All things considered, many scholars have completed studies on the factors that influence teacher turnover and retention. Yet, additional research is needed on the intrinsic and extrinsic factors that influence retention in elementary schools. This retention research is urgent, due to the impact of COVID-19 on student outcomes and teacher turnover. To speed up recruitment and retention of elementary teachers, this critical issue must be brought to the forefront of research and especially in educational forums. Most importantly, teacher retention research will not alter the face of education immediately, yet it is a necessary step in educational reform.

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Appendix A: Sources of Turnover

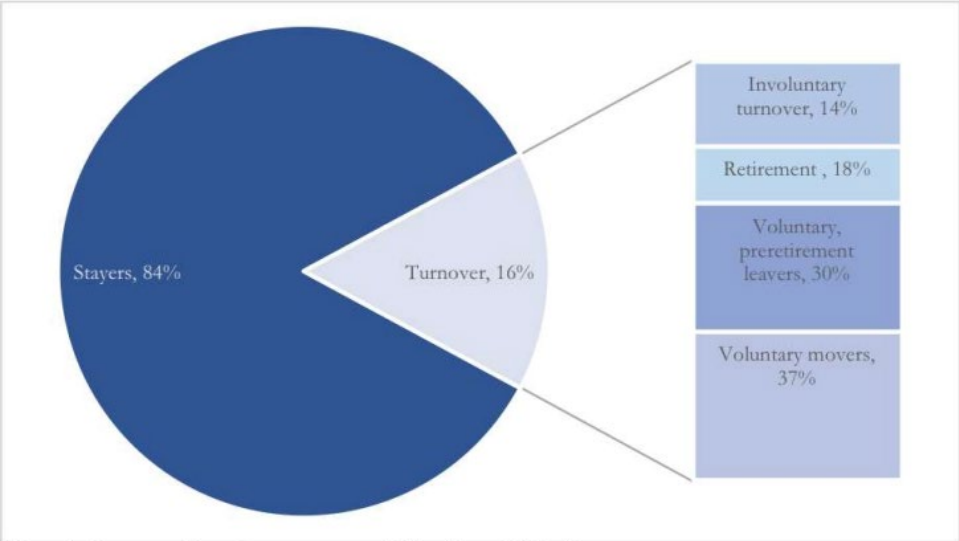
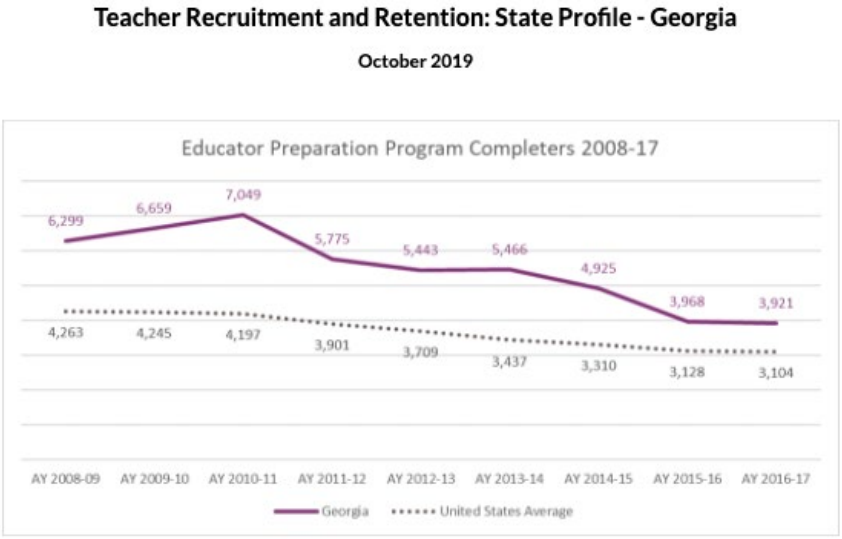


