I, WINONA LANE OLIVER, hereby submit this work as part of the requirements for the degree of:

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Influences of Principals

Running Head: THE INFLUENCE OF PRINCIPALS ON TEACHER RETENTION

The Influence of Principals on Teacher Retention:
An Examination of the Relationship Between Principal Behavior
and Teacher Retention

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ABSTRACT
This qualitative study investigated the connection between the behaviors of principals and teacher job satisfaction and motivation, and how this connection results in increased teacher retention. Particularly, the researcher looked at what strategies principals use to motivate and encourage teachers to remain at a school. The researcher also examined teachers’ primary reasons for staying at a particular school. Two urban high schools were the sites for this study. The researcher conducted both focus groups and interviews. Individual interviews were held with two principals; one principal had two years of experience and the other had seven years of experience. In addition, the researcher conducted individual interviews with three teachers from each school. One focus group at each school, each composed of three to four participants, also yielded data. The research showed that college education programs do not adequately prepare teachers to work with students and face the various challenges that often accompany them. Teachers need support in order to succeed as educators. The data revealed that the principal sets the tone and is the driving force of a school, thereby having a huge impact on the school environment. Though teachers were more likely to stay at schools where they felt a connection to their students, this study found that the principal is instrumental in teacher retention. The researcher found that though teachers believe they directly have control of many aspects of the school reality, the principal continues to orchestrate and facilitate school operations in an indirect, inclusive manner. The effective, invisible principal creates an environment where teachers are empowered and moved to the forefront, while the principal navigates from the background. The ability of the teacher to focus on teaching and learning is directly correlated with the principal’s ability to maintain a safe and orderly environment, complete with the supports and recognition teacher need. These supports satisfy teachers’ intrinsic needs, in turn
resulting in increased job satisfaction and then increased teacher retention. The behaviors of the principal as they relate to teacher support, interest in the staff, and the principal’s ability to motivate the staff all affect teachers’ desire to stay.
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DEDICATION

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CHAPTER: 1: INTRODUCTION

The effects of the teacher shortage in America have reached enormous proportions. Teachers represent 4% of the entire work force in the United States (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). There were 3,214,900 teachers employed in America during the 2004-2005 school year (Marvel et al., 2007). Compared with the previous teacher count in the school year 2000-2001 of 2,994,700 teachers, this represented an increase in the teaching force of 220,200 (Marvel et al., 2007). This increase may seem substantial, but a teacher shortage still remains. The number of teacher recruits is outstripped by the number of teachers leaving their teaching assignments. Of the 3,214,900 teachers in America during the 2004-2005 school year, 261,100 left their teaching assignment for another assignment within their present school district or in another school district. This represents 8.1% of the nation’s teacher population. Another 296,600 left the teaching profession altogether, representing 8.4% of the nation’s total teacher population (Marvel et al., 2007). According to these figures, 16.5% of the nation’s teachers left their classrooms and their students. The tumultuous effect of this phenomenon on the urban school community has seriously affected student academic achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2003; Hill & Gillette, 2005).

Statement of Problem

The rate of teacher turnover in the nation’s schools is extremely high. Each year thousands of teachers leave their teaching positions or the profession altogether. Teacher turnover is a part of the culture particularly in the nation’s urban schools. Research has found that 22% of the faculty in urban high-poverty schools are lost each year as compared to 15.1% of
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the faculty in all the public schools (Ingersoll, 2004). This loss is attributed mostly to teacher job dissatisfaction (Ingersoll, 2004). Urban schools are those schools located in central city areas (Jacob, 2007). Urban school student population is typically more than 50% minority, with most students receiving a free or reduced lunch. These schools have fewer resources and fewer qualified teachers teaching their students than their suburban counterparts. It has been found that regardless of the numbers of teachers available for hire, there are always shortages in the large urban schools (Bradley & Loadman, 2005; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003).

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to identify and examine the connection between teacher retention and the behaviors of principals, examining principals’ effects on teacher job satisfaction and motivation. The study looked to clarity principals’ impact on teacher retention. In the school setting, the teachers’ immediate supervisor is the principal. This study looked at the leadership of the principal as a motivator and sought to identify ways in which principals influence the job satisfaction or dissatisfaction of teachers. This knowledge will aid in the development of strategies to help principals improve job satisfaction among their teachers and thereby aid in teacher retention at their schools.

Significance of the Study

The professional significance of this study is the potential discovery of an important causative agent for teacher retention whose solution is workable at the grassroots level, the school itself. Identifying strategies that enable principals to provide leadership supports, as well as, developing methods that influence teachers to stay, in their current teaching positions, can have a positive effect on the nation’s teacher retention problem.
This study has practical implications as it looks at the various types of leadership, particularly transformational leadership, and how principals can use the attributes affiliated with this type of leadership style to motive teachers and increase their job satisfaction.

_Research Questions_

1. What factors are associated with teacher retention (including, but not limited to, factors such as teacher age and years of service), and what influences do these factors have on teachers decision-making?

2. What are the leadership characteristics of principals in urban schools, and what are their effects on teacher retention?

3. What behaviors, supports, and strategies do principals utilize that encourages and prompts teachers to stay in schools that show a higher rate of teacher retention?

_Theoretical Framework_

The theory presented by Herzberg, Mausner and Snyderman (1959) was used to frame the connection between principal output and teacher job satisfaction that leads to retention; it is the empirical “two-factor” theory. Herzberg (2003) was a republication of Herzberg’s 1968 published findings from 12 different investigations into the motivation behind employees in 12 different career paths. The two-factor theory was used in the study. One of the career paths was that of a teacher. In all 12 investigations the dichotomy proved to be true. The two-factor theory, though first presented almost five decades ago, and having been subject to multiple reviews, is still considered relevant and “state of the art” today (Dinham & Scott, 1998; Basset-Jones & Lloyd, 2005; Derlin & Schneider, 1994; Iiacqua, Schumacher, & Li, 2001). In the field of job attitudes, the two-factor theory is one of the most replicated studies (Herzberg, 2003).
The business community has made inquiries into employee motivation for a much longer period of time than the educational community. In the area of motivation it is advantageous to look outside of the area of education and into the field of business where much more research has been done. Employee motivation and job satisfaction in the business community has been studied for many decades. By the year 1997, more than 600 books had been published that addressed managing and leading, employee motivation being a main topic of discussion (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999). Gallup interviewed the world’s best managers and average managers, and then compared their responses. In order to determine the best managers, the performance scores used in the different organizations was used. Performance scores measure productivity, profit, shrinkage, absenteeism, employee accidents, customer feedback, and employee feedback. Over 80,000 managers from a wide variety of businesses were interviewed. Great managers stated that a manager must be able to perform four things very well: select a person, set expectations, motivate the person, and develop the person (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999). A manager’s ability to motivate his or her staff is an essential factor in the development of employee job satisfaction. Thus, an employee’s direct manager has a profound impact on his or her job experience. At schools the teachers’ direct manager is the principal, which leads one to deduce that the principal’s influence is considerable, directly affecting teacher job satisfaction. In other words, “People leave managers, not companies” (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999, p. 33).

In the educational arena such concerns have not been so heavily focused upon. There is a limited amount of research in this area (Davis & Wilson, 2000). For this reason both business and educational references are needed to support the effects of organizational leaders’ on the job satisfaction of their employees. Herzberg (2003) discovered factors that motivated employees in business organizations. Motivation is a behavioral stimulus that moves one to engage in a
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particular action (Dinham & Scott, 1998). Motivation is at the center of Herzberg’s theory, and is key to the success of any organization (Herzberg, 2003). A principal’s goal, through motivation, is to improve teacher productivity and job satisfaction. However, with teachers whose morale is average, principal motivation will only produce 30% temporary improvement at best (Allison, 2006). In order to achieve 80 to 90% permanent improvement from teachers, Allison (2006) asserted that the principal must provide changes to conditions. Even small amounts of time spent by the principal in creating effective motivation will produce positive results.

Herzberg (2003) proposed a theory that looked at two factors: motivators that affect job satisfaction and hygiene that affects job dissatisfaction. The difference in the two-factor theory from others previously presented is the placing of the dichotomy on different continuums (Iiacqua et al., 2001). They are not considered opposites but rather completely separate entities, which should be measured as such. Before the two-factor theory, researchers believed that job satisfaction and dissatisfaction occupied the same continuum: job satisfaction at the high end and job dissatisfaction at the lower end (Iiacqua et al., 2001). Job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction, because they are measured by different variables, could both simultaneously be high; a teacher could be very satisfied with an aspect of his or her actual work but very dissatisfied with another aspect, such as his or her salary or school facility, resulting in a high satisfaction and dissatisfaction levels in the subsequent continuums. It has been found that in most cases two factors can be connected to one situation (Herzberg, 2003).

Motivators or satisfiers include achievement, recognition, the work itself, responsibility, and advancement; these are intrinsic, having to do with the execution of the job itself. An increase in the level of intrinsic factors increases job satisfaction. Motivators have a more lasting
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impact on employee attitudes than do hygiene factors, or dissatisfiers (Herzberg, 2003). The hygiene factor relates to job dissatisfaction. Hygiene factors, include interpersonal relationships, work conditions, salary, status, benefits, and organizational policy. Removing a dissatisfier does not increase job satisfaction, but rather reduces job dissatisfaction.

Studies by Sergiovanni (2006) and Dinham and Scott (1998) concurred that Herzberg’s theory can be used to reflect job satisfaction of teachers. Some of the intrinsic factors related to teachers according to Dinham and Scott (1998) are “student achievement, teacher achievement, changing pupil attitudes and behaviors in a positive way, recognition from others, mastery and self-growth, and positive relationships” (p. 364).

Job satisfaction is increased by active enhancement of the intrinsic factor by one’s immediate supervisor. Teacher achievement, recognition, responsibility, growth or advancement and work itself were the most important factors tied to job satisfaction (Herzberg, 2003). Some of the extrinsic factors related to teachers, according to Dinham and Scott (1998), were “impacts of changes to educational policies and procedures, greater expectations on schools to deal with and solve social problems, the declining status of teachers in society, poor supervision, being treated impersonally by employers, new responsibilities for schools and increased administrative workloads” (p. 364).

Iacqua et al. (2001) explained how the two factors stem from different basic human needs. The basic need for self-esteem would be the foundational basis for recognition and reward, while the basic need for food and shelter would be the foundational basis for having a good salary. Because of the specific distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic factors, principals should not limit their focus to one (Sergiovanni, 2006). In order for a school to function as an educational institution, extrinsic factors must continually be addressed; the factors
that get overlooked by most principals are the intrinsic ones. Principals look at intrinsic factors as those that can be skimmed, when in fact the satisfaction of one’s staff rests on the attainment of intrinsic factors (Derlin & Schneider, 1994). Teacher job satisfaction, job dissatisfaction, and commitment are directly related to teacher retention (Shann, 1998).

**Operational Definitions**

The terms that follow are presented as defined for use in this study.

*Retention*: ability of an employer to retain his or her current staff.

*Turnover*: loss of employees.

*Revolving Door*: continued movement of qualified teachers into and out of their assigned schools to teach at other schools or to leave the teaching profession entirely.

*Motivation*: positive intrinsic reinforcement that moves one to feel that their presence and contribution to a task or activity is beneficial.

*Mixed-Method*: use of both quantitative and qualitative methodology within a single research study (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006).

*Climate*: the atmosphere or tone produced by a group’s actions and behaviors, characterizing the group.

*Environment*: circumstances, objects, or conditions that surround and organization, influencing the lives of those in the organization and their survival.

**Summary**

The continued exodus of teachers from their present schools to other schools, or out of the profession altogether, is negatively affecting the continuity of the nation’s schools as well as student achievement. Though teacher recruitment efforts have been increased nationwide, the number of new teachers is keeping pace with the number of teachers leaving our nation’s schools.
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(Ingersoll, 2002b). There has recently been a shift in focus to increasing the teacher retention rate.

The loss of teachers is mostly a result of teacher job dissatisfaction (Ingersoll, 2004). Herzberg’s “two-factor” theory will be used to investigate teacher job satisfaction in this study. Herzberg (2003) places job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction on separate continuums. With use of this theory Herzberg (2003) stated that an increase in one does not necessarily mean a decrease in the other. According to this line of thinking one must consider the notion of causative agents that directly or indirectly affect teachers’ sense of job satisfaction or dissatisfaction. One such agent would be the school principal.

According to findings from a study conducted within the business community, Buckingham and Coffman (1999) found that people leave companies because of the managers, not because of the company. Therefore a look at the relationship between the principal and the teachers warrants serious consideration; this study will investigate this relationship.
CHAPTER II: Literature Review

Ingersoll has been the major contributor to the area of teacher retention, with researchers building their studies using the foundation laid by him. This study has been significantly influenced by Ingersoll with its underlying foundation in the area of teacher shortage and teacher retention. Ingersoll analyzed the School and Staffing Survey statistical data and wrote the report for the National Task Force on Public Education in 2004, which addressed the difficulties high-poverty schools have staffing their classrooms. In 2003 Ingersoll was the first to present the educational community with information supporting a focus on retention instead of recruitment as a solution for the shortage. He also coined the phrase “The Revolving Door” as it pertains to the continual movement of new teachers in and out of the nation’s classrooms. Norton (1999) found that after one year in the profession 25% of teachers leave, and their fifth year, up to 50% of teachers leave the profession. When considering the number of young Entry Year Teachers (EYT) that feed this revolving door, one must look for factors that affect this EYT population. Ingersoll (2002b) stated that the problem is not due to a shortage, but is due to an extremely high frequency of teacher turnover. This turnover, according to Ingersoll (2002b) is not connected to teacher retirement; it is a direct result of teacher job dissatisfaction. This study will investigate the relationship between teacher retention and the effects of principal influence on teacher retention.

Teacher Turnover

Employee turnover is realized in all organizations. However, it must be noted that all employee turnover is not bad. While high turnover rates within an organization can suggest internal, systemic, and managerial problems, a relatively low level of turnover is normal and beneficial to the organization. It allows the organization to eliminate employees whose
performance does not reflect organizational standards, while at the same time allows for the infusion of new energy and ideas brought about by new employees (Ingersoll, 2003b). Turnover can also be said to have a more devastating affect on some organizations than others. In organizations where assembly lines and routine are not the norm, and where exuberant amounts of human interaction are commonplace, a high rate of turnover can derail the flow and basic operation of the organization. Therefore, employee commitment is important to the stability and effectiveness of the organization. Employees of these organizations provide a certain degree of specialization needed for the job. This makes the organization very dependent upon each employee for the success of the organization as a whole (Ingersoll, 2003b). Such is the case with teachers and the school organizations in which they serve.

The constant interaction between school employees and students creates a real sense of community and family. This sense of community is one of the indicators of an effective school (Ingersoll, 2003b). High turnover rates inhibit the development of such relationships and may decrease a school’s ability to be effective.

The most comprehensive collection of data on educational staffing in America is encompassed in the School and Staffing Survey (SASS) and its companion supplement, the Teacher Follow-up Survey (TFS). These surveys are conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). The SASS has been administered five times beginning with the 1987-1988 school year and every three years thereafter. The TFS is a sample of the teachers who participated in the SASS. The TFS is conducted the following year. The sample size consists of teachers who leave teaching and teachers who continue to teach in the year after their participation in the SASS. The 2004-2005 TFS data presented in this paper was compiled from surveys completed by 7,429 teachers that completed the SASS (Marvel et al., 2007).
The TFS Survey of 2004-2005 divides the urban category into central city and urban fringe (also called large town). The data revealed that 10.3% of central city and 7.3% of urban fringe teachers moved from their school of 2003 – 2004 to a different school in 2004 – 2005 (Marvel et al., 2007). In addition, 9.9% of central city and 7.9% of urban fringe teachers left the profession altogether. When compared to the national percentages in these two categories, 8.1% and 8.4%, respectively, central city teacher mobility was significantly higher than that of the nation’s teacher population (Marvel et al., 2007). Close to 90% of all minorities in the United States live in urban areas. Specifically, African Americans, Hispanics and Asians live mostly in urban areas (Rusk, 2003). Within the urban community of ethnicity, Swanson (2004) stated that the percentage of students who graduated from high poverty urban schools was 15% to 18% lower that that of their peers from schools located in other areas. In addition, most urban schools have few resources; large class sizes; facilities in need of repair; large minority populations and a large population that receives free or reduced lunch. All of these conditions compound the challenges that already exist for today’s teachers (Bradley & Loadman, 2005; Brown, 2002; Darling-Hammond, 2003; Gonzalez & NASDSE 1995). The NCES (1998) pointed out that among the schools with a minority population of 50% or above, the teacher turnover is double that of schools with less than 50% minority population.

When considering the reasons for the high turnover rate of teachers in urban schools, one can use the findings from the report prepared for the National Task Force on Public Education by Ingersoll (2004) which stated that the top five causes of teacher turnover during the first five years of teaching in high poverty schools are, in order, limited or perfunctory administrative support, lack of faculty influence, numerous classroom disruptions, inadequate time, and poor salaries. Of those teachers who participated in the study, only 14% of teacher turnover found in
the high poverty schools was due to retirement. The data showed 40% of turnover was due to job dissatisfaction or the search for a different job (Ingersoll, 2004). Other reasons were connected to school staffing actions or personal considerations. Before the year 2003, it was believed that the main reason for the teacher shortage was due to increased student enrollment and increased teacher retirement, but one can see from these data that this was not the case (Ingersoll, 2003a). Jacob (2007) found teachers in urban schools were more inexperienced than those in suburban schools. It is said that it takes about three years for an urban classroom teacher to become proficient in his or her craft; if so, urban schools are losing their teachers just when they are blossoming in their profession (Haberman & Rickards, 1990). Even when considering teachers entering the profession at an older age, urban school environments have been found to be challenging.

Alternative licensure programs (AEL) have been developed to help satisfy the demand for qualified teachers in the nation’s schools. These programs allow people from other professions an opportunity to participate in an accelerated teaching program. Some researchers, such as Adams (1996) argued that teachers in the middle adult age range are more likely to find more satisfaction in teaching and therefore perform better and have more commitment to the profession. This statement might reflect the feelings of suburban AEL teachers, but not all urban school teachers for AEL programs agree. Three participants in a study by Costigan (2005), who were in their second year at an urban school in New York City, expressed this sentiment. Costigan (2005) summarized the feelings of one teacher:

Arnie is “on the fence” and is not sure he wants to stay in teaching for a third year. He is intermittently looking at want ads for jobs in his former profession as a business administrator. He states that the constant administrative flux in his
school, as well as the school’s inability to deal consistently with disruptive or unprepared students, leads him to strongly consider leaving teaching. (p. 3)

Another study conducted by McConney, Ayres, Hansen, and Cuthbertson (2003) in the Baltimore City Schools, which examined teachers with only one or two years of experience, found that 44% of them left their teaching positions because of job dissatisfaction. When asked their reason for leaving, their response was that they needed more support and a mentor for new teachers.

*Reasons for Teacher Turnover*

Though the tide is changing from recruitment and is increasingly focused on teacher retention as the reason for high teacher turnover, not all researchers agree with the change in focus (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). For some time, researchers proposed that increased student enrollment and teacher retirement created the need for increased numbers of teachers; there are still those who feel this way (Ingersoll, 2002). Hanushek, Kain, and Rivkin (2001) concluded that the main reason for the great need for teachers in urban public schools was the large number of students of color that populated the urban schools, citing that the White teachers are leaving for the suburban schools that have fewer minorities and higher academic achievement.

Haberman (1991) presented an entirely different argument. Haberman believed that the more mature the teacher, the more developmentally prepared they were to be successful and satisfied within a classroom teaching position in an urban school. Therefore the solution to the teacher shortage is to increase the number of teachers from Alternative Licensure Programs.

The lack of appropriate teacher training programs is the final opposing position. Teachers are not prepared for the multicultural environment that they find in today’s urban schools (Haberman & Post, 1998; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Rose, 1995). Therefore their time in
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the urban classroom is frustrating and stressful at best, leading to the teachers’ decision to leave. Presently, recruiting new students into the profession is the focus of conversation in teachers colleges, while recruiting new licensed teachers to teach at particular schools is the focus of many school districts. Recruiting at both levels does have its place in the solution of the teacher shortage; however, it should not be the main thrust.

The main focus should be on the retention of the more than three million teachers that are already occupying positions in the nation’s schools (Ingersoll, 2004; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Oakes, Franke, Quartz, & Rogers, 2002). Consider the teacher shortage as a car flat tire with a few tiny slits that produced a slow leak. A temporary solution would be to add more air to the tire. The tire would once again be inflated enough for travel, but the air still seeps out—resulting in the tire going flat again. Like the addition of air, the recruitment of new teachers is only a temporary solution to a much larger problem. Though new teachers are recruited, many more teachers are exiting. The reduction of teacher turnover should be the focus of the charge to alleviate the teacher shortage—teacher retention. Teacher attrition, not teacher retirement or large increases in the student population, is the main reason for the teacher shortage (Bradley & Loadman, 2005; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Oakes et al., 2002). Ingersoll (2001) proposed this notion:

School staffing problems are neither synonymous with, nor primarily due to, teacher shortages in the conventional sense of a deficit in the supply of teachers…school staffing problems are primarily due to excess demand resulting from a “revolving door”—where large numbers of teachers depart their jobs for reasons other than retirement. (p. 5)
"Influences of Principals"

*Job Commitment and Satisfaction*

The definition of organizational commitment as presented by Porter, Steers, Mowday and Boulian (1974) will be used when speaking of organizational commitment. This study divided organizational commitment into three different but connected characteristics: “a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization’s goals and values, a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization, and a definite desire to maintain organizational membership” (p. 604). A determinant of teacher commitment is job satisfaction (Shann, 1998). Job satisfaction affects the development of a teacher’s commitment to the mission of the school. Shann (1998) asserted that satisfaction in a school environment is cultivated by the principal and has a direct effect on the school culture. The lack of commitment and job satisfaction led teachers to varied paths previously discussed: a position at another school within the same district; a teaching position in another district; or departure from the teaching profession altogether.

The prominent factors surrounding dissatisfaction among teachers in urban schools are not the same as those found in suburban schools. Derlin and Schneider (1994) reported that job dissatisfaction in both school types consists of three primary factors. In suburban schools the factors are extrinsic: pay, advancement and job security. Conversely, in urban schools the factors are intrinsic in nature: recognition and involvement in decision making and support. In addition to instructional support and support with student discipline issues, support is also needed by most teachers in urban schools regarding cultural diversity (Bradley & Loadman, 2005; Hill & Gillette, 2005; NG, 2003; Rushton, 2001).

*Generational Differences*

Age is a factor that affects one’s behavior as well as one’s decision-making ability. Haberman (1991) and Quartez and TEP (2003) considered age as a factor when analyzing
teachers lack of commitment to the teaching profession. When looking at the nation’s teachers who were age 30 and younger, 15% of them changed schools and 9% of them left the teaching profession altogether in the 2004-2005 school year (Marvel et al., 2007). Today’s teaching force is mostly comprised of teachers between the ages of 25 and 64. These ages encompass two categories of people: the Baby Boomers, ages 45 to 64, and the Generation Xers, ages 25 to 44. Bolch (2001) wrote of the numerical difference in the Baby Boomer population and the Generation X (Gen X) population, that difference being 10 million fewer in the Generation X population. Carlson (2004) stated that within 10 years, more than two million new teachers will be needed in America’s classrooms. In addition, he compared the hard working, dedicated, strong sense of ideals held by Baby Boomers to the focus on peace of mind and leisure time focus among Generation Xers.

To understand the behavior of GenXers, one need only review the nation’s major work related events that occurred during their youth. GenXers grew up in the period of downsizing. They saw first hand the devastating results of being laid off after devoting ten, fifteen and twenty years or more to a particular company (Ruch, 2000). These are the children of parents whose organizational commitment was rewarded with loss of pension, loss of security and loss of jobs. From this grave situation a new perspective toward work was developed by the next generation of employees, the GenXers. GenXers as a group do not exhibit a sense of job loyalty; they look for greener pastures (Filipczak, 1994; Peske, Liu, Johnson, Kauffman, & Kardos, 2001). Within a year of employment one third of GenX employees begin to investigate new employment (Ruch, 2000). Retention of GenX employees depends heavily on their daily experiences. A focus on personal growth and happiness are two of the driving forces behind decisions made by GenXers (Johnson et al., 2001; Jurkiewicz, 2000; Montana & Lenaghan, 1999). In addition,
achievement, recognition, responsibility, advancement, and the work itself are factors that motivate employees of the GenX generation (Montana & Lenaghan, 1999).

A workplace that does not attend to generational differences is less attractive to GenXers (Ruch, 2000). This makes it imperative to have knowledge of what motivates them. Only a few researchers (e.g., Johnson et al., 2001) made the connection between the characteristics of the new population of Generation X teachers, their professional commitment, and teacher retention.

**Cultural Differences**

Though the number one reason for teacher turnover related to job dissatisfaction is poor administrative support, according to Ingersoll (2004), much of that support is needed as a result of the stress, tension, and uneasy feeling created when one is continually surrounded by visual, verbal and behavioral representations from cultures other than one's own. Many teachers are challenged by the various aspects that surround diversity, which are prevalent in urban schools. In order for teachers in urban schools to be effective, it is imperative for them to possess multicultural competencies (Haberman & Post, 1998; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Rose, 1995). Though the student population of urban schools is becoming more and more multicultural, the National Commission (1997) reminded us that the racial make-up of new teachers in urban schools remains predominantly White, female and young, with little or no experience dealing with people of ethnicities other than their own. According to the Marvel et al. (2007) TFS for school year 2004-2005, White teachers make up 84.8% of the nation’s teaching force. The ethnic division of teachers according to Marvel et al. (2007) is as follows: 84.8% of the nation’s teachers are White, 7.5% are African American, 4.3% are Hispanic, and 1.4% are Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Other Pacific Islander, non-Hispanic American Indian/Alaska Native, non-Hispanic ethnicity. The ethnic division of students in urban U.S. schools is just the opposite of teachers’.
That is, the nation’s teacher population is predominately White, while the student population in urban schools is predominantly minority (Kozol, 2005).

According to Kozol (2005) during the 2002-2003 school year, 87% of Chicago’s student population were African American or Hispanic; in Washington D.C. 94% were African American or Hispanic; in Philadelphia and Cleveland 79% were African American or Hispanic; in Los Angeles 84% were African American or Hispanic; in Detroit 96% were African American or Hispanic; in Baltimore 89% were African American or Hispanic; and in New York City almost 75% were African American or Hispanic. As one can see, most students of ethnic background have been taught by White teachers. For most of the White teachers, the presence of such large numbers of students of color establish a reason for leaving (Hanushek et al., 2001).

Hanushek et al. (2001) stated, “Teacher transitions are much more strongly related to particular student characteristics than salary differentials. Schools serving large numbers of academically disadvantaged, African American or Hispanic students tend to lose a substantial fraction of teachers each year” (p. 5).

When referring to culture, we are referencing our unconscious ways of interpreting things that go on around us. These interpretations are always with us and cause us to behave, think and react in certain ways. These reactions can adversely affect others. The classroom clash of cultural differences and lack of understanding prompts the majority of White teachers in urban schools to question their cultural knowledge of their students of color as well as their own (McIntyre, 1997). Many White teachers, especially teachers in their first few years of teaching, experience a large degree of tension in their classroom (McIntyre, 1997). This is due to the reality that they must occupy a space, seven hours or more a day, that is culturally unfamiliar to them. Some teachers respond by overcoming their tension, while learning about and using the
culture to enhance student achievement, but others respond by leaving (Hanushek et al., 2001; Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2002). When there is a large amount of interaction among people of differing cultural backgrounds who have little or no knowledge and understanding of the other’s culture, it can produce a tense, stressful environment and strong feelings of discomfort (Wolff, 1996). Racial and cultural differences can cause feelings of discomfort and uneasiness (Wolff, 1996). Turnover seems to be part of the culture in schools. Teacher responsibilities involve an extreme amount of interaction with the urban students of color they serve (Bradley & Loadman, 2005; Hill & Gillette, 2005; NG, 2003; Rushton, 2001).

The intermingling that takes place among various ethnic groups in this discourse, between White teachers and students of color, creates a venue for contact through observation, discourse and physical interaction. These interactions can lead to the development of assimilations, understandings or misunderstandings. This venue, where cultures collide, is the “melting pot” of America; the classroom is a contact-zone.

**Classroom Interaction**

A contact-zone, by definition, is an imaginary space where differing cultures meet (Wolff, 1996). Though imaginary as it relates to place, the contact-zone can bring one face-to-face—by way of event or discourse—with people, issues and realities that are often uncomfortable and not understood. However, contact-zones can also be thought of as provoking and enlightening. A contact-zone, by nature, is a place that can be meaningful, yet questioning. It can evoke calm and understanding, and it can be explosive. Confrontations are almost inevitable in the contact-zone.

When White teachers think about working with urban students of color, they envision entering the environment colorless, as someone who is going to help the students of color to
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learn (McIntyre, 1997). This constant denial of the existence of racism, or one could say colorblindness has resulted in assumptions that produce misinformation (Taylor, 1999). Whites try to function with the belief that color has no bearing on the events of society. Gay and Howard (2000) explained how individuals, for the most part, believe that people are more alike than different. The belief is also that race and ethnicity have much less to do with inequities and disparities in school but more to do with class, gender, economics, and privilege (Gay & Howard, 2000). These assumptions become problematic in situations where true cultural differences present themselves; a collision ensues. Ladson-Billings (1999) underscores the persistence of race as a crucial factor, claiming that, “Despite the scientific refutation of race as a legitimate biological concept and attempts to marginalize race in much of the public (political) discourse, race continues to be a powerful social construct and signifier” (p. 8). The scope of discourse surrounding teacher retention needs to broaden to include race, encompassing cultural and characteristic differences that play a part in the shortage of White teachers in urban schools. Students’ cultural characteristics should not affect a teacher’s ability to educate them. Ideally, cultural characteristics should not be the determining factor in the academic ability of students. McIntyre (1997) spoke of student teachers who have “anxieties about how their identities as white teachers would influence their expectations of Black students” (p. 661).

Student characteristics are reflected in student achievement, student minority classification and student subsidized lunch eligibility (Hanushek et al., 2001). Hanushek et al. (2001) found that these differences led to the movement of White teachers from urban schools to suburban schools—or out of the education profession all together. Hanushek et al. (2001) showed “dramatic changes in district average student characteristics for teachers who move from urban to suburban districts, including a 0.35 standard deviation (14 percentile) rise in
average achievement and falls in racial and ethnic concentrations of 15-20 percent” (p. 21).

Simply stated, when teachers move from urban to suburban schools, they find a student population that is more White and whose academic achievement is 14% higher than that of urban students. This movement allows White teachers to reduce many of the issues they found at the urban schools; these issues are not present in such magnitude at most suburban schools.

*The Urban Situation*

It is clear that in addition to the basic responsibilities that all teachers have, urban teachers are presented with considerably more challenges. Scarce resources, overcrowded classrooms, disciplinary problems, little collaboration time with other teachers, students with problems beyond academics, and cultural differences are all realities that most urban school teachers must address on a daily basis in addition to their teaching responsibilities (Gonzalez & NASDSE, 1995). These issues, coupled with the mindset and work ethic of the thousands of new teachers from the Generation X population, are the ingredients for teacher unrest. Because of the many additional pressures placed upon urban teachers, collaboration and support are so crucial to the continuation of their teaching career in urban schools. Teacher turnover has an impact on the total school environment, which includes students’ academic performance. Students receive the brunt of the effects of the turnover. Ingersoll and Smith (2003) explained it this way:

Employee turnover has especially serious consequences in workplaces that require extensive interaction among participants and that depend on commitment, continuity, and cohesion among employees. From this perspective, the high turnover of teachers in schools does not simply cause staffing problems but may also harm the school environment and student performance. (p. 31)
The characteristics as stated above, regarding urban schools as a workplace, give rise to the need for support for new as well as veteran teachers. It is imperative to their longevity in teaching in urban schools. Retaining good staff in any line of work must be creative and strategic at best, but retaining staff in an underpaid, underappreciated, under-supported career presents a true challenge (Brown, 2002). Retaining teachers in urban schools is an example of such a challenge. While all schools are experiencing shortages, especially in the areas of math, science and special education, impoverished urban schools are the hardest hit (Archer, 2000; Bradley & Loadman, 2005; Recruiting New Teachers, 2000).

School Leadership

Among the top five reasons for teacher flight are, in order, limited or perfunctory administrative support, lack of faculty influence, numerous classroom interruptions, inadequate time, and poor salaries (Bueker, 2005; Gonzalez & NASDSE, 1995; Ingersoll, 2004; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). Of those top five, administrative support influences four of the five. Poor salary is the only reason for teacher flight that is not directly influenced by the school administrator. Administrative support should promote the creation of cohesive school learning communities that embody shared goals, visions, and beliefs with interdisciplinary collaboration and valued teacher input, thus fostering a strong organizational foundation. Administrative support puts schools on the road to meeting the needs of their faculty. Though the number one reason for job dissatisfaction-related teacher turnover is poor administrative support, according to Ingersoll (2004), much of the support is needed as a result of the stress, tension and uneasy feelings about circumstances confronted by teachers within the school.

How one perceives one’s circumstances can result in positive or negative decision making. When individuals feel they have little or no control, are insecure or helpless, they
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respond by focusing more on themselves and become more remote in the organizational setting (Fullan, 2006). Many urban teachers respond to such circumstances by re-entering the revolving door. They leave their school or the teaching profession completely. Schools, as in business organizations, have a leader; the principal represents the leadership of the school. The principal is the human entity within the school who is responsible for orchestrating the support that urban teachers need. It was the contention of this study that the common denominator among the top causes of teacher flight was the school site management, the principal. The school administrator, the principal, is the guiding force of all that occurs in the school building. The principal sets the climate in the building. Their perspective drives the decisions that are made, ultimately affecting all in the building, for good or for bad.

Leadership

Perspectives allow one to understand and uncover how one feels about the world. When looking at leadership perspectives, one finds that there is more than one way of understanding the concept of leadership or occupying a position of leadership. Leadership relies on the relationship between a leader and those who are being led as well as their loyalty to the organization. Two types of leadership are transactional leadership and transformational leadership.

Transactional leadership fosters an exchange of one thing for another between the leader and the followers. This type of leadership does not lead to commitment on the part of the follower (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Yukl, 2006). In contrast, transformational leadership motivates the followers to perform increasingly above what was intended (Marzano et al., 2005; Yukl, 2006). Transformational leadership moves both the leader and the followers to new heights of motivation. The separate goals of the leader and followers come together as one
Transformational leadership is the leadership type necessary for an effective principal in the changing school environment of today (Carlson, 1996; Marzano et al., 2005).

Yukl (2006) examined transformational behaviors in leaders. These behaviors result in increased follower emotions; leaders look at problems from a new perspective, and provide encouragement and support to the followers. There is a relationship between job satisfaction and leadership types. A positive correlation exists between job satisfaction and transformational leadership (Bogler, 2001). Due to the supportive nature of transformational leaders, their followers tend to exhibit a higher level of job satisfaction. Another characteristic of a good leader is one that does not stay in his or her office, but is visible, observant, and actively involved at all levels of the organization. This allows the leader to determine some of the needs of their followers, and then use this knowledge to consider ways to address their needs. Heifetz and Linsky (2002) described a leadership strategy for acquiring the information necessary to determine followers’ needs as “taking a trip to the balcony.” This move will let one see the interactions of the staff from the perspective of someone from the outside looking in. By stepping “onto the balcony,” one can see details and small aspects of situations that would otherwise not be noticed because of one’s active involvement. After observation and assessment one can return to the situation or group with new knowledge and insight to the events that have been unfolding. The principal can then return with added knowledge of individuals’ needs, accomplishments, and future endeavors. At this point the principal is in a position to provide knowledgeable support to the various staff members. The principal’s ability to make multiple trips to the balcony, as explained by Heifetz and Linsky (2002) permits the principal to view the emotional climate and disposition of the teachers, as well as their potential needs. This is
something that many principals feel they don’t need to do in their authoritarian position. However, a regular visit to the balcony will give the principal the insight needed to effectively respond to the needs of the teachers and increase teacher job satisfaction. The principal should be able to, as Fullan (2005) stated, to “steer and facilitate the evolving direction on a daily basis” (p. 67).

As Hoerr (2005) explains, “Good leaders change organizations; great leaders change people. Leadership is about relationships” (p. 7). When referring to school leadership, Hoerr (2005) presented four behaviors of school leaders:

1. Leaders nurture, challenge, help grow and develop, creating a culture in which they all learn.
2. A leader passes out praise when things go well and takes responsibility and picks up pieces when things fall apart.
3. A leader brings out the best in others.
4. A leader executes strategies that make the vision a reality, deal with employees, and follow through to ensure that the right things are done in the right way. (pp. 7-8)

A good principal not only leads; he or she also manages. Management and leadership are used interchangeably at times, but in actuality are quite different (Ubben, Hughes, & Norris, 2007). When one manages, his or her focus is on ensuring the solutions to the school’s problems are being solved. When one leads, the focus is to ensure that the school functions and operates as it should. As a principal, both management and leadership behaviors must be performed. When referencing factors related to teacher job satisfaction, the management aspect of being an
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effective teacher is the focus. The supportive interactions between the principal and the teachers are addressed through the principal’s management strategies.

**Principals**

A principal provides leadership and management for those who work in and attend the school. Sergiovanni (2006) explained that for decades the principal has occupied the position of “the most influential person in the school.” The principal creates an atmosphere in the school that renders the school a calm, safe environment, a chaotic, turbulent environment, or one that is somewhere in between (Sergiovanni, 2006; 2005; 2004).

The standard operating procedures that foster a safe and orderly environment are established and monitored by the principal. It is this environment that teachers return to daily, and it is where they spend most of their waking hours during the school year. They need and expect a safe and orderly environment. A feeling of safety is one of the most basic of human needs and must be established before high level needs such as belonging, esteem, and self-actualization can be achieved. According to Sergiovanni (2006) as teachers move toward the satisfaction of higher needs, they become more motivated and productive. Therefore, the school environment, which is established in large part by the principal, has a direct influence on teachers’ feelings of safety and motivation and their level of productivity.

Marcus (2007) argued that of the four highest ranking motivators found in the workplace, two are intrinsic and two are extrinsic. The intrinsic motivators are: interesting work and full appreciation of work done, and the extrinsic motivators are: good wages and job security. Full appreciation of work done represents one of the factors that were found by Jurkiewicz (2000) to be very important to workers between the ages of 25 to 44, also known as Generation X. Generation X includes the nation’s young teachers and many of the alternative licensed teachers.
The alternative licensed teachers are those teachers whose first career was not teaching and who subsequently participated in an accelerated licensure program to enter the profession. Thoughtful comments, given around one’s colleagues, do much to foster job satisfaction and employee motivation (Marcus, 2007). Principals are the catalyst to increased job satisfaction for teachers (Brown, 2002; Gonzalez & NASDSE, 1995; Jorissen, 2002; Shann, 1998). Of the ten things a principal can do to retain teachers, as presented by Jorissen (2002) item number ten is, “to recognize the ways in which the teacher is making a difference” (p. 53). Jorissen (2002) explained that teachers feel successful when their students’ performance is high. Principals who talk with their teachers and learn of students’ successes should make mention and congratulate the teacher in the presence of other colleagues. These acts of recognition should be given to any staff member who has achieved an accomplishment, no matter how small. When explaining what increases staff productivity and loyalty, Buckingham and Coffman’s report from the Gallup Poll (as cited in Minarik et al., 2003) found:

> The single most important variable in staff productivity and loyalty is this quality of the relationship between staff and their direct supervisors. It was not pay, perks, benefits, or other extrinsic factors. More specifically, they found employees valued clear and consistent expectations, a caring supervisor, recognition of their unique talents, freedom to act, and support of their personal growth. (p. 232)

Satisfied, motivated employees are more highly productive (Marcus, 2007; Peters & Waterman, 2004).

From the moment a new teacher enters the school, a feeling of support is necessary. Within the first month of the school year new teachers either sink or swim. Those that swim do
so with the aid and assistance of their principal in his or her role as instructional leader, culture
builder and coordinator of veteran teachers as mentors for the new teachers (Colley, 2002). New
teachers are looking to the principal for guidance. This is critical to their survival. Shaun (1998)
discovered a connection between job satisfaction, commitment, school effectiveness and teacher
retention.

Organizations are composed of human entities, each with physical and emotional
responses to intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Likewise, urban schools are composed of human
entities; they are a form of organization. The teacher shortage can be said to be both a physical
and emotional response by human entities, teachers, to the intrinsic and extrinsic factors that
engulf them. These factors create circumstances that the teachers feel unequipped to handle or
have little or no control over. Fullan (2006) explained that human responses are usually a result
of how one experiences or perceives one’s circumstances. Wilkinson (as cited in Fullan, 2005)
presented this notion in the following manner:

The biology of how psychological factors affect health seems to hinge
predominantly on the extent to which they cause frequent or recurrent stress.

Chronic stress affects numerous physiological systems, including the
cardiovascular and immune systems, increasing our vulnerability to a very wide
range of diseases and health conditions.

Because psychological factors influence health through stress, the main
psychosocial factors identified by research are also likely to be most important
sources and symptoms of chronic stress in modern societies. They include
depression, anxiety, helplessness, hostility, insecurity, and lack of a sense of
control—not to mention the pressures that lead people to dependency on prescribed or recreational drugs.

On the positive side, feeling happy and in control of life, having friends, and enjoying good relationships all seem highly beneficial to health.

(pp. 12-13)

*Teachers of the 21st Century*

In order to better retain the Generation X teachers, those teachers between the ages of 25 and 44, steps need to be taken to reduce the extrinsic factors and increase the intrinsic factors they encounter in the school. To coin a phrase from Cochran-Smith and Bank Street College of Education (2006) “This is not your mother’s teacher. We need to address the teacher supply problem from a generational perspective that requires a redefinition of career expectations, career paths, and school organization” (pp. 7-8). This could be done with increased administrative support and recognition from the principal. Peters and Waterman (2004) stated that American corporations that produce excellent financial reports and productivity do so by motivating average employees, not by hiring outstanding ones. Teachers need that same level of motivation and support from their principal to develop a sense of job satisfaction. This sense of job satisfaction will lead to the commitment needed for the teacher to remain in the teaching profession (Bolger, 2001).

Essential information regarding successful companies in America was published in the best selling book by Peters and Waterman in 1984, *In Search of Excellence: Lessons from America’s Best-Run Companies*. The material included in this book is still relevant today, underscored by its republication in 2004. Peters and Waterman (2004) found that organizational leaders must continuously reinforce the thought of being a winner to their employees.
Recognition and rewards can facilitate this action. Small accolades are better than large ones. When large rewards are used this seems to discourage the teachers that did not get rewarded but thought they should have received an award. In other words, “Lasting commitment to a task is engendered only by fostering conditions that build intrinsic motivation.” (Peters & Waterman, 2004, p. 72) In order to motivate, one must have some background knowledge and understanding of those to be motivated (Marcus, 2007). This knowledge will allow the leader to implement the intrinsic factors needed to motivate one’s followers.

Mentors, also referred to as *accomplished veteran teachers*, are those who are focused and extremely efficient in their content and pedagogy. In conjunction with the principal as the instructional leader of the building, they have the ability to provide maximum support for *novice teachers*. Mentoring that occurs in the school building comes under the auspices of the principal, in that the principal would need to provide possible release time for some of their meetings. Johnson et al. (2001) presented the elements that make a successful school-based teacher induction program. In a successful program, teachers collaborate with one another. The principal supports staff interaction and fosters a school structure that recognizes teacher achievements and encourages teacher input.

Teachers look for a safe and orderly learning and work environment; seek dependence from others; seek content knowledge and intellectual safety; and have concern for safety and survival. In response to these needs, principals must avail themselves, provide mentors, salary, benefits, adequate facilities, development of safe learning communities, professional development, honor cultural differences and background as well as acknowledging fears and limitations. This represents the food and shelter of a teacher’s existence. If these aspects of the teacher’s life are not met through direct response by the principal and district in some fashion,
hopes of longevity begin to dissipate during the first quarter. In situations where no immediate gratification is possible, collaboration between the teacher and the principal regarding its attainment is imperative. One of the eight characteristics of a successful urban teacher is self-care (Erskine-Cullen & Sinclair, 1996). To be a successful urban teacher, a teacher’s personal needs must be met.

Principals and Their Influence

Since the principal is responsible for all that is related to the school, every aspect of the school inevitably filters back to the principal. Teacher retention is no different.

A stressful day filled with conflict, pressures, always increasing workload, long hours, and a vast array of demands describe the job of the typical urban principal (Cistone & Stevenson, 2000). Such demands on urban principals can lead to high levels of stress and high turnovers rates in their ranks as well. The urban principal needs assistance and time: time to provide adequate teacher support, time to complete office tasks and solve instructional issues, disciplinary concerns, managerial issues and climate control. At the beginning outset of the nation’s focus on teacher retention, in the early 1980s, school climate was identified as an important part of principal’s responsibilities. Weller (1982) speaks to the importance of the principal’s development of a favorable school climate. Weller stated, “As with any organizational structure, the climate of the school is dependent upon the quality of leadership exhibited by its principal” (p. 32). With their need to maintain a favorable school climate and all of their other responsibilities, urban principals are in a position to contribute significantly to the retention of today’s teachers, potentially alleviating the teacher turnover problem. Balancing, navigating through and giving ample time for all demands are one of the biggest challenges
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urban principals face. However, as stated by Watkins (2005), putting strategies in place that will increase teacher retention must be a priority for principals.

Retaining satisfied, qualified teachers will actually assist principals in their balancing act of responsibilities. Teachers are the backbone of the school structure. A good supportive relationship between the principal and the teachers is essential to any successful urban school. A number of researchers have investigated the connection between teacher retention and the school principal (Colley, 2002; Darling-Hammond, 2003; Jorissen, 2002). Further research has been conducted more specifically regarding the influence of the principal on teacher job satisfaction (Billingsley, 1993; Bogler, 2001; Darling-Hammond & Sclan, 1996; Davis & Wilson, 2000; Ingersoll, 2001; Singh & Billingsley, 1998; Stockard & Lehman, 2004). Two of the “ten things a principal can do to retain teachers,” as listed by Jorissen (2002) were: establishing and maintaining positive personal relationships and recognizing the ways teachers make a difference. Jorissen (2002) brings attention to these two ways to increase teacher retention, but few studies link teacher motivation and its effect on job satisfaction and retention.

Getting urban principals to identify with and accept the critical need to support teachers presents them with a cognitive challenge. Derlin and Schneider (1994) found that urban principals who don’t provide much administrative support for teachers considered extrinsic factors like salary, advancement and job security to be more important than intrinsic factors. But intrinsic factors, which include student achievement and satisfaction in the workplace, were found to be more important to teachers. The principals, unless presented with differing information, would tend to believe that other professionals think, as they do, that is extrinsic factors are more important to job satisfaction than intrinsic ones. Though research has been done regarding this premise, the results have not been widely distributed to the population that needs it
most: the urban principals. Principal support is even more imperative with the added stress factors that urban teachers experience (Gonzalez & NASDSE, 1995). Less stress and burnout is experienced by teachers who receive support from their principal (Singh & Billingsley, 1998). Principals need to assume, and execute fervently, their roles as instructional leaders, mentor coordinators, culture builders, and as reported by Richards (2003) emotional support persons. By doing this, principals are more likely to create a caring school community that supports their staff and recognizes their achievements. These efforts will in turn increase teachers’ willingness to stay (Colley, 2002).

Principals should take care not to assume that with supporting teachers, one size fits all (Bush & Middlewood, 2005). No two people are the same; therefore treating them as if they are, can lead to additional problems and disappointments. To help principals respond to the needs of teachers appropriately, they need additional information. Just as teachers need to acquire or compile background information about their students so that they know how to best service them, principals need to be very observant so as to develop knowledge about each teacher. This will allow the principal to better support the teachers’ needs. Good teachers challenge, support and encourage their students to continue to work towards attaining their goals; principals should provide the same for their teachers (Sargent, 2003; Sergiovanni, 2005). Bush and Middlewood (2005) found that in determining how to motivate particular teachers, one should consider their gender, cultural background and professional career level. What may motivate one teacher may not have the same motivational effect on another teacher. Individuality of strategies is necessary at times. Clearly, what may motivate a female teacher might not have the same effect on a male teacher. What is important to one is not necessarily important to all.
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When principals attend to the supportive nature of intrinsic factors, it not only increases job satisfaction according to Davis and Wilson (2000), but also works toward the development of an attractive school culture that appeals to teachers. Principals need to establish a school culture that promotes a feeling of encouragement toward the teachers (Davis & Wilson, 2000; Sergiovanni, 2004). A school that has established an attractive culture has a principal who finds and uses opportunities to praise and recognize staff members. In addition, professional development, staff input and promotions are encouraged (Bush & Middlewood, 2005). Attractive culture, as laid out by Bush and Middlewood (2005), encompasses two main categories of behavior that principals should embrace: praise and recognition, and career opportunities. It would appear that the development of an attractive culture mirrors the need for principals to again address both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Principals who learn to seamlessly integrate and implement behaviors from both arenas will in turn experience the rewards of a positive school community and heightened job satisfaction among teachers, which thereby increases teacher retention.

The loss of qualified teachers each year causes urban principals to replace many teachers with substitutes that are not proficient in the subject area they are asked to teach (NG, 2003). The number of students being instructed by teachers who are not licensed has a direct effect on the academic success of the students (Darling-Hammond, 2003; Hill & Gillette, 2005; NG, 2003). As a result, many students’ test scores are below the state average. Urban school districts across the nation have been experiencing a relatively high teacher turnover rate. The need for a solution to the problem of retaining qualified teachers in urban schools is crucial. Why don’t these teachers remain in their positions? In a pilot study conducted by Oliver (2007) participants who were Generation X teachers, whose teaching assignment was in an urban high
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school setting, reflected on the influence their principal had on their decision to stay. This study was conducted in a large Midwest school district during the 2006-2007 school year. The pilot study sought the answers to the aforementioned question. In the pilot study conducted by Oliver (2007) three of the six teacher participants expressed a direct relationship between their principal’s actions, or lack thereof, and their willingness to stay.

Though principals have many responsibilities that are business related, like budget, staffing, public relations, district meeting, and so forth, it is imperative that they still allow ample time to assist their teachers, provide visible support, and create structures that support a safe and orderly environment. Teachers are not only looking for administrative support, but recognition from the administration for their hard work and accomplishments that are connected to education and the school. Something as simple as a “thank you” for time spent can make the difference between a satisfied teacher and a dissatisfied teacher. Lack of support from principals has been reported as a major reason why teachers leave their teaching positions (Ingersoll, 2004; McConney, Ayres, Hansen & Cuthbertson, 2003; Singh & Billingsley, 1998).

One of the highest ranked motivators found by Marcus (2007) was full appreciation of the work done. Knowing and showing appreciation for employees is a proven motivational strategy employed in the business community. For many, this solution may seem too simple, but data obtained from the pilot study conducted by Oliver (2007) supported this premise. Oliver (2007) found that Generation Xers expect recognition of some sort, for work done and accomplishments made. This depicts the feelings of young teachers who love the profession, but who are not receiving the support and recognition needed resulting in feeling of dissatisfaction.
Methodology of Previous Studies

A variety of methods have been used to conduct the research in this area. Both qualitative and quantitative methods have been used in order to obtain the richest data possible. Most studies cited used quantitative methods (Adams & Dial, 1993; Derlin & Schneider, 1994; Hanuskek et al., 2001; Ingersoll, 2004; Stockard & Lehman, 2004), fewer used qualitative methodology (Costigan, 2005), while others used both quantitative and qualitative methodology, mixed methods, in order to understand the stories and rationale behind the quantitative responses (Haberman & Rickards, 1990; Quartz & TEP Research Group, 2003; Rhodes et al., 2004; Richards, 2003). A look at the findings of these studies gives an overview of the factors that continue to ignite a teacher’s decision to leave.

Qualitative Methodology

This current study employed a qualitative methodology because, “Every word that people use in telling their stories is a microcosm of their consciousness” (Vygotsky & Kozulin, 1987, pp. 236-237). Data collected from interviews allow one to understand the meaning the participants derive from their lived experiences (Seidman, 2006). Throughout history, information and explanation of human experiences have been passed on through the use of language. Data from the interviews, focus groups and case studies provide information necessary to clarify and explain the situational drama that lies behind human behavior. Qualitative methods give researchers access to rich data, which is simply not available through empirical methodology.

Costigan (2005) performed interviews along with focus groups and journal entries in order to obtain information that would describe the experience of new teachers from an alternative licensure program at an urban public college in the city of New York. Each teacher
who completed the alternative licensure program had to commit to a minimum of two years of service in one of New York City’s urban primary or middle schools. The data obtained would hold the causative factors that might possibly lead to teachers leaving their school or teaching altogether. Initially 38 participants kept journals with both guided and unguided entries regarding their teaching experience while at their urban school placement. The first year the researchers read the journals and chose nine participants whose journals contained rich data. These participants were interviewed. Researchers also conducted focus groups. Twenty-five of the initial 38 participants were asked to participate. Each focus group lasted five hours and included four to six participants at a time from the group of 25. During the second year, 12 interviews were conducted with fellows from the initial 38. These same fellows participated in a focus group to assess the validity of the information obtained in the interviews. Again the information gathered pertained to their teaching experiences. These data were then used to select the participants whose experiences would become the focus of the study. From the 12 initial participants who were interviewed, three were chosen to participate in seven additional interviews.

The three participants all had a difficult time in the classroom. This was due to the alternative licensure program’s failure to prepare them to deal with cultural differences, standards accountability, and lack of autonomy (Costigan, 2005). At the end, the three participants were wavering between staying in teaching and returning to business and industry.

The rich information provided by this study, due to the qualitative methodologies employed by Costigan, was extremely helpful in understanding why some new teachers contemplated leaving teaching or their present school assignment. However, it would have been
interesting to know how the other 35 participants felt about the experiences they encountered and the impact they had on their decision to stay or leave.

**Quantitative Methodology**

Quantitative methodologies are most often used with a large sample population to increase the reliability of the data collected in the study. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) quantitatively compiles the most comprehensive collection of data on educational staffing in America. The NCES uses a survey called the School and Staffing Survey or SASS. In addition, NCES developed the Teacher Follow-up Survey (TFS). SASS is administered every three years; the TFS is administered the following year to teachers who participated in SASS the previous year. The TFS population consists of those who left teaching the year of SASS and those who continued to teach the year after SASS. As in most surveys all initial participants do not complete and submit their survey. The SASS survey was distributed nationwide to a random teacher sample population of 50,000. Over 5,000 of the SASS participants completed the TFS. Provasnik and Dorfman (2005) wrote the report on the findings of the 2004-2005 SASS and TFS study. Ingersoll (2004) was contracted by the Center for American Progress in conjunction with the Institute for America’s Future to prepare a report entitled “Renewing Our Schools, Securing Our Future: A National Task Force on Public Education.” In the report by Ingersoll (2004) SASS and TFS 2000-2001 data were used.

In order to obtain a valid snapshot on the state of teacher staffing nationwide, quantitative methodology is needed. Data from such a large sample population provide validity to the reported results, which include national statistics regarding teacher demographic as well as situational information. Without such an extensive study, a reliable database would not exist.
Stockard and Lehmen (2004) conducted a study that examined the influences of teacher job satisfaction on the retention of Entry Year Teachers. This study used 1993-1995 SASS data. They also surveyed 117 Entry Year Teachers from one state in the western portion of the United States. These 117 teachers comprised a random sample population from 12 large and 6 small school districts from this western state. The survey was mailed to and collected from the participants by mail. A panel design was used by Stockard and Lehman (2004). This design allowed for data collection over time. Both surveys considered various aspects of a teacher’s career: class size, teaching assignments, certification plus school and location demographics. According to the findings by Stockard and Lehmen (2004):

Administrators seem to influence teachers’ satisfaction indirectly—by promoting a safe and orderly school, by assigning teachers to positions for which they feel qualified, by providing teachers a sense of control and influence over their work and by providing a context in which teachers can feel supported by their colleagues and students’ parents and where they can be more efficacious in their teaching. (p. 762)

Hanushek et al. (2001) also used the panel design survey research method. However, their focus was investigating the influence of student characteristics, particularly race and achievement, on teacher retention. The student/teacher panel data used were from the Texas Public Schools Database. The study was conducted in collaboration with the Texas Education Agency (TEA). The database contains demographic information regarding students as well as yearly teacher information that includes salary, education, years of experience, teaching assignment and class size. It was found that in fact there is a correlation between teacher turnover and student characteristics. In this study, teacher turnover refers to teachers leaving the
teaching profession completely as well as those leaving their present school for a different school district.

In both studies using panel design, Stockard and Lehman (2004) and Hanushek et al. (2001), the use of quantitative methodology allowed the use of data collected over time from a large sample population, which allowed for increased validity and reliability. The findings from both studies support the increased need for adequate administrative support if teacher turnover is to decrease.

The Cox Regression Model offers another approach to quantitative research. The Cox model analyzes events in history or survival. According to Allison (2006) “In its simplest form, an event history is a longitudinal record of when events happen to a sample of individuals” (p. 9). With this model, one will measure attrition or turnover rate. Adams and Dial (1993) used the Cox model to investigate the survival rate of urban teachers. From an age perspective, it was found that teachers who began their teaching career at the age of 40 or above were less likely to leave their school district. When considering ethnicity, Whites are four times more likely to leave than African Americans and 57% more likely to leave than Hispanics (Adams & Dial, 1993). Teachers with a graduate degree were more likely to stay than those with only a bachelor’s degree, and alternatively certificated teachers were more likely to stay than those who completed the regular teachers college program.

In contrast to looking at turnover from an attrition perspective, Derlin and Schneider (1994) considered turnover from the retention perspective. They presented a study that investigated factors surrounding job satisfaction among teachers and principals in both urban and suburban schools. They used data obtained by the Study Commission on the Quality of Education in Milwaukee Metropolitan Public Schools (Derlin & Schneider, 1994). The surveys
were distributed to the Milwaukee School District teachers and principals as well as the teachers and principals of 21 of the 24 surrounding suburban school districts. The response from teachers was 5,496 out of 10,000 and for principals 333 out of 442. Derlin and Schneider (1994) found that while urban principal job satisfaction stemmed mostly from extrinsic factors, urban teacher job satisfaction stemmed from intrinsic factors.

Though the research studies of Adams and Dial (1993) and Derlin and Schneider (1994) came from two different perspectives, both used quantitative methods, working with large sample populations. With the Cox model, one can see how specific quantitative instruments can be used to attain data that represents a specific research focus. However, though the aforementioned empirical studies presented data relative to their research focus, they lacked the richness of experiential data obtained through voice that is present with the use of qualitative methodology.

*Mixed-Methods Designs*

When using a scale, like the Likert Scale, to determine how much of a variable is present, one is said to be conducting a quantitative study (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). When collecting data in the form of words, or pictures, usually through observation, interviews or informational documents, one is said to be conducting a qualitative study (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). A study in which both types of methodology are used is called a mixed-method study.

Mix-method studies are becoming more prevalent, though there is still much discussion and questioning regarding their use (Mertens, 2003; Newman, Ridenour, Newman, & DeMarco, 2003; Punch, 1998). Creswell (as cited in Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006) found three types of mixed-method designs: triangulation design, in which both quantitative and qualitative data are collected and then compared to see if they validate each other; explanatory design, whereby
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quantitative data are first collected, followed by a collection of qualitative data to obtain more rich data for clarity and explanation; and exploratory design, in which qualitative data are collected, analyzed and used to give direction to the quantitative data that needs to be collected. The quantitative data can then be used to validate the qualitative data or extend the qualitative research (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006).

Four reasons for choosing mixed-method designs have been presented (Hanson, Creswell, Clark, Petska & Creswell, 2005): 1. To better understand a research problem by converging numeric trends from quantitative data and specific details from qualitative data; 2. To identify variables and constructs that may be measured subsequently through the use of existing instruments or the development of new ones; 3. Obtain statistical, quantitative data results from a sample of a population and use them to identify individuals who may expand on the results through qualitative data and results; and 4. To convey the needs of individuals or groups of individuals who are marginalized or underrepresented (Hanson, et al., 2005, p 226).

Haberman and Rickards (1990) and Richards (2003) used mixed-methods in an explanatory design. Milwaukee teachers were again used as participants in research regarding urban teacher retention. Haberman and Rickards (1990) sent 124 surveys to teachers who had resigned, retired, or terminated their contracts with the Milwaukee Public Schools. Of the 124, 40 surveys were returned. Ten other participants were interviewed by the researchers via telephone. From the data gathered, it was found that 36 of the 50 participants were still teaching in other districts in the Milwaukee Metropolitan area. To this end, it is important to acknowledge the top two problems the teachers had while in the urban schools in Milwaukee. The most common problem cited by the participants was discipline and the second most common
problem was inadequate support from administrators and supervisors, which directly relates to
the premise of this study.

In the same vein, Richards (2003) started by interviewing 15 teacher participants in an
exploratory mixed-method design. From these interviews, 22 important principal behaviors
emerged. Respondents were then asked to rank the importance of the 22 behaviors. This
ranking was done in the form a survey. The survey was distributed to 100 additional teachers
and 100 principals for completion. The purpose of the study was to discover the behaviors
displayed by principals that are causative agents, potentially leading to teacher turnover. The
teachers and principals ranked the behaviors that had been generated by the interviewed teachers.
Three of the five top behaviors chosen by the teachers involved principal support of teachers
with parents, discipline, and being accessible for assistance. The other two dealt with respecting
teachers and being honest. The principals did agree with three of the five behaviors selected by
the teachers: respecting teachers, being honest and being accessible. In addition, principals
included four other behaviors: gives encouragement for the improvement of their teacher
practice, holds high standards, acting as a motivator, and gives praise and acknowledgement for
a job well done.

In both mixed-method studies, the qualitative data gathered was instrumental in either the
development of the quantitative instrument used or the attainment of supportive data that
provided clarity to the information collected from the survey.

Interviews are not the only qualitative method researchers marry to quantitative methods;
focus groups and case studies are also used to collect data that enrich and tell the detailed stories
behind the numbers. Rhodes et al., (2004) coupled the use of focus group and survey in an
exploratory design to collect data in order to better understand teacher job satisfaction and
A focus group composed of four primary and three secondary teachers identified 40 different facets that affect teacher job satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Those identified facets were then used to create a survey design that used the five-point Likert Scale. There were 368 participants who completed and returned the survey. The participants were a self-selected group of teachers still teaching in schools in the United Kingdom. The survey found that teacher workload and administration were the facets that most affected a teacher’s job satisfaction or dissatisfaction. In this study, job satisfaction and dissatisfaction are presented on the same continuum. The wavering of teachers’ level of satisfaction among a single set of variables is the opposite of Herzberg’s two-factor theory.

Unlike Rhodes et al. (2004), Quartz and TEP (2003) chose to use a case study methodological approach coupled with the use of survey, again using an exploratory design. This study looked at ways to support new teachers who want to teach successfully in an urban school. The study used graduates from a special teacher program at UCLA that offers classes to prepare teachers for the challenges of teaching in an urban classroom; it is known as Center X. Center X has created strategies and processes that assist in bringing racial, political and economic differences together in a way that gives more understanding and preparation for instruction in urban schools. They consider themselves “social justice educators” (Cochran-Smith, 2003). Data were obtained from a database at the University’s Center X. The center tracks the career demographics of its 326 teacher graduates. Initial phone interviews of 233 of the graduates were conducted in the spring of 2000. In 2001 an electronic survey was sent to 326 graduates to determine why they either left or stayed at their urban school. It was found that the Center X graduates have a higher retention rate than the national rate as presented by SASS.
Even though this rate decreased over a five year period, even then the retention rate of the Center X graduates were higher than the national average, 70% as compared to 61%, respectively.

The results from the study, conducted by Quartz and TEP (2003) revealed that urban teachers who received adequate training were less likely to leave their teaching position. However, even with the training, 30% of the Center X graduates rotated back out of the revolving door and left their urban teaching assignment. Therefore adequate training is only one agent contributing to teacher retention.

All cited studies contain information relevant to the investigation of the reasons for the nation’s high teacher turnover rate, particularly in urban schools. Studies investigating the existence of the problem have been conducted. Studies investigating the effectiveness of teacher training programs have been conducted. Studies investigating the connection between teacher satisfaction and teacher retention have been conducted. Studies investigating the connection between student characteristics and teacher retention have been conducted. Studies investigating the major problems of teachers in urban schools have been conducted. Yet, the problem still exists without a definitive solution. In those studies where teachers were actually consulted, lack of administrative support was a major contributor in dissatisfaction (Derlin & Schneider, 1994; Haberman & Rickards, 1990; Rhodes et al., 2004; Richards, 2003; Stockard & Lehmen, 2004). Research into teachers and job satisfaction has been done previously, but few researchers have connected job satisfaction in conjunction with motivation provided by principal behavior to teacher retention. Johnson et al. (2001) presented an argument that encouraged the educational community to provide the needed support for both new and veteran teachers in order to increase job satisfaction and retention. In all but one study cited, qualitative methods were critical to the
understanding of the data collected. The only way to uncover the story behind a participant’s response is through use of qualitative methodology.

Summary

Many researchers have conducted studies and analysis regarding a teacher shortage, but the major contributor in this area is Dr. Richard Ingersoll. Ingersoll (2002b) stated that teacher movement in and out of schools is the major reason for what seems to be a teacher shortage. Ingersoll (2000b) presented the argument that, in fact, there is not a shortage, but an enormous frequency of teacher turnover due to teacher job dissatisfaction. All employee turnover is not bad for an organization, but high turnover rates indicate problems within an organization. The SASS, and its companion the TFS, contain the most comprehensive collection of data regarding the nation’s educational staffing. These two reports were used to substantiate proof of the staffing problem within the nation’s schools.

There is no agreement among researchers on a reason for the increase in teacher turnover. However, it is clear that if teachers are leaving, there is a problem with retention. Therefore, the focus of the educational community should be on retaining the more than three million teachers that are in the nation’s schools (Ingersoll, 2004; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Oakes, Franke, Quartz, & Rogers, 2002). Teacher job satisfaction is an important piece of this puzzle (Ingersoll, 2002b; Shann, 1998). Age, cultural differences, lack of appropriate teacher training and the urban school environment have all been presented as factors to be considered for the causative agent behind increased teacher turnover. The number one reason for teacher flight is limited or perfunctory administrative support (Bueker, 2005; Gonzalez & NASDSE, 1995; Ingersoll, 2004; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). The school principal affects all major organizational structuring and decisions made in the school. The leadership style and behaviors of the principal are important
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to the job satisfaction of the building teachers (Brown, 2002; Gonzalez & NASDSE, 1995; Jorissen, 2002; Shann, 1998). Many qualitative and quantitative studies have been conducted in this area, with varying results. There have been no definitive answers to the questions regarding the low rate of teacher retention.
CHAPTER III: Methodology

As is true with any container laden with small holes, a constant loss of its content is inevitable unless steps are taken to secure the leaks. Our nation’s schools contain many qualified teachers who decide to leave their school or the teaching profession altogether. The persistent high turnover rate for teachers in our schools has led many educational communities to search for ways to recruit more teachers. Their goal is simply to hire new teachers to replace those who have left. However, the number of recruited teachers can not keep up with the number of teachers leaving each year. Ingersoll (2002) argued that recruitment is not the correct focus; rather than focusing on recruitment, the focus should be on retention. Improving teacher retention would lessen the total number of teachers who need to be replaced.

Overview

This study examined the influence of the behaviors of principals on teacher retention. The study took place in the Morlin Public School District, a large urban Midwest district. The Morlin School District services more than 30,000 diverse students, of which more than half are African Americans; more than half are economically disadvantaged; and more than a tenth are students with disabilities. Schools in the Morlin district, like other large urban districts in the nation, work diligently to achieve the necessary state testing scores that reflect “Adequate Yearly Progress” (AYP). This is the level designated in Public Law No. 107-110, better known as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, as the minimum level that all schools in the nation should attain (No Child Left Behind, 2001).

Demographic information regarding the district was obtained from district officials. The

1Names of city, school district, neighborhoods and interviewees are factitious; they have been created by the researcher.
The district reported that during the 2005-2006 school year, there were 2719.36 teachers in the district. Of those teachers, 190 left the district and 342 teachers requested transfers. For the 2005-2006 school year, a total of 532 teachers left their teaching positions, which equates to 20% of the district’s total teaching staff (teachers who left as a result of retirement, disability and surplusing are not included in these numbers). During the 2006-2007 school year, there were 2271.23 teachers in the district. Of those teachers, 205 left the district and 360 teachers requested transfers. For the 2006-2007 school year, a total of 565 teachers left their teaching positions, which equates to 25% of the district’s total teaching staff (teachers who left as a result of retirement, disability and surplusing are not included in these numbers).

Of the district’s many high schools, two were selected to participate in this study. This selection was based on the low number of voluntary teacher transfers recorded during the two school years cited above. The schools chosen for the study had two or fewer teachers requesting a voluntary transfer for the two years combined. Data from the school district revealed that the average number of voluntary transfers at the high school level for the past two school years combined was two-and-a-half. For at least one of the past two school years, each of the chosen schools had no teachers desiring a transfer. The highest number of voluntary transfers in a high school within the district during the combined two year period was five. These numbers do not include the district’s highest academically performing school, which requires testing for entrance or its school of the arts, which requires auditions to gain entrance.

This study was exploratory in nature with the intent of generating theory. Rich data were needed for this study that could only be acquired from knowledge of the “lived experiences” of teachers. This was necessary in order to derive a clear understanding of the responses. Therefore, qualitative methods were used. Qualitative data collected revealed the stories behind
the teachers’ actions. It gave a picture of the naturally occurring events within the school, its meaning and relevance that resulted in a teacher’s decision to stay. The purpose of this study was to examine the connection between the behavior and attitudes of principals and teacher retention. Looking at this connection revealed the effect of principals’ behaviors on teacher job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction, which in turn affects teacher retention. The research questions explored were:

1. What factors are associated with teacher retention (including, but not limited to, factors such as teacher age and years of service); and what influences do these factors have on teachers’ decision-making?

2. What are the leadership characteristics of principals in urban schools, and what are their effects on teacher retention?

3. What behaviors, supports and strategies do principals utilize that encourages and prompts teachers to stay in schools that show a high rate of teacher retention?

Qualitative Design

In this study a qualitative methodology was used in order to obtain the rich data needed to formulate a theory. In qualitative research, participants have the opportunity to reveal, in detail, the rationale for their actions, the feelings within, and their driving force. They give the research a personal perspective, and in turn the researcher can analyze and present their story for the benefit of others. Qualitative research gives the participants a voice that numbers simply cannot convey.

Grounded theory was the methodology employed in this study. The data generated and analyzed from this study were used to develop a theory. Grounded theory was presented to the educational community in 1967 by Glaser and Strauss (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). The use of
grounded theory, according to Corbin and Strauss (1990) allows the researcher to develop a theoretical explanation of the phenomena that is the focus of this study.

Constant comparative method was used throughout the analysis of the data. Constant comparative method refers to the constant volley between the researcher, the data, and the theory (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). According to Fraenkel and Wallen (2006), as is prevalent in grounded theory, semistructured one-on-one interviews and focus group interviews were used in this study. From the moment data collection began, the researcher started analyzing the data. Corbin and Strauss (1990) stated the following as the canons and procedures that are the basis of grounded theory, and these procedures were incorporated into this study:

1. Data collection and analysis are interrelated processes.
2. Concepts are the basic units of analysis.
3. Categories must be developed and related.
4. Sampling in grounded theory proceeds a theoretical ground.
5. Analysis makes use of constant comparisons.
6. Patterns and variations must be accounted for.
7. Process must be built into the theory.
8. Writing theoretical memos is an integral part of doing grounded theory.
9. Hypotheses about relationships among categories should be developed and verified as much as possible during the research process.
10. A grounded theorist need not work alone.
11. Broader structural conditions must be analyzed, however microscopic the research. (pp. 6-11)
No definitive reason has been stated for the low rate of teacher retention in the nation’s schools. The top five reasons for teacher flight were identified by Ingersoll (2003) with the number one reason being limited or perfunctory administrative support. However, no solution that increases the rate of teacher retention has been identified or formulated. Grounded theory was the chosen methodology for this study because with its use the researcher was able to use data gathered to develop a theoretical explanation of the connection between behaviors of principals and teacher retention.

The Researcher

I have taught in the Morlin School District since the 1970s both as a general education teacher and as an Intervention Specialist. My teaching experience has taken place in six different schools, with twelve different principals. The majority of my time as a teacher has been spent teaching middle school and high school students.

I have been a teacher leader for over fifteen years. In that time I have listened to many discussions regarding principal behaviors that at times have resulted in teachers transferring to other schools or school districts. I myself have never transferred to another school because of the actions or behaviors of a principal.

My affiliation with the Morlin Public School District allowed me greater ease of access when contacting schools and school employees. The district required an application process before any research could be conducted in the schools. After completion, submission, and approval of the application, the principals of the selected schools were contacted and presented with information about the study. When a principal agreed to allow his or her staff to participate, we discussed possible interview times and time needed to meet with the staff. My knowledge of the required school staff meeting dates and staff inservice day schedule allowed me to anticipate
possible dates that would be available. This knowledge assisted in the planning of the meetings. My connection with the district also allowed me access to the buildings, since most of the interviews and focus group sessions were held prior to regular school hours.

The fact that the researcher has been a teacher for thirty years and a lead teacher for fifteen of those years may be a possible source of bias in the study.

*Population and Setting*

Qualitative research methods allowed the researcher the ability to acquire a more comprehensive view of the data. The researcher was used as the key instrument in this qualitative research (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). All participants were obtained on a voluntary basis. No incentives were used. In order to obtain the teachers needed to participate in the study, the researcher went to the schools, presented basic information regarding the study, and distributed consent forms to the teachers at their staff meeting or distributed forms by teacher teams. Each participant was required to sign a consent form and return it to the researcher before participating in the study. Focus groups and individual interviews allowed exploration of teachers’ perceptions regarding their principal’s influence on their decisions to remain in their teaching positions. The fact that the researcher is an educator provided insight to the understanding of the basic hierarchy present in a school organization. Researcher bias was not a factor in the setting during the interviews and focus group administration. The researcher made no interjections of opinion during the sessions or while analyzing the data. The interviews and focus groups were conducted at the schools. Fraenkel and Wallen (2006) stated that settings influence people’s behaviors; therefore, interacting with the participants in the setting that is connected to the phenomena of the study is important to the participants’ responses.
Beckham High School is positioned in a residential area of Morlin that contains a number of local and national businesses. Beckham serves more than 400 students. More than two-thirds are African American, which is more than the district’s proportion; more than half are economically disadvantaged; and almost one-third are students with disabilities, again, more than the district’s proportion. Beckham has achieved the scores needed to place the school at the required level for “Adequate Yearly Progress.”

Davisson Academy is positioned in an area that houses many businesses as well as residential dwellings. Davisson serves more than 600 students. Like Beckham, more than two-thirds are African American; more than half are economically disadvantaged, which is less than the district’s proportion; and almost one-third are students with disabilities, which is more than the district’s proportion. Currently, Davisson is not meeting the requirements needed for the designation of “Adequate Yearly Progress.”

Sampling

The nature of the study required the use of more than one sampling type. This was necessary since the study used two different populations: principals and teachers. A purposive sampling type was used for the selection of the principals in the study, specifically, critical sampling. This type of sampling looks to select participants who have an exceptional quality (Fraenkael & Wallen, 2006). The principal participants were selected for their ability to maintain a high teacher retention rate in their respective schools over the past two years. An interview was conducted with each principal individually.

Voluntary sampling was the method used in the obtaining of the teacher participants for the study. At Beckham High School the consent forms were distributed to the school staff during their meeting. After the meeting, seven signed consent forms were submitted to the
researcher. Of the seven teachers that returned the forms, three requested to participate in an individual interview rather than in the focus group. Therefore, at Beckham High the focus groups consisted of four participants, and three individual interviews were conducted with teachers.

The Davisson Academy staff was also given consent forms. From their distribution, only three consent forms were returned. After the completion of one of the three individual interviews, names of other teachers that should be contacted to participate in the focus group were given to the researcher. At that point the sampling procedure evolved from voluntary to the snowball method. Snowballing is when additional participants are needed and one or more participants already engaged in the study give recommendations of other potential interviewees in the target population, (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). From use of this method, four additional Davisson teachers consented to participate. However, at the time of the focus group, one of the four was unable to attend, leaving three participants in the focus group.

In total the study consisted of two principal participants and thirteen teacher participants, making the total number of participants fifteen.

*The Participants*

Two high school principals whose schools maintain a high teacher retention rate were interviewed to discover the strategies and practices they implement that produce teacher job satisfaction and in turn have resulted in a high rate of teacher retention for the past two years. These principals were sent letters asking permission to conduct the study at their schools. They also were given a consent forms. Both principals, Sydney Mason from Beckham High School and Addison White from Davisson Academy, agreed to the involvement of their schools in the study.
Thirteen teachers participated in the study. Six teachers were interviewed individually: Paul Hatcher, Andrew Cummings and James Jones from Beckham High School and Deborah Dean, Marvin Malone and Evan Nelson for Davisson Academy. Teachers at each school also participated in a focus group. At Beckham High School the focus group participants were: Elaine Crawford, Rebecca Shaffer, Sara Neil and Jordan Banks. At Davisson Academy the focus group participants were: Ruth Pritchard, Yvette Levell and Sharon Price. Basic background information about each participant provided the researcher with knowledge of their educational and career background as well as their years in teaching.

Sydney Mason is the principal at Beckham High School. She is a White, female principal at a predominately African American school. Sydney has been principal at Beckham for two years. She was a teacher for less than ten years; an assistant principal for a number of years; and a principal for two years. Sydney falls into the Baby Boomer age group.

Addison White is the principal at Davisson Academy. She is an African American principal in a predominately African American school. Addison has been principal at Davisson for four years. Her initial profession was in the area of business. She later returned to school with a focus on education. After spending a number of years as a teacher she changed her focus to administration. She spent only a few years as an assistant before she was offered her own school. Addison falls into the Baby Boomer age group.

Paul Hatcher is a White, male teacher at Beckham High School. Teaching has always been his career of choice. Paul has been teaching for fewer than ten years. He has always taught has always at Beckham. Paul falls into the Generation X age group. He has a master’s degree in education.
Andrews Cummings is a White, male teacher at Beckham High School. He has not always been a teacher. Andrew started his professional experience in the business world, and then entered the educational community. He has been at Beckham for over ten years. Andrew is part of the Baby Boomer age group.

James Jones is an African American male whose profession has always been teaching. This is James’s second year at Beckham. He is a part of the Generation X age group.

Rebecca Shaffer is a White, female teacher at Beckham High School. She has been a teacher for over twenty-five years, and most of those years have been spent at Beckham. Rebecca has a master’s degree and has occupied a number of various leadership positions within the school. Rebecca is a part of the Baby Boomer age group.

Sara Neil is a White, female full-time Speech Pathologist at Beckham High School. She has a list of students she sees regularly. Though her title is not teacher, many of her interactions with the students are likened to those of classroom teachers. Sara has been at Beckham for less than five years. She is another member of the Baby Boomer age group.

Jordan Banks is an African American, female teacher at Beckham High School. She began her career experience in the business world, and then changed her focus to education. Jordan has been at Beckham for less than ten years. Jordan has a master’s degree in education. She is a member of the Baby Boomer age group.

Elaine Crawford is a White, female teacher at Beckham High School. She has been teaching at Beckham for less than ten years. Like many others, Elaine did not start off with a career in teaching. Elaine is also a part of the Baby Boomer age group.
Yvette Levell is a White, female teacher at Davisson Academy. Teaching has been Yvette’s sole career. She has her master’s degree. Yvette has been teaching at Davisson more than five years. She is a member of the Generation X age group.

Ruth Pritchard is an African American, female teacher at Davisson Academy. She has always been in the field of education. Ruth has taught at Davisson less than five years. She is a member of the Generation X age group.

Sharon Price is an African American, female teacher at Davisson Academy. Sharon’s first career was in corporate America. She eventually changed careers and entered the educational community as a teacher. Sharon has been teaching at Davisson for more than five years. She has occupied various leadership positions. Sharon is a member of the Generation X age group.

Deborah Dean is an African American, female teacher at Davisson Academy. Deborah’s first career was in the area of business. Deborah changed from business to a career in teaching, a field she has been in for more than fifteen years. She has taught at Davisson more than five years. During that time she has occupied a number of leadership positions. Deborah is in the Baby Boomer age group.

Marvin Malone is a White, male teacher at Davisson Academy. He also started in the business world and then decided to enter teaching. Marvin has been teaching for more than fifteen years and has taught at Davisson his entire teaching career. Marvin is a member of the Baby Boomer age group.

Evan Nelson is an African American, male teacher at Davisson Academy. Evan has always been an educator. He has taught at Davisson Academy for more than ten years, and has
Influences of Principals

been a teacher for twice that length of time. Evan is a member of the Baby Boomer age group. Tables 3.1 and 3.2 are graphic representations of the study’s basic participant information.

Data Collection

Seidman (2006) stated that “individuals’ consciousness gives access to the most complicated social and educational issues, because social and educational issues are abstractions based on the concrete experience of people” (p. 7). It is this consciousness of the teachers and principals that was accessed during this study, through the use of interviews and focus groups. The meaning that is at the heart of the experiences of the teachers was obtained from the rich data acquired in the interviews and focus group sessions. Uncovering the meaning behind their experiences is necessary to understand their actions. To arrive at the meaning, the participants must reflect on their past experiences and the effect those experiences had on where they are at this time (Seidman, 2006).

A semistructured interview type was employed in the study. An interview and focus group question guide was created and used to elicit responses from participants (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). This structure facilitated the comparison and contrast to formulate conclusions from data collected from the participants. It also allowed the researcher to clarify the questions for the participants, when needed, and to ask additional questions of the participants if an answer warranted further in-depth probing. The interview and focus group question guides are composed of four types of questions that were presented in a progressive manner. Background questions were used first to gain demographic information and information used as foundation in setting the scene as it exists in that particular school. Global questions followed to obtain additional information that presented an even clearer picture of the setting. To get to the data at the heart of this research, focused questions were used. Finally, follow-up questions allowed
Table 1

**BECKHAM HIGH SCHOOL PARTICIPANTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Generation</th>
<th># Yrs at This School</th>
<th># Yrs in Teaching</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sydney Mason</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>BB</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>&gt;10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul Hatcher</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>GX</td>
<td>&lt;10</td>
<td>&lt;10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrew Cummings</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>BB</td>
<td>&gt;10</td>
<td>&gt;10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Jones</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>AA</td>
<td>GX</td>
<td>&lt;5</td>
<td>&lt;10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebecca Shaffer</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>BB</td>
<td>&gt;10</td>
<td>&gt;10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sara Nell</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>BB</td>
<td>&lt;5</td>
<td>&gt;10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan Banks</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>AA</td>
<td>BB</td>
<td>&lt;10</td>
<td>&gt;10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elaine Crawford</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>BB</td>
<td>&lt;10</td>
<td>&lt;10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2

**DAVISON ACADEMY PARTICIPANTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Generation</th>
<th># Yrs at This School</th>
<th># Yrs in Teaching</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Addison White</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>AA</td>
<td>BB</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deborah Dean</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>AA</td>
<td>BB</td>
<td>&lt;10</td>
<td>&gt;10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yvette Levell</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>GX</td>
<td>&lt;10</td>
<td>&gt;10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruth Pritchard</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>AA</td>
<td>GX</td>
<td>&lt;5</td>
<td>&lt;10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharon Price</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>AA</td>
<td>GX</td>
<td>&lt;10</td>
<td>&gt;10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marvin Malone</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>BB</td>
<td>&gt;10</td>
<td>&gt;10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evan Nelson</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>AA</td>
<td>BB</td>
<td>&gt;10</td>
<td>&gt;10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**KEY**

F – Female   M – Male   AA – African American   W – White   BB – Baby Boomer

GX – Generation Xer
participants to expound on their responses and to add additional details regarding connected events not explored by the researcher. With the exception of the questions used to generate information about participants’ ages and number of years teaching, all questions used were open-ended, and were created by the researcher.

Twenty questions were used to guide the discussion in the focus groups and the individual teacher interviews. Sixteen questions were used to guide the interviews of the principals. The time allotment for a participant’s response to a given question was one and a half minutes during the focus group sessions. The focus group sessions lasted ninety minutes each. The interview sessions lasted between forty-five minutes and an hour. Both the interview and focus group sessions were recorded. Within three days of the completion of the interviews and focus groups, the audio accounts of each were given to the typist to prepare transcripts of the entire accounts. The data collected provided detailed information about the “lived experiences” between teachers and principals. All data have been stored and will be secured for three years and then will be destroyed.

During the teacher interviews and focus group sessions, nine of the twenty questions (See Appendix B) served to probe the participants for the meaning behind the feelings, emotions and actions taken that led to their decision to stay. These questions were:

1. Describe what you feel to be the main forces that impact your school climate.
2. In general, what support systems are in place for teachers at your school? For new teachers? For veteran teachers? Are they the same/different?
3. Describe what would happen, as well as your level of comfort, if you had a problem with a student and talked with the principal about it.
4. Describe what would happen, as well as your level of comfort, if you had a problem in the school and talked with the principal about it.

5. Describe what would happen, as well as your level of comfort, if you had a problem with your colleagues and talked with the principal about it.

6. What effect do you think the principal has on the school environment?

7. What factors are most important when considering whether to remain at a school?

8. In what ways did your principal influence your decision to remain at this school for the time you have been here?

9. What are some of the strategies that your principal uses to motivate teachers? Are these strategies effective with you? Why or why not?

During the principal interviews, five of the sixteen questions (See Appendix C) served to probe the participants for the meaning behind the feelings, emotions and purposeful actions and strategies put in place in an effort to obtain job satisfaction among their teaching staff. These questions were:

1. Describe your relationship with your teachers.

2. What are some of the ways in which you provide support for your teachers, and how do you communicate your willingness to support them?

3. What strategies do you use to motivate your teachers? How do they usually respond?

4. Research has found that when employees leave, they are leaving because of their immediate supervisor, which at a school would be the principal. What reasons do you think your teachers would cite for their devotion to you as the principal of this school?
5. If you were a mentor principal to a person that will be entering his or her first year as principal of a school, as it pertains to the building and cultivating their relationship with their teachers, what would you say their first steps should be and why?

Data Analysis

As stated previously, data collection and analysis were conducted simultaneously; this is called the constant comparative method in grounded theory (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). The data analysis process used was the three concurrent flows of activity: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Data reduction occurred throughout the study. During the data collection and analysis phases data were coded, categorized, and emergent themes were identified. Data that represented importance to the participants were the focus of the analysis. Patterns were identified and noted, making data organization necessary for the development of data displays. Some data were not included as they were deemed insignificant in the study’s focus.

The data were compressed and formatted, which enabled the development of conclusions drawn in this study. This use of data displays rather than extended text increased the study’s validity (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Extended text requires more time and makes it easier for the researcher to jump to hasty conclusions while reviewing a massive amount of text. Illustrations, tables, networks, and matrices developed from the data collected gives an organized presentation of the data in a compressed form that helped to justify the decisions made during the birth of conclusions development.

Verification of Interpretation

Various measures were taken to enhance the validity and reliability of the study. In this study, none of the narratives or settings were contrived or changed in any way by the presence or
behaviors of the researcher. This in itself gave the study a level of "natural" validity (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Fraenkel and Wallen (2006) presented the following as measures to take in order to enhance validity and reliability of qualitative research studies: triangulation of data; comparison of one participant’s description of events to another participant’s description of the same events; the writing of the questions to be asked and the responses; and the writing of personal thoughts by the researcher during the interview process.

Triangulation refers to the comparison of information gathered from one source to two other sources in an effort to see if they agree (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). Fraenkel and Wallen (2006) further stated that triangulation improves the quality and accuracy of the interpretations made by the researcher. Triangulation was exercised in this study in the following manner (see Figures 3.1 and 3.2):

Comparisons were also made of participants’ descriptions of certain events. These comparisons took place during the data collection process as well as during the data analysis process. The researcher took written note during the interviews and focus group sessions of possible similarities and differences in participants’ responses. The notes were reviewed further during the analysis of the data.

Questions asked during the interviews and focus group sessions were written in advance. This ensured consistency in the prompting used to evoke participant response. All responses to the questions were recorded and then transcribed for accuracy when excerpts were used as evidence during the analysis phase.

During the interview and focus group sessions the researcher took written notes of thoughts that arose from the narratives of the participants. This written information was used
What are teachers’ beliefs?

Teacher statements from Beckham

Teacher statements from Davisson

Data from Literature Review

Figure 3.1
Triangulation of Teachers’ Comments
Figure 3.2
Triangulation of Effectiveness of Principals’ Strategies

Teacher statements from Beckham & Davisson

Data from Literature Review

Principals’ statements from Beckham & Davisson

What is the effectiveness of principals’ strategies?
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during the analysis phase. It provided the researcher with the fresh thoughts that emerged at the time data collection. These thoughts could otherwise have been forgotten. Though data analysis occurred throughout the study and preliminary conclusions were made, the final conclusions were not made until after the data analysis was complete. Verification of these conclusions is found in the data collected.

Summary

Based on the research presented, the following is known: There is a nationwide teacher shortage (Ingersoll, 2001); the shortage hits hardest in urban schools (Bradley & Loadman, 2005; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003); initially increased recruitment was thought to be the solution (Ingersoll, 2003a); some researchers have switched their focus to retention of teachers (Ingersoll, 2004; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Oakes, Franke, Quartz, & Rogers, 2002); teachers have reported that the lack of administrative support is one of the main reasons for leaving their position (Bueker, 2005; Gonzalez & NASDSE, 1995; Ingersoll, 2004; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Minarik et al., 2005); one’s level of job satisfaction affects one’s decision to stay in a position (Shann, 1998); in the business community great managers motivate and develop their employees (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999); and in schools, the principal is the influential manager and influences teacher job satisfaction (Brown, 2002; Gonzalez & NASDSE, 1995; Jorissen, 2002; Shann, 1998).

This study investigated the influence of the behaviors of principals on teacher retention using qualitative methodology through interviews and focus groups. The setting for the study was Morlin Public Schools, a large, urban, midwestern school district. Two high schools from the district, Beckham High School and Davisson Academy, were used as the data collection
sites. The high schools were selected for their low rate of voluntary teacher transfers in the past two years. Two sample populations were used for the study: principals and teachers.

The sampling method used for the principal population was purposive, specifically critical sampling. The sampling method used for the teachers was voluntary sampling, which evolved into the use of snowball sampling. Fifteen voluntary participants provided rich data. Two principals, one from each school, were interviewed individually. Teachers were also interviewed individually; other teachers participated in a focus group session. At Beckham High School three teachers were interviewed individually and four teachers participated in the focus group. At Davisson Academy, three teachers were interviewed individually and three teachers participated in the focus group. Each interview and focus group session was recorded and transcribed. Data collection and analysis were interrelated in that analysis of the data occurred concurrently throughout the data collection process. The researcher took written notes of thoughts that emerged as a result of participant responses.

During the data collection and analysis phases, data were coded and categorized and emergent themes were identified. To increase the study’s validity, the researcher triangulated the data, compared participants’ descriptions of events, and employed a set of carefully written and structured questions. In addition, the researcher’s own written record of personal thoughts gathered from participants’ responses during the interviews and focus group sessions, further supplements and contributes to the validity of the study.

Using the methodology process described, this study examined the principal’s influence on teacher retention. Rich data collected from principals and teachers in interviews and focus groups fostered the development of theory that addressed the effects of principals’ behavior on teacher job satisfaction and ultimately, teacher retention.
CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

In this chapter the researcher presents the qualitative data collected from interviews and focus groups conducted at Beckham High School and Davisson Academy. Both schools are a part of the Morlin Public School District, an urban school district in the Midwest. The presented data told the stories two of principals, Sydney Mason of Beckham High School and Addison White of Davisson Academy, their teachers, and those factors that affected their lives as educators. Seven teachers from Beckham High School participated in the study; Paul Hatcher, Andrew Cummings, and James Jones were interviewed individually, and Rebecca Shaffer, Sara Nell, Jordan Banks, and Elaine Crawford composed the focus group at Beckham. Six teachers from Davisson Academy participated in the study; Deborah Dean, Marvin Malone, and Evan Nelson were interviewed individually, and Yvette Levell, Ruth Pritchard and Sharon Price composed the focus group at Davisson.

The sixteen questions that the researcher asked the principals provided great insight into the principals’ behaviors, their roles in the schools, and their impact on teacher behaviors. The questions addressed training, years of service, climate and environment, teacher support, teacher motivation, responsibilities, and hiring practices. Twenty questions were used by the researcher to acquire data needed to understand teacher behaviors. The questions addressed teacher training, years of service, school climate and environment, support, motivation, reasons to stay in teaching or at their present school and principal influence. From the rich data provided by the principals and teachers, five themes emerged, these themes are: 1. reasons to stay; 2. climate and environment; 3. teacher support; 4. motivation; and 5. university preparation. These five themes along with the questions that specifically address them will be used to assist in the presentation
of the data collected. Data collected as a result of all questions posed to the participants can be found in Appendix E.

Reasons to Stay

*Responses from the Beckham and Davisson Teachers*

**Question:**

How did you end up at this school, and what would you say are the main reasons you’re still here?

The paths to their positions at Beckham or Davisson varied. As for why they have remained at their respective schools, four of the teacher participants stated that they stayed because of the students; three due to personal convenience; two because of the teachers at the school; two because of the students and teachers; one because of the principal; and one because of financial consideration. Jordan stated:

I was teaching at Michelin High; I was surplussed, and Beckham had a position open, and that’s how I wound up here. I stay here because of the kids, the connection with them and their needs, and it’s a good fit.

Paul described his placement at Beckham. He stated:

I’ll be honest with you, the principal here. When I got out of school, I took a year off and traveled and did silly stuff, and then I decided to get into this. The principal here, I’d known [him] since I was in the fifth grade. He was the athletic director at Bosley High, and my father worked for him out there for twenty-something years. And so he knew my family, knew my dad, and he was the principal here, and he coached me when I was a little kid. So I used my connections, a little networking. I came in for the interview, and got the job here.
I’ve stayed for probably three big reasons. One is I get pretty dedicated to a place. I’m not one of these people that likes to fly around, even if it’s not the greatest situation. If this is the place that gave me a chance, then I feel loyalty to that place. That just sounds kind of weird. It comes from being an athlete, I think. The second thing is, as much as I detest a lot of the things I see go on here in terms of mind-frames and things, I really do like these kids. And if I wasn’t trying to teach them, I would really get along great with them. There’s another one. This temporary group I’ve got now, I’ve had three job offers for other school districts that are considered “better.” I’ve told everybody that I’m not leaving, but if I do leave, not until this tenth grade group graduates. That’s what I mean. They get you, [they get] their hooks in you. So that’s a big part of it. Lately, I will be honest with you, the last couple of years, the thought of leaving really starting to come into play. The administration that has come in has really kind of had me re-buy into being here. Not because you agree with everything—that will never happen—but because you know their efforts are genuine. That’s a real sense that I have. I don’t like everything that happens, that’s just natural, but I really do believe that our administration here, mainly our principal, I really believe her effort is genuine. That I can roll with—that’s really all I need.

And Evan stated:

It’s a combination of things. It is in fact, and I know that your study, that you’re working on the role of administrators. Why I’m here now is in fact [Addison] White. She is definitely the reason I am here now. It’s also the other people who work here and the way this school works. When I first got here it was definitely a
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team based, team run and teacher run school. That was true about Bailey Park East in Batch City. That is was a staff run school and I like that. I like that empowerment. Before White it was Sally Conwell, who was just the absolute worst. She was just . . . she couldn’t get things straight and one of the things that annoyed me the most about her was that she was really indecisive and, you know, district sends out emails all the time telling administrators, “do this.” Then they’ll send them one about two weeks later contradicting the one they sent before, and it never dawned on her that she should use her own judgment to figure out, “Is this really something I need to do? Do I really reshuffle everything because they sent out this email or can I wait them out on this one?” That’s the kind of thing that White does. She uses her judgment and tries to figure out what it is. Keep an eye on the big prize. The real point is to get us to this level. What is it that I need to do to get us to this level? That’s what I’m going to do even if it costs me a little extra heat with the board.

Question:

What factors are most important when considering whether to remain at a school?

Many different factors were stated by the teacher participants as being important when considering whether to remain at a school. The factors that were stated were: students, opportunities, stability and alternatives. Andrew responded:

I guess opportunities, but you’re talking about why I stayed at this school year to year? I’ve kind of almost answered that. Again, I’ve stayed here for the most part because of what I was able to teach and because of the staff, the students, opportunities. That’s kind of why I stayed.
Paul stated:

Students. I don’t trust who they’d replace me with, to be honest with you. I’ve seen who’s replaced other people who have left. And that’s not a shot to anybody else, but when you replace a Spanish teacher with a history teacher because of budget, that’s insanity to me. I don’t understand that. When you have a computer applications teacher who is taught to teach computer technology to our kids—how to use computers—and they’re doing APEX programs (computerized instruction) for social studies, English, math that they don’t have any certification in, because of budget, to me that’s insanity. And I would worry that I, this sounds terrible, I don’t trust other people with my students. That’s why I hate missing school; I don’t trust subs. Not that I don’t like them, but I don’t like having subs. That’s just how I feel, but I don’t know.

Question:

In what ways did your principal influence your decision to remain at this school for the time you have been here?

One of the teacher participants in the focus group did not respond to this question. Six of the teacher participants felt that the principal did influence their decision to stay, while five teacher participants felt that the principal had no influence on their decision to stay. One participant felt that the principal might have some influence. Ruth stated, “The principal did not influence whether I stayed or not. And I think what I’ve said before would speak to that. I’m willing to stay here with any principal that comes in, if they want me to stay. Marvin stated:

Probably very little. I don’t feel like a huge allegiance to the administration. My allegiance is to my kids and my students and my family and myself. If something
happened where I needed to be someplace else my hope would be that the administration would support and recognize that and wish me well.

Sara stated:

It didn’t really occur to me to go somewhere else. I’ve been here with two principals in three years, but actually the current principal has been very supportive with some personal issues, so that’s made a huge difference . . . A lot of times, the principal doesn’t even know who we are, sometimes. That’s been my experience, until now. This one knows my name. Yes, the current one. So I kind of assumed that that’s the way it was, with my previous experiences, it’s like, okay, yeah, you can have this room, and you do what you do. But this principal is concerned about what I’m doing and is interested. That’s the first time that I’ve ever had that experience in this field. That’s made a huge difference; it makes it easier to stay.

Andrew stated:

Actually, there have been four principals here, and [when] three of the four I thought of leaving. I never did leave, but there was one here, one principal, that really felt, in my opinion, that had us moving in the right direction, at least in terms of the educational environment, and was really exciting to work for. And that could be a reason why I’m still here, because I was actually kind of on my way out when this other person came, so I may not have been here.

Deborah stated:

I’ve had three sets of principals since I’ve been here. So our last administration, just the openness and being straightforward, “This is what I won’t tolerate,” and
the honesty. That part I like. You have to have a lot of control because you’re here; you know you’ve got the district that controls, really. I’ve always sort of felt that she had our best interests at heart. Everything she can provide for us here at Davisson within her powers, she would try to do that for us. We always felt like that. When she first came she was getting money from places and you know we got supplies and all kinds of wonderful things that we had been buying out of our own pockets. She was like, okay, you can have $150. We went wow. We just sort of felt like she had our best interests at heart. I do feel, like I said, that cutting edge professional development, she stays up to date with that. Every since we’ve been here we’ve had a book every summer to read. So she keeps us up-to-date with what’s going on in the world and the world of education. She has a business background as well. So sometimes we had this book called, *Good to Great*. She brought that in and we had summer reading. So she gives us homework and things to keep us challenged. I think that’s the one reason I haven’t felt the need to go anywhere.

Evan stated:

Yes. Yes she does. She definitely does. The fact that she and I get along so well and the fact that I know that she respects me and my ideas, that she allows me and encourages me to take on leadership roles and responsibilities that she wants me involved in, it definitely makes a huge difference. Again, she understands what’s going on. She teaches and she knows about teaching and how to make the whole thing come together.

And Jordan stated:
I believe that the principal could potentially [impact the decision to stay]…because in the past I’ve considered leaving, because when I didn’t feel safe and I didn’t feel that the person was doing what [he or she could]. I didn’t have to go to that level, but I think it could impact whether I stay.

Question:

What else can you offer that would shed light on those factors that influence your commitment to teaching and your commitment to stay at this school?

There were many statements made by the participants as they continued to explain the factors that contribute to their decision to stay. Yvette described the ability to watch the students mature. Yvette stated:

One of the other things that kind of keeps me going is seeing the kids who have graduated and seeing your previous students. Even if it’s a couple of times, or somebody saying “I ran into so-and-so.” Seeing the kids who do succeed keeps me going. Seeing the high school kids as they mature kind of keeps me going. Having the younger kids and seeing them grow up, and that there is some rhyme or reason to what we’re trying to do.

Ruth continued that discussion; she stated:

The other one is what Yvette said, when students come back to you, and even at the school that I was at five years ago, a girlfriend will call me and say, “Hey they were looking for you.” They will come back and they’re getting married now or something. They’ve graduated. Oh my God that takes you; that’s a year or two. Again, I’ve never, and I’ve only been here for a year but I can see what Yvette says when she says she can see them grow, because the school that I was at
before, even though it was two years, it was a K-12 building and I got to see the kids mature. I still keep in contact with them and they tell me how they are doing and that they are graduating this year. Hey this is prom. It’s nice to keep that connection and to know that they’re kids you did touch. They really did understand what you were teaching them and they are taking the knowledge you gave them and using it.

Climate and Environment

Responses from the Beckham and Davisson Principals

Question:

Describe your primary responsibilities on a typical day at this high school.

The typical day for Sydney included many different tasks. Sydney described it as being “unbelievable.” She stated:

Oh my god, it’s unbelievable. I couldn’t even begin to describe it. All the crap I do in one day. Okay, typical day: I will see new enrollees, I will see parents who want to come and withdraw their children, and I sit for a half an hour and try to talk them out of it, and I talk about two-thirds of them out of leaving, because I’m into stability, because mobility was my research area, and I know how damaging it is to have kids coming and going. I will give direction to the clerical staff on running the report cards; I will see umpteen kids for disciplinary infractions. Most of those will go to my assistant principal, but I won’t have an assistant principal next year, so I’ll be doing all of that. Some of the ones that come to me are the more complicated ones that involve expulsion or parents that may be very difficult to work with, so I try to take some of those hard cases.

Addison explained that no day is typical for her. She stated:
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You know that is if I had primary responsibilities it’s like everything. No day is typical . . . my plan is to walk the building and get in the lunchroom. Those are two things I say. I think we need to be visible. I don’t have a typical schedule.

Question:

Describe your daily routine as principal of this high school.

The two principals’ daily routines are packed with a plethora of tasks. Addison and Sydney both recount their routines beginning with their arrival in the school parking lot. Addison described it in this manner:

So I get here about 8:30 and I used to get here at 6:30. Then I was getting here at 7:00 or 7:30 and I still couldn’t get anything done. So I get here about 8:30 and I’m walking from the parking lot hoping that I could just get to my desk. I say hey to the kids coming in and I come back here and turn the computer on. About 8:40 I go on duty. Every morning I’m on duty because it’s important to me to see the kids coming in because I can catch a lot of stuff. I can see what’s going on and see what’s brewing. I get the kids in, too; the first and last bell is the roughest for us. So I get the kids in and I make announcements at 9:00. I usually set the expectation for the day with the students. Sometimes it depends on if parents are waiting for me and I meet with the parents. I try to touch base with my secretary and I walk the building. I walk the building every morning. I try to walk the building so the kids can see me every morning, getting money, getting needs and meeting with teachers. The staff meets with the principal more so than the assistant principal. I’m catching discipline sometimes. I’m dealing with all kinds of issues. Making people feel good. You’ve just got to make people feel good . .
Influences of Principals

. Since I was gone that week before school let out I haven’t touched base with a lot of teachers. If I don’t do that they’ll kind of take it personal. There are some teachers who just don’t come to you if you have a relationship with some teachers. Some teachers just feel I have to go to them and touch base with everybody.

Sydney described her daily routine in this manner:

Well the other two things that I didn’t mention that are real huge, and are definitely part of the daily routine, are direct supervision of kids. I have to supervise the lunchroom. When the bells rings for the kids to change classes, I’m in the hall helping direct kids to their class; we don’t want them roaming around the building. And the other part is teacher evaluation, and I use that term broadly. That process of working with teachers may be an observation in the formal sense, that I have to write up and turn in, but as often as not it is, I’m going up the stairs when the tardy bell rings because I’ve got to see two teachers on the third floor. One of them I’ve got to ask them about the field trip that’s coming up, some detail of it. The other I have to get them to think through an agenda with me on the science department, the science department got a national science teachers evaluation done recently where a bunch of science teachers came in and looked at our instructional program. So in the morning when I arrive, I’m here at 6:00, 6:15 if I’m feeling lazy, and I use that to get in my inbox. So I come in and do paperwork at six. At seven teachers are starting to arrive. We go down to the cafeteria to supervise. Before I got here, there was a lot of fighting on this campus, almost daily fights in the lunchroom. There were fifty people arrested on
this campus before I got here that year. Some of them were parents who came up
to fight with each other over their children’s issues, because stuff just wasn’t
getting sorted out. So, direct supervision of the lunchroom. We now have the
kids come in from the buses straight down to the cafeteria. Why, because there
were kids attacked in the stairwell. I don’t have supervision in every stairwell in
the morning. I can put that supervision together in one place in the lunchroom.
Twenty after we dismiss, I’m in the hall for the next ten minutes. After we get
everybody tucked into first bell, I may look over the ISS list and go see that group
which is in the tardy center till the end of first bell. Take a look, talk to a couple
kids about why they’re there. There may be a parent waiting for me in the office
by then to talk about something, either a disciplinary matter from the day before
or a senior parent wanting a credit check on a kid, that sort of thing. And at 8:30
I’m making announcements . . . lunch is at 10:30 so then we go to the lunchroom,
John and I, the assistant principal and I. Actually, he goes down first; I stay here
for about ten minutes because we have no counselor again, so I told seniors, if
you need a credit check we need to talk about your status, lots of seniors are
coming in with different questions, so that first part of the lunch, they come over
and see me then. If I can wrap that stuff up, that’s when I go down to the
lunchroom. At the end of the day . . . we do dismissal. I’m in the halls or out
front.

Responses from the Beckham and Davisson Teachers

Question:

Describe what you feel to be the main forces that impact your school climate.
Some teacher participants felt that the school climate was determined by the students, while others felt that the climate was determined by the teachers. James stated simply, “It is the character that that kid brings to school from their home.” Rebecca replied:

This is why I would think we have a very dedicated team of teachers, because the outside force keeps bringing us constant change. We go from this format, we’re one large school, to three schools, to two schools. It’s been constant change. So if it wasn’t for the strength of the classroom teacher, we could not have kept this together.

While Paul explained:

How can I say this without going on forever? I think the biggest force that affects our school climate, and I know people get upset with me when I say this, there is a systemic philosophy that is now becoming generational. It’s been going on for generations now in our kids’ families. It used to be in education that the school was the whole, and if you came there, you adapted to that whole. It doesn’t matter what your personal issues are, you come here, you’re a student here, and this is the way you function. Now that’s bad in the sense that you have to acknowledge individuals’ needs and individual situations. But I think that has shifted so far the other way now, that there is no expectation of our kids, and all the words like “rigor” and “standards,” we don’t expect anything from our kids or our families. They are of the mindset that we do whatever we do, however we want to do it. And everyone else, the school system and everything else, will adapt to us. And that is dangerous, because the world doesn’t work that way, and that’s what we try to pound into these kids’ heads every day. A kid throws an
orange juice carton at a teacher, gets suspended for ten days, comes back and demands make-up work, because the system has taught them, no matter what you do, you deserve make-up work. Now if the kid has a death in the family, illness, learning disability, those things, you die to get that kid what they need. But our kids actually believe that their behaviors and their philosophies on how you can function at school are acceptable no matter what. And no matter what they do, they have a right to get . . . and successful schools don’t operate that way. But for whatever reason our public schools, the ones I’ve seen in Morlin, operate with that philosophy. You know, the whole “Alternative to Suspension” thing. And I have a real issue with that, because it’s now become generational. I try to talk to my parents about the importance of being in school, the importance of acknowledging a teacher’s classroom rules that are there to help the kids. They don’t have a point of reference. I have to talk to an eighty-year old grandmother to talk to anyone who has a point of reference on that, that they understand what I’m talking about. The parents came up through the same kind of philosophy. And it’s just going to get worse if we don’t do something to alter that philosophy, and get a little bit of that “Hey, if you come here you’ve got to adapt.” Our kids have no ability to adapt.

Question:

What effect do you think the principal has on the school environment?

When providing their thoughts about the principals affect on the school environment, almost all of the teacher participants believed that the principal has a huge affect on the school environment. Only one participant felt otherwise; this participant was Ruth, who stated:
I don’t see administration or the principal having influence because the teams are so tight. We deal with discipline first. I mean the only time they ever see a kid for discipline is [when] we can’t . . . yeah, at another school it would be the same thing. The principal wasn’t that great, but it didn’t matter because the team was so tight in what they did. I mean we pretty much ran things. There was a head team leader. Each teacher had a job, and each kid knew that the teacher had a job. We met with the kids as a team and as a force, so the principal wasn’t even an ingredient in that recipe on our team.

In addition, there was one participant who felt that the principal only had a partial effect on the school environment. This participant was Yvette; she stated, “I think that she has a major influence on the staff members here, as far as we know what she wants. I think she has very little influence on the kids. Very, very little.” Other participants like Marvin felt that the principal’s effect on the school environment was huge. Marvin stated, “The principal has a huge effect. The attitude, the presence in the building, how much the principal is seen by the students and staff, and the modeling that the principal does can make a difference.” In addition, James stated, “Oh a big effect. A big effect. It starts from the top on down. When you have good schools you have a good principal. So that’s the big start right there.” Sharon stated:

I think the principal has a very major part in the school environment. Having been in leadership roles myself and having worked with her very closely, I understand that there are a lot of times that she just has to do it because she has bosses also. So there are certain initiatives and certain things she has to do and that’s just the bottom line. A lot of times I think that the way she gets that
information across sometimes rubs people the wrong way. Just like we’re understanding our teammates, we’ve also done things with her where we’re understanding her and the way she acts. She’s just a very firm and a very straightforward type of person, and so once you understand that, you will learn how to not take [her methods] personally. That’s something that you have to grow into. I don’t think somebody coming right in would feel the same way. So that’s something you have to grow into. I’m sorry, repeat the question one more time. Okay. So pretty much you know she is the one. This is how we have to do it. She gives us the information, and then we basically have to carry it out. I will say this, and I felt that way about our previous [principal], well not the previous one, but the one before that . . . especially with us being a team based school, you’ve got your assignment: here it is and carry it out. If you do your part there is really no need for her to come behind you and say anything or correct anything that you’ve done. I do like that. There is a certain trust level where I’m entrusting you to do your job.

Elaine stated:

Huge. I think the principal largely sets the whole tone for others. You mean the school culture; we addressed that, it’s critical . . . I think that the principal is key in helping us operate at the school. That’s still not a lot of detail; I’ll keep thinking and give someone else a chance to talk.

Following Elaine, Jordan stated:

I agree. The principal is the driving force and sets the standard of operation, and teachers and students acquiesce or go along with that, whatever it may be. And
we’ve seen a variety here. We’ve seen a variety, and how the atmosphere has changed, and how I personally felt about my job. There’s been times here, under different leadership, that I didn’t want to come here, I didn’t feel safe and comfortable here, and I can directly equate that to the principal’s input and their drive. Whereas now, it’s a different tone. I do feel safe. I do feel someone cares. I do feel that there’s an open door. So, that’s a huge piece that’s integral to the operation.

And Deborah described the principal’s effect on the school environment in this manner:

I think the principal has a tremendous impact on the school. One thing that she wasn’t sure if she should do or not do is get on the announcements every morning to say, “good morning” and “This is what we’re going to do today.” So if she’s not here you can sort of tell the difference, and I think that makes an impact on our day-to-day operations here. You know, if she doesn’t get on and say whatever, well everything doesn’t go crazy but it’s almost like the kids are going, “She’s here.” It’s like, “Let’s get started, and this is what we need to do. Have a great day.” That sort of sets our day and out with the old again. So she takes time to do that for a couple of minutes every morning. The tone, right. Some days she’ll get on there and say, “I’m not on it.” She’s says, “I’m not on it and you come by me and you’re out of here.”

Teacher Support

*Responses from the Beckham and Davisson Principals*

**Question:**

How would you describe your leadership style?
Both principals expressed their leadership style as being directive but collaborative.

Sydney stated:

I hope they would say collaborative because that’s what I’m shooting for, that’s what I believe in now. The other element I think is, how would I describe it, I try to make it energetic, but I also make it, I’m looking for the right word here, directive to some degree. But I try to juxtapose directive versus collaborative because there are principals that operate as a . . . the model is font of wisdom. The principal is supposed to know everything. I believe in a model that says the principal is the facilitator of instructional leadership. Now that has some implied instructional leadership in it, but I think that bringing forth your department chair leadership, lead teacher leadership, your team, horizontal teams, interdisciplinary teams, leadership of those teams and other people. I agree with Sergiovanni\(^2\) that leadership is a quality that is found in all humans, not that it is an extraordinarily rare quality that a few people possess. I think that it exists in everyone; it’s a component of everyone’s existence. And the question is how do you grow it and build it and bring it out.

Question:

Describe how your experiences as a teacher contributed to your leadership style.

Sydney and Addison’s experiences as teachers have significantly influenced their leadership styles. Addison stated:

As a teacher I’m just making sure that I’m treating people the way I want to be treated. That’s key to me. I always go back to my teaching. Everybody needs to be here on time. Okay, you say that at the opening day meeting but after that you
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need to talk to those people who are on time. You know. So I try to do that. I try to really treat teachers the way that I wanted to be treated as a teacher.

Question:
Describe your relationship with your teachers?

Both principals indicated that they have an open door policy and feel that they foster communication between themselves and their teachers. Addison described her relationship with her teachers in this manner:

I think it's good. They know that... over the last four years we've really worked hard. We go through a lot of professional development about team building and about communication styles and personality types. You know, because being like this, I do believe they think I am fair. They think I'm consistent. I try to treat people the way I want to be treated. I think that you find people who say negative things about me have been a disciplinary issue. I'm not arrogant. It's not personal to me. It's strictly business. I have to do what's best for students. It doesn't feel good for me and it's not always comfortable. I think that I would say the majority respects that. They are like okay. They trust me or at least my Instructional Leadership Team does. When I come in and say, "They, look, this is how it's got to be." They trust that. That's important to me I get in task mode when I'm involved in tasks and so I trust them to give me feedback. They know that I can do that. I have to discipline somebody who was a friend. I want them to
know that they can count on me. It’s hard to be in that predicament. It’s not something that I enjoy but they know for me the rules are the rules. They know if they, when they ask me for something, I deliver, as long as you have the data. My goal is to get everybody what they need to be successful. Then my goal is to do something else. So they know that if they say, “I need this,” and you need it then I’m going to get it. They know I’m going to support them. I’m going to tell you that I’m going to support you. I think just supporting your staff, you know. So they know with the last budget cuts I had to tell quite a few people that you’ve got to go. They knew I fought for them and they know that I’m going to fight for them. I’m going to fight for you. They know that and they appreciate that. I support them. You’ve got to really be concerned what gets to them. I do that probably to some extreme. They are like, “Ms. White, we can handle some of that stuff,” but you know I want them to teach. I’m the buffer. That is my job to buffer and kind of let all that other drama come to me. I’m the buffer for all of that and I tell them, “Don’t worry until I start worrying.” I get the sleepless nights and I’m up. I’m just; but that’s what I think I’m here for and that’s the only way that I know how to be the principal. I’ve let more come to them but I think that I should protect my staff and let them work.

Question:

What are some of the ways in which you provide support for your teachers, and how do you communicate your willingness to support them?
As previously stated in the data, both Sydney and Addison see teacher support and communication as being very important. Sydney responded to the question regarding principal support when she stated:

The first thing I did to support my teachers was, the first thing after I got hired in April, I was at an event or took a couple of events in the spring where my colleagues were, fellow principals. They all said “Oh congratulations, I hear you’re going to Beckham,” or they would say, “Condolences, I hear you’re going to Beckham,” and I would say, okay you’ve been a principal for a lot of years, what’s your best advice for me as my first assignment as a regular principal, not the interim? They all said without exception, “Sydney, do nothing. Don’t do a thing. Watch and learn your first year. You will only screw things up, you don’t know the territory and you don’t know the players. You may think you know the problems or can see them, but you can’t see the whole thing because you don’t know the whole thing yet. So don’t run around doing a bunch of crazy changes your first year. Because you’ll screw it up. Lay low, learn the ropes, get to know the players. You make your moves the second year.” And I thought, “Oh my god that is the worst advice I ever heard in my life.” This school does not have a year to wait. This school is in academic emergency and as a teacher I’ve sat by for years, or not sat by, sometimes protesting and intervening, I watched principals go into awful schools and not display a sense of imperative that this is an unacceptable way to educate our children, that our kids deserve better. Teachers deserve a better environment to teach in to try to do their best. So I rejected that advice, and I said to myself, okay that’s the arrogance of a new principal. But I
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thought I can’t waste a whole year in a school that’s unsuccessful . . . it’s a
disservice. So I thought, what’s the second best way? If waiting a year is not the
right thing to do, what’s the second best way to get to know the players, to get to
know the territory, so that you can make some meaningful changes soon? And I
decided, okay, the best way to do it is to get to know the players. I scheduled
between May and August of that year I scheduled every teacher, every custodian,
the Parent Teacher Organization president, every secretary, every security person,
everybody that works here or has a major role in the community, like the people
who serve on the Local School Decision Making Committee, scheduled them all
in for an hour, hour and a half privately with me. And I did these one on one; it
took me all summer to get through them-- there’s like 50, 60 of them. And that
turned out, accidentally, to be a really great strategy which I would recommend to
any incoming principal. It turned out to be a very powerful thing to do. I just
thought I was getting information, and I only asked each of them two questions. I
asked them, “You know I’m new, don’t know the ropes, I need you to tell me
what’s working here that I should not screw up coming in new. And what’s not
working that we need to find new solutions to.” I’ve talked to 60 people looking
all, addressing the same organization. Most of those people have been here for
many years, some have not. There were six things that every single person, no
exceptions, told me what’s problematic or issues or whatever here. And I went
through my notes and did some hash mark tallying. And at the end I had these six
things that every single person told me. I called the retreat; we got the staff
together, not just teachers but everybody else. “Okay here we are. I was gonna be
new, but I’m not new anymore. I’ve talked to each of you, so I’m hoping we’re getting to know each other a little bit by now.” The comfort level was much greater than going in your first day and saying, “Hi, you don’t know me but I’m going to be your boss.” You can’t, how can you go in cold like that, so I was able to say, “You know I talked to each of you this summer. What I’m going to do to you today is report the results of those conversations.” And I said, “The good news is, the bad news is we’ve got lots of problems we’ve got to solve.” They’re all nodding. “The good news is, you all think you’re very divided. After talking to all sixty of you here, there’s a lot of unity here that you may not really realize, so I’m going to lay it out to you. Here are six things that you told me, that every one of you told me.” They’re all nodding because they all told me that. Fighting in the lunchroom was number one. I said, “Now there’s fifty other things you told me too, two people are concerned about this, five people are concerned about this, thirty people are concerned about this, half the staff. But all of you are concerned about these six. Here’s our agenda, let’s work on these six things. Let’s find some solutions to these six things; make that our agenda for this year to improve the school and we’ll work together, that’s what we’re going to work on. How does that sound?” Unity moving forward. It was brilliant but accidental on my part. I couldn’t see all that before it happened. But we had a great year last year, and I think that when you say “What do you do to support teachers?” you gotta sit down and talk to them you gotta listen to them. And I mostly didn’t do a lot of talking in those sessions, I mostly listened. If you want good instruction you’ve got to listen to the teachers telling you what’s going on. And it’s not that
everybody’s right on every single thing they tell you, but you gotta get that picture, you gotta get that overview. And they’re the ones that have the information. So you’ve got to establish that relationship with them, a working relationship. And then you’ve got to tell them, “I heard what you told me, boy am I listening to this. What can we do?” And you gotta give them a little faith that you take them seriously enough that they know more about the school than you do, even a principal that’s been there twenty years. Many teachers know something about the school that the principal doesn’t know and have a different perspective than the principal. So I think you have to respect them and listen to them. And you can do that in fifty different ways. But it all comes down to establishing a working relationship, listening.

Responses from the Beckham and Davisson Teachers

Question:

In general, what support systems are in place for teachers at your school? For new teachers? For veteran teachers? Are they the same/different?

Except for mentoring programs and the district’s new teacher initiatives, the teacher participants described the support for all teachers as the same. Elaine stated:

Well, I mean, it’s the same for the newer and the older, except that I don’t know if Praxis III still exists. It’s for mentoring for new teachers, the “new hire comprehensive.” I think as far as IST [Instructional Support Team] goes I personally have found that very beneficial, the implementation of IST, and as a special education teacher, I get two, because I teach a content area subject as well and I have my special ed. That’s been great. That’s been the most obvious recent
support coming from Morlin Public School. I think there’s different opinions about that, but other than that stuff I mentioned – the new hire and if the Praxis III is still in place—I think it’s still about the same.

Deborah described the support in this manner:

Professional development is open to everyone, but in the summer or early fall, we have what you call a new teacher orientation. The principal and administration and lead teachers are to make sure they spend time with the new teachers coming into the school and introduce them to our climate and expectations. Then we work together. We have retreats. We have a two-day retreat at the beginning of August. Everybody comes together with all the new [teachers]. We do team building and bonding for the whole staff. That helps us work together.

And Yvette stated:

The biggest support system that you can find within the building is the teachers. I think regardless if you’re a veteran or a new teacher. It’s the other teachers in the building. As far as things that have worked and things that haven’t worked, the collaborative teaching, or at least teaching the same kids for the most part, helps also. As far as being able to work with the kids or knowing what to expect, I think the smaller environment [is helpful].

Question:

What are your alternatives when addressing problems with your students?

All of the teacher participants felt that the addressing of student problems started with the teacher and worked its way up to the principal if necessary. James explained:
First I would try to deal with it one-on-one and to handle it with me and them. To let them know that as a human being, before I go to the parent, and deal with that first. So my first thing is trying to deal with that student one-on-one. I would talk to them and tell them why what they did was not the right thing. Hopefully they can see. It’s a struggle to try to instill some values that they are not taught at home, or [when] they don’t see the use of those values from outside of school and inside of school—I guess then you’ve got to take the next step as far as trying to get the parent involved and then maybe administration.

Jordan stated:

Administration obviously, the assistant principal, the principal, you can talk among your team members as well, and talk with other teachers as well about the particular student, and again, just conferring with the student. You don’t want to ever leave that out—how important that is.

Question:

What are your alternatives when addressing a problem in your school?

When addressing problems in the school, teacher participants relied on the team, school leadership committees, administration, and the teachers’ union. Andrew described the options he would use to handle school problems:

I guess it depends on what kind of situation. Obviously, you can submit your concern to your Instructional Leadership Team representative, and then at the Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) they can bring it up in the agenda and discuss it. You can probably go to your union, your building rep, if it’s something of that magnitude. I think that teachers have some support number you can call if
you need advice from a professional. I think that’s available, too. I don’t know much. I remember somebody one time doing that, but I can’t remember.

Evan simply stated, “The ILT does address these issues. Yeah. Yeah.”

Question:

What are your alternatives when addressing problems with your colleagues?

All of the teacher participants express caution and some even explained alternative strategies for addressing problems with their colleagues. Sara described a strategy in this way:

We have a process that they call “putting the moose on the table.” We are allowed with a small team, or a large group. If we’ve got an issue, or people are just not talking about it, or trying to keep it back here, you put that moose out here, [and] now we’ve got to talk. We need to address it. Some people don’t like that, but our principal is saying we need to use that process. We just can’t go around talking to one another about something that’s bothering us. It just keeps us from having energy in the classroom, so let’s get past that.

Deborah stated:

Okay. Our principal’s philosophy is, no parking lot discussions and everything should stay on the front openly. We have the PASS counselors; I have known adults that have gone there for remediation. If they have a problem they can actually go to the counselors. If not, it has to be brought out in the open. So you need to go to the principal to discuss something. Usually everybody in this building is mature enough to go directly to the person. That’s the way our principal said. No discussion behind anybody’s back. Just bring it to the office.

Question:
Describe what would happen, as well as your level of comfort, if you had a problem with a student and talked with the principal about it.

All of the teacher participants stated that they felt comfortable talking with their principal about a problem with a student. Elaine stated:

I feel like if I do go, I want to be able to account for what have my parent contacts been, and what has the team done, when was the last time the parent was in here, what have we done with the parent, that I’ve done my job as far as getting all my ducks in a row. I feel like that’s pretty clearly expected, and I’ll be asked those questions very directly, but will also be receptive and get support. But I need to have done my job, too.

Andrew stated:

I guess it depends on what kind of situation. Obviously, you can submit your concern to your ILT representative, and then at the ILT they can bring it up in the agenda and discuss it. You can probably go to your union, your building rep, if it’s something of that magnitude. I think that teachers have some support number you can call if you need advice from a professional. I think that’s available too. I don’t know much. I remember somebody one time doing that, but I can’t remember.

Question:

Describe what would happen, as well as your level of comfort, if you had a problem in the school and talked with the principal about it.
All but one teacher participant felt comfortable going to the principal with a problem about the school. As it pertained to the teacher participants’ levels of comfort when talking to the principal about a problem with some aspect of the school, Jordan stated:

Sometimes I feel a little leery, not because I don’t think her door’s open, not in that respect, but I feel like it’s too minor. She has a million things to do. So a lot of times, or in the past, I’ve held back and then have eventually taken it to her or resolved it in another manner. But sometimes I feel like that’s too petty or that’s not important, so that’s my only hesitation.

Deborah explained, “Very comfortable. She just established that policy to keep everything in the open. Just go directly to her or the assistant principal.”

Question:

Describe what would happen, as well as your level of comfort, if you had a problem with your colleagues and talked with the principal about it.

All teacher participants felt that they would have trouble talking to the principal about another teacher. Paul explained his thoughts about the situation. He stated:

Yes, there’s a little discomfort, just in the sense that I know I don’t do everything right. I feel kind of silly pointing out someone’s [faults]. That’s just the way I was brought up. If you have a problem with somebody, why don’t you just point at yourself for a second and say what’s my part in that? And I think maybe I take that too far sometimes. But that’s just how I am.

Marvin stated:

Colleagues are probably the toughest, because I have no authority other than just my personality and my reputation or integrity. They are going to respond to that.
The only things that I will confront them about are things like monitoring the hallways. If I’m out there trying to get students to get to class and I’m the only guy out there herding cats then they’ll hear about it. My comfort level; I don’t like confrontation and so I will try to avoid that if I can. Then sometimes you just get pushed.

And Ruth stated, “Our vice principal seems to be more open and a little more friendly so I’d feel more comfortable going to him.”

Question:
What else can you offer that would shed light on those factors that influence your commitment to teaching and your commitment to stay at this school?

There were many statements made by the participants as they continued to explain the factors that contribute to their decision to stay.

In response, Jordan stated:

Communication has been important. Teaming has been important, and she makes efforts towards those: “What is the team thing? Take this back to your team.”

The moose thing, having that in place, of being able to express what you need to. So all those kinds of things help and have to do with communication and accountability.

Motivation

Responses from the Beckham and Davisson Principals

Question:
What strategies do you use to motivate your teachers? How do they usually respond?
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When it comes to motivating their teaching staff, Sydney uses more traditional strategies; and Addison is more creative with her strategies. Sydney stated:

I consider all what I just told you part of that motivation. Because I think, you know, I’m trying not to lose touch with my own roots as a teacher. I had some strong opinions about the schools I taught in; nobody was ever very interested in them, it didn’t seem like. And I thought to myself, if I ever become a principal, I’m not going to treat people like that . . . I don’t think what motivates people is being in an idyllic environment. What makes people feel motivated, I think, and me on my job, is to be part of an organization that is cooking, it’s going somewhere, it’s making progress, no matter how low the level might be. In other words, you can be in the worst school in the district, if the teachers feel like we’re getting somewhere, and it’s not just a lot of rah rah pat on the back stuff with no substance to it. But if you really feel like the school is moving in a positive direction, I think they’ll be with you and stay on board. And that is what motivates people—feeling like their day is not wasted.

Addison described the motivational strategies she uses in this manner:

They really like to be fed. Somebody said it but they really do, when they don’t have to pay for it. I have taken them out of the building and they’ve never had to buy. For professional development I buy them lunch. I write handwritten notes. Every quarter I write handwritten notes. I say something. On one I had to say thanks for showing up. We go through the building and see the notes taped up. I send them a weekly email saying thanks for the good work. Let’s stay up. It’s critical, like now, we’re going through the home stretch. I’ll send them an email
saying let’s finish strong and just emails to keep them encouraged. I send them an
email in a staff meeting and say, look, you are wearing me out. You guys are
wearing me out and I’m tired. I don’t have anymore to give you. I’ve had
massage therapists come in. You know I do little things for them all the time. At
Christmas time I gave them a bunch of baskets the whole week before Christmas.
I had something in the teachers’ lobbies on each floor every day. We did that.
We gave them all Christmas cards, which they loved. It’s like the little stuff they
really like. Connors wrote a book, *If You Don’t Feed The Teachers They’ll Eat
the Students*. I have these little wisdom cards. You know you’re not in trouble
but it’s like a joke you’ll really like. If you just can’t take it anymore I’ll bring
you in the office and give you a little chat and then you get a wisdom card. One
thing is that I ask them because I know them. I ask them how was your
daughter’s cheerleading contest? Last year I felt like, oh that’s draining me.
Gosh I can’t, you know, but it’s important to them. I have principal chats every
other week . . . I started it this year. People who just aren’t comfortable coming in
here, I have, like, a set time that you can just come in. I’ll just go around the
building and just chat with people. You’ve got to make that. You don’t always
have to do something. You’ve just got to make a human connection with them
and build relationships. I’m always doing something little. I did the little carpet
opening for the kids and I did it for the teachers. We bring them in on the red
carpet and we have music and we, you know. It’s like a big thing now. We do
the pom poms and we welcome them back. We have a little pep rally. They like
it now. They start looking for it. We do that and they just go to this after school
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thing at Hooligan’s. I usually go once. “Let me go before you start talking about me, I joke with them. We did this “five dysfunctions of the team” this year. That was powerful. We had to share some personal history. We did that and just kind of opened myself up to them. I respect them. I’m always working hard for them and they see that. So I can’t say that I am, well sometimes I feel like I’m not appreciated, but they know that I work hard for them. That’s what they want to see. They want to see your principal working hard for you. They know that.

Responses from the Beckham and Davisson Teachers

Question:

What are some of the strategies that your principal uses to motivate teachers? Are these strategies effective with you? Why or why not?

The teacher participants described various ways in which they felt that their principal motivated them. Some stated that in addition, they were also self-motivated. James explained:

The principal recognizes positive things with the teachers. Our principal does that. She doesn’t come down on negative things. A lot of positive things are being put out there. It works. To me, I’m self-motivated . . . As long as I know what I’m doing and God knows what I’m doing I’m just fine.

Ruth stated:

The principal here, I don’t think she motivates me . . . She brings people in to motivate me. She brought speakers that had some fantastic lessons and some fantastic philosophy and I’ve actually utilized that stuff. She doesn’t herself, but she’s brought people to do that. I’ve appreciated that very much.

Rebecca stated:
She’s high energy. She works. She’s never in her office with the door closed popping bon-bons. She has a mission and she has asked us to come on board to get Beckham up and running. And when I see someone who’s willing to put in the hours she puts in and puts as many things in place to help us, why wouldn’t I work?

Jordan stated:

I think very quickly she empowers you, and that was from the outset in a way that had not been my experience with other principals. And then it makes you take ownership. She asks you the tough questions, she asks you, “Well what have you done?” And she expects a response. And by the same token, it’s empowering at the same time. She asks you to be accountable, but yet she empowers you to make decisions and to be a part of decisions. From the outset she has asked my opinion as a department chair, which in the past, the department chair was just a name, but those days are over. It really has been empowering, but it’s made it tough too, but in a good way.

And Deborah stated:

They are effective with me, yes. Like I said, we have to do a Beckham retreat and all kinds of professional development, you name it; people come from all over the country. When she can, when there is opening, she is sending us to different places . . . One time we went to San Diego. That’s how we learned about co-teaching. We took professional development [courses] there . . . So she just has a way of helping us stay up to date and now we are able to track our progress.

Question:
What else can you offer that would shed light on those factors that influence your commitment to teaching and your commitment to stay at this school?

There were many statements made by the participants as they continued to explain the factors that contribute to their decision to stay.

In response, Deborah stated:

I guess I’ve already said everything that works. The teams, like I said, next year we won’t have teams, but we’ll be in departments. It will be the same basic group of people, so I’m assuming we’ll work together, like English will work together, math will work together, social studies and science. We’ll work like that. Then we’ll have specialist departments. So just the working together, now I don’t want you to think that everybody, well you know we don’t have a 100%. You always have two people that are complaining or whatever. The majority of us work together. 97%. That was the one thing about the book *Good to Great*. Get the right people on the bus and get them in the right positions and just roll on out. That’s what we’re doing. Just looking forward to whatever our summer professional development will be this summer. Last year we went to Camp Joy and actually swung from trees and we learned to trust each other. Fly like squirrels in the sky and walk the tight ropes. That helped to build camaraderie among the co-workers. We had the young and the old and we were all there together depending on each other. That’s what we’ll have to do next year. Our classes will be different, and the forces from without are sort of pushing us closer together, so we’ll just have to continue to work together.
University Preparation

Responses from the Beckham and Davisson Principals

Question:

How well did your university training prepare you to be the principal at this school?

Both principals felt that the training received from the university was lacking. Addison described it as having “holes.” Addison stated:

Basic theory and it gave me plenty; being in the job I know what I would have liked to have. I had a couple of school law classes that were really good. Having done the job I can say where the holes were. I would say that there needs to be more; it gave me a foundation. It gave me enough knowledge to pass Praxis.

Sydney ranked the training on a scale of one to ten. Sydney stated: “On a scale of one to ten, I’d probably put it at a three. Maybe I’ll change my answer to more like a five.”

Question:

Describe the areas in which you were most and least prepared. Why do you think this?

When asked to be more specific about the areas in which the university training most and least helpful, Sydney responded with detail. Sydney replied:

The Administrator Development Academy experience taught me not to judge people so much, which that was an important lesson for me personally. That’s not everyone’s issue, but it is one of my issues because I can be real strict—black and white thinking—judgmental, critical. It taught me to lose that voice for your own survival and to build anything positive. People don’t like criticism. They don’t like to be fussed at, even if it’s true. To try to figure out not to judge everyone around you and what they’re doing and to not be so critical, but to figure out positive ways to work with people, so in that aspect, it
was real critical for my own development. As far as technical preparation and understanding how to build an organization, I think that training all lacks a lot. I think many principals come out of training without any idea of how to build an organization. A school’s an organization. If you can’t build a powerful organization, you can’t get any of your goals done. We all know how to set goals, that’s not too hard to do. But many principals set goals and set goals and set goals, and are never able to reach them because they don’t know how to build an organization that will get to those goals. I really think that if education wants to use business analogies, which we have been attempting to do in the last twenty years, let’s use the business analogy of organizational development. The stuff that I learned about organizational development I learned mostly outside of the certification process and the university process.

Responses from the Beckham and Davisson Teachers

Question:

How well did your university training prepare you for your teaching career?

Of the 13 teacher participants, all but one felt that the university teacher training program they attended did not prepare them very well for teaching in an urban school.

Jordan reflected on her teacher training and stated:

It did not. Nothing prepares you for this until you get here. You feel like you know the content in that regard, but as far as the teaching experience itself, I don’t believe anything can prepare you for it except getting in there for me, anyway.

Evan stated:

I think they did a good job. It was a good emphasis on philosophy and methodology, which I think created a good base for me to build and to work from.
So that I’m prepared now and so that it remains the basis on which I do whatever it is I do. I will always have a project-based class curriculum. It drives the intervention specialist crazy, all the projects. We both recognize and understand it when kids are doing things and have to use information and ideas that that’s when they really understand them. Professor Ross understood a lot of this and he also was interested in the essential schools model and help set me up on that track. My class is still a reflection of all that I did in New York with Marsha Crane and the essential schools. When I came to Morlin I tried to do that at Michelin High with the essential schools.

Question:

Describe the areas in which you were most and least prepared. Why do you think this?

Seven of the thirteen teacher participants felt that they were most prepared in the area of their content. In addition, other areas that the participants felt well prepared in was lesson planning, learning styles, questioning methods, and technical aspects of teaching. Of the thirteen participants, when referencing the area of least preparation, three stated classroom management and two stated paperwork; others areas were parent interaction, modifications, bureaucracy of teaching, lack of student motivation, and use of various teaching strategies. Two of the participants did not respond to this question. When considering this question, Deborah stated:

I would say the university did the best they could. Every now and then when I think back on those textbooks and the students I’m actually working with, they don’t connect. They don’t match. They gave me that formal education and I have a good background as a special education teacher now. I first chose business teacher, so I guess you can say I have a good background in how to work in a
professional setting, how to work with teachers and how to work with students.

Nothing, I think my internship was probably the better part of the program. I had an internship when I got to leave the textbook and actually go into the classroom. My university provided that. That’s where I really learned what teaching was all about. Instead of student teaching, the actual internship [was more helpful]. I was there a whole school year.

Rebecca stated:

I went back recently to become certified for the position that I have now. And I went to one of the local universities, and I found that most of their coursework or what they were preparing us for, got a lot of content, but it was geared more for the urban, well not the urban school setting, but more for the suburban school setting, the middle-class student, and we were sort of on our own. There’s a void there, a true void. I would think classroom management, handling the many, many needs of the urban population—we don’t have any preparation for this.

Summary

The data collected through these interviews and focus group sessions gave a depiction of the intrinsic factors that influence a teacher’s decision to stay, as well as give an understanding of the environmental influences upon that decision. Chapter V: discussion will address how the data spoke to the research questions posed by this study.
CHAPTER V: Discussion

This chapter presents a summary of the study as well as an analysis of the findings. Implications and limitations of the study are discussed, as well as its implications for future research.

Overview of the Study


One study specifically investigated “principals’ behaviors and attitudes reported by teachers . . . that encourage them to stay in the profession” (Richards, 2003, p. 3). The results of this study identified principal support as the factor that encourages teachers to stay, specifically highlighting visible principals who offer suggestions and give guidance (Richards, 2003). Lack of principal support was found by Ingersoll (2004) to be one of the top five reasons why teachers leave. However, teacher attrition is also caused by factors such as: lack of faculty influence, numerous classroom disruptions, inadequate time, and poor salaries (Ingersoll, 2004).

Chapter I presented the problem to be investigated and the basis for the problem. The problem identified herein is that the rate of turnover for teachers surpasses that of is higher than any other occupations in the nation (Ingersoll, 2003). That rate is even higher when considering urban school settings. Ingersoll (2004) stated that the primary reason for this high turnover rate was teacher job dissatisfaction. However, the study used Herzberg’s “two-factor theory,” as it’s theoretical framework, in which job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction are located on two different continuums, suggests that as one increases, the other does not decrease. Herzberg also spoke of “hygiene factors,” that represent job dissatisfiers, extrinsic factors and motivators that represent job satisfiers, and intrinsic factors. It was found that intrinsic factors are more important to urban school teachers than extrinsic factors (Stotko, Ingram & Beaty-O’Ferrall, 2007; Derlin & Schneider, 1994).
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Chapter II presented detailed information surrounding teacher turnover and job satisfaction. This chapter also discussed various factors that contribute to decision-making such as: generational differences, cultural differences, components of the school environment, school leadership, as well as time period. In addition, this chapter renewed previous studies that explored similar topics.

Chapter III presented a detailed account of the methodology used in the implementation of this study. The qualitative methods used, interview and focus group, were explained. The focus population, setting, and a clear depiction of methods of sampling were revealed in this chapter. Grounded theory was discussed along with its implementation through this study. Data collection and data analysis were juxtaposed in this study and were discussed as an aspect of grounded theory.

Chapter IV presented the rich data collected from the interview and focus group sessions. In Chapter IV, participants’ responses were presented along with the questions that were used to prompt the participants. Principals’ and teachers’ responses were presented separately.

Emergent Themes

Through analysis, the sixteen questions presented to the principals and the twenty questions presented to the teachers revealed five emergent themes: reasons to stay, climate and environment, teacher support, teacher motivation, and university preparation. These five themes were consistent in both populations studied except one. This emergent theme, “reasons to stay,” was exclusive to the teacher population.

Reasons to stay was the first emergent theme. Much research has focused on why teachers leave their schools for positions in other school buildings in the same district or in another district. But the reasons teachers stay are just as, if not more, important. Depending on
one’s years of teaching experience, the reasons may vary. For newer teachers, the connection to a teacher mentor and principal support could be key (Colley, 2002). For veteran teachers, principal support and career growth may be key. Regardless of the reason, being able to encourage good teachers to stay is imperative for the success of a school, and therefore is important to all principals.

The teacher participants gave a variety of reasons for staying at their present schools. Most of the participants responded as follows, “I stay here because of the students.” One may wonder if that is reason enough for most teachers. Sergiovanni (2006) discussed this notion. He stated:

Indeed, teachers rely almost exclusively on interaction with students as sources of satisfaction in teaching. The question, though, is whether the satisfaction derived from students’ social interaction is enough to provide the kind of motivation and commitment needed for effective schooling. How does social interaction with adults fit into the picture? Social interaction is a key ingredient in the supervisory process.” (p. 319)

Aspects of the school environment are linked to one or more of the reasons teachers give for staying, namely; support and collaboration. Quartz and TEP (2003) stated that supportive and collaborative school environments cause teachers to stay. Teachers’ daily experiences have a significant influence on teachers’ decisions to stay. This is also evident in the responses of both Beckham and Davisson teachers.

From the data collected, the conclusion could be derived that teachers remain at their schools because of their students. However a closer analysis leads one to question the validity of the statements of pure student devotion given by the teachers as their reason to stay. There are
many pertinent aspects of a teacher’s existence, aspects that affect a teacher’s job satisfaction: teacher-student relationships, climate and environment, support, and professional growth (Derlin and Schneider, 1994). Since the major part of a teacher’s day is spent interacting with students, it does seem logical for them to equate students with their desire to stay. The epistemology of the teacher participants, as presented, depicts principals as having no effect on teachers’ decision to stay, with teachers controlling the school climate and staying primarily because of their students.

Though the students are presented as the participants’ reason to stay, data from the Teacher Follow-Up Survey found that teacher flight was generally not due to teachers’ poor interaction with students, students’ poor response academically in the classroom, or teachers’ lack of a connection or bond with their students. Participants left their schools, most times, due to a lack of or perfunctory support from their principals. The data provided in this study allows one to explore what seems to be a disconnect between the teachers reason to stay, as found in the study, and the decision to leave.

Gonzalez & NASDSE (1995) stated that teachers in many urban schools are plagued with a variety of challenges, one of which is a lack of principal support. This support includes support with students and parents, instructional needs and resources, provisions of professional development, and recognition of work well done, all of which are intrinsic factors. The support that principals need to provide their teachers is multifaceted. It impacts a teacher’s ability to successfully fulfill his or her job responsibilities. When that support is absent or is only partially provided, teachers are hard pressed to find solutions to daily problems and needs independent of the school administration. This evokes feelings of frustration, anger, and resentment. Teachers in this situation are like dangling participles, hanging out there by themselves. Barth (1990)
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presents a comparison among school relationships and their impact on the quality of school existence. Barth (1990) stated:

There are many important relationships within a school: child-child, teacher-teacher, child-teacher, parent-teacher, parent-principal, parent-parent. I am convinced that none of these relationships has greater effect on the quality of life under the roof of the schoolhouse than the relationship between teacher and principal. I have found no characteristic of a good school more pervasive than a healthy teacher-principal relationship—and no characteristic of a troubled school more common than a troubled, embattled administrator-teacher relationship. (p. 19)

Teachers in this situation focus on the principal and on those things that the principal is not doing, which in turn hinders teachers’ ability to teach effectively and to survive at that school (Ingersoll, 2004; McConney, Ayres, Hansen & Cuthbertson, 2003; Singh & Billingsley, 1998). In this instance the student is not the focus because the teachers’ basic needs are not being met (Sergiovanni, 2006). Teachers leave because it is too difficult to survive in a school setting with little or no support from the principal. They have a desire to teach, but so many other things inhibit the process. As a result, the teachers experience a significant decrease in job satisfaction.

Effective principals provide the support needed for teachers. They successfully facilitate the development of positive school climate and environment, provide instructional leadership and resources, offer disciplinary support, and give praise and recognition, all of which are imperative for a school work environment that is conducive to teaching and learning (Colley, 2002; Darling-Hammond, 2003; Jorissen, 2002; Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2005; Sergiovanni, 2006; Sergiovanni, 2004). With the principal taking ownership of these
responsibilities, it allows teachers’ focus to move from satisfying basic needs to the educational needs of the students. They are free to engage in professional discourse with other teachers and participate in shared decision-making and collaboration, all elements that are needed in a successful educational environment (Sergiovanni, 2006). In doing so, principals provide opportunities for teachers to improve their practice, which in turn has the potential to result in better instruction and consequently increased student achievement, transforming ordinary teachers into extraordinary teachers whose focus, again, is on teaching and learning (Hoerr, 2005). The change of ordinary teachers who teach in isolation, to extraordinary teachers who collaborate, participate in shared decision-making and experience professional growth, is the goal of a great, effective principal, a principal who orchestrates and facilitates the operation of an effective school. A high teacher retention rate is a characteristic of such a school, as is evident from the data presented.

The principal’s role in this instance appears relegated to the shadows, in the eyes of the teachers. No longer are they just trying to survive. They are working in an environment that is safe and orderly, one which allows them, the teachers, to take on roles that include them in decision-making and ultimately give them more power. This sense of teacher power can lead teachers to perceive the principal as a figure who has little or no impact on some of the various components of the school reality. The data from this study supports that notion. The teacher’s ability to experience such thoughts is a direct result of the principal’s continual support and involvement in all aspects of the school. The principal’s impact has not been reduced; his or her successful implementation of appropriate supports and strategies allows school operations to flow in an inclusive manner. Barth (1990) described the importance of the principal in the school environment:
• The principal is the key to a good school. The quality of the educational program depends on the school principal.

• The principal is the most important reason why teachers grow—or are stifled on the job.

• The principal is the most potent factor in determining school climate.

• Show me a good school, and I’ll show you a good principal. (p. 64)

The principal still conducts and orchestrates all aspects of the school but is not continually visible in the forefront, creating an invisible principal. The collaboratively focused principal still has control of the school and its environment, though the execution of daily activities is no longer principal centered. Creighton (2004) describes in detail this type of leadership, and in addition, Figure 5.1 gives a visual depiction. Creighton (2004) presents a reevaluation of leadership that states:

If we reexamine leadership and especially the work of effective principals in our school, we see men and women who are distant from the much praised description of effective leadership in much of the present literature. And they are not highly visible—or out in the front of the charge. But they are effectively leading schools, dedicated to improved teaching and student learning, and having a positive impact on education improvement and reform. (p. 105)

The data showed that the Beckham High School and Davisson Academy principals both exhibit leadership qualities and styles that position them as invisible principals. Teachers at both schools have opportunities for shared decision-making, experience support from the principal, professional growth, collaboration, recognition, and the ability to teach in a safe and orderly
Figure 5.1

The Invisible Principal’s Leadership Matrix
environment. This allows them to focus to be on their students, not on unmet needs and supports, as suggest by the data collected on the teachers’ reasons for staying.

The second emergent theme was climate and environment. The climate of the school is a result of intricate interactions between the various students and staff within the building. These interactions create a temperament that can be felt and sometimes experienced by all those who enter. Since the largest population within a school building is the students, they play a pivotal role in the school climate. The second largest population within a school building is teachers. Teachers also play a significant role in creating the school climate. The behaviors of members of these two groups can influence both feelings and actions exhibited by themselves or others in the building. Ubben, Hughes, and Norris (2007) stated, “The real or perceived normative behavior of a student body will determine reward or punishment practices, teacher and administrator attitudes and behaviors, and even teacher and administrator attrition rates” (p. 91). Though the students and staff represent the actors in this production, the principal is the director. The principal is the person who spearheads the enforcement of the school’s operating standards and policies; the principal sets the tone. Addison, principal at Davisson Academy, commented on this action. Addison stated:

Every morning I’m on duty because it’s important to me to see the kids coming in, because I can catch a lot of stuff. I can see what’s going on and see what’s brewing. I get the kids in too; the first and last bells are the roughest for us. So I get the kids in and I make announcements at 9:00. I usually set the expectation for the day with the students. I walk the building every morning. I try to walk the building so the kids can see me every morning.
In addition to checking the student barometer of the day and being sure students understand their parameters, Addison also works to check and regulate the teacher barometer. She described her routine:

The staff meets with the principal more so than the assistant principal. Making people feel good. You’ve just got to make people feel good. You’ve got to make people feel . . . since I was gone that week before school let out I haven’t touched base with a lot of teachers. If I don’t do that they’ll kind of take it personal. Some teachers just feel I have to go to them and touch base with everybody.

With the leadership exhibited by Addison, Davisson Academy will soon meet the criteria for achievement of AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress). When one considers the school environment, one likely thinks of matter and circumstances that encompass the school. As a result, most think of the words “safe” and “orderly” as always preceding the word “environment.” In some instances climate and environment intertwine, one affecting the other, whether in a positive or negative way. However, regardless of the focus, climate or environment both can have an overall impact on the success of the school and teacher retention.

The teacher participants clearly distanced their thoughts regarding school climate from their thoughts regarding the school environment. This was evident from their responses when asked to identify the main factors that contribute to the schools’ climate and the schools’ environment. Regarding climate, teachers either felt that the students or the teachers constituted the main contributing factor. However, when referencing the school environment, all but one teacher felt that the influence of the school principal was “huge.”

In order for any school to be safe and orderly, rules and parameters, guidelines must be in place, resources must be made available, and standard operating procedures must be known. The
school environment includes all things and people that encompass the school, which all have the ability to affect the school climate. Therefore, the principal is a main factor in the creation and regulation of the school climate as well as the school environment, which in turn affect a teacher’s decision to stay.

As stated previously, behaviors of transformational leaders reflect; nurturing, challenging, passing out praise, taking responsibility, bringing out the best in others, and implementing strategies that make the school vision a reality (Hoerr, 2005). Both principals, Sydney and Addison, showed evidence of the above mentioned behaviors, behaviors that possibly have had a significant effect on their teachers’ decision to stay.

The third emergent theme was teacher support. As a result of the many challenges that face urban teachers, support for them in their schools is extremely important. Support and training are two areas of focus in the discussion of retaining teachers (Johnson et al., 2001). Though the principal is not always the provider of the support, the principal plays an important role by initiating steps to provide the support or by putting resources in place to provide the support needed by teachers. When teachers were asked about the systems of support present at their school, answers varied, even within the same school. Most teachers felt that support was given by other teachers when assistance was need. Andrew acknowledged the presence of support for new teachers during their first year of teaching; however, he felt that the support ended there. Andrew stated:

I think for new teachers there’s . . . I know I went through it, any new teacher has to go through a . . . I don’t want to call it an initiation process, but they have to attend some classes, some meetings, they have to go observe teachers, maybe in three or four different schools. So they go
through a system as an introductory thing so they get some kind of idea of what’s going on in their school and the other schools. For veteran teachers, I don’t know if there’s a whole lot. There’s nothing that I know of. I know they urge veteran teachers to go watch your peers here in the school. And they do offer, there’s some, our principal has offered for us to shadow her, so we can do that. But I don’t know of a whole lot, at least during the school day.

While the teachers at Beckham and Davisson felt supported by other teachers, the principals at those schools felt that they provided support to the teachers. It is apparent from the teachers’ responses that when they considered support, they were referring to instructional support. This is evident from their statements regarding receiving assistance from the teacher teams. In addition, though most teachers did not mention it, teacher teams are not the only instructional supports in place. Elaine explained:

They’re the same. There’s the new hire. I don’t know if Praxis III still exists.

It’s for mentoring for new teachers, the new hire comprehensive. I think as far as IST goes. I personally have found that very beneficial, the implementation of IST, and as a special education teacher, I get two coaches, because I teach a content course and I have my special ed. That’s been great. That’s been the most obvious recent support coming from Morlin Public Schools. I think there’s different opinions about that, but other than that stuff I mentioned, the new hire and if the Praxis III is still in place, I think it’s still about the same.

Sydney, the principal at Beckham, describes some of the support that she provides for her teachers. Sydney stated:
“What do you do to support teachers?” You gotta sit down and talk to them you gotta listen to them. If you want good instruction you’ve got to listen to the teachers telling you what’s going on. And it’s not that everybody’s right on every single thing they tell you, but you gotta get that picture, you gotta get that overview. And they’re the ones that have the information. So you’ve got to establish that relationship with them. A working relationship. And then you’ve got to tell them, “I heard what you told me; boy, am I listening to this. What can we do?” And you gotta give them a little faith that you take them seriously enough that they know more about the school than you do, even with a principal that’s been there twenty years. Many teachers know something about the school that the principal doesn’t know and have a different perspective than the principal. So I think you have to respect them and listen to them. And you can do that in fifty different ways. But it all comes down to establishing a working relationship, listening.

When discussing ways to create a supportive environment for teachers, Scherer (2003) offered these words from an actual principal: “You start with making teachers feel good about themselves and what they are doing. Make them feel that this is a safe, risk-free environment for teaching and learning. If you set that up and do it consciously, they are going to do the work that they are about, which is intellectual” (p. 39).

Both principals’ responses suggest that they have taken steps to foster a welcoming, appreciative, and “I’ve got your back” type of environment. Most of the teachers, when asked about teacher support, focused on the immediate support of those closest to them, primarily other
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teachers. However, at least one teacher from each building acknowledged the additional supports within the school that work to assist them as teachers and individuals.

The fourth emergent theme was teacher motivation, which goes beyond support. A motivator is someone who tries to encourage particular thoughts and behaviors. When referencing teachers, motivation focuses on the intrinsic factors connected with teachers’ performance at school.

Principals use various strategies to motivate their staff to higher levels of performance (Sergiovanni, 2006). In order to increase the performance of teachers to a level that exceeds average performance, principals must implement strategies that motivate them (Sergiovanni, 2006). If principals do nothing to motivate their teachers, the teachers will not experience job dissatisfaction, they simply will not be motivated to work. This is in line with Herzberg’s two-factor theory. While motivation increases the level of teacher performance and job satisfaction, it does not affect the factors that contribute to the teachers’ level of job dissatisfaction. In order to motivate teachers, principals must use strategies that generate feelings of competence, belonging, usefulness, potency (empowerment), and optimism within their teachers (Sagor, 2003). Both Addison and Sydney use strategies that target these five feelings. This is evident in the descriptors used by the teachers as they explained ways in which their principal provided motivation. The teachers used words like “empowerment,” “challenging,” “ownership,” “complement,” and “encourage.”

University preparation was the fifth theme to emerge. University teacher education programs are deficient in their ability to prepare teachers to teach in the urban school setting. Unsupportive administration, inadequate facilities, too few community supports, and a diverse student population that brings many neighborhood and family challenges with it, are some of the
Influences of Principals

major conditions characteristics of most urban schools today (Quartz & TEP, 2003). Universities, although knowledgeable of these conditions, are still trying to develop programs that will begin to properly equip teachers with the mind set and strategies needed to successfully teach and respond effectively to the needs of students in urban school settings. These sentiments were expressed by both principals and teachers. When asked how well the university prepared her for her school setting, Sydney replied, “On a scale of one to ten, I’d probably put it at a three. Maybe I’ll change my answer to more like a five.” When responding to the same question, Andrew stated:

In terms of my discipline, in terms of my science, excellent. The education was horrible. The education classes I took were worthless. I was not trained at all. When I got here, I emulated my science professors; that’s the only thing I had to draw on. I know that’s kind of harsh, but I will add one thing. My methods professor at the university said that teaching should be like driver’s ed. When you go to driver’s ed, when you’re done, you either can drive the car, or you’re unable to drive the car.

University preparation has a significant effect on the success of teachers placed in school settings. Of the principals and teachers, all participants except one agreed that they were not properly prepared for the demands and situations they faced by teaching in an urban school setting.

The lack of proper teacher preparation has presented urban teachers with instructional and personal demands that go beyond their college training, adding considerable tension and stress to the teaching position. The diverse population of students served at both Beckham and Davisson require teachers whose training equips them to successfully handle the needs of their
students and the conditions present in urban schools today. For the last twenty years there has been a move toward the addition of multicultural content in the nation’s teacher education programs. However, even though universities report great strides in reforming their teachers training programs to reflect multicultural content, research has found that there has not been much change (Cochran-Smith, 2003).

The data collected through interview and focus group sessions gave a depiction of the intrinsic factors that influence a teacher’s decision to stay, as well as an understanding of the environmental influences that affect that decision. The data provided by the participants also present viable answers to questions posed by the researcher.

Responses to Research Questions

The researcher posed three questions. The first of the three involved the factors that influence teacher retention. This question stated:

1. What factors are associated with teacher retention (including, but not limited to, factors such as teacher age and years of service); and what influences do these factors have on teachers, decision-making?

There are a number of factors that influence teacher turnover. In high poverty schools, the top factors, in order, are: limited perfunctory administrative support, lack of faculty influence, numerous classroom interruptions, inadequate time, and poor salaries (Ingersoll, 2004). Additional research into factors influencing teacher turnover in high poverty schools has focused on age, ethnicity, and teacher preparation (Haberman, 1991; Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 2001; Quartz and TEP, 2003).

In order to consider the level of influence the top five factors have on teachers’ decisions to stay, one must first consider whether the factor represents an intrinsic or extrinsic aspect of the
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teacher’s reality. This is an important distinction because teacher job satisfaction is determined more by intrinsic factors, unlike urban principal job satisfaction which is determined mostly by extrinsic factors of the job (Derlin & Schneider, 1994; Sergiovanni, 2006). Of the five factors, the top three represent intrinsic factors, while the latter two represent extrinsic factors. Extrinsic factors are those factors outside the realm of internal gratification. These are such things as salary, board policy, working conditions, and job security (Derlin & Schneider, 1994; Sergiovanni, 2006). Intrinsic factors are those that are more closely related to work motivation. They are such things as: recognition, participation in decision-making, advancement, and support (Derlin & Schneider, 1994; Sergiovanni, 2006).

Both intrinsic and extrinsic factors have an effect. However, it is the intrinsic factors that regulate job satisfaction, and it is that job satisfaction that directly affects teachers’ decision-making; should I stay or should I go? Jordan, one of the focus group participants at Beckham High, described how she felt as a result of motivational strategies implemented by Sydney, the Beckham principal. Jordan stated:

I think very quickly she empowers you, and that was from the outset, in a way that had not been my experience with other principals. And then it makes you take ownership. She asks you the tough questions; she asks you, “Well, what have you done?” And she expects a response. By the same token, it’s empowering at the same time. She asks you to be accountable, but yet she empowers you to make decisions and to be a part of decisions. From the outset she has asked my opinion as a department chair, which in the past, the department chair was just a name, but those days are over. But it really has been empowering, but it’s made it tough too, but in a good way.
Deborah, one of the participants as Davisson, described how support strategies, put in place by her principal, affect the ways she feels. Deborah stated:

You have to have a lot of control because you’re here; you know you’ve got the district that controls really. I’ve always sort of felt like she had our best interests at heart. Everything she can provide for us here at Davisson, within her powers, she would try to do that for us. We always felt like that. When she first came she was getting money from places, and you know we got supplies and all kinds of wonderful things that we had been buying out of our own pockets. She was like, “Okay, you can have $150.” We went, “Wow.” We just sort of felt like she had our best interests at heart. I do feel, like I said, that cutting edge. Professional development, she stays up to date with that. Every since we’ve been here, we’ve had a book every summer to read. So she keeps us up-to-date with what’s going on in the world and the world of education. She has a business background as well. So we had this book called *Good to Great*. She brought that in and we had summer reading. So she gives us homework and things to keep us challenged. I think that’s the one reason I haven’t felt the need to go anywhere.

In addition to the top five factors that cause teacher turnover in high poverty schools: limited or perfunctory administrative support, lack of faculty influence, numerous classroom disruptions, inadequate time, and poor salaries, one additional factor that has been cited to have significance in the discussion about turnover is age (Haberman, 1991; Quartez & TEP, 2003). Haberman (1991) presented information that supported the belief that the more mature teachers are more committed. This finding of Haberman (1991) paralleled the findings of studies.
conducted within the business community regarding the lack of job commitment exhibited by the Generation X employees (Filipczak, 1994; Peske, Liu, Johnson, Kauffman, & Kardos, 2001).

As stated in Chapter II, members of Generation X, those ages 25-44, appear to have a much weaker sense of commitment than that of the Baby Boomer age group, ages 45-64. The Generation Xers stay at a job for an average of two to five years before moving on. Ingersoll (2003) stated that the largest population of teachers that leave are those new teachers within the second-to-fifth-year into the profession.

The second question focused on the leadership characteristics of urban school principals. The question states:

2. What are the leadership characteristics of principals in urban schools; and what are their effects on teacher retention?

The problems that face urban principals demand a leader that knows not only how to lead, but also manage. An urban principal’s job is comprised of conflict, pressures, always increasing workload, long hours, and a vast array of demands (Cistone & Stevenson, 2000). An urban principal must be able to encourage others; implement professional development; exhibit data-driven decision-making; be an expert instructional leader; demonstrate an understanding of the unique dynamics of urban schools; and be supportive (Cistone & Stevenson, 2000). As with their teacher counterparts, urban principals are faced with a multitude of challenges that are not present in suburban schools. These challenges require a principal with characteristics beyond the transactional or transformational nature of leadership.

When considering the two leadership styles, the transformational leadership style most successfully meets the needs of urban teachers. The urban principal that exhibits this style of leadership addresses the intrinsic nature of the urban teacher. This is accomplished through good
communication, providing encouragement and support to teachers, looking at problems with a new perspective, maintaining visibility, and possessing the charismatic nature of the transformational leader (Yukl, 2006). A positive correlation has been documented between job satisfaction and transformational leadership (Bogler, 2001).

Both Beckham and Davisson principals emulate many of these characteristics. They are both directive and collaborative in the leadership styles, while also being visible, supportive, and encouraging professional development. The effect of these characteristics on a teacher’s desire to stay is expressed well by Rebecca, a Beckham teacher. Rebecca stated:

She’s high energy. She works. She’s never in her office with the door closed popping bon-bons. She has a mission and she has asked us to come on board to get Beckham up and running. And when I see someone who’s willing to put in the hours she puts in and puts as many things in place to help us, why wouldn’t I work?

The focus of the third question was on the behaviors, supports, and strategies used by principals. The question states:

3. What behaviors, supports, and strategies do principals utilize that encourage and prompt teachers to stay in schools showing a higher rate of teacher retention?

Hoerr (2005) stated, “Good leaders change organizations; great leaders change people” (p. 7). Analyzing the behaviors, supports, and strategies one uses is basically looking at how one is managing and engaging in professional discourse and interaction with others. Research has identified ten cumulative examples of behavior, supports, and strategies, which the principal participants have found useful when encouraging teachers to stay. They are: 1. provide overall support (resources, discipline, parents); 2. provide instructional support; 3. provide teacher
mentors for new teachers; 4. put strategies in place that improve the school climate and environment; 5. communicate and collaborate; 6. be visible; 7. give praise and recognition; 8. celebrate successes; 9. provide opportunities for professional development; 10. motivate, motivate, motivate (Colley, 2002; Scherer, 2003; Sergiovanni, 2006; Sergiovanni, 2005; Stotko, Ingram & Beaty-O’Ferrall, 2007; Ubben, Hughes & Norris, 2007).

The behaviors, supports, and strategies are not listed in any particular order. All of them have the ability to promote some level of job satisfaction and thereby possibly increase the potential for teacher retention. All of them represent aspects of a principal’s role in staff management that could ultimately increase teacher performance as well as teacher retention.

When researching or simply discussing teacher turnover, administrative support becomes a key focus; it occupies two of the elements listed above. Needless to say, providing administrative support is important to the retention of teachers. This was evident from the participant responses at Beckham and Davisson. In addition, the literature speaks to the effect that lack of administrative support can have on teacher retention rates. The National Task Force on Public Education by Ingersoll (2004) found that the number one cause of teacher turnover during the first five years of teaching in high poverty schools is lack of administrative support. The data used in Ingersoll’s study came from the Teacher Follow-up Survey (TFS). This survey was given to teachers who participated in the School and Staffing Survey (SASS) the previous year. SASS, administered every three years, is the most comprehensive teacher survey of its kind in the nation.

The teacher participants in the pilot study conducted by Oliver (2007) explained in detail that lack of administrative support caused them to leave or could cause them the leave their teaching positions. The research found in the above mentioned studies, where teachers were
asked about their experiences, that lack of administrative support was the number one reason for job dissatisfaction and as a result, their reason for leaving their teaching position.

Additional evidence of this phenomenon was provided by the responses generated from the teachers at Beckham High School. The teachers described nine ways in which their principal, Sydney, provided them with support. They were as follows:

1. Instructional Leader
2. Communication
3. Visibility
4. Motivation
5. Collaboration
6. Resources
7. Empowerment
8. Challenges
9. Professional Development

The responses provided by the teachers at Davisson Academy also described ways in which their principal, Addison, provides support. The Davisson teachers identified nine as well. They were:

1. Provides Teacher Mentors
2. Recognition
3. Instructional Leader
4. Visibility
5. Communication
6. Motivation
Many of the teachers at both schools spoke enthusiastically about the supports provided to them at their school. Figure 5.2 displays the effects of the invisible principal's behavior on teacher job satisfaction, resulting in increased teacher retention. The figure shows the direct impact by the teachers coupled with the indirect impact by the principal.

The teachers at Beckham and Davisson, as well as research data reported in this study’s literature review, all concur regarding the correlation between the implementation of varied aspects of administrative support and a teacher’s job satisfaction and ultimate survival. This triangulation provides continuity and validity to the statement regarding the strong influence that principals have on teachers’ job satisfaction and decision to stay.

Three elements that were presented as behaviors, supports and strategies needed by the principal can be united under the category of motivation. Motivation is the key to obtaining a higher level of job performance from teachers (Sergiovanni, 2006). Researchers in the business community have presented this theory for decades (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999). Motivation also has direct ties to job satisfaction (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999; Herzberg, 2003; Herzberg, Mansner & Snyderman, 1959; Sergiovanni, 2006). Research has suggested that one of the keys to retaining Generation X employees is the need for praise and recognition (Montana & Lenaghan, 1999).

From the teachers’ responses obtained from both schools, it was found that different teachers respond to different types of motivation; however, the response is usually positive regardless of the type of motivation. Teachers were motivated by being empowered by their principal,
Figure 5.2
Flow of Principal Behaviors

Desirable Environment
Communication
Support
Motivation

Increased Teacher Job Satisfaction

Increased Rate of Teacher Retention

PRINCIPAL

TEACHERS
receiving praise, being recognized, receiving notes or gifts, and by being given food or encouragement.

Principal participants also discussed the strategies they use to motivate their teachers. They know that their staff of teachers needs motivation to foster feelings of appreciation, contentment, and satisfaction. The principals described motivational strategies as elaborate as Addison’s “Red Carpet Welcome” at Davisson Academy and as simple as brief words of encouragement delivered by Sydney at Beckham High School. Both strategies are effective and appeal to different teachers; both plant seeds of a caring, concerned, and supportive principal. Such feelings lead to job satisfaction and a higher rate of teacher retention (Sergiovanni, 2006; Buckingham & Coffman, 1999).

Evidence from the teachers at both Beckham and Davisson; both principals, and the review of the literature shows that the strategies put in place by both principals have positive effects on the teachers in their schools. Research also supports the need for motivational strategies for teachers. This triangulation substantiates and gives validity to the connection drawn between principals, motivation, and teachers.

The findings have generated the following conclusions that are rooted in Grounded Theory:

- Principals have a significant influence on teacher retention;
- Principals have a huge effect on the major aspects of the school environment; their influence gives them the ability to create, shape, and mold the school into one that is orderly and where teachers feel safe;
The school climate and environment, teacher motivation, teacher support, and communication represent the ammunition principals may use in their quest to retain their teachers.

This is important because the situation is dire. Teachers are leaving at an alarming rate. Though the number of teachers in the nation is twice that of nurses and five times that of lawyers and professors, the retention rate of teachers is lower than that of any other profession (Ingersoll, 1999). In the hands of school principals lies an arsenal of tools to combat this nation-wide phenomenon on teacher retention.

Recommendations

From the findings and conclusions presented, recommendations related to principals’ practices regarding teacher retention can be made. These recommendations are important to principals because they have the potential to assist principals’ attempts to retain quality teachers. The researcher strongly believes that principals’ focus, as it relates to their behaviors that yield improved teacher retention, should be on three actions: create, communicate, and motivate (refer to Figure 5.3).

Principals must create an environment for teaching and learning. The school climate, the tone of the school, and the school environment represent the surroundings in which the teachers conduct their practice. This researcher believes that the principal must remain visible to the teachers and students give the structure for the school day, ensure that school policies are enforced, and provide teachers with the many supports (including instructional support beyond induction) and resources needed to do their job effectively.

Principals must communicate and collaborate with their teachers regularly. Communication is simply the exchange of information. This should be an ongoing exchange
Figure 5.3

Principals’ Pyramid Towards Teacher Retention
between the principals and their teachers. It is this researcher’s belief that this communication can occur via email, written bulletins, presentations at meetings, and one-on-one or small group conversations. This will keep teachers informed and will help alleviate classroom disruptions and the circulation of misinformation. Collaboration involves more than just an exchange of information; it occurs when two or more people engage in the practice of shared decision-making. The researcher believes that giving teachers a voice in the decision-making regarding issues that ultimately affect them is critical to the development of an actual connection, a feeling of competence and belonging, for the teacher. Fostering these feelings is crucial in encouraging a teacher to stay at a school.

Principals must learn to motivate their teachers. This researcher believes that beyond teacher support, when considering ways to increase teacher retention, motivation is the part of the pyramid that, when lacking, causes structural damage and inevitable collapse. Though motivation is used by great business managers to create positive feelings and increase performance in their corporation, the population of school principals as a whole, tend not to labor over the implementation of strategies that motivate their teachers. This researcher found that principals at both schools studied used strategies that motivated their teachers on some level. A handwritten note, food, praise, formal or informal recognition, and celebration of success are all ways in which principals can motivate their teachers. Everyone likes to feel appreciated and valued. Motivation provides the vehicle necessary to instill those feelings of appreciation, of being valued, in one’s teachers.

It is the belief of this researcher that principals who incorporate these three actions into their practice will potentially see an increase in teachers’ desire to stay at their school.
Limitations

Limitations experienced in this study included IRB (Institutional Review Board) changes, lack of control over participant absenteeism, total number of participants, possible participant bias, and the uneven number of Generation X and Baby Boomer participants involved in the focus groups and individual teacher interviews.

To ensure the safety and rights of all research participants, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) must approve the study and the forms distributed to participants. It was the intent of this researcher to discover the age group of each participant prior to the interview or focus group session. This would have allowed the researcher control over the inclusion or exclusion of participants in the Baby Boomer age group, age 45-64. The differentiation of the age groups, Baby Boomers and Generation Xers, age 25-44, was important to this study because the work ethics of these two groups are so different (Filipczak, 1994; Peske, Liu, Johnson, Kauffman, & Kardos, 2001). A work ethic affects how one relates to various stimuli in a work environment and as a result of that work environment. This was an important aspect of this study.

When submitted, the consent form contained a section that asked the participant to check his or her specific age group, 25-44 or 45-64. However, the IRB’s approval of the form was contingent upon the deletion of the age information section, which it felt was necessary and which it deleted, even though the consent form clearly stated an age stipulation (refer to Appendix A).

Therefore, even though the consent form states an age restriction, this criterion was not implemented due to the IRB’s removal of the age information section from the consent form. This removal hindered the researcher from being able to control the number of participants in a
particular age group. This knowledge could have helped shed light on the impact of age on teacher retention. As a result of this action, the teacher participants represent both age groups.

The absence of one of the focus group participants decreased the amount of data gathered from that group and reduced the response content that may have affected the responses of another participant.

Qualitative methodology favors the use of smaller participant populations, made necessary by the volume of rich data potentially collected from each participant. The small number of participants reduced the researcher’s ability to make generalizations.

Possible participant bias could be posed by the teacher participants. The fact that most of the teachers volunteered to participate could mean that they possessed a personal motive for their willingness to participate.

In addition, the focus groups lacked a balance between the Generation X participants and the Baby Boomer participants. This produced discourse that lacked the influence of generational stimulated opinions and feelings, which could have facilitated the uncovering of additional data.

Implications for Future Study

As a result of this study, the following questions should be considered for investigation:

1. How might we understand and address the needs of the Generation X and Y teachers?
2. What is the effect of age on teacher retention?
3. What motivational strategies are most effective for use with teachers?
4. How do teachers affect peer retention?
5. When does new teachers’ desire to stay diminish, and how can principals redirect already discouraged teachers back to an optimistic view of teaching, in their current position?
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Summary

This was a qualitative study that investigated the effect of principal behaviors on teacher retention. Three research questions were posed which led to the development of a research design that included the use of both interview and focus group methodology. The study was composed of two research populations: principals and teachers. Two principals were interviewed individually. In addition, six teachers were interviewed individually, while seven other teachers populated two separate focus groups. Data collected from the interviews and focus groups sessions were analyzed, coded, and categorized, resulting in the identification of emergent themes. The data were examined to discern the connection between principal behavior and teacher retention.

This study concluded that principal behavior does have a significant impact on teacher retention. Principal influence on school climate, environment, implementation of teacher support and support programs, communication efforts, and motivation, all affect a teacher’s decision to stay.

The findings of this study determined three actions that principals should take in order to increase the rate of teacher retention. Those actions are to create, communicate, and motivate. The implementation of such actions will potentially stimulate teachers’ feelings of competence, empowerment, optimism, appreciation, and of being valued.

These findings were compared with literature from previous studies conducted by some of the top researchers whose focus is teacher retention. The implications of this study suggest that additions need to be made to the focus of principals when considering ways to increase teacher retention. A focus that includes strategies that target more intrinsic factors is warranted.
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Appendix A

Consent to Participate in a Research Study
University of Cincinnati
College of Education, Criminal Justice, and Human Services
Winona L. Oliver
513-266-0099/oliverwl@email.uc.edu

Title of Study: The Influence of Principals on Teacher Retention

Introduction: Before agreeing to participate in this study, it is important that you read this consent form and understand the purpose, procedures, risks, and benefits of the study as well as your right to withdraw from the study at any time. Please note that no guarantee or assurance can be made as to the results of the study.

Purpose of Study: The purpose of this study is to investigate teachers’ commitment to their teaching position in an urban public high school. The teachers will be from the age of 25 to 44. Teachers will participate in a focus group or individual interview; and the principals will participate in an individual interview about what makes their job satisfactory or unsatisfactory and discuss their level of commitment to the teaching profession. You will be one of 48 participants invited to participate in this research study.

Procedures and Duration: The interviews will last no more than one hour and will be conducted at a time and location that is most convenient for you. The focus group sessions will last no longer than two hours. The interview and focus sessions will be recorded and transcribed.

Risks/discomforts: You have the right to decide whether or not to remain in the study. You may discuss discomfort and risks with the investigator, Winona L. Oliver at (513)-266-0099, the investigator’s advisor Lanthan Camblin at (513) 556-3331, or you may call the University of Cincinnati’s Institutional Review Board for Social and Behavioral Sciences at (513) 558-5784.

Benefits: There is no direct benefit for you. Findings may be used to develop recommendations for improving teacher retention especially in urban public high schools.

Confidentiality: Every effort will be made to maintain confidentiality. The investigator will not allow anyone outside of the co-investigator and key personnel listed to read questionnaire data and interview transcripts or listen to audiotapes of interviews. The data from the study may be published and presented at conferences; however, you will not be identified by name. To further ensure confidentiality, all questionnaire data, interview audiotapes and transcripts will be stored in a locked file cabinet and destroyed after the study is completed. Consent forms will be stored in a secure place for three years after the end of the study and then will be destroyed.

Compensation: There is no compensation connected to this study.

Right to refuse or withdraw: Your participation is strictly voluntary. You may refuse to participate or may discontinue participation at any time without
penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

**Offer to answer questions:** If you have any other questions about this study, you may call Winona L. Oliver at (513)-266-0099 or Lanthan Camblin at (513)-556-3331.

The University of Cincinnati Institutional Review Board – Social and Behavioral Sciences reviews all non-medical research projects that involve human participants to be sure the rights and welfare of participants are protected. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, you may contact the Chairperson of the University of Cincinnati Institutional Review Board – Social and Behavioral Sciences at (513) 558-5784. If you have a concern about the study you may also call the UC Research Compliance Hotline at (800) 889-1547.

**Legal Rights:** Nothing in this consent form waives any legal right you may have nor does it release the investigator, the sponsor, the institution or its agents from liability for negligence.

I HAVE READ THE INFORMATION PROVIDED ABOVE. I VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY. I WILL RECEIVE A SIGNED AND DATED COPY OF THIS CONSENT FORM FOR MY INFORMATION.

_________________________________________________       ___________________
Signature of Participant                                                                   Date

_________________________________________________       ___________________
Signature and Title of Person Obtaining Consent                           Date
1. What were the reasons you chose to go into teaching and why did you stay in education?

2. How well did your university training prepare you for your teaching career?

3. Describe the areas in which you were most and least prepared. Why do you think this?

4. Describe your professional journey in the educational system.

5. Give me an idea of how long you’ve been teaching and how long you’ve been teaching at this school?

6. How did you end up at this school and what would you say are the main reasons you’re still here?

7. What do you think are the advantages for teachers who have been in the teaching profession for a number of years; and what advantages do you think new teachers have in the teaching profession?

8. Describe what you feel to be the main forces that impact your school climate.

9. In general, what support systems are in place for teachers at your school? For new teachers? For veteran teachers? Are they the same/different?

10. What are your alternatives when addressing problems with your students?

11. What are your alternatives when addressing a problem in your school?

12. What are your alternatives when addressing problems with your colleagues?
13. Describe what would happen, as well as your level of comfort, if you had a problem with a student and talked with the principal about it.

14. Describe what would happen, as well as your level of comfort, if you had a problem in the school and talked with the principal about it.

15. Describe what would happen, as well as your level of comfort, if you had a problem with your colleagues and talked with the principal about it.

16. What effect do you think the principal has on the school environment?

17. What factors are most important when considering whether to remain at a school?

18. In what ways did your principal influence your decision to remain at this school for the time you have been here?

19. What are some of the strategies that your principal uses to motivate teachers? Are these strategies effective with you? Why or why not?

20. What else can you offer that would shed light on those factors that influence your commitment to teaching and your commitment to stay at this school.
Appendix C

Principal Interview Questions

1. How well did your university training prepare you to be the principal at this school?

2. Describe the areas in which you were most and least prepared. Why do you think this?

3. Give me an idea of how long you’ve been in the field of education and how long you’ve been a principal?

4. Describe your professional journey in the educational system.

5. How long have you been the principal at this high school?

6. How would you describe your leadership style?

7. Describe how your experiences as a teacher contributed to your leadership style.

8. Describe your primary responsibilities on a typical day at this high school.

9. Describe your daily routine as principal of this high school.

10. What are the two most important questions you and your interview team ask when interviewing a candidate for one of your teaching positions? Why are the answers to these questions so important?

11. Describe your relationship with your teachers?

12. What are some of the ways in which you provide support for your teachers, and how do you communicate your willingness to support them?

13. What strategies do you use to motivate your teachers? How do they usually respond?

14. Research has found that when employees leave, they are leaving because of their immediate supervisor, which at a school would be the principal. What reasons do you think your teachers would cite for their devotion to you as the principal of this school?
15. If you were a mentor principal to a person that will be entering his or her first year as principal of a school, as it pertains to the building and cultivating their relationship with their teachers, what would you say their first steps should be and why?

16. What else can you offer that would clarify the steps you take to maintain the commitment and job satisfaction of your teaching staff?
Appendix D
Letter to the Principal

2600 Clifton Ave.
Cincinnati, Ohio 45221
November 25, 2007

Principals Name
Name of High School
School Address

Dear Principal ____________:

My name is Winona L. Oliver. I am presently a third year doctoral student in Urban Educational Leadership at the University of Cincinnati. My research focus is teacher retention, particularly—A Principal’s Influence on Teacher Retention. Under your leadership, your school has exhibited a high rate of teacher retention. I would like to interview you to discover the leadership methods and strategies you have in place, as well as what behaviors and interactions you engage that result in high teacher job satisfaction and in turn a high teacher retention rate. I would also like to observe you during your daily routine and at a staff meeting.

In addition, I would like to conduct a focus group of five teacher volunteers from your school to discover what they feel is their reason for staying and how much you influence their decision to stay. I would like to distribute informational fliers and consent forms regarding the study at the beginning of a staff meeting. At the close of the meeting I would collect the consent forms of those that are interested in participating in the study.

If you agree to participate, enclosed you will find a consent form regarding the study that you will need to sign. Please sign and return the consent form to me in the pre-addressed return envelop, also enclosed.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Winona L. Oliver
Appendix E
Participant Responses to Interview
and Focus Group Questions

Responses from the Beckham and Davisson Principals

1. How well did your university training prepare you to be the principal at this school?

   Both principals felt that the training received from the university was lacking.

   Addison described it as having “holes.” Addison stated:

   Basic theory and it gave me plenty; being in the job I know what I would have liked to
   have. I had a couple of school law classes that were really good. Having done the job I
   can say where the holes were. I would say that there needs to be more; it gave me a
   foundation. It gave me enough knowledge to pass Praxis.

   Sydney ranked the training on a scale of one to ten. Sydney stated: “On a scale of one to
   ten, I’d probably put it at a three. Maybe I’ll change my answer to more like a five.”

2. Describe the areas in which you were most and least prepared. Why do you think this?

   When asked to be more specific about the areas in which the university training most and
   least helpful, Sydney responded with detail. Sydney replied:

   The Administrator Development Academy experience taught me not to judge people so
   much, which that was an important lesson for me personally. That’s not everyone’s
   issue, but it is one of my issues because I can be real strict—black and white thinking—
   judgmental, critical. It taught me to lose that voice for your own survival and to build
   anything positive. People don’t like criticism. They don’t like to be fussed at, even if it’s
   true. To try to figure out not to judge everyone around you and what they’re doing and to
   not be so critical, but to figure out positive ways to work with people, so in that aspect, it
   was real critical for my own development. As far as technical preparation and
understanding how to build an organization, I think that training all lacks a lot. I think many principals come out of training without any idea of how to build an organization. A school’s an organization. If you can’t build a powerful organization, you can’t get any of your goals done. We all know how to set goals, that’s not too hard to do. But many principals set goals and set goals and set goals, and are never able to reach them because they don’t know how to build an organization that will get to those goals. I really think that if education wants to use business analogies, which we have been attempting to do in the last twenty years, let’s use the business analogy of organizational development. The stuff that I learned about organizational development I learned mostly outside of the certification process and the university process.

3. Give me an idea of how long you’ve been in the field of education and how long you’ve been a principal?

Both principals have worked in the field of education for more than ten years. Sydney described her years in education. She explained:

The teachers went on strike that year. I was picket captain; that was instructive right there. I obtained a contract the next year and taught social studies for eight years in inner city schools in Morlin. Then I was promoted as assistant principal at Pendleton High School, where I was for three years. I moved to Dozier High School for four years, to get a different kind of experience. Those were vastly different schools with completely different kinds of administrators. And you learn something from an administrator that doesn’t lead well and you also learn from those who do lead well—you get different lessons from them. Then I went to Seminole Elementary as an interim principal while they were doing a national
search. I went to Phillips Academy for four years—again a really different kind of school, learned entirely different things there. Then I got a chance to come here—probably the only administrator that ever voluntarily left Phillips.

4. Describe your professional journey in the educational system.

Sydney’s professional journey has always had a connection with the educational community; however, Addison’s has not. Addison’s professional journey began in the business community. Addison described her journey in this manner:

Before education I was in business . . . my undergraduate degree is in that . . . and I think that helps because I’m bringing that sort of mindset, a business mindset, which is as an administrator. Then once I started teaching I just never felt like I was empty or not fulfilled in terms of a career. When I was a teacher I just did all the leadership stuff. You know, team leader. Everybody wanted to do this. It was part of the job. The assistant principal was really solid so he just was; they thought I was the assistant principal and she was the principal. So I was able to just really experience administration. She ran the building and I helped her run the building. When I get kind of disillusioned, then it’s time for me to go. So I went to an administrative training program.

5. How long have you been the principal at this high school?

Addison has been the principal of Davisson Academy for four years, and Sydney has been the principal of Beckham High School for two years.

6. How would you describe your leadership style?

Both principals expressed their leadership style as being directive but collaborative.

Sydney stated:
I hope they would say collaborative because that’s what I’m shooting for, that’s what I believe in now. The other element I think is, how would I describe it, I try to make it energetic, but I also make it, I’m looking for the right word here, directive to some degree. But I try to juxtapose directive versus collaborative because there are principals that operate as a . . . the model is font of wisdom.

The principal is supposed to know everything. The district, of course, has a model in its mind that the principal is an instructional leader. I actually don’t believe in that model. I believe in a model that says the principal is the facilitator of instructional leadership. Now that has some implied instructional leadership in it, but I think that bringing forth your department chair leadership, lead teacher leadership, your team, horizontal teams, interdisciplinary teams, leadership of those teams and other people. I agree with Sergiovanni\(^2\) that leadership is a quality that is found in all humans, not that it is an extraordinarily rare quality that a few people possess. I think that it exists in everyone; it’s a component of everyone’s existence. And the question is how do you grow it and build it and bring it out. Some people never develop it. Some leaders never view half their staff or more as having any of it. They say these are my leaders, but they don’t say these poor weak teachers over in this group also have leadership. Where is it? Can I bring it out?

7. Describe how your experiences as a teacher contributed to your leadership style.

Sydney and Addison’s experiences as teachers have significantly influenced their leadership styles. Addison stated:
As a teacher I’m just making sure that I’m treating people the way I want to be treated. That’s key to me. I always go back to my teaching. Everybody needs to be here on time. Okay, you say that at the opening day meeting but after that you need to talk to those people who are on time. You know. So I try to do that. I try to really treat teachers the way that I wanted to be treated as a teacher. I was an effective teacher. How did I feel when teachers were ineffective? It was overlooked and I’m really conscious of that. I stay plugged in and the farther I get away from the classroom the more I want to stay connected. When people ask me what I do I say I’m a teacher first. You can’t be an effective superintendent either. If you stop being a teacher at the core of yourself, then that’s going to change your whole management style.

Sydney explained:

I learned how to sort of take command of a classroom, and so to the degree that I am sort of commanding, meaning I accept large responsibility, that everything that happens in the school is ultimately up to me, good or bad, whichever way it goes. I think you learn to do that in a classroom. When I was at Peasley Junior High, it was a very tough school, it was the worst junior high in the district at the time I taught there, and of course part of the problem was they kept getting us new teachers in there, the kids were teaching us more than we were teaching them. But you learn to take command, you learn to plan, probably those two things.

8. Describe your primary responsibilities on a typical day at this high school.
The typical day for Sydney included many different tasks. Sydney described it as being “unbelievable.” She stated:

Oh my god, it’s unbelievable. I couldn’t even begin to describe it. All the crap I do in one day. Okay, typical day: I will see new enrollees, I will see parents who want to come and withdraw their children, and I sit for a half an hour and try to talk them out of it, and I talk about two-thirds of them out of leaving, because I’m into stability, because mobility was my research area, and I know how damaging it is to have kids coming and going. I will give direction to the clerical staff on running the report cards; I will see umpteen kids for disciplinary infractions. Most of those will go to my assistant principal, but I won’t have an assistant principal next year, so I’ll be doing all of that. Some of the ones that come to me are the more complicated ones that involve expulsion or parents that may be very difficult to work with, so I try to take some of those hard cases. On my desk today I’ve got a long, lengthy questionnaire from the federal government about school safety that I have to do at some point. I’ve got my staffing calendar. I have to make my master schedule for next year; I’m working on that today. No counselor, so I’m doing scheduling and the credit checks for seniors is right here. These are all phone calls from parents that have to be returned, and those are just the ones from the last two days, because I stay within a day or two of my phone calls. I’ve got a new student teacher coming in that I have to get oriented. I’ll stop there.

Addison explained that no day is typical for her. She stated:

You know that is if I had primary responsibilities it’s like everything. No day is typical. I have an idea; I mean look at my desk. That’s the thing, when I come in here it’s completely . . . I don’t know what’s going to happen. I’m just a
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troubleshooter. I have no idea; what I want to do is, my plan is to walk the building and get in the lunchroom. Those are two things I say. I think we need to be visible. I don’t have a typical schedule.

9. Describe your daily routine as principal of this high school.

The two principals’ daily routines are packed with a plethora of tasks. Addison and Sydney both recount their routines beginning with their arrival in the school parking lot. Addison described it in this manner:

My routine is I come in, I hope that I can make it to my desk and take my coat off, so if I can make it out of the parking lot without having to talk to, you know, I used to come in early but no matter how early I came in someone would be waiting for me. So I get here about 8:30 and I used to get here at 6:30. Then I was getting here at 7:00 or 7:30 and I still couldn’t get anything done. So I get here about 8:30 and I’m walking from the parking lot hoping that I could just get to my desk. I say hey to the kids coming in and I come back here and turn the computer on. About 8:40 I go on duty. Every morning I’m on duty because it’s important to me to see the kids coming in because I can catch a lot of stuff. I can see what’s going on and see what’s brewing. I get the kids in, too; the first and last bell is the roughest for us. So I get the kids in and I make announcements at 9:00. I usually set the expectation for the day with the students. Sometimes it depends on if parents are waiting for me and I meet with the parents. I try to touch base with my secretary and I walk the building. I walk the building every morning. I try to walk the building so the kids can see me every morning, getting money, getting needs and meeting with teachers. When I was in ADA they would
say, what are you doing? I didn’t think I was doing anything. Your assistant principal should run your day-to-day operations. I’m taking care of the business, the district stuff and a lot of community stuff that you have to do. It’s like I’m on some deadline to finish some sort of paper. The amount of paperwork that you have to do—people don’t really understand the amount of paperwork that their principal does. People always say, I know you’re busy, but you know, fielding phone calls and meetings with staff. The staff meets with the principal more so than the assistant principal. I’m catching discipline sometimes. I’m dealing with all kinds of issues. Yesterday I got a kid whose attendance has fallen off. This kid’s been—I saw her talking to the visiting teacher and I said, “Wait a minute.” So I pulled her in and talk to her. I said hey, what’s going on, because we’ve never had that issue with her. I found out they are going through a divorce so that sprung a whole lot of other issues, because we want to get that family in a good place. Then you just wait for the next thing to clean up and get done and try to go walk through the building again in the afternoon. All my evaluations are done so that is out of the way. That’s pretty time consuming. I would try to build a master schedule and really meeting especially with the amount of positions we had to reduce. Making people feel good. You’ve just got to make people feel good . . . Since I was gone that week before school let out I haven’t touched base with a lot of teachers. If I don’t do that they’ll kind of take it personal. There are some teachers who just don’t come to you if you have a relationship with some teachers. Some teachers just feel I have to go to them and touch base with everybody. I go home at a decent hour because basketball season is over. During
basketball season I usually did paperwork. I hated paperwork when I was a teacher so I knew that was a weakness. I was the one; the special ed teacher had to run after and get everything filled out so that is something I’m always conscious of. I’m always conscious of that. Downtown will stay off your back if you maintain your deadlines and have all your paperwork in order. So I try to stay up to it. The amount of emails that I get in a day is just ridiculous. Luckily we have these BlackBerrys so as I’m walking and in classrooms I can do some things. That’s kind of it. It depends on if you have a critical incident. There is always something popping off that you have to react to.

Sydney described her daily routine in this manner:

Well the other two things that I didn’t mention that are real huge, and are definitely part of the daily routine, are direct supervision of kids. I have to supervise the lunchroom. When the bells rings for the kids to change classes, I’m in the hall helping direct kids to their class; we don’t want them roaming around the building. And the other part is teacher evaluation, and I use that term broadly. That process of working with teachers may be an observation in the formal sense, that I have to write up and turn in, but as often as not it is, I’m going up the stairs when the tardy bell rings because I’ve got to see two teachers on the third floor. One of them I’ve got to ask them about the field trip that’s coming up, some detail of it. The other I have to get them to think through an agenda with me on the science department, the science department got a national science teachers evaluation done recently where a bunch of science teachers came in and looked at our instructional program. We have a thick report from them, and I need it to talk
to that teacher about how we’re going to do that—she’s the department head—
how we’re going to structure that discussion and try to get her thinking on that
with me. You get in somebody’s classroom when they’ve got their prep, talking
to them about some issue going on; [this] is part of, I should say, teacher
development, working with teachers—not just formal evaluation, but day-to-day
communications. So in the morning when I arrive, I’m here at 6:00, 6:15 if I’m
feeling lazy, and I use that to get in my inbox. So I come in and do paperwork at
six. At seven teachers are starting to arrive. We go down to the cafeteria to
supervise. Before I got here, there was a lot of fighting on this campus, almost
daily fights in the lunchroom. There were fifty people arrested on this campus
before I got here that year. Some of them were parents who came up to fight with
each other over their children’s issues, because stuff just wasn’t getting sorted out.
So, direct supervision of the lunchroom. We now have the kids come in from the
buses straight down to the cafeteria. Why, because there were kids attacked in the
stairwell. I don’t have supervision in every stairwell in the morning. I can put
that supervision together in one place in the lunchroom. Twenty after we dismiss,
I’m in the hall for the next ten minutes. After we get everybody tucked into first
bell, I may look over the ISS list and go see that group which is in the tardy center
till the end of first bell. Take a look, talk to a couple kids about why they’re
there. There may be a parent waiting for me in the office by then to talk about
something, either a disciplinary matter from the day before or a senior parent
wanting a credit check on a kid, that sort of thing. And so, while everybody’s
tucked into first and second bell, third bell, I mean you’re doing a teacher
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observation, I may do a little desk work then, return some phone calls. I have to wait until it gets to be a decent hour if you’re trying to reach anyone in an office or parents, you don’t want to call them at 6:30 in the morning. Wait until about 8:30 and call them. And at 8:30 I’m making announcements . . . you have to balance your day. The way that I do it is I use Covey’s quadrant system. Urgent, but not important, do you know that quadrant? Okay. So I have to think through every day. And it’s really hard to work that chart. It takes an extreme amount of discipline to keep working that chart and stay on the—you’ve got to get some things from each quadrant done that day. You really need to be working on things that are important but not urgent. They’re very critical to your school’s ultimate success, but they may not involve something that’s not happening until two months from now. But if you only stay in the urgent, you never get the big stuff done. And it’s real easy to get caught up in that. And how well do I succeed at that? I never entirely succeed at that on any given day. I never get there. There’s always important stuff left. So, to some degree you’re also keeping up with the urgent to prevent disaster, to prevent damage from being done one way or another. It’s a mad scramble. Lunch is at 10:30 so then we go to the lunchroom, John and I, the assistant principal and I. Actually, he goes down first; I stay here for about ten minutes because we have no counselor again, so I told seniors, if you need a credit check we need to talk about your status, lots of seniors are coming in with different questions, so that first part of the lunch, they come over and see me then. If I can wrap that stuff up, that’s when I go down to the lunchroom. At the end of the day, after lunch I’m trying to finish up whatever I
can, catch up on a few phone calls, trying to stay on top of them. We do dismissal. I’m in the halls or out front. John’s up on the hill to get everyone out without incident to make sure everyone knows where they’re going and so forth.

10. What are the two most important questions you and your interview team ask when interviewing a candidate for one of your teaching positions? Why are the answers to these questions so important?

Sydney and Addison execute two totally different approaches when interviewing prospective new teachers. Addison described her method. She stated:

I interview. I don’t ask any questions up front. I take about twenty minutes to let you know what we want you to be doing. That’s just critical. I talk about twenty minutes and go through talking about the culture of our school, what we expect from our teachers and what I expect you to be doing. Then I ask are you willing to do that. That’s going to save a whole lot of time. As a teacher you need to know what I’m expecting. Then my first question is, are you willing to do that. Then the second question is how am I going to see that. What does this look like? When I walk in your classroom what kind of person are you going to be in my building? I need to know what you’re going to do based on the conversation that I’ve had for the last twenty minutes. It’s very clear we have a teacher perceiver instrument and you know we lay it out. I don’t want to waste your time or my time. We talk about twenty minutes as to what our teachers do here. We have staff retreats, we have professional development, we go through all of that and this is how we want our classrooms to look. Our interview is a little different because we really believe that you make the expectation clear. Some teachers are
like, well no, I don’t want to do that. Then the first questions after that discussion is are you willing to do it. What we require you to do and then the second is how is that going to look.

Sydney stated:

I will ask them their philosophy about learning and instruction. They don’t always have a conscious developed philosophy, but I want to hear what they say to that. If they say, “Well, I’m going to give the kids the best instruction I can. If they get it, fine. If they don’t, I’ve done the best that I can do.” That’s got a lot of messages behind it. I’m not hiring that person. If they say “Well, I think you really have to give your best instruction but you’ve also got to work with individual kids to figure out are they getting it,” or they describe some complex process of interaction then I know they do understand the complexity of the job and that they acknowledge all the different pieces that have to be put in place. You can’t just throw it out there and expect it to stick. You’ve got to plan and think through how kids are learning, why they’re not learning and that kind of thing. The second one is their classroom management strategies. Again, I want to hear what they say.

11. Describe your relationship with your teachers?

Both principals indicated that they have an open door policy and feel that they foster communication between themselves and their teachers. Addison described her relationship with her teachers in this manner:

I think it’s good. They know that . . . over the last four years we’ve really worked hard. We go through a lot of professional development about team building and
about communication styles and personality types. I think they’re pretty clear about my personality types. I don’t care if I’m liked, I’m respected and that’s critical to me. You know, because being like this, I do believe they think I am fair. They think I’m consistent. I’m just what you see is what you get. When I was in the classroom the kids used to say, “Ms. White, we don’t know who you like but we sure know who you don’t like.” They used to say that. “You don’t play favorites but we know who you don’t like.” I try to treat people the way I want to be treated. I think that you find people who say negative things about me have been a disciplinary issue. I’m not arrogant. It’s not personal to me. It’s strictly business. I have to do what’s best for students. It doesn’t feel good for me and it’s not always comfortable. I think that I would say the majority respects that. They are like okay. They trust me or at least my Instructional Leadership Team does. When I come in and say, “They, look, this is how it’s got to be.” They trust that. That’s important to me I get in task mode when I’m involved in tasks and so I trust them to give me feedback. They know that I can do that. I have to discipline somebody who was a friend. I want them to know that they can count on me. It’s hard to be in that predicament. It’s not something that I enjoy but they know for me the rules are the rules. They know if they, when they ask me for something, I deliver, as long as you have the data. My goal is to get everybody what they need to be successful. Then my goal is to do something else. So they know that if they say, “I need this,” and you need it then I’m going to get it. They know I’m going to support them. I’m going to tell you that I’m going to support you. I think just supporting your staff, you know. So they know
with the last budget cuts I had to tell quite a few people that you’ve got to go.
They knew I fought for them and they know that I’m going to fight for them. I’m
going to fight for you. They know that and they appreciate that. I support them.
You’ve got to really be concerned what gets to them. I do that probably to some
extent. They are like, “Ms. White, we can handle some of that stuff,” but you
know I want them to teach. I’m the buffer. That is my job to buffer and kind of
let all that other drama come to me. I’m the buffer for all of that and I tell them,
“Don’t’ worry until I start worrying.” I get the sleepless nights and I’m up. I’m
just; but that’s what I think I’m here for and that’s the only way that I know how
to be the principal. I’ve let more come to them but I think that I should protect
my staff and let them work.

12. What are some of the ways in which you provide support for your teachers, and how do
you communicate your willingness to support them?

As previously stated in the data, both Sydney and Addison see teacher support and
communication as being very important. Sydney responded to the question regarding principal
support when she stated:

The first thing I did to support my teachers was, the first thing after I got hired in
April, I was at an event or took a couple of events in the spring where my
colleagues were, fellow principals. They all said “Oh congratulations, I hear
you’re going to Beckham,” or they would say, “Condolences, I hear you’re going
to Beckham,” and I would say, okay you’ve been a principal for a lot of years,
what’s your best advice for me as my first assignment as a regular principal, not
the interim? They all said without exception, “Sydney, do nothing. Don’t do a
thing. Watch and learn your first year. You will only screw things up, you don’t know the territory and you don’t know the players. You may think you know the problems or can see them, but you can’t see the whole thing because you don’t know the whole thing yet. So don’t run around doing a bunch of crazy changes your first year. Because you’ll screw it up. Lay low, learn the ropes, get to know the players. You make your moves the second year.” And I thought, “Oh my god that is the worst advice I ever heard in my life.” This school does not have a year to wait. This school is in academic emergency and as a teacher I’ve sat by for years, or not sat by, sometimes protesting and intervening, I watched principals go into awful schools and not display a sense of imperative that this is an unacceptable way to educate our children, that our kids deserve better. Teachers deserve a better environment to teach in to try to do their best. So I rejected that advice, and I said to myself, okay that’s the arrogance of a new principal. But I thought I can’t waste a whole year in a school that’s unsuccessful . . . it’s a disservice. So I thought, what’s the second best way? If waiting a year is not the right thing to do, what’s the second best way to get to know the players, to get to know the territory, so that you can make some meaningful changes soon? And I decided, okay, the best way to do it is to get to know the players. I scheduled between May and August of that year I scheduled every teacher, every custodian, the Parent Teacher Organization president, every secretary, every security person, everybody that works here or has a major role in the community, like the people who serve on the Local School Decision Making Committee, scheduled them all in for an hour, hour and a half privately with me. And I did these one on one; it
took me all summer to get through them-- there’s like 50, 60 of them. And that turned out, accidentally, to be a really great strategy which I would recommend to any incoming principal. It turned out to be a very powerful thing to do. I just thought I was getting information, and I only asked each of them two questions. I asked them, “You know I’m new, don’t know the ropes, I need you to tell me what’s working here that I should not screw up coming in new. And what’s not working that we need to find new solutions to.” I’ve talked to 60 people looking all, addressing the same organization. Most of those people have been here for many years, some have not. There were six things that every single person, no exceptions, told me what’s problematic or issues or whatever here. And I went through my notes and did some hash mark tallying. And at the end I had these six things that every single person told me. I called the retreat; we got the staff together, not just teachers but everybody else. “Okay here we are. I was gonna be new, but I’m not new anymore. I’ve talked to each of you, so I’m hoping we’re getting to know each other a little bit by now.” The comfort level was much greater than going in your first day and saying, “Hi, you don’t know me but I’m going to be your boss.” You can’t, how can you go in cold like that, so I was able to say, “You know I talked to each of you this summer. What I’m going to do to you today is report the results of those conversations.” And I said, “The good news is, the bad news is we’ve got lots of problems we’ve got to solve.” They’re all nodding. “The good news is, you all think you’re very divided. After talking to all sixty of you here, there’s a lot of unity here that you may not really realize, so I’m going to lay it out to you. Here are six things that you told me, that every
one of you told me.” They’re all nodding because they all told me that. Fighting in the lunchroom was number one. I said, “Now there’s fifty other things you told me too, two people are concerned about this, five people are concerned about this, thirty people are concerned about this, half the staff. But all of you are concerned about these six. Here’s our agenda, let’s work on these six things. Let’s find some solutions to these six things; make that our agenda for this year to improve the school and we’ll work together, that’s what we’re going to work on. How does that sound?” Unity moving forward. It was brilliant but accidental on my part. I couldn’t see all that before it happened. But we had a great year last year, and I think that when you say “What do you do to support teachers?” you gotta sit down and talk to them you gotta listen to them. And I mostly didn’t do a lot of talking in those sessions, I mostly listened. If you want good instruction you’ve got to listen to the teachers telling you what’s going on. And it’s not that everybody’s right on every single thing they tell you, but you gotta get that picture, you gotta get that overview. And they’re the ones that have the information. So you’ve got to establish that relationship with them, a working relationship. And then you’ve got to tell them, “I heard what you told me, boy am I listening to this. What can we do?” And you gotta give them a little faith that you take them seriously enough that they know more about the school than you do, even a principal that’s been there twenty years. Many teachers know something about the school that the principal doesn’t know and have a different perspective than the principal. So I think you have to respect them and listen to
them. And you can do that in fifty different ways. But it all comes down to establishing a working relationship, listening.

13. What strategies do you use to motivate your teachers? How do they usually respond?

When it comes to motivating their teaching staff, Sydney uses more traditional strategies; and Addison is more creative with her strategies. Sydney stated:

I consider all what I just told you part of that motivation. Because I think, you know, I’m trying not to lose touch with my own roots as a teacher. I had some strong opinions about the schools I taught in; nobody was ever very interested in them, it didn’t seem like. And I thought to myself, if I ever become a principal, I’m not going to treat people like that . . . I don’t think what motivates people is being in an idyllic environment. What makes people feel motivated, I think, and me on my job, is to be part of an organization that is cooking, it’s going somewhere, it’s making progress, no matter how low the level might be. In other words, you can be in the worst school in the district, if the teachers feel like we’re getting somewhere, and it’s not just a lot of rah rah pat on the back stuff with no substance to it. But if you really feel like the school is moving in a positive direction, I think they’ll be with you and stay on board. And that is what motivates people—feeling like their day is not wasted.

Addison described the motivational strategies she uses in this manner:

They really like to be fed. Somebody said it but they really do, when they don’t have to pay for it. I have taken them out of the building and they’ve never had to buy. For professional development I buy them lunch. I write handwritten notes. Every quarter I write handwritten notes. I say something. On one I had to say
thanks for showing up. We go through the building and see the notes taped up. I send them a weekly email saying thanks for the good work. Let’s stay up. It’s critical, like now, we’re going through the home stretch. I’ll send them an email saying let’s finish strong and just emails to keep them encouraged. I send them an email in a staff meeting and say, look, you are wearing me out. You guys are wearing me out and I’m tired. I don’t have anymore to give you. I’ve had massage therapists come in. You know I do little things for them all the time. At Christmas time I gave them a bunch of baskets the whole week before Christmas. I had something in the teachers’ lobbies on each floor every day. We did that. We gave them all Christmas cards, which they loved. It’s like the little stuff they really like. Connors wrote a book, *If You Don’t Feed The Teachers They’ll Eat the Students*. I have these little wisdom cards. You know you’re not in trouble but it’s like a joke you’ll really like. If you just can’t take it anymore I’ll bring you in the office and give you a little chat and then you get a wisdom card. One thing is that I ask them because I know them. I ask them how was your daughter’s cheerleading contest? Last year I felt like, oh that’s draining me. Gosh I can’t, you know, but it’s important to them. I have principal chats every other week . . . I started it this year. People who just aren’t comfortable coming in here, I have, like, a set time that you can just come in. I’ll just go around the building and just chat with people. You’ve got to make that. You don’t always have to do something. You’ve just got to make a human connection with them and build relationships. I’m always doing something little. I did the little carpet opening for the kids and I did it for the teachers. We bring them in on the red
carpet and we have music and we, you know. It’s like a big thing now. We do the pom poms and we welcome them back. We have a little pep rally. They like it now. They start looking for it. We do that and they just go to this after school thing at Hooligan’s. I usually go once. “Let me go before you start talking about me, I joke with them. We did this “five dysfunctions of the team” this year. That was powerful. We had to share some personal history. We did that and just kind of opened myself up to them. I respect them. I’m always working hard for them and they see that. So I can’t say that I am, well sometimes I feel like I’m not appreciated, but they know that I work hard for them. That’s what they want to see. They want to see your principal working hard for you. They know that.

14. Research has found that when employees leave, they are leaving because of their immediate supervisor, which at a school would be the principal. What reasons do you think your teachers would cite for their devotion to you as the principal of this school? Addison felt that teachers stay if they feel that they are heard, are supported and are valued. Addison stated:

They support me. It’s just about supporting. People want to be heard. They want to be supported and they want to be valued. So what I do for my staff is what I want done for myself. I mean that’s why you have administrators looking for jobs now because we don’t feel valued and supported by the people or by our bosses.

So that’s it. People just want to feel like your principal has your back.

Sydney felt that as long as the principal can bring forth a feeling of hope, the teachers will stay. Sydney stated:
Influences of Principals

Well, you know, this is a high school where devotion would be a really strong word for teachers’ relationship with the principal. I don’t think I would call any of my teachers devoted to me, but most of them hung on last year because there was hope here. And I try to put out some of that energy and bring forth some of their hope; it’s not just my hope, it’s theirs. There’s a reason why in a tough school teachers hang in there. A few teachers, like those dysfunctional three, out of a staff of 30, 40 hang in there because nothing is demanded of them, hang in there because a bad school is not operating well. But most of them hang in there because they realize that the kids really need them. And in spite of all the difficulties they hang in there. I think they will hang in there if you get them feeling like you’re making progress. So hope is part of it, it’s the Obama message . . . it’s the Jesse Jackson message, you’ve got to keep hope alive.

15. If you were a mentor principal to a person that will be entering his or her first year as principal of a school, as it pertains to the building and cultivating their relationship with their teachers, what would you say their first steps should be and why?

One thing that both Sydney and Addison felt was important to convey to a principal mentee was to talk to your teachers. Addison stated:

I would say you’ve really got to strike a balance between, you know, getting to know people and over getting to know people. You know. What I did here when I first started is, I had a meeting every week. So that was my first; well before that what I did is I just started reading through not personnel files per se, but anything that I could find from the previous principal. I just started reading through stuff. I was just kind of talking to people in the building and introducing
myself and just kind of talking to people. I was trying to get a feel for people. There were some here that I knew and kind of trusted. So I was able to talk to them to get some insight. I would just say get to know people. That’s really the first step. Ask for feedback. Do surveys. That teacher survey that . . . the board of education does at the end of the year, I look at that. I compare that. I look at that relationship by valuing people. Being equitable and supporting people. Then you need to talk to people who won’t talk to you. They are not always the most vocal but they need to be appreciated. Then you have those middle tier people that you want to get to the top so you want to coach them because you’re are going to have to coach some more to get to the top. The people at the bottom tier you want to get to the middle. Does that make sense?

Sydney stated:

Talk to the teachers. When people assume things or, for instance, a teacher that I was talking to recently had this real resentful tone in her voice, which is not typical in my relationship with teachers, and made a remark about fairness being the issue. And I said, “Tell me more about it. What are you talking about?” And she said, “Well you know it seems like there’s favorites around here.” You know, and I said “Tell me more.” “Well, it just seems like if you’re certain people, you can get extra perks.” And I said, “Tell me more.” I said, “Come on lay it out.” She said, “Why did you give Beth Tresap extra money?” I’m like, “What, what are you talking about?” The Board minutes in December listed this teacher that we have, that’s a lead teacher, she’s head of the department, as a team leader and gave her team leader pay. She’s not a team leader; the person that was addressing
me was a team leader. She said, “She’s not a team leader, why is she getting extra money?” I’m like, “Latia, thank you for telling me this. It’s a complete error.” And I hadn’t even seen those Board minutes myself. And no, she’s not a team leader. She gets lead teacher pay for being the department chair. She doesn’t get team leader pay. So we had to straighten that out with downtown. I went back and looked at our documents; we’re not even sure how that happened. But that teacher had gone to, I said, “Latia how many people have you had this conversation with before talking to me about it?” She goes, “Well I was talking to people in the lunchroom about it.” There are probably twenty teachers that have been involved in that discussion. But not the person involved, who would have straightened it out. I knew nothing about the conversation, hadn’t seen the minutes. So communicating is extremely important to keep people from making assumptions that are negative and drawing conclusions that aren’t there. And then I followed up, and I got back with that teacher, “Thank you for bringing that to me, wish you’d brought it earlier, but thank you for bringing it to me because we got it fixed.” There’s so much missed communication and negativity that come about if people don’t talk to each other.

16. What else can you offer that would clarify the steps you take to maintain the commitment and job satisfaction of your teaching staff?

Both Sydney and Addison had additional comments regarding the steps they take to maintain the commitment and job satisfaction of their teaching staff. Addison stated:

We changed our attitude. Really 20% of the kids act like assholes. So this year I started to reward the 80%. I started to use that peer pressure with the 80% on the
20%. You’re going to deal with the 20% no matter what. You’ve got to value the 80%. So I don’t treat the 80% the same way that I would treat the 20%. I don’t care how many years you’ve had I will do what I need to do as the boss. If you haven’t, to me if you have been teaching for 15 or 16 years and you’re still not where you need to be by that time. People who are marginal step up. They know that I will come after you. That’s the key. People who are marginal, and you do want to get those marginal people up, if they know that you’ll come after them they will step it up. Does that make sense?

Sydney stated:

We do an exercise called putting the moose on the table. We did this at the retreat. If I hand you this object then you speak truth. I went to Outdoor World and bought a stuffed moose, since the exercise is called putting the moose on the table, which hangs in the faculty lounge and we get it out for certain tough dialogues. It’s part of that courageous conversation idea, that you can speak and say something that’s kind of hard to say, you want to confront your colleagues on something. All of this isn’t the teachers on one side and me on the other.

Many of the responses given by the principals are reflected in the responses made by the teachers to the semistructured question guide used in the teacher interviews and focus group sessions.

Responses from the Beckham and Davisson Teachers

1. What were the reasons you chose to go into teaching and why did you stay in education?

Seven of the thirteen teacher participants indicated that they chose to go into teaching because of the connection with the students. The other participants’ reasons varied; the reasons
given were that they enjoyed teaching, they experienced fulfillment, they liked helping people, another person or group of people encouraged them, or they started as an instructor assistant and then became a teacher. Evan stated:

I took an education class, and during the observation I really connected with the kid and really thought that I could have connected with another if I had more time. There was an energy and excitement about classroom and teaching experience that called to me. I stay in teaching because I still like what I do. I can make money lots of ways but if I’m going to work this hard then I really need to enjoy what I’m doing. Every five years I actually stop and review whether or not I really want to keep teaching or whether I might want to change schools that I’m working at. In fact that’s how I ended up at Davisson. I was not happy at Michelin High so I thought that it might be the school as opposed to being teaching. Then when I got to Davisson I realized that that’s what it was.

Sharon stated:

I chose to go into education . . . this is my second career actually. I tutored in college and then I went into computer science. I was tutoring a little girl every Thursday and hated corporate America. I enjoyed working with her and so I put two and two together and realized I was supposed to be a teacher.

2. How well did your university training prepare you for your teaching career?

Of the 13 teacher participants, all but one felt that the university teacher training program they attended did not prepare them very well for teaching in an urban school.

Jordan reflected on her teacher training and stated:
It did not. Nothing prepares you for this until you get here. You feel like you know the content in that regard, but as far as the teaching experience itself, I don’t believe anything can prepare you for it except getting in there for me, anyway.

Evan stated:

I think they did a good job. It was a good emphasis on philosophy and methodology, which I think created a good base for me to build and to work from. So that I’m prepared now and so that it remains the basis on which I do whatever it is I do. I will always have a project-based class curriculum. It drives the intervention specialist crazy, all the projects. We both recognize and understand it when kids are doing things and have to use information and ideas that that’s when they really understand them. Professor Ross understood a lot of this and he also was interested in the essential schools model and help set me up on that track.

My class is still a reflection of all that I did in New York with Marsha Crane and the essential schools. When I came to Morlin I tried to do that at Michelin High with the essential schools.

3. Describe the areas in which you were most and least prepared. Why do you think this?

Seven of the thirteen teacher participants felt that they were most prepared in the area of their content. In addition, other areas that the participants felt well prepared in was lesson planning, learning styles, questioning methods, and technical aspects of teaching. Of the thirteen participants, when referencing the area of least preparation, three stated classroom management and two stated paperwork; others areas were parent interaction, modifications, bureaucracy of teaching, lack of student motivation, and use of various teaching strategies. Two of the participants did not respond to this question. When considering this question, Deborah stated:
I would say the university did the best they could. Every now and then when I think back on those textbooks and the students I’m actually working with, they don’t connect. They don’t match. They gave me that formal education and I have a good background as a special education teacher now. I first chose business teacher, so I guess you can say I have a good background in how to work in a professional setting, how to work with teachers and how to work with students. Nothing, I think my internship was probably the better part of the program. I had an internship when I got to leave the textbook and actually go into the classroom. My university provided that. That’s where I really learned what teaching was all about. Instead of student teaching, the actual internship [was more helpful]. I was there a whole school year.

Rebecca stated:

I went back recently to become certified for the position that I have now. And I went to one of the local universities, and I found that most of their coursework or what they were preparing us for, got a lot of content, but it was geared more for the urban, well not the urban school setting, but more for the suburban school setting, the middle-class student, and we were sort of on our own. There’s a void there, a true void. I would think classroom management, handling the many, many needs of the urban population—we don’t have any preparation for this.

4. Describe your professional journey in the educational system.

Teaching was not the initial career choice of all teacher participants. Six of the teacher participants came from the business community. Andrew began his career in business. He stated:
Okay, my first year of teaching was kind of an unusual year. This was a culture shock when I came here—some of the behavior of the students. We had extremists, well not extremists, we had a whole bunch of students that were really serious, and then there were some that were simply the monkey and the wrench. And then working in an urban environment was, I thought I was prepared for it, but I wasn’t. So that was interesting. My first year was really tough. I had encountered more disrespect than I ever thought I would ever encounter. And then as it continued on, things changed rapidly the beginning of the next year. It’s really been a wonderful experience. Students, for the most part, have been really great. Staff is great. Working conditions, fine. Now that’s all changing again as we’re going into budget cuts, and our school has lost four [teachers]. And now it’s really difficult to work here, under the circumstances, just because of all that is being asked of everybody.

Teaching has been Paul’s only career. Paul stated:

I tell you, it’s funny. My first four or five years… They say you don’t become a good teacher until your sixth year. You hear that all the time. I can see why they say that, and I can tell you that here, in Morlin Public, you have to give a little more time than that, because so much energy is spent away from teaching. I guess my journey, the biggest thing has been to become more efficient. I’ve learned to deal with all things we have to deal with outside of teaching and at the same time still devote a decent amount of energy and time to my actual lesson planning and implementation of my lessons. That gets lost. First-year teachers, the fact that they put them on comprehensive evaluation is just insanity. A first-year teacher should
be left alone. They should be given a mentor and just get your feet wet and get a
sense of what you’re doing. Maybe second or third-year we’ll come in and evaluate
you. You spend your first three years just trying to get your head screwed on
straight. I got hired in with 330 new teachers and two-thirds of them quit by the
end of the first year. Nowhere in that time do you sit down and develop your craft
of teaching. I’m in my seventh-year and this is the first year where I really feel like
I get to devote any time and energy, and I’m here till 5:30 every night. But that I
get to devote any time and energy to my actual practice of teaching, I think that’s
the biggest part of the journey, and it’s taken seven years to get to that point. That’s
probably the biggest thing.

5. Give me an idea of how long you’ve been teaching and how long you’ve been teaching at
this school.

Seven of the thirteen teacher participants have been teaching for more than fifteen years. The remaining six teachers have been teaching for less than fifteen years. The time at their present schools ranges from two to twenty-one years. Two of the participants have been at their present school for only two years, while at the other end of the spectrum, one of the teacher participants has been at one of the schools for more than twenty years.

6. How did you end up at this school, and what would you say are the main reasons you’re
still here?

The paths to their positions at Beckham or Davisson varied. As for why they have remained at their respective schools, four of the teacher participants stated that they stayed because of the students; three due to personal convenience; two because of the teachers at the
school; two because of the students and teachers; one because of the principal; and one because of financial consideration. Jordan stated:

I was teaching at Michelin High; I was surplussed, and Beckham had a position open, and that’s how I wound up here. I stay here because of the kids, the connection with them and their needs, and it’s a good fit.

Paul described his placement at Beckham. He stated:

I’ll be honest with you, the principal here. When I got out of school, I took a year off and traveled and did silly stuff, and then I decided to get into this. The principal here, I’d known [him] since I was in the fifth grade. He was the athletic director at Bosley High, and my father worked for him out there for twenty-something years. And so he knew my family, knew my dad, and he was the principal here, and he coached me when I was a little kid. So I used my connections, a little networking. I came in for the interview, and got the job here. I’ve stayed for probably three big reasons. One is I get pretty dedicated to a place. I’m not one of these people that likes to fly around, even if it’s not the greatest situation. If this is the place that gave me a chance, then I feel loyalty to that place. That just sounds kind of weird. It comes from being an athlete, I think. The second thing is, as much as I detest a lot of the things I see go on here in terms of mind-frames and things, I really do like these kids. And if I wasn’t trying to teach them, I would really get along great with them. There’s another one. This temporary group I’ve got now, I’ve had three job offers for other school districts that are considered “better.” I’ve told everybody that I’m not leaving, but if I do leave, not until this tenth grade group graduates. That’s what I
mean. They get you, [they get] their hooks in you. So that’s a big part of it.

Lately, I will be honest with you, the last couple of years, the thought of leaving really starting to come into play. The administration that has come in has really kind of had me re-buy into being here. Not because you agree with everything—that will never happen—but because you know their efforts are genuine. That’s a real sense that I have. I don’t like everything that happens, that’s just natural, but I really do believe that our administration here, mainly our principal, I really believe her effort is genuine. That I can roll with—that’s really all I need.

And Evan stated:

It’s a combination of things. It is in fact, and I know that your study, that you’re working on the role of administrators. Why I’m here now is in fact [Addison] White. She is definitely the reason I am here now. It’s also the other people who work here and the way this school works. When I first got here it was definitely a team based, team run and teacher run school. That was true about Bailey Park East in Batch City. That is was a staff run school and I like that. I like that empowerment. Before White it was Sally Conwell, who was just the absolute worst. She was just . . . she couldn’t get things straight and one of the things that annoyed me the most about her was that she was really indecisive and, you know, district sends out emails all the time telling administrators, “do this.” Then they’ll send them one about two weeks later contradicting the one they sent before, and it never dawned on her that she should use her own judgment to figure out, “Is this really something I need to do? Do I really reshuffle everything because they sent out this email or can I wait them out on this one?” That’s the kind of thing that
White does. She uses her judgment and tries to figure out what it is. Keep an eye on the big prize. The real point is to get us to this level. What is it that I need to do to get us to this level? That’s what I’m going to do even if it costs me a little extra heat with the board.

7. What do you think are the advantages for teachers who have been in the teaching profession for a number of years, and what advantages do you think new teachers have in the teaching profession?

All of the teacher participants felt that veteran teachers have the advantage of experience, whereas new teachers have the advantage of bringing new things to the classroom and to the school, as such new energy and new methods. Marvin stated:

If you have been practicing long enough and if you reflect on your practice, and those are two big ifs, but if you do those things you should be able to recognize situations that either will occur or could occur, and either avoid those situations or make those situations happen. I think that’s the biggest thing about an experienced teacher: knowing how to handle situations with kids and then also coming to grips with your style. With your personality and not being someone who you aren’t to the kids. The biggest advantage I guess to the new teachers is naiveté or your “I can change the world” attitude. I think also your willingness to try new things. I think that as you get older into the profession a lot of teachers are reluctant to try new things.

Sharon replied:

Advantages for teachers who have been in teaching for a while [are] similar to what Yvette said. Security, especially if you have a lot of time in a district or a lot
of time in a particular building, and job security. And I remember early on getting stuck with some of the not so favorable classes or the not so favorable supplies and so on and so forth because you were the new kid on the block. So having, you know, once you’ve built a number of years in a particular building or district, those are advantages that you can look forward to. For new teachers just coming in, some of the advantages . . . I’m sorry, let me back up. Job security, depending on the area in which you are teaching, too, but for new teachers coming in, I think one of the biggest advantages is . . . [the] many new and innovative teaching methods out there to really grab the interest of your students. When I started teaching we were still doing a lot of things with our hands and drawing and so on and so forth. So I know I like the little toys that are out now. So I could see that as being an advantage for a newer teacher.

8. Describe what you feel to be the main forces that impact your school climate.

Some teacher participants felt that the school climate was determined by the students, while others felt that the climate was determined by the teachers. James stated simply, “It is the character that that kid brings to school from their home.” Rebecca replied:

This is why I would think we have a very dedicated team of teachers, because the outside force keeps bringing us constant change. We go from this format, we’re one large school, to three schools, to two schools. It’s been constant change. So if it wasn’t for the strength of the classroom teacher, we could not have kept this together.

While Paul explained:
How can I say this without going on forever? I think the biggest force that affects our school climate, and I know people get upset with me when I say this, there is a systemic philosophy that is now becoming generational. It’s been going on for generations now in our kids’ families. It used to be in education that the school was the whole, and if you came there, you adapted to that whole. It doesn’t matter what your personal issues are, you come here, you’re a student here, and this is the way you function. Now that’s bad in the sense that you have to acknowledge individuals’ needs and individual situations. But I think that has shifted so far the other way now, that there is no expectation of our kids, and all the words like “rigor” and “standards,” we don’t expect anything from our kids or our families. They are of the mindset that we do whatever we do, however we want to do it. And everyone else, the school system and everything else, will adapt to us. And that is dangerous, because the world doesn’t work that way, and that’s what we try to pound into these kids’ heads every day. A kid throws an orange juice carton at a teacher, gets suspended for ten days, comes back and demands make-up work, because the system has taught them, no matter what you do, you deserve make-up work. Now if the kid has a death in the family, illness, learning disability, those things, you die to get that kid what they need. But our kids actually believe that their behaviors and their philosophies on how you can function at school are acceptable no matter what. And no matter what they do, they have a right to get . . . and successful schools don’t operate that way. But for whatever reason our public schools, the ones I’ve seen in Morlin, operate with that philosophy. You know, the whole “Alternative to Suspension” thing. And I
have a real issue with that, because it’s now become generational. I try to talk to my parents about the importance of being in school, the importance of acknowledging a teacher’s classroom rules that are there to help the kids. They don’t have a point of reference. I have to talk to an eighty-year old grandmother to talk to anyone who has a point of reference on that, that they understand what I’m talking about. The parents came up through the same kind of philosophy. And it’s just going to get worse if we don’t do something to alter that philosophy, and get a little bit of that “Hey, if you come here you’ve got to adapt.” Our kids have no ability to adapt.

9. In general, what support systems are in place for teachers at your school? For new teachers? For veteran teachers? Are they the same/different?

Except for mentoring programs and the district’s new teacher initiatives, the teacher participants described the support for all teachers as the same. Elaine stated:

Well, I mean, it’s the same for the newer and the older, except that I don’t know if Praxis III still exists. It’s for mentoring for new teachers, the “new hire comprehensive.” I think as far as IST [Instructional Support Team] goes I personally have found that very beneficial, the implementation of IST, and as a special education teacher, I get two, because I teach a content area subject as well and I have my special ed. That’s been great. That’s been the most obvious recent support coming from Morlin Public School. I think there’s different opinions about that, but other than that stuff I mentioned – the new hire and if the Praxis III is still in place—I think it’s still about the same.

Deborah described the support in this manner:
Professional development is open to everyone, but in the summer or early fall, we have what you call a new teacher orientation. The principal and administration and lead teachers are to make sure they spend time with the new teachers coming into the school and introduce them to our climate and expectations. Then we work together. We have retreats. We have a two-day retreat at the beginning of August. Everybody comes together with all the new [teachers]. We do team building and bonding for the whole staff. That helps us work together.

And Yvette stated:

The biggest support system that you can find within the building is the teachers. I think regardless if you’re a veteran or a new teacher. It’s the other teachers in the building. As far as things that have worked and things that haven’t worked, the collaborative teaching, or at least teaching the same kids for the most part, helps also. As far as being able to work with the kids or knowing what to expect, I think the smaller environment [is helpful].

10. What are your alternatives when addressing problems with your students?

All of the teacher participants felt that the addressing of student problems started with the teacher and worked its way up to the principal if necessary. James explained:

First I would try to deal with it one-on-one and to handle it with me and them. To let them know that as a human being, before I go to the parent, and deal with that first. So my first thing is trying to deal with that student one-on-one. I would talk to them and tell them why what they did was not the right thing. Hopefully they can see. It’s a struggle to try to instill some values that they are not taught at home, or [when] they don’t see the use of those values from outside of school and
inside of school—I guess then you’ve got to take the next step as far as trying to
get the parent involved and then maybe administration.

Jordan stated:

Administration obviously, the assistant principal, the principal, you can talk among your
team members as well, and talk with other teachers as well about the particular student,
and again, just conferring with the student. You don’t want to ever leave that out—how
important that is.

11. What are your alternatives when addressing a problem in your school?

When addressing problems in the school, teacher participants relied on the team, school
leadership committees, administration, and the teachers’ union. Andrew described the options he
would use to handle school problems:

I guess it depends on what kind of situation. Obviously, you can submit your
concern to your Instructional Leadership Team representative, and then at the
Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) they can bring it up in the agenda and
discuss it. You can probably go to your union, your building rep, if it’s something
of that magnitude. I think that teachers have some support number you can call if
you need advice from a professional. I think that’s available, too. I don’t know
much. I remember somebody one time doing that, but I can’t remember.

Evan simply stated, “The ILT does address these issues. Yeah. Yeah.”

12. What are your alternatives when addressing problems with your colleagues?

All of the teacher participants express caution and some even explained alternative
strategies for addressing problems with their colleagues. Sara described a strategy in this way:
We have a process that they call “putting the moose on the table.” We are allowed with a small team, or a large group. If we’ve got an issue, or people are just not talking about it, or trying to keep it back here, you put that moose out here, [and] now we’ve got to talk. We need to address it. Some people don’t like that, but our principal is saying we need to use that process. We just can’t go around talking to one another about something that’s bothering us. It just keeps us from having energy in the classroom, so let’s get past that.

Deborah stated:

Okay. Our principal’s philosophy is, no parking lot discussions and everything should stay on the front openly. We have the PASS counselors; I have known adults that have gone there for remediation. If they have a problem they can actually go to the counselors. If not, it has to be brought out in the open. So you need to go to the principal to discuss something. Usually everybody in this building is mature enough to go directly to the person. That’s the way our principal said. No discussion behind anybody’s back. Just bring it to the office.

13. Describe what would happen, as well as your level of comfort, if you had a problem with a student and talked with the principal about it.

All of the teacher participants stated that they felt comfortable talking with their principal about a problem with a student. Elaine stated:

I feel like if I do go, I want to be able to account for what have my parent contacts been, and what has the team done, when was the last time the parent was in here, what have we done with the parent, that I’ve done my job as far as getting all my ducks in a row. I feel like that’s pretty clearly expected, and I’ll be asked those
questions very directly, but will also be receptive and get support. But I need to have done my job, too.

Andrew stated:

I guess it depends on what kind of situation. Obviously, you can submit your concern to your ILT representative, and then at the ILT they can bring it up in the agenda and discuss it. You can probably go to your union, your building rep, if it’s something of that magnitude. I think that teachers have some support number you can call if you need advice from a professional. I think that’s available too. I don’t know much. I remember somebody one time doing that, but I can’t remember.

14. Describe what would happen, as well as your level of comfort, if you had a problem in the school and talked with the principal about it.

All but one teacher participant felt comfortable going to the principal with a problem about the school. As it pertained to the teacher participants’ levels of comfort when talking to the principal about a problem with some aspect of the school, Jordan stated:

Sometimes I feel a little leery, not because I don’t think her door’s open, not in that respect, but I feel like it’s too minor. She has a million things to do. So a lot of times, or in the past, I’ve held back and then have eventually taken it to her or resolved it in another manner. But sometimes I feel like that’s too petty or that’s not important, so that’s my only hesitation.

Deborah explained, “Very comfortable. She just established that policy to keep everything in the open. Just go directly to her or the assistant principal.”
15. Describe what would happen, as well as your level of comfort, if you had a problem with your colleagues and talked with the principal about it.

All teacher participants felt that they would have trouble talking to the principal about another teacher. Paul explained his thoughts about the situation. He stated:

Yes, there’s a little discomfort, just in the sense that I know I don’t do everything right. I feel kind of silly pointing out someone’s [faults]. That’s just the way I was brought up. If you have a problem with somebody, why don’t you just point at yourself for a second and say what’s my part in that? And I think maybe I take that too far sometimes. But that’s just how I am.

Marvin stated:

Colleagues are probably the toughest, because I have no authority other than just my personality and my reputation or integrity. They are going to respond to that. The only things that I will confront them about are things like monitoring the hallways. If I’m out there trying to get students to get to class and I’m the only guy out there herding cats then they’ll hear about it. My comfort level; I don’t like confrontation and so I will try to avoid that if I can. Then sometimes you just get pushed.

And Ruth stated, “Our vice principal seems to be more open and a little more friendly so I’d feel more comfortable going to him.”

16. What effect do you think the principal has on the school environment?

When providing their thoughts about the principals affect on the school environment, almost all of the teacher participants believed that the principal has a huge affect on the school environment. Only one participant felt otherwise; this participant was Ruth, who stated:
I don’t see administration or the principal having influence because the teams are so tight. We deal with discipline first. I mean the only time they ever see a kid for discipline is [when] we can’t . . . yeah, at another school it would be the same thing. The principal wasn’t that great, but it didn’t matter because the team was so tight in what they did. I mean we pretty much ran things. There was a head team leader. Each teacher had a job, and each kid knew that the teacher had a job. We met with the kids as a team and as a force, so the principal wasn’t even an ingredient in that recipe on our team.

In addition, there was one participant who felt that the principal only had a partial effect on the school environment. This participant was Yvette; she stated, “I think that she has a major influence on the staff members here, as far as we know what she wants. I think she has very little influence on the kids. Very, very little.” Other participants like Marvin felt that the principal’s effect on the school environment was huge. Marvin stated, “The principal has a huge effect. The attitude, the presence in the building, how much the principal is seen by the students and staff, and the modeling that the principal does can make a difference.” In addition, James stated, “Oh a big effect. A big effect. It starts from the top on down. When you have good schools you have a good principal. So that’s the big start right there.” Sharon stated:

I think the principal has a very major part in the school environment. Having been in leadership roles myself and having worked with her very closely, I understand that there are a lot of times that she just has to do it because she has bosses also. So there are certain initiatives and certain things she has to do and that’s just the bottom line. A lot of times I think that the way she gets that
information across sometimes rubs people the wrong way. Just like we’re understanding our teammates, we’ve also done things with her where we’re understanding her and the way she acts. She’s just a very firm and a very straightforward type of person, and so once you understand that, you will learn how to not take [her methods] personally. That’s something that you have to grow into. I don’t think somebody coming right in would feel the same way. So that’s something you have to grow into. I’m sorry, repeat the question one more time. Okay. So pretty much you know she is the one. This is how we have to do it. She gives us the information, and then we basically have to carry it out. I will say this, and I felt that way about our previous [principal], well not the previous one, but the one before that . . . especially with us being a team based school, you’ve got your assignment: here it is and carry it out. If you do your part there is really no need for her to come behind you and say anything or correct anything that you’ve done. I do like that. There is a certain trust level where I’m entrusting you to do your job.

Elaine stated:

Huge. I think the principal largely sets the whole tone for others. You mean the school culture; we addressed that, it’s critical . . . I think that the principal is key in helping us operate at the school. That’s still not a lot of detail; I’ll keep thinking and give someone else a chance to talk.

Following Elaine, Jordan stated:

I agree. The principal is the driving force and sets the standard of operation, and teachers and students acquiesce or go along with that, whatever it may be. And
we’ve seen a variety here. We’ve seen a variety, and how the atmosphere has changed, and how I personally felt about my job. There’s been times here, under different leadership, that I didn’t want to come here, I didn’t feel safe and comfortable here, and I can directly equate that to the principal’s input and their drive. Whereas now, it’s a different tone. I do feel safe. I do feel someone cares. I do feel that there’s an open door. So, that’s a huge piece that’s integral to the operation.

And Deborah described the principal’s effect on the school environment in this manner:

I think the principal has a tremendous impact on the school. One thing that she wasn’t sure if she should do or not do is get on the announcements every morning to say, “good morning” and “This is what we’re going to do today.” So if she’s not here you can sort of tell the difference, and I think that makes an impact on our day-to-day operations here. You know, if she doesn’t get on and say whatever, well everything doesn’t go crazy but it’s almost like the kids are going, “She’s here.” Its like, “Let’s get started, and this is what we need to do. Have a great day.” That sort of sets our day and out with the old again. So she takes time to do that for a couple of minutes every morning. The tone, right. Some days she’ll get on there and say, “I’m not on it.” She’s says, “I’m not on it and you come by me and you’re out of here.”

17. What factors are most important when considering whether to remain at a school?

Many different factors were stated by the teacher participants as being important when considering whether to remain at a school. The factors that were stated were: students, opportunities, stability and alternatives. Andrew responded:
I guess opportunities, but you’re talking about why I stayed at this school year to year? I’ve kind of almost answered that. Again, I’ve stayed here for the most part because of what I was able to teach and because of the staff, the students, opportunities. That’s kind of why I stayed.

Paul stated:

Students. I don’t trust who they’d replace me with, to be honest with you. I’ve seen who’s replaced other people who have left. And that’s not a shot to anybody else, but when you replace a Spanish teacher with a history teacher because of budget, that’s insanity to me. I don’t understand that. When you have a computer applications teacher who is taught to teach computer technology to our kids—how to use computers—and they’re doing APEX programs (computerized instruction) for social studies, English, math that they don’t have any certification in, because of budget, to me that’s insanity. And I would worry that I, this sounds terrible, I don’t trust other people with my students. That’s why I hate missing school; I don’t trust subs. Not that I don’t like them, but I don’t like having subs. That’s just how I feel, but I don’t know.

18. In what ways did your principal influence your decision to remain at this school for the time you have been here?

One of the teacher participants in the focus group did not respond to this question. Six of the teacher participants felt that the principal did influence their decision to stay, while five teacher participants felt that the principal had no influence on their decision to stay. One participant felt that the principal might have some influence. Ruth stated, “The principal did not
influence whether I stayed or not. And I think what I’ve said before would speak to that. I’m willing to stay here with any principal that comes in, if they want me to stay. Marvin stated:

    Probably very little. I don’t feel like a huge allegiance to the administration. My allegiance is to my kids and my students and my family and myself. If something happened where I needed to be someplace else my hope would be that the administration would support and recognize that and wish me well.

Sara stated:

    It didn’t really occur to me to go somewhere else. I’ve been here with two principals in three years, but actually the current principal has been very supportive with some personal issues, so that’s made a huge difference . . . A lot of times, the principal doesn’t even know who we are, sometimes. That’s been my experience, until now. This one knows my name. Yes, the current one. So I kind of assumed that that’s the way it was, with my previous experiences, it’s like, okay, yeah, you can have this room, and you do what you do. But this principal is concerned about what I’m doing and is interested. That’s the first time that I’ve ever had that experience in this field. That’s made a huge difference; it makes it easier to stay.

Andrew stated:

    Actually, there have been four principals here, and [when] three of the four I thought of leaving. I never did leave, but there was one here, one principal, that really felt, in my opinion, that had us moving in the right direction, at least in terms of the educational environment, and was really exciting to work for. And
that could be a reason why I’m still here, because I was actually kind of on my way out when this other person came, so I may not have been here.

Deborah stated:

I’ve had three sets of principals since I’ve been here. So our last administration, just the openness and being straightforward, “This is what I won’t tolerate,” and the honesty. That part I like. You have to have a lot of control because you’re here; you know you’ve got the district that controls, really. I’ve always sort of felt that she had our best interests at heart. Everything she can provide for us here at Davisson within her powers, she would try to do that for us. We always felt like that. When she first came she was getting money from places and you know we got supplies and all kinds of wonderful things that we had been buying out of our own pockets. She was like, okay, you can have $150. We went wow. We just sort of felt like she had our best interests at heart. I do feel, like I said, that cutting edge professional development, she stays up to date with that. Every since we’ve been here we’ve had a book every summer to read. So she keeps us up-to-date with what’s going on in the world and the world of education. She has a business background as well. So sometimes we had this book called, Good to Great. She brought that in and we had summer reading. So she gives us homework and things to keep us challenged. I think that’s the one reason I haven’t felt the need to go anywhere.

Evan stated:

Yes. Yes she does. She definitely does. The fact that she and I get along so well and the fact that I know that she respects me and my ideas, that she allows me and
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encourages me to take on leadership roles and responsibilities that she wants me involved in, it definitely makes a huge difference. Again, she understands what’s going on. She teaches and she knows about teaching and how to make the whole thing come together.

And Jordan stated:

I believe that the principal could potentially [impact the decision to stay]…because in the past I’ve considered leaving, because when I didn’t feel safe and I didn’t feel that the person was doing what [he or she could]. I didn’t have to go to that level, but I think it could impact whether I stay.

19. What are some of the strategies that your principal uses to motivate teachers? Are these strategies effective with you? Why or why not?

The teacher participants described various ways in which they felt that their principal motivated them. Some stated that in addition, they were also self-motivated. James explained:

The principal recognizes positive things with the teachers. Our principal does that. She doesn’t come down on negative things. A lot of positive things are being put out there. It works. To me, I’m self-motivated . . . As long as I know what I’m doing and God knows what I’m doing I’m just fine.

Ruth stated:

The principal here, I don’t think she motivates me . . . She brings people in to motivate me. She brought speakers that had some fantastic lessons and some fantastic philosophy and I’ve actually utilized that stuff. She doesn’t herself, but she’s brought people to do that. I’ve appreciated that very much.

Rebecca stated:
She’s high energy. She works. She’s never in her office with the door closed popping bon-bons. She has a mission and she has asked us to come on board to get Beckham up and running. And when I see someone who’s willing to put in the hours she puts in and puts as many things in place to help us, why wouldn’t I work?

Jordan stated:

I think very quickly she empowers you, and that was from the outset in a way that had not been my experience with other principals. And then it makes you take ownership. She asks you the tough questions, she asks you, “Well what have you done?” And she expects a response. And by the same token, it’s empowering at the same time. She asks you to be accountable, but yet she empowers you to make decisions and to be a part of decisions. From the outset she has asked my opinion as a department chair, which in the past, the department chair was just a name, but those days are over. It really has been empowering, but it’s made it tough too, but in a good way.

And Deborah stated:

They are effective with me, yes. Like I said, we have to do a Beckham retreat and all kinds of professional development, you name it; people come from all over the country. When she can, when there is opening, she is sending us to different places . . . One time we went to San Diego. That’s how we learned about co-teaching. We took professional development [courses] there . . . So she just has a way of helping us stay up to date and now we are able to track our progress.
20. What else can you offer that would shed light on those factors that influence your commitment to teaching and your commitment to stay at this school?

There were many statements made by the participants as they continued to explain the factors that contribute to their decision to stay. Yvette described the ability to watch the students mature. Yvette stated:

One of the other things that kind of keeps me going is seeing the kids who have graduated and seeing your previous students. Even if it’s a couple of times, or somebody saying “I ran into so-and-so.” Seeing the kids who do succeed keeps me going. Seeing the high school kids as they mature kind of keeps me going. Having the younger kids and seeing them grow up, and that there is some rhyme or reason to what we’re trying to do.

Ruth continued that discussion; she stated:

The other one is what Yvette said, when students come back to you, and even at the school that I was at five years ago, a girlfriend will call me and say, “Hey they were looking for you.” They will come back and they’re getting married now or something. They’ve graduated. Oh my God that takes you; that’s a year or two. Again, I’ve never, and I’ve only been here for a year but I can see what Yvette says when she says she can see them grow, because the school that I was at before, even though it was two years, it was a K-12 building and I got to see the kids mature. I still keep in contact with them and they tell me how they are doing and that they are graduating this year. Hey this is prom. It’s nice to keep that connection and to know that they’re kids you did touch. They really did
understand what you were teaching them and they are taking the knowledge you
gave them and using it.

Deborah stated:

I guess I’ve already said everything that works. The teams, like I said, next year
we won’t have teams, but we’ll be in departments. It will be the same basic group
of people, so I’m assuming we’ll work together, like English will work together,
math will work together, social studies and science. We’ll work like that. Then
we’ll have specialist departments. So just the working together, now I don’t want
you to think that everybody, well you know we don’t have a 100%. You always
have two people that are complaining or whatever. The majority of us work
together. 97%. That was the one thing about the book *Good to Great*. Get the
right people on the bus and get them in the right positions and just roll on out.
That’s what we’re doing. Just looking forward to whatever our summer
professional development will be this summer. Last year we went to Camp Joy
and actually swung from trees and we learned to trust each other. Fly like
squirrels in the sky and walk the tight ropes. That helped to build camaraderie
among the co-workers. We had the young and the old and we were all there
together depending on each other. That’s what we’ll have to do next year. Our
classes will be different, and the forces from without are sort of pushing us closer
together, so we’ll just have to continue to work together.

And Jordan stated:

Communication has been important. Teaming has been important, and she makes
efforts towards those: “What is the team thing? Take this back to your team.”
The moose thing, having that in place, of being able to express what you need to.

So all those kinds of things help and have to do with communication and accountability.