

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

THE CHALLENGES OF FIRST-YEAR MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHERS:
PERSONNEL PRACTICES AND THEIR IMPACT ON ATTRITION AND
RETENTION

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education in
Educational Leadership

By

Kathleen L. Reams

December 2015

Copyright by Kathleen L. Reams 2015

The dissertation of Kathleen L. Reams is approved:

Dr. Kathleen Dudden Rowlands

Date

Ms. Adrienne Shaha

Date

Dr. Jody Dunlap, Chair

Date

California State University, Northridge

DEDICATION

Obtaining this doctorate degree has been a dream of mine for as long as I can remember. Helping others has been a passion of mine since I was young, and working within the educational field allows me to utilize that passion. This dissertation topic was chosen so that further positive change can be implemented towards teachers, particularly first year teachers. Educators provide an outstanding service to students daily, and they need to have as much support and encouragement as possible. Principals also need support and encouragement. It is my hope after reading this dissertation that both principals and teachers can find ways to develop within their field so that our students ultimately reap the benefits of their positive changes.

While completing my degree and this dissertation, I would have never been able to do so, first and foremost, without the help of Jesus. In fact, if it wasn't for Him, I wouldn't even be here to complete this degree, as I am a miraculous survivor of a premature birth. Therefore, I give Him all the credit for the talents and skills that I currently possess, which allowed me to write this dissertation, to navigate through the challenges that occurred while trying to obtain this degree, and to become an educator and a leader that affects profound change within the field of education.

My family has also been a critical component in accomplishing this goal. Without your continual encouragement, love, prayers, advice, support, and belief in my abilities, I would not have been able to get through this program or complete this dissertation. Thank you for the many hours you spent telling me that my goal was almost in sight, for being my cheerleaders as I crossed through the finish line, and for reminding me that I am an intelligent, determined person who can accomplish whatever I put my mind to do.

I would like to thank my committee members, especially my chair, Dr. Jody Dunlap, who spent numerous hours reading my dissertation drafts and providing feedback. Without your suggestions, guidance, and feedback, I would have been in a muddled mess as I blindly tried to get this dissertation done. Thank you for sacrificing your time to help me complete a lifelong dream.

Finally, I would like to thank the professors who imparted knowledge for how to become a leader who can make a difference in the lives of others. Thank you for providing me with the skills I needed to become a strong instructional leader who constantly strives to create an organizational unit that flourishes and runs smoothly.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Copyright Page	ii
Signature Page	iii
Dedication	iv
Abstract	ix
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Problem Statement	3
Purpose	6
Significance	7
Research Questions	11
Conceptual Framework	11
Definition of Terms	14
Overview of Methodology	18
Limitations	19
Delimitations	19
Organization of Remaining Chapters	20
Chapter 2: Literature Review	21
Teacher Preparation	23
Beginning Teacher Experiences	28
Student Interactions	29
Teacher Induction and Mentoring	33
Principal Interactions	39
Principal Support	43
Colleague Interactions and Support	48

Professional Development	49
Professional Environment	50
School Climate	51
School Culture	54
Summary	57
Chapter 3: Methodology	58
Research Questions	59
Research Tradition	59
Research Design	61
Research Setting and Context	62
Research Sample and Data Sources	63
Data Collection Instruments	64
Interview Protocol	64
Focus Groups	65
Data Collection Procedures	65
Interview and Focus Group Procedures	65
Data Analysis	67
Preliminary Data Analysis	68
Data Analysis of Interviews	68
Roles of the Researcher	69
Bias	70
Researcher Effects of the Case	70
Case Effects of the Researcher	71
Summary	71
Chapter 4: Data Findings	73

Teacher Preparation	73
Student Interactions	81
Teacher Induction	84
Principal Interactions and Support	86
Colleague Interactions and Support	93
Professional Environment	97
Summary	105
Chapter 5: Discussion and Recommendations	107
Discussion of Findings	109
Conclusions	119
Recommendations for Change	122
Recommendations for Future Study	123
Summary	124
References	126
Appendix A: Research Invitation for Teachers	137
Appendix B: Research Invitation for Principals	138
Appendix C: Informed Consent Form	139
Appendix D: Interview Protocol for Teachers	143
Appendix E: Interview Protocol for Principals	146
Appendix F: Focus Group Protocol	149

ABSTRACT

THE CHALLENGES OF FIRST-YEAR MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHERS: PERSONNEL PRACTICES AND THEIR IMPACT ON ATTRITION AND RETENTION

By

Kathleen L. Reams

Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

Currently, the nation is facing the challenges of lowering high teacher attrition rates and increasing teacher retention rates. These challenges are significant because these rates affect students, student achievement, schools, school districts, the economy, and the nation. This qualitative institutional case ethnography examined the impact that various factors have on the attrition and retention rates of first year middle school teachers using the social capital theory as the conceptual framework. The factors explored were: teacher preparedness, principal interaction and support, mentoring, teacher workload, student interactions, and other aspects found within a professional environment.

Data was collected from six urban middle schools in southern California which employed the participants who volunteered to participate in this study. One-on-one

interviews were conducted with six principals and five first year teachers. Additionally, those same five teachers, along with one other colleague, participated in a focus group.

After analyzing the collected data, the following key findings were determined:

- 1) When teachers are satisfied with their work environment, their school, and the support they receive from their principal and colleagues, they are more apt to want to stay in the teaching profession.
- 2) Principals do not provide enough support or interact enough with first year teachers.
- 3) Principals often delegate on-site mentoring of first year teachers to another administrator or to another teacher.
- 4) First year teachers who graduated from their credential program with a multiple subject credential feel more prepared to teach than their colleagues who have a single subject credential.
- 5) Professional development is not specific enough to meet the needs of all teachers, especially first year teachers.

The implications of these findings are that principals need to interact and support their first year teachers more; credential programs need to provide student teachers with equal opportunities and extensive exposures to students and classroom practice, so they can become adequately prepared to enter the teaching profession; and with the proper support and adjustment time, first year teachers will have a successful first year, will be satisfied with their work as a teacher, and will be encouraged to continue in the teaching profession.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Increasing teacher retention (i.e. remaining in the profession) and lowering teacher attrition (i.e. leaving the profession) continue to be challenges for schools in America. This study addressed the reasons for attrition and retention among beginning first year middle school teachers. According to Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, and Wyckoff (2005), “School districts across the country are finding it increasingly difficult to recruit new, well-qualified teachers. This is especially true for urban schools with high concentrations of poor, non-white, and low-performing students” (p. 113). Algozzine, Gretes, Queen, and Cowan-Hathcock (2007) state, “...the number of new teachers that will need to be hired each year will be greater than the total number of teachers currently working in the public schools” (p. 137). Furthermore, Boyd et al. (2005) note,

In general, urban schools must have salaries, working conditions, or student populations that are more attractive than those of the surrounding suburban districts to induce sufficiently qualified candidates whose hometowns are in suburban regions to take jobs farther from home and in a different type of region (p. 127).

Since this study dealt with urban schools, the findings by these authors are pertinent to understand how the aspects mentioned in the latter quotation assist in the support of teacher retention. Although teacher retention is a huge concern nationwide, there are a multitude of other concerns (e.g. teacher preparedness and effectiveness, first year teaching experiences, principal and colleague support, teacher workload and adjunct duties, and other on-site influences) that affect teacher retention (Brock & Grady, 2001; Brown & Wynn, 2007, 2009; Darling-Hammond, 2003, 2006; Fullan, 2014; Good, 2014;

Heller, 2004; Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004; Ingersoll, Merrill, & May, 2012; Levine, 2006; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; and Watkins, 2005).

The literature identified numerous reasons for teacher dissatisfaction and teacher satisfaction that ultimately results in teacher attrition and teacher retention, respectively. Minarik, Thornton, and Perreault (2003) identified the following six reasons why teachers decide to leave their occupation:

- 1) Inadequate induction and lack of principal support;
- 2) Feelings of isolation and lack of community;
- 3) Major flaws in teacher preparation and lack of professional development;
- 4) Low level rewards for knowledge and skill;
- 5) Unsafe work environments;
- and 6) Student discipline and motivation problems (p. 230).

Although these six reasons are most frequently mentioned in the literature, this study sought to explore additional factors leading to teacher attrition. The primary reason for this exploration was that for the past 12 years, various researchers (Brock & Grady, 2001; Hughes, 2012; Ingersoll et al., 2012; Kersaint, Lewis, Potter, & Meisels, 2007; McCann & Johannessen, 2004; Minarik et al., 2003; and Olebe, 2005) have identified why teachers leave the profession and suggested that by avoiding the factors that led to attrition, teachers would remain in the teaching profession, thus increasing the retention rate and lowering the attrition rate. However, attrition rates have continued to rise over the past decade. Therefore, there must be additional factors for teacher attrition that have not been identified, especially among first year middle school teachers. As a result, this study went beyond the common factors, identified the gaps in the literature, and explored the reasons for teacher attrition, as well as discovered the conditions needed to improve teacher retention.

Problem Statement

The problem of this study is that there is a high attrition rate and a low retention rate among first year middle school teachers. Various researchers attribute this success or lack thereof to factors ranging from personal issues to issues with the principal.

Nonetheless, all greatly affect the attrition and retention rates of beginning teachers (i.e. those who have less than two years of teaching experience). This problem also causes one to ponder the factors that attribute, or impede, this success. After conducting a Principals Survey, Levine (2006) found that:

less than half of all principals surveyed thought schools of education were preparing their students very or moderately well in integrating technology into their teaching; implementing curriculum and performance standards; using student performance assessment techniques; addressing the needs of students with disabilities, limited English proficiency, and diverse cultural backgrounds; working with parents; and classroom management....(p. 31)

Though it was not emphasized, the premise in this quote acknowledges that more than 50% of principals feel their teachers are unprepared to enter the classroom. In other words, the principals do not consider them to be effective teachers, but rather inadequate and insufficient in their teaching skills, which ultimately affects student achievement. Equally important, because teachers feel unable to properly educate their students, they become frustrated trying to prove that they are prepared and that they know how to teach, and may eventually decide to leave the profession. As a result, the principals' beliefs are accurate since the assumption is that a prepared teacher would be able to demonstrate his or her skills; thus, the likelihood of teacher attrition becoming an issue would be low.

Furthermore, with the new implementation of the Teacher Evaluation System in the state of California within the Educational Unified School District (pseudonym), increased pressure to increase student achievement is placed on educators. Teacher evaluation is the starting point in a cyclical process which begins with the evaluation and ends with Academic Performance Index (API) and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) scores (see Figure 1.1). During the evaluation process, teachers are observed to determine the teaching skills they possess, as well as their strengths and weaknesses as teachers; feedback is given based on those observations. The teachers' skills correlate with the knowledge being imparted to the students, which ultimately impacts student achievement. Student achievement is measured by how well the students perform on state testing; the results become part of the school's API and AYP results. As a result, the teacher evaluation cycle begins again by teachers being evaluated for the teaching skills and abilities. Therefore, a teacher's skills and abilities are evaluated based on his or her ability to increase student achievement on state testing.

According to Good (2014) teachers' instruction has become nothing more than teaching to the test in order to increase student test scores, since test scores have become a priority for schools. Consequently, by putting so much emphasis on high stakes testing, teachers feel as if their teaching skills are being suppressed and consolidated to one main focus, resulting in frustration. Moreover, Good (2014) contends, "Among these constraints for using the knowledge of teacher effects on student achievement in high-stakes situations, is that this knowledge base does not include information about how teachers influence other important student outcomes such as creativity and problem finding..." (p. 33). The fact that teachers help students in innumerable ways, other than to

prepare for state testing, becomes irrelevant when faced with the prospect of schools not getting funding if the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and Academic Performance Index (API) goals are not met. Furthermore, student achievement in schools has continued to be widely linked to the quality of teachers and the improvement of teacher quality (Good, 2014). Nonetheless, Good (2014) asserts that putting the blame solely on teachers for low student achievement is unfair and ludicrous, since there are many other external factors contributing to the lack of student achievement. Unfortunately, factors such as: family life, social class, and the economy are out of a teacher's control, and therefore, should not be classified with teacher effectiveness. As a result, the exploration of the factors contributing to the lack of teacher retention were pertinent for this study in order to learn how to increase more retention, how to lower teacher attrition, and ultimately how to provide a successful future of our students.

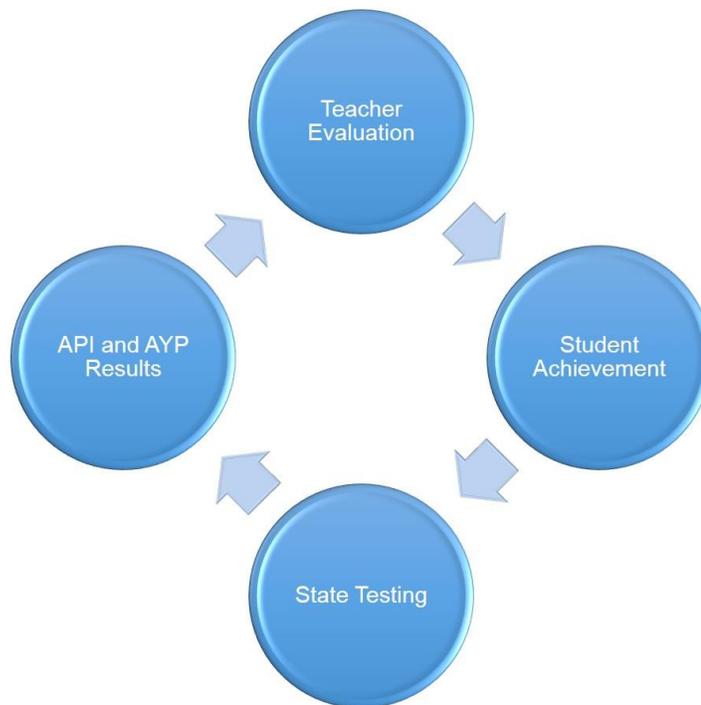


Figure 1.1 displays how these four factors interact causing an educator's teaching skills to be evaluated through one lens.

Purpose

The purpose of this ethnographic study was to examine what happens during middle school teachers' first year in order to determine the factors that affect teacher attrition and retention rates. Middle school, for this study, was defined as grades 6-8. Two studies by Ingersoll (2001) (2004) indicated that teacher attrition is due to a lack of satisfaction on the part of the beginning teacher (i.e. one who has less than two years of experience). Ingersoll (2004) noted that teachers who work in schools with a high poverty rate have a higher attrition rate than other schools. Furthermore, he stated that schools in these areas were:

...unable to match the salaries, benefits and resources offered by more affluent schools...[in] high-poverty school districts, especially those in rural and urban areas, [and therefore] have difficulty competing for the available supply of adequately trained teachers and, consequently, employ far larger proportions of under qualified teachers. (p.3)

Likewise, Heller (2004) commented that beginning teachers are often assigned "the least desirable assignment, usually a class that has had poor academic performance and discipline problems" (p. 38), which often leads teachers to feel stress and a sense of being overwhelmed.

Although there are various aspects attributing to the attrition and retention rates of teachers, researchers found that the work setting plays a vital role in beginning teachers' first year and also exposes them to a variety of influences, responsibilities, and challenges (Brown & Wynn, 2007) which will be discussed in more detail throughout the chapters. According to Brock and Grady (2001), these responsibilities commonly cause "beginning

teachers [to]...feel overwhelmed with the realities, complexities, and workload of teaching” (p. 25). As a result, many beginning teachers decide to leave the profession after their first year. Hong (2010) notes, “...emotional burnout [is] the most salient pattern for dropout teachers” (p. 1541). Although teacher burnout was the most prevalent rationale for teacher attrition, the entire convoluted attrition and retention process within the educational system continues to be something that takes time and determination to sort out and to analyze, in order to determine how to best help principals, teachers, school sites, and districts with this paradigm (Hong, 2010). Therefore, it was necessary to carefully examine all the factors contributing to teacher attrition and retention in this study. By using this examination process, the extent to which each factor contributed to a teacher’s decision to stay or to leave the profession was better able to be determined. Moreover, by isolating each factor, the following three things occurred: 1) Ways in which principals can better support their teachers were identified, 2) A greater understanding of how to address each issue within a school setting was gained, and 3) The knowledge of how to reduce teacher attrition and to increase teacher retention was attained.

Significance

During the 1990s, eligibility requirements for those who could enter the classroom changed. By the 21st century, allowances were made for teachers who had not completed all the necessary requirements to enter the classroom while they were striving to get those requirements finalized. Strawn, Fox, and Duck (2008) noted that “many schools must hire teachers with a provisional, or temporary, licensure status to staff classrooms; emergency licensure became a regular practice...” (p. 271). This change

meant that teachers were entering the classroom without being fully qualified to teach. As a result, by 2006, a large number of educators in the classroom had failed to complete the necessary coursework or the documentation to become a teacher, and were facing possible termination under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) because they were not “highly qualified” (CDE, 2015).

Research shows that once teachers graduate from a credential program and enter the classroom during their first year, most do not feel completely prepared to undertake the seemingly insurmountable task of teaching and all that it entails (Angelle, 2006; Brock & Grady, 2001, 2006; Fantilli & McDougall, 2009; Levine, 2006). One reason for feeling unprepared is lack of ample classroom teaching experience during their time in the credential program. Brock and Grady (2001) note, “A major difficulty for beginning teachers is the weak knowledge base of the teaching profession. Beginning teachers frequently complain that preservice preparation does not adequately prepare them for actual teaching” (p. 17). When a preservice teacher is in the preparation program, he or she is in a comfort zone where guidance is provided throughout the program. However, once the beginning teacher enters a new work setting at a school site, he or she no longer depends on the guidance of professors, but is entirely responsible for dealing with student demographics, creating student engagement, and carrying out a multitude of other responsibilities.

However, other beginning teachers enter the teaching profession and are very successful in the classroom. McCann and Johannessen (2004) found that beginning teachers who chose to remain in education had “a commitment to strategic planning to make bad situations better” (p. 142) and chose to “...view disturbing episodes in the

school year as shared experiences among students and faculty and not as personal obstacles, aggravations, or attacks” (p. 142). In other words, teachers who stayed in the profession had different viewpoints, perceptions, and outlooks than those who chose to leave the profession. Hence, examining the factors that caused both groups of teachers to arrive at their individual motivations and decisions will explain what changes need to occur at schools and school districts in order to ensure beginning teachers are satisfied and will, therefore, want to remain in the field of education rather than leave it.

Beginning teacher attrition is prevalent at all grade levels but middle school was the focal point for this study. Norton (1999) calculated that “...as many as 25% of teachers leave the profession after only one year, and that only 50% remain after only five years of service” (p. 52). In an interview with Linda Darling-Hammond, Scherer (2012) found that between the years 2010-2013 there was a 12% increase in teachers who intended to leave the teaching profession. According to Heller (2004), “Teachers have one of the highest attrition rates of any profession...” (p. 4) but noted, “we find ourselves in a catch-22 situation: We are desperate for people to enter a profession with standards that are increasingly difficult to meet, has ever-expanding duties, and can easily crush the idealism of a new member” (p. 5). Ingersoll (2004) elaborated on this point, stating:

...teachers most often link their turnover to six factors: a lack of resources, support and recognition from the school administration; a lack of teacher influence over school and classroom decision-making; too many intrusions on classroom teaching time; inadequate time to prepare; poor salaries; and student discipline problems. (p. 11)

Enduring a first year with the experiences mentioned by Ingersoll (2004) can be frustrating and overwhelming, not to mention exhausting, especially as Angelle (2006) declares, “New teachers are required to enter their first year of teaching with the same teaching load and responsibilities as those many years their senior” (p. 318). These facts reveal that the expectations for teacher quality and effectiveness are high, and that may be a challenge for beginning teachers as they try to reach the same level of multi-tasking and adaptability to teacher work load as their veteran colleagues. As a result, the possibility of teacher attrition or departure from the profession among beginning teachers increases. Regardless of the grade level, the first year of employment has a large impact on the perceptions of beginning teachers. However, not much research has been provided for assisting middle school teachers in transitioning through that first year.

An additional aspect in regards to first year teacher quality is examining the extent of preparedness beginning teachers receive from multiple subject credential programs compared to single subject credential programs. According to the California Department of Education (2015), teachers who hold a multiple subject credential are eligible to teach grade 6 in a middle school, but are unable to teach grades 7-8 unless they also possess a single subject authorization for that particular subject area(s). Although this study does not focus on credential programs, exploring this aspect is important in order to determine whether first year teachers who hold a multiple subject credential need the same types of support as first year teachers who hold a single subject credential. By taking these preemptive measures, teacher satisfaction may increase causing teacher attrition to decrease. Despite these pertinent facts, there was limited research describing the attrition and retention rates of first year middle school teachers and the effectiveness of multiple

subject credential programs on first year teachers entering a middle school setting (Miller, Thompson, & Xu, 2012; Conklin, 2014a). Additionally, attrition and retention rates of first year teachers in middle school were areas where very little research had been conducted and therefore made this study pertinent but more challenging in regards to collecting data.

Research Questions

The research question guiding this study is:

How do site characteristics influence the attrition and retention rates of first year middle school teachers?

In order to reveal as many factors as possible for a teacher's decision to remain in or to leave the profession, the following sub-research questions answered were:

- How does principal interaction and support influence the attrition and retention rates of first year middle school teachers?
- How does colleague interaction and support influence the attrition and retention rates of first year middle school teachers?
- How does the professional environment influence the attrition and retention rates of first year middle school teachers?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework encompassing this study is the social capital theory originated by Jacobs (1961), which involves interactions with others. Fullan (2014) explains that:

Social capital concerns the quality and quantity of interactions and relationships among people. Social capital in a school affects teachers' access to knowledge

and information; their sense of expectation, obligation, and trust; and their commitment to work together for a common cause. (p. 70)

Social capital is diverse and multi-faceted according to Vorhaus (2014) and Putnam (1995) states that it includes "...features of social life—networks, norms and trust—that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives" (p. 664-665). This study dealt with numerous facets as they relate to teacher attrition and retention, and the social capital theory was prevalent in the daily lives of beginning teachers in a variety of forms (see Figure 2.1). Interaction with master teachers, students, other teachers, and fieldwork supervisors during student teaching preparation, principal support and interaction with beginning teachers, interactions with colleagues, staff, and students, professional development interactions, introduction to the school norms, school cultures and school climates, and the level of trust beginning teachers had with all constituents are just some of ways that the social capital theory was incorporated into beginning teachers' first year.

Coleman (1988) indicated that social capital is "...a single entity but a variety of different entities, with two elements in common: they all consist of some aspect of social structures, and they facilitate certain actions of actors—whether persons or corporate actors—within the structure" (p. 98). The social capital theory can be applied to any corporation, organization or structure. For this study, the corporation, organization, and structure were collectively described as the school site, and Coleman's (1988) "corporate actors" are those who work within the school site, namely, principals, faculty, teachers, and staff. In other words, within a school site, there is some type of organized structure that can be grouped into three main categories: how the school is maintained, the norms

that are prevalent, and the expectations of employers in regards to their employees.

Those who are employed at the school site strive to interact and work together within that organized structure in order to attain the common goal and objective at the site, namely, to help students achieve.

For the purposes of this research study, Coleman's (1988) "corporate actors" were six first year middle school teachers as well as six principals who were interviewed and their responses analyzed. Peter (2005) maintains that some of the primary characteristics entailed in the theory of social capital are "...the transmission of values and norms, as well as the inculcation of skills" (p. 636). During my data collection the school norms were analyzed, the colleague interactions present at the various school sites were observed, the level of trust first year teachers have of their colleagues and the principal was determined, and the ways in which beginning teachers were kept informed and up-to-date regarding the school, principal expectations, and district policies was discussed with principals. Peter (2005) further states that social capital involves networking with others and that "...[it] improves individual well-being, reduces personal stress, and improves collective action through facilitating communication..." (p. 636). For the sake of this study, social capital became intertwined among the factors contributing to teacher attrition and retention (i.e. teacher preparedness, principal interaction and support, colleague interaction and support, and school culture and climate); it involved interactions among those within the educational profession; and caused an ongoing open dialogue among participants. Therefore, this framework was a key component to the organization and compilation of data for this study.

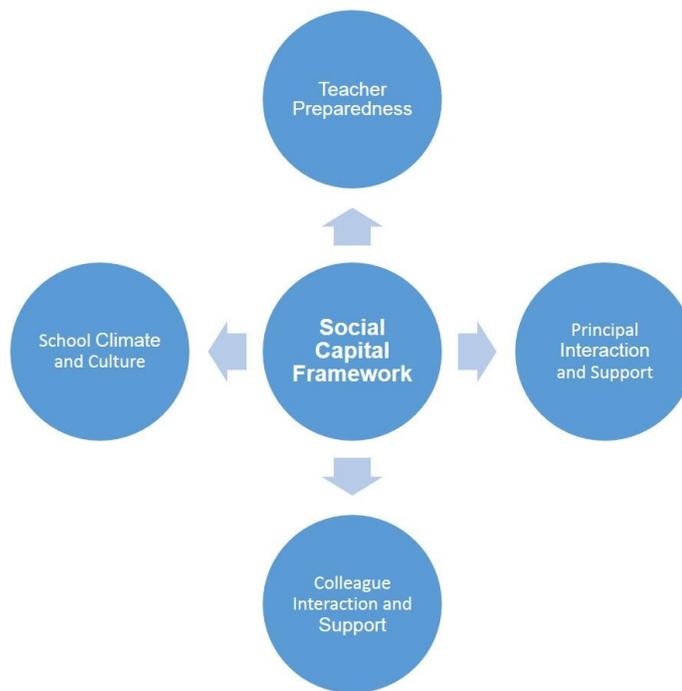


Figure 1.1 displays the links among components of the social capital framework used for this study.

Definition of Terms

- **Attrition:** “a reduction in the number of employees or participants that occurs when people leave because they resign, retire, etc., and are not replaced.”
(Retrieved January 2014 from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary>).
- **Beginning teacher:** “Any novice educator with less than two years of recent experience, whether a classroom teacher or in a specialist's role such as a school nurse”. (Retrieved November 2013 from www.teachermentors.com)
- **BTGDI Induction Program:** “*Beginning Teacher Growth & Development Induction* (BTGDI), formerly known as BTSA, is a California Commission on Teaching Credentialing approved teacher induction program, committed to supporting beginning teachers to grow and develop as professional educators. BTGDI is approved by the Commission to offer and implement an induction curriculum that will lead to fulfilling the requirements for the California Clear

Multiple Subjects and Single Subject credentials. In the induction process, BTGDI engages teachers holding preliminary teaching credentials in a job-embedded formative assessment system of intensive individualized support and professional growth in becoming highly effective classroom practitioners.”

(Retrieved from <http://achieve.lausd.net/Page/354>)

- BTSA Program: “BTSA Induction, an acronym for "Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment" Induction, is a state-funded program co-sponsored by the California Department of Education (CDE) and the Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC). The program engages preliminary credentialed teachers in a job-embedded formative assessment system of support and professional growth to fulfill the requirements for the California Clear Multiple Subjects, Single Subject, and Education Specialist credentials.” (Retrieved August 2015 from <http://www.btsa.ca.gov>)
- Climate: “...the total environmental quality within an organization... This climate may be described as hostile, rigid, warm, or open.” (Retrieved January 2015 from Townley and Schneider-Ramirez, 2011, p.86)
- Culture: “...the school’s shared norms, values, assumptions, ideologies, and philosophies.” (Retrieved January 2015 from Townley and Schneider-Ramirez, 2011, p.81)
- Induction program: “The induction program incorporates a purposeful, logically sequenced structure of extended preparation and professional development that prepares participating teachers to meet the academic learning needs of all P-12 students and retain high quality teachers. The design is responsive to individual

teacher's needs, and is consistent with Education Code.” (Retrieved October 2015 from <http://www.ctc.ca.gov/educator-prep/standards/Induction-Program-Standards.pdf>)

- Mentoring: The personal guidance provided, usually by seasoned veterans, to beginning teachers in schools. (Retrieved August 2015 from Smith & Ingersoll, 2004)
- Middle school: “A school which most frequently includes grades six through eight, but may have any combination of grades five through eight.” (Retrieved November 2013 from www.ctc.ca.gov)
- Multiple Subject Credential: “This credential authorizes teaching in a self-contained K-12 classroom. Self-contained classrooms are usually found at the elementary level. The credential also authorizes teaching in a core or team teaching setting. Core settings are found in middle school in grades five through eight and team teaching is usually found in elementary and middle schools. The holder has demonstrated the knowledge required to teach multiple subjects through successful completion of an approved teacher preparation program.” (Retrieved November 2013 from www.ctc.ca.gov)
- New teacher: “Any educator with at least two years of recent experience but who is new to the district, whether a classroom teacher or in a specialist's role such as a school psychologist.” (Retrieved November 2013 from www.teachermentors.com)
- Pedagogy: “The art, science, or profession of teaching.” (Retrieved August 2015 from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary>)

- Preliminary Teaching Credential: This term refers to teaching or services credentials that are valid for five years. Preliminary teaching credentials require the holder to complete a bachelor's degree, a teacher preparation program including student teaching, CBEST, subject matter competence, and additional specific requirements. Additional academic requirements must be completed to qualify for the professional clear credential. Out-of-state trained applicants may be issued a five-year preliminary credential. A preliminary credential has the same authorization as the clear or professional clear credential.” (Retrieved January 2014 from www.ctc.ca.gov)
- Probationary: “An individual who is hired as a probationary employee (“Probe”) usually must serve in that capacity for two consecutive, complete school years (at least 75% of the number of school days) before being eligible for permanent status. Probationary employees may be non-reelected for the next school year without a hearing for any or no lawful reason, at any time up to March 15 of their second year.” (Retrieved July 2015 from <http://www.cta.org>)
- Retention: “The ability of a company to keep its employees and stop them from going to work somewhere else.” (Retrieved from January 2014 <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/business-english>)
- Single Subject Credential: “This credential authorizes teaching a specific subject in a departmentalized K-12 classroom usually found at the middle or secondary level. The holder has demonstrated the subject matter knowledge required to teach the single subject through successful completion of an approved academic program and by completion of subject matter course work or passage of multiple

choice and standardized constructed response examinations.” (Retrieved November 2013 from www.ctc.ca.gov)

- Student Teaching: “These are experiences in a professional preparation program that expose credential candidates to a variety of instructional activities. These might include classrooms, resource rooms, and other settings where instructional activities occur.” (Retrieved November 2013 from www.ctc.ca.gov)
- Teacher Preparation Program: “A state-approved course of study, the completion of which signifies that an enrollee has met all the state’s educational and/or training requirements for initial certification or licensure to teach in the state’s elementary, middle or secondary schools. A teacher preparation program may be either a traditional program or an alternative route to certification, as defined by the state. Also, it may be within or outside an institution of higher education.: (Retrieved January 2014 from www.ctc.ca.gov/educator-prep/Title2/HEA-Glossary.pdf)

Overview of Methodology

Criterion-based random sampling was used throughout this institutional ethnographic case study since it involved first year teachers who had all experienced the same phenomenon: they had graduated from a teaching credential program and experienced their first year of teaching. The purpose of this study was to determine and evaluate the factors that led to the attrition and/or retention rates of first year middle school teachers. Therefore, the research methods involved a series of five semi-structured in-depth interviews with six first year teachers at three different middle schools in southern California—School A, School B, School C—in order to reveal the

perceptions, successes, and challenges of first year teachers. In addition, six interviews with middle school principals were conducted at six sites—School A, School B, School C, School D, School E, and School F, respectively. Three of the principals were also employed at the same schools—School A, School B, and School C— as three of the first year teachers. Principals were interviewed in order to further understand the views principals have of first year teachers as well as their expectations and knowledge of the vital role they play in the success or failure of their teachers. Finally, one focus group with four first year teachers was conducted in order to gain further insight of the challenges and opinions of first year teachers.

Limitations

Only a small sampling of six first year teachers and six principals was able to be obtained in this study, which limited the number of participants for one-on-one interviews as well as focus groups. The fact that middle school was the focal point for this study is a subsequent reason why there was a limited sampling of teachers and principals. Collecting data from only urban school districts as opposed to suburban or rural districts limited the findings as well. In addition, time was a limitation since this was a one-year study and sampling and data were obtained with what was available during that time period.

Delimitations

The fact that this study was based in southern California limited the breadth of diverse information gathered, as opposed to data collected from first year teachers and principals who were located in northern California or in other states. The data collected for this study was a cross content area sampling from Title I public schools or schools

with a low socioeconomic status which had diverse demographic populations. Moreover, not all districts were accessible while collecting data. All first year teachers, except resource or special day class teachers, were allowed to participate in the study.

Organization of Remaining Chapters

In Chapter 1 the reader is introduced to the purpose, problem, significance, and research questions of this study. Chapter 2 provides the historical background for the factors that contribute to the attrition and retention rate of first year middle school teachers. For the purpose of this study, the contributing factors analyzed were: teacher preparation programs, beginning teacher experiences principal interaction and support induction programs, mentoring, colleague interaction and support, school climate, school culture. Chapter 3 gives a detailed account of the methodology used in this study including the data collection procedures and analysis, in order to provide the reader with a thorough understanding of what occurred during the researcher's time spent in the field. Chapter 4 presents the data collected during the study and explains how the data connects with the study's research questions as well as how it links to the literature findings from current authorities in the field of education. Chapter 5 provides an analysis and discussion of the findings and gives recommendations for change and for future study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this study was to examine the factors that contributed to the current attrition and retention rates of first year middle school teachers. Attrition and retention rates of teachers, particularly those of first year teachers, are important to understand because they play a pivotal role in student success or failure. Throughout this chapter, factual evidence and viewpoints of numerous researchers for the factors that contribute to first year teacher attrition and retention are presented. Those factors include, but are not limited to, teacher preparedness (Ingersoll et al., 2012), familiarity of pedagogy (Ingersoll et al., 2012), flexibility during teaching (Brock & Grady, 2006), school factors which involve principal interaction and support (Minarik et al., 2003; Brock & Grady, 2001), student behavior (Brock & Grady, 2001), student achievement (Villani, 2002), teacher induction (Olebe, 2005), relationships with colleagues (Algozzine, Gretes, Queen, & Cowan-Hathcock, 2007), mentoring (Brill & McCartney, 2008), professional development (McCann & Johannessen, 2004), compensation (Hughes, 2012), working conditions (Kersaint, Lewis, Potter, & Meisels, 2007), school culture (Fullan, 2014), and school climate (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). A plethora of factors account for the success rate of beginning teachers. By becoming familiar with how each factor affects beginning teachers, a greater understanding for how to reduce the attrition rate and increase the retention rate is developed.

Additionally, the significance of why attrition rates need to be decreased and retention rates need to be increased is examined in this chapter. Not only does lack of retention influence the schools and the economic system, but the students are affected as well by beginning teacher attrition rate. Minarik et al. (2003) conclude that “attrition of

new teachers is a major barrier to continuous school improvement, thereby creating ceiling effects for student achievement” (p. 234). Moreover, due to the amount of attrition and the low retention rate of teachers in K-12 schools, Levine (2006) expresses concern that “the United States is facing nearly 200,000 teacher vacancies a year at a cost to the nation of \$4.9 billion annually” (p. 11). However in 2007, the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (NCTAF) reevaluated the cost of teacher turnover and found that it costs “\$8,750 per teacher” who leaves an urban district, resulting in it costing the nation “\$7.3 billion a year” (p.1). With only one year difference between estimations, the significant district and national deficit due to teacher attrition reveals that drastic steps need to be put in place in order to end the excessive number of teachers who leave the profession. Many researchers have provided solutions for what can be done to decrease this loss; however, Brill and McCartney (2008) eloquently, yet simplistically, state the key to terminating this attrition rate: “To freeze the revolving door of professional educators, we must make the inside of a classroom a far more attractive and rewarding place to work” (p.772).

The researchers’ perspectives and findings are linked to the main research question of this study:

How do site characteristics influence the attrition and retention rates of first year middle school teachers?

Likewise, the literature is also connected to the three sub-research questions:

- How does principal interaction and support influence the attrition and retention rates of first year middle school teachers?

- How does colleague interaction and support influence the attrition and retention rates of first year middle school teachers?
- How does the professional environment influence the attrition and retention rates of first year middle school teachers?

After the ideas and findings of the literature are presented, a connection is made with how the purpose and significance of this study fit into the researchers' findings. This study analyzed the factors related to attrition and retention in order to create a strong correlation between beginning teachers' experiences and why they decide to stay or leave the profession.

Teacher Preparation

In order to guarantee that students are provided with the best education possible, beginning teachers must be prepared and qualified to teach. According to Reed, Reuben, and Barbour (2006), "...California defines highly qualified teachers as those with a full credential or participating in an internship program during their first three years of teaching" (p. 27). The NCLB Act was not only responsible for coining the term "highly qualified," it was monumental to the field of education because it was a deterrent for hiring teachers who did not have the necessary qualifications. Teachers receive their preparation from their credential programs while the NCLB Act ensures that beginning teachers have all the necessary authorizations in order to teach the students in their classrooms.

Ingersoll et al. (2012) assert that credential programs provide the groundwork for educators' careers as they instill in them fundamental teaching skills needed to impart the pedagogical knowledge they acquire while in the program. However, researchers have

found that credential programs may not provide enough time for the educators to learn all the necessary skills they are required to have once they have their own classrooms. Brock and Grady (2006) state, “The time spent in preservice studies is extremely short compared to the length of a teaching career. Consequently, the learning that occurs ‘on the job’ plays a critical role in determining the quality of a teacher’s performance” (p. 39). The amount of time spent doing fieldwork while in the credential program provides a distinct sign of how equipped and prepared beginning teachers are to have their own classrooms. McIntyre’s study (as cited in Hixon & So, 2009) identifies the benefits of fieldwork within the credential program since fieldwork “help[s] students...to practice skills prior to student teaching, help[s] preservice teachers start viewing themselves as teachers, and improv[es] preservice teachers’ attitudes toward teaching” (p. 294). It is pertinent that teachers, particularly first year teachers, are prepared as much as possible to begin their teaching career; thus, credential programs are a foundation to success.

Ingersoll et al. (2012) found that “pedagogy is strongly related to teacher attrition” (p. 32) particularly among science and math teachers. These authors conducted a study in 2004-2005 regarding teacher preparedness to enter the classroom after student teaching. They separated their study data into two categories—teachers who felt they received little or no pedagogical training and those who felt they received comprehensive training. By the study’s definition, teachers receiving little or no pedagogical training consisted of “those who had at most one methods course; little or no practice teaching, and little or no materials selection preparation, learning theory or psychology courses, observation of others, or teaching feedback” (Ingersoll et al., 2012, p. 32). In contrast, they defined teachers receiving comprehensive pedagogical training as “those entering

teaching with a number of methods courses, materials selection preparation, learning theory and psychology courses, usually a full semester of practice teaching, observation of others, and feedback on their teaching” (Ingersoll et al., 2012, p.32). The results were sobering and disheartening when they found that 20% of mathematics teachers, 26% of science teachers and 13% of “other” teachers felt they had “little or no pedagogical training” (p. 32) to prepare them for their first year of teaching. Similarly, Ingersoll et al. (2012) noted that only 9.8 percent felt they had comprehensive training in pedagogy. Therefore, teachers “...receiving little or no pedagogy [are] twice as likely to leave after one year as those who receive a comprehensive pedagogy...” (p.32). In other words, it is crucial for teachers to have an in-depth knowledge (i.e. “comprehensive knowledge”) of the content they are teaching. Without ample knowledge of their pedagogy, they are not able to be successful as a teacher. These statistics about the level of preparedness or skill beginning teachers have in pedagogy are concerning, because when teachers are unfamiliar with the content, are unaware of how to teach the content, and are not prepared to face the challenges of their first year, feelings of frustration and stress occur, causing beginning teachers to reach a breaking point. This breaking point is when they commonly decide to leave the teaching profession.

Other factors besides pedagogy play a role in the attrition and retention rates of first year teachers. Many teachers have the capability of receiving excellent grades during their teacher training and passing all the necessary requirements to earn a teaching credential, yet are unable to multi-task while teaching or relate well to their students and sometimes to their colleagues due to overwhelming requirements and expectations such as: multiple classes to prepare for, differentiating their instruction, and adjunct duties,

(Darling-Hammond, 2006; National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2015). Unfortunately, a test has not been developed yet that would identify the amount of “teaching skill” educators possess once they finish the credential program (Darling-Hammond, 2010, p. 44). It is critical to ensure that teachers are well prepared pedagogically to enter the classroom since their level of preparation is a determining factor in how their students will achieve academically. Student achievement results are often a determining factor in the way principals evaluate a beginning teacher’s skill and abilities. Lack of student achievement may result in the principal placing additional pressure on first year teachers to demonstrate positive performance. As a result, if too much pressure is placed on beginning teachers, they may decide to leave the profession due to feelings of inadequacy.

As already briefly mentioned, an additional contributing factor linked with teacher effectiveness, is the amount of time a beginning teacher spent student teaching while in their credential program. Moreover, the type of credential program (i.e. traditional, fast track, or alternative) beginning teachers go through also plays a role in the extent of training they receive. Ingersoll et al. (2012) found after conducting national data analyses that more than 40% of teachers completed their teacher training via “nontraditional or alternative routes” (p. 30). This is important to consider in order to conclude whether ample training was provided and how that training will ultimately affect a beginning teacher’s first year.

According to a 2013-2014 report by the California Teaching Commission (CTC), there has been a 7.8% decrease in the number of preliminary credentials issued during the 2009-2014 academic years. Additionally, the CTC revealed that 40% of teachers received

Multiple Subject preliminary credentials and 40% received Single Subject preliminary credentials. Furthermore, the CTC showed that only 2.4% of teachers received a clear credential between the years 2009-2014. These statistics are pertinent to this study because they suggest that if beginning teachers are satisfied with their jobs and their working conditions, there should be a larger percentage of teachers who complete a clear credential, thus indicating a desire to stay in the profession. According to Shaw and Newton (2014):

In 1994, Secretary of Education, Richard W. Riley, projected that the United States would need to hire 2 million teachers in order to fill all of the teaching slots left behind by retiring Baby Boomers. [In] 2004, the United States beat that goal by hiring approximately 2.25 million teachers. During that same decade, the United States lost 2.7 million teachers. Of the teachers who began teaching in public schools in 2007 or 2008, about 10 percent were not teaching in 2008-09, and 12 percent were not teaching in 2009-10. As large numbers of teachers exit the profession, concerns arise in how to ensure an adequate work force of strong, high quality teachers. (p. 101)

This study sought to identify the factors leading to teacher attrition in order to provide a better understanding of the changes that needed to occur in order to increase teacher retention. Therefore, when Shaw and Newton (2014) identified a huge number of teachers who entered the profession only to have an equal number or more leave the profession within a short period of time, the mass exodus indicated that deep teacher dissatisfaction had occurred. Therefore, the factors causing the depth of that dissatisfaction, resulting in the high attrition rate, needs to be quickly determined. It is

possible that those who left the profession did so because they felt unprepared to teach and to deal with issues encountered during their first year. Some researchers, such as Tait (2008), may argue, however, that teaching resiliency to preservice teachers is the missing ingredient for credential programs, and with its addition, retention rates would become more stable. The number of teachers who have left the teaching profession after taking the time to earn their credential is appalling; therefore, this resiliency suggestion may be effective if implemented. Thus, it is critical to determine the factors causing this exodus in order to salvage it and promote teacher retention.

Beginning Teacher Experiences

The effectiveness of educators, particularly during their first few years of teaching, is a concern of various organizations and professionals in our nation. According to the National Council of Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), a well-rounded knowledge of content, pedagogy (i.e. teaching strategies), and child development is necessary to be an effective teacher. Educators are responsible for increasing student achievement, but there are many factors which influence their effectiveness—school culture and climate [i.e. norms, shared beliefs, values, and environment of the school as a whole], teacher delivery of instruction, classroom culture and climate [i.e. norms, behaviors, shared beliefs, and environment of the classroom], and teacher understanding of how to relate to students. Beginning teachers have to learn how to adapt to all the factors that affect student achievement while still making a positive impact on their students. At the same time, these teachers are striving to navigate through all the requirements, duties, responsibilities and challenges that accompany a new job and a new environment, yet ultimately emerging as an educator who is skilled in

pedagogy, dealing with students, and classroom management. Brock and Grady (2001) note, “Beginning teachers have professional concerns that occur in a loose chronological sequence as they move from survival issues to the discovery of the art of teaching” (p. 69). The first year of teaching can be like a swinging pendulum—one moment it is calm and enjoyable and the next moment it is fraught with high levels of stress and anxiety. For the purpose of this study, the ways in which first-year teacher effectiveness is frequently viewed are through student interactions, which involve student behavior and student achievement, and induction programs.

Student interactions.

Educators are key components in the lives of the students they are entrusted to teach. Not only do they have the responsibility for providing them with a rigorous education, but, as Good (2014) notes, the majority of teachers have high expectations for them and want their students to be successful. Teachers often are counselors, confidants, and educators about life skills to their students. Since students often spend more hours at school than they do at home, it is understandable that a teacher is an essential factor in a child’s life. Good (2014) discusses how great educators affect the success or failure of students. Hence, by ensuring that a plentiful number of “high quality teachers” are available, students will be prosperous and student achievement will increase (Wynn, Patall, & Carboni, 2007, p. 226).

However, in the process of trying to affect profound positive change among their students, beginning teachers may experience feelings of inadequacy, frustration, and stress, sometimes due to “inappropriate teaching assignments” (Brock & Grady, 2001, p.75), leading them to become overwhelmed. In other words, beginning teachers may be

assigned classes that are extremely overcrowded; they may have classes with students that range from the lowest academic level to the highest one; or they may have classes with numerous behavior and discipline issues. Jung (2007) declared that a teacher's confidence plays a significant role in the success and adaptability to their first year. Beginning teachers, particularly those at a middle school level, feel dismayed and unsure of their abilities for a variety of reasons. For example, Miller et al. (2012) found that lack of cooperation and effective interaction with experienced teachers, along with negative student behavior and lack of student motivation, contributed to middle school teachers' negative self-image and frustrations. By emanating confidence in the pedagogical knowledge and teaching skills in the classroom, beginning teachers often experience success with their students, thereby encouraging them to continue in the teaching profession. According to McCann and Johannessen (2004), confident teachers have:

“...a sense of duty to help young people; benefit from instruction; an interest in developing their teaching skills; an interest in growing as teachers and can account for factors that have influenced their growth; a commitment to strategic planning to make bad situations better; [and] a belief that bad experiences in the school are evidence of the need for good teachers...” (p. 142).

These teachers are the ones who feel that they can make a difference in the lives of their students and will do what they can to improve in their profession while being lifelong learners, as opposed to the teachers who give up because they feel unable to cope with the group of students they were given or because they feel inadequate as teachers. Jung (2007) states, “Confidence levels have been shown to increase with training, exposure to specific situations, and knowledge utilizing explicit interventions” (p.106). According to

Brock and Grady (2001), beginning teachers are more apt to remain in the profession if they are introduced to the technique of dealing with first year experiences as they occur. Being able to relate to students at the middle school level encourages the beginning teacher to continue their mission as a teacher.

As mentioned earlier, some teachers feel as if they are in daily survival mode (Brock & Grady, 2001). One survival issue is that of classroom management. Classroom management is not completely or thoroughly discussed in most teaching programs, according to Brock and Grady (2001), nor are the tedious details, additional duties, and the extent of responsibilities educators face. As a result, Brock and Grady (2001) found that many beginning teachers encounter these difficulties with shock and frustration. This shock is common when research finds that only 60% of beginning teachers spent as much as one semester student teaching and 16% of teachers spent even less than a semester student teaching; indeed, only 12% student taught for more than one semester (Levine, 2006). Despite first year frustrations and surprises, Doney (2013) argues, “Teachers who [are] flexible in handling new demands, [use] problem solving to alleviate stress, and [maintain] a sense of humor [are] better able to remain positive and overcome adversities” (p. 655). In other words, if beginning teachers possess positive reactionary techniques to use when faced with challenging circumstances, their first year may turn out to be more successful.

Beginning teachers often have activities or lessons they would like to use once they have acquired a classroom of their own; however, some may feel trepidation about embedding their own ideas into a set curriculum. Having the ability to try new ideas in the classroom using accessible resources, while concurrently receiving the necessary

level of support and encouragement to do so is a key component to the success of beginning teachers (Brown & Wynn, 2009). Unfortunately, beginning teachers frequently experience blockades when implementing their ideas and using accessible resources, which causes "...creative and talented teachers [to find] their work frustrating, and unrewarding and intolerably difficult which ultimately increases their risk of becoming a casualty of the profession" (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009, p. 814). Some beginning teachers may have the opportunity to work in schools where numerous resources are accessible to them; yet with lack of support and encouragement, beginning teachers may quickly decide to give up the profession and pursue another career (Brown & Wynn, 2009, Darling-Hammond, 2003).

Teaching requirements are constantly changing and teachers need to be flexible and adjust. Darling-Hammond (2006) states, "...the demands on teachers are increasing. Teachers need not only to be able to keep order and provide useful information to students but also to be increasingly effective in enabling a diverse group of students to learn ever more complex material" (p. 1). While beginning teachers are trying to acclimate to these expectations, they are finding the task too overwhelming and not what they had originally perceived teaching to be (Nasser-Abu Alhija & Freska, 2010; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Angelle, 2006). Thibodeaux, Labat, M., Lee, and Labat, C. (2015) state, "Teachers [feel] that policy makers [make] decisions that [affect] educators, and it [bothers] teachers that so many mandates [have] been placed on them... Teachers [feel] pressure to fulfill obligations that sometimes [feel] unattainable..." (p. 247). As a result of these hurdles, beginning teachers choose to leave the profession, thus increasing the attrition rate nationwide. When a beginning teacher leaves the profession due to lack

of freedom in teaching, too many mandates, and lack of confidence, the ones who are ultimately affected the most are the students, who desperately need guidance from an effective teacher. Conklin (2014b) states:

With the narrowing of school curricula and increased pressures for testing has come an erosion of joy for both the young people and adults who inhabit classroom spaces. While this concern resonates across age levels, the critical middle grades hold particular peril, given their pivotal role in steering young adolescents onto future trajectories (p. 1228).

Middle school is the springboard for high school. The knowledge and learning that occurs in grades 6-8 often determine whether a student will or will not be successful in high school. When middle school teachers are required to focus solely on increasing student achievement in state testing, the students do not receive a well-rounded education, resulting in them not being properly prepared for their future academic years. In addition, teachers' freedom to teach and to foster student ingenuity dissolves when they are asked to terminate supplemental teaching within the curriculum due to the promotion of validity in teaching. Because of this requirement, teacher creativity is slowly taken away. Over time, a beginning teacher may be frustrated by these regulations and decide to leave the profession.

Teacher induction and mentoring.

Bickmore and Bickmore (2010) define effective induction as “a systematic process embedded in a healthy school climate that meets the new teachers' personal and professional needs” (p. 1006). Olebe (2005) notes “...induction [is] a critical phase in the career trajectory of teachers...” (p. 159). Without some type of induction, beginning

teachers are left to flounder and discover things on their own, which is additional stress that they do not need. Brock and Grady (2006) concur when they state:

The goal of induction programs is to address the concerns of teachers in the beginning stages of professional development. New teachers need to transition into a supportive program of continuous development. Unless teachers are assisted in making this transition, their development may cease prematurely. (p. 113-114)

Student teaching during the credential program, professional development, and mentoring programs such as Beginning Teacher Growth & Development Induction (BTGDI), formerly known as Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA), were some of the ways that beginning teachers become more aware of the surprises, challenges, and excitements they encountered during their teaching career. Professional development and mentoring programs will be discussed later in this chapter.

There are two main types of induction programs: formal and informal. Informal programs usually occur at the school site and “may consist of as little as a one-day orientation program or a casual assignment of another teacher to act as a mentor” (Waynes, Young, & Fleishman, 2005, p. 76). According to Nasser-Abu Alhija and Fresko (2010), “Induction programs are designed to deal directly with teacher socialization” (p. 1593). Villani (2002) says:

New teachers benefit from meeting with each other regularly; they realize that they are not alone in their feelings of being overwhelmed, uncertain about their competence, and/or confused by some of their experiences. They are also able to

share coping strategies, as well as things that have been successful in their classroom teaching. (p. 12)

By having the opportunity to discuss circumstances with other colleagues in a professional community while simultaneously receiving advice about how to deal with situations, beginning teachers are able to hone their craft, find out what does and does not work in the classroom, and ultimately assist in increasing student achievement. An example of a formal induction program, particularly in the state of California, is the BTGDI program. According to Reed et al. (2006), "...[BTGDI] programs are two-year induction programs designed to provide new teachers with support such as counseling, assessment, and in-class assistance from veteran teachers" (p. 13). Beginning teachers are required to enroll in some type of induction program (commonly two years) in order to clear their credential as well as develop additional teaching skills.

Darling-Hammond (2000) notes:

With nearly 30% of new teachers leaving within five years of entry and even higher attrition rates in the most disadvantaged districts that offer fewest supports, a revolving door of candidates makes recruitment a...task in states and districts that have not enacted mentoring programs for beginning [teachers]. (p. 10)

Induction programs (sometimes referred to as mentoring programs), such as BTGDI, are types of assistance offered to beginning teachers to ensure their effectiveness as an educator. Quite often, this assistance comes with a mentor. Induction programs, whether formal or informal, are key factors in a teacher's success rate. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2015), "...the percentage of beginning teachers who were currently teaching was larger among those who were assigned a first-year mentor than

among those not assigned a first year mentor...” (p. 3). Induction programs provide beginning teachers with a strong foundation in teaching skill and pedagogy; thus providing beginning teachers with more confidence. By obtaining these abilities, it strengthens the retention rate.

Although induction programs have a variety of aspects, ensuring that a beginning teacher participates in one or more of those aspects can reduce teacher attrition and help avoid burnout. There are some critics of the BTGDI program however. McCann and Johannessen (2004) note how taxing a program such as BTGDI can be on beginning teachers. They observe, “If the time required to participate in the program represents an additional burden on the beginning teacher, then the activities become counterproductive” (p. 144). Nonetheless, an induction program can be a necessary and positive asset for beginning teachers. . Smith and Ingersoll (2004) found that the main factors most beneficial to beginning teachers were: “...having a mentor from the same field, having common planning time with other teachers in the same subject or collaboration with other teachers on instruction and being part of an external network of teachers” (p. 706). Furthermore, Smith and Ingersoll (2004) state that “...teachers participating in [a] combination of packages of mentoring and group induction activities were less likely to migrate to other schools or to leave teaching at the end of their first year” (p. 706). The more support that is provided to beginning teachers, the more confident they become in their teaching abilities. Mentoring at the school site is often not sufficient during the first year. Participating in an induction program is an added benefit for first year teachers because the program allows them time to reflect on their teaching abilities and learn additional strategies.

While BTGDI is the formal induction program for beginning teachers in California, some school sites offer an additional mentoring program for beginning teachers as well. Sometimes this mentoring comes in the form of a veteran teacher being paired with a beginning teacher. At other times, the principal takes the primary responsibility of mentoring beginning teachers, making sure they feel comfortable to the new surroundings, and ensuring they collaborate with peers. After interviewing beginning teachers, McCann and Johannessen (2004) learned that “novice teachers will naturally select mentors whom they respect and can trust. When mentors are assigned to beginning teachers, they may resist and resent the mentor program” (p. 144). Teachers do not like to be forced to be a mentor. Similarly, beginning teachers do not like to feel that a teacher is doing them a favor by being their mentor. Therefore, it is important that mentors are not forced to occupy that position but rather volunteer to do it.

Informal mentoring often occurs at a school site where a veteran teacher is paired with a beginning teacher, while formal mentoring commonly consists of working with a principal (Brock & Grady, 2006). According to Wynn et al. (2007), because of the insufficient support that is provided in formal induction programs, many schools have implemented mentoring programs at their site in order to aid in the reduction of teacher attrition. Mentoring is a common practice implemented by principals in order to retain and support beginning teachers (Johnson & Kardos, 2002; Portner, 2003). However, each principal may have his or her own view of what he or she feels is effective mentoring. Class visits, observations, and professional development are frequently used when dealing with beginning teachers (Watkins, 2005; Womack-Wynne, Dees, Leech, LaPlant, Brockmeier, & Gibson, 2011), but more than that is required to ensure a

beginning teacher has sufficient support. According to Watkins (2005), “effective mentoring alone does not constitute the total induction process. The novice, regardless of teacher preparation, must have opportunities to connect with like-minded colleagues. These relationships will sustain the teacher well beyond the first year” (p. 85). Research shows that teachers who participate in some type of mentoring or induction program during their first year are more likely to continue teaching in subsequent years as well as remain in the teaching profession (Ingersoll, 2004).

Wynn et al., (2007) note that “...two types of mentoring *support* are necessary: psychological support and instruction-related...” (p. 213) in order to thoroughly support a beginning teacher. Psychological support assists teachers with the everyday frustrations and stresses while instruction-related support strengthens their knowledge of content in relating it to students. As established by Brill and McCartney (2008), “Mentors give crucial support and advice to new teachers in a number of areas, including pedagogy, classroom management, lesson planning, and emotional support” (p. 767). Whether those mentors are formal or informal, as indicated earlier, they should provide a type of springboard for beginning teachers, a place of understanding and rejuvenation to continue teaching.

The first year of teaching is frustrating, and at times, stressful, and overwhelming. Teachers need to find an outlet, which is often in the form of a mentor, to express their negative feelings. Furthermore, they need to receive a boost of encouragement so that they know that their hard work is worthwhile and that there is no need to give up. By receiving this support and encouragement, beginning teachers are less likely to feel the need to leave the profession, because they are learning how to do their job more

adequately and how to survive the stages within their first year. Nasser-Abu Alhija and Freska (2010) note:

This phase ...is not just about anxiety, stress, and frustration, rather it is an important learning stage in which they expand their content-specific repertoire of teaching strategies, acquire important practical knowledge related to students, curricula, workplace norms, and school policies, test their beliefs and ideas about teaching, and mold their professional identity. (p. 1593)

In other words, growth follows learning. Although the first year can be filled with challenges and frustrations, some of those challenges are necessary in order to grow as an educator.

Principal Interactions

Any area that a beginning teacher is lacking needs to be given the proper attention to turn that weakness into strength. After surveying principals and beginning teachers, Brock and Grady (2001) identified the following as areas of need for beginning teachers:

[1] Discipline and classroom management, [2] Emotional support, [3] Responding to varying levels of student abilities, [4] Planning, organization and time management, [5] Communicating with students, parents, faculty, and administrators, [6] Assessing students' work, [7] Understanding the procedures and policies of the school, [8] Adjusting to the teaching profession, [and] [9] Obtaining resources.... (p.74)

These areas of need are often overlapping but principals need to make an effort to address each need that beginning teachers have. By being particularly cognizant of their beginning teachers' needs, the possibility of attrition is less likely to occur among first

year teachers. It is also critical that principals lay a strong foundation at the beginning of the school year for their beginning teachers. Hope (1999) states, “In addition to promoting teacher retention, the principal who invests time and energy in positive orientation and induction experiences will benefit his or her school in other ways” (p. 56). According to a study by Algozzine et al. (2007), 50% or fewer beginning teachers felt they had “...assistance from [the] administration in terms of establishing positive relationships..., meeting state standards and performance objectives..., setting procedures and routines..., and selecting and delivering content...” (p. 140). Based on these statistics, principal interactions seem to be one of the primary lacking components needed to help make a teacher’s first year in the classroom successful, thus a reason why it was addressed in this study.

In the era of high-stakes testing and the effect Academic Performance Index (API) and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) have on schools in the 21st century, particularly within the Educational Unified School District (pseudonym), principals prefer to hire teachers who are knowledgeable in their subject matter, who are able to communicate well with others, and who possess strong teaching ability (Rutledge, Harris, & Ingle, 2010; Brown & Wynne, 2