Figure 1. Sources of teacher turnover, 2011–12 to 2012–13

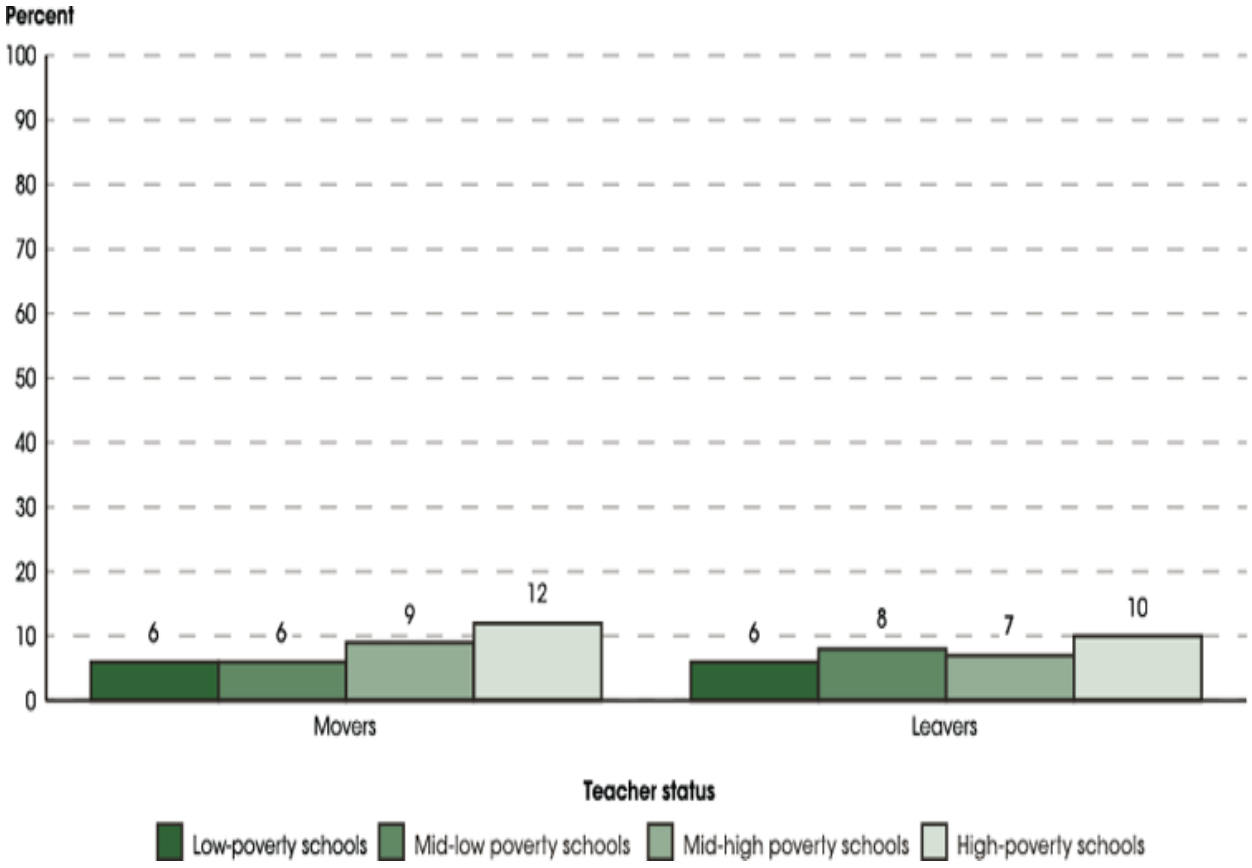
Source: Carver-Thomas, D., & Darling-Hammond, L. (2019). *The trouble with teacher turnover: How teacher attrition affects students and schools*. Education Policy Analysis Archives, 27(36). http://dx.doi.org/10.14507/epaa.27.3699

Appendix B: Teacher Recruitment and Retention: State Profile—Georgia.



Source: Education Commission of the States. (2022). *Teacher recruitment and retention: State profile-Georgia*. Individual State Profile. https://ecs.secure.force.com/mbdata/mbstcprofgnc?Rep=TRRGA&st=Georgia

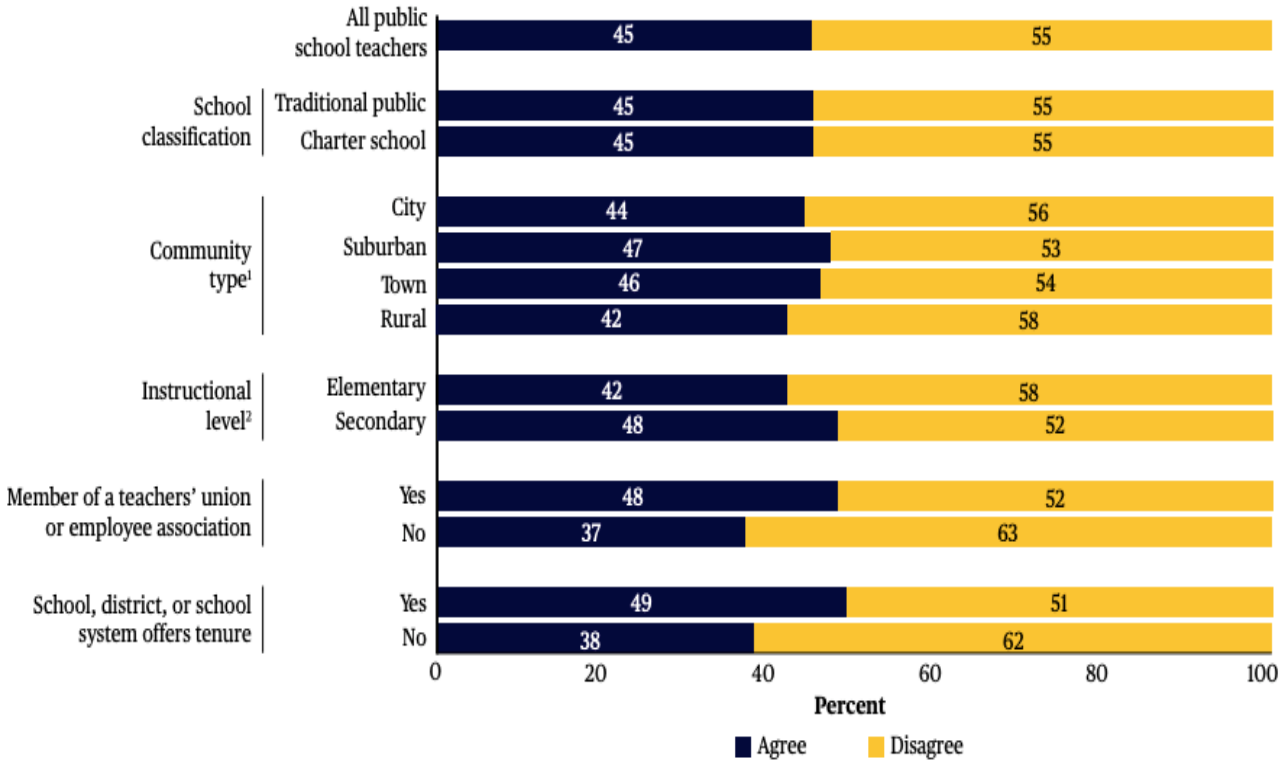
Appendix C ***Percentage of public-school teacher movers and leavers, by 2011-12 school poverty level: 2011-11 to 2012-13*** (NCES, 2015).



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools, and Staffing Survey (SASS). Teacher Follow-Up Survey (TFS), "Current and Former Teacher Data Files, "2012-13, See Digest of Education Statistics 2014. https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/slc

Appendix D Percent of public-school teachers who agree or disagree that they were satisfied with their teaching salary, by selected school and teacher characteristics: 2015-16.

FIGURE 1. Percent of public school teachers who agree or disagree that they were satisfied with their teaching salary, by selected school and teacher characteristics: 2015-16



[1] Community type is defined by the urban-centric school locale code based on the 2010 Decennial Census data, collapsed into four categories: city, suburban, town, and rural.
[2] Instructional level refers to the grade levels taught by a teacher and divides teachers into elementary or secondary based on a combination of the grades taught, main teaching assignment, and the structure of their classes.
NOTE: Interpret data on city teachers with caution. After nonresponse adjustments, the nonresponse bias for this category is greater than for other characteristics.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Teacher, and Principal Survey (NTPS), "Public School Teacher Data File," 2015-16. https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2018/2018116rev.pdf

Appendix E

Informed Consent Form

Researcher's Statement

My name is Sheree Jones, and I am doctoral student at the University of Georgia. I am studying the intrinsic and extrinsic factors that influence teacher retention in elementary schools. You are being asked to participate because you have taught at Ellis Bell Elementary School for three or more years. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to take part in the study. If you agree to participate in this study, I will conduct an interview with you. The interview will last one to one-and-a-half hours in length. There is the risk that you may find some of the questions about your job conditions to be sensitive. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary. You may skip any question that you do not want to answer. If you decide to take part, you are free to withdraw at any time. The researcher conducting this study is Sheree Jones.

Researcher:

Sheree Jones
University of Georgia
Educational Administration & Policy
Ph.D. Student & Graduate Assistant
smj28604@uga.edu

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine why elementary teachers remain in their positions during/in the aftermath of the pandemic. Moreover, this study will examine intrinsic and extrinsic incentives a public school district can implement to increase teacher retention rates.

Incentives for participation

Participants will receive a $50 gift card after completing the interview.

Privacy/Confidentiality

The records of this retention study will be kept private. Your name will be deleted from the research and replaced with a pseudonym. The data will be kept in a password protected laptop, owned by the researcher. Transcripts, audio-recordings, and consent forms will be destroyed after the study is completed. Only the researcher will have access to the audio-recordings. Audio-recordings will be erased after the transcription and data analysis process.

If you have questions

The researcher conducting this study is Sheree Jones, a graduate student at the University of Georgia. If you have questions later, you may contact Sheree Jones at smj28604@uga.edu.

Consent to Participate in Teacher Retention Project:
To voluntarily agree to take part in this study, please sign on the line below.

_____	_____	_____
Name of Researcher	Signature	Date
_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	Signature	Date

Appendix F

Interview Protocol

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my retention research study. The purpose of this study is to examine why elementary teachers remain in their positions during/in the aftermath of the pandemic. Most importantly, this research will identify intrinsic and extrinsic incentives K-5 administrators can implement to increase teacher retention rates. The data from this study will be used in a dissertation and your participation will remain anonymous. Please read the consent form carefully and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to take part in the study. If you agree to participate in this study, I will conduct an interview with you. The interview will last approximately 45 minutes. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary. You may skip any question that you do not want to answer. If you decide to take part, you are free to withdraw at any time. Do you have any questions before I begin recording?

Research Question

What intrinsic and extrinsic factors influence teacher retention in a high-poverty, elementary school?

Introduction

I am interested in learning about how you perceive the culture and climate of this school and the various factors that have affected your decision to remain in teaching. I am interested in both the intrinsic and extrinsic factors that influenced your career decision.

- How long have you been a teacher? How long have you taught at this school?
- What attracted you to the field of education?

Rewards (Before COVID-19)

- Before the pandemic, what were the greatest rewards in your job?
    - Prompts: Intrinsic (i.e., teacher autonomy or personal factors)
    - Prompts: Extrinsic (i.e., administrative/mentoring support)

Rewards (During/In the Aftermath of COVID-19)

- During/in the aftermath of the pandemic, what were the greatest rewards in your job?
    - Prompts: Intrinsic (i.e., teacher autonomy or personal factors)
    - Prompts: Extrinsic (i.e., administrative/mentoring support)

Challenges (During/In the Aftermath of COVID-19)

- During/in the aftermath of the pandemic, what were the greatest challenges in your job?
    - Prompts: Intrinsic (i.e., “burnout,” workload, exhaustion, and mental health)

- Prompts: Extrinsic (i.e., administrative, and mentoring support)

School Support (During/In the Aftermath of COVID-19)

- During/in the aftermath of the pandemic, how were you supported by administration, teachers, and your students' parents?

Reducing Teacher Turnover in Elementary Schools

- When you hear teachers discuss teacher turnover, what factors are consistently mentioned?
- What measures, if any, have your school/district implemented to reduce teacher turnover rates during this time?
  - Do you think those have been effective? Why or why not?

Teacher Expectations & Job Satisfaction

- In the current environment, what are the factors that are contributing most to your staying in teaching?
- Have you considered leaving teaching? If so, why?
- What role does salary play in your decision to stay/leave the field of education?

Closing Questions

- What can policymakers/administrators do to encourage teachers to remain in the field of education?
- Is there anything further you would like to tell me about this topic of retention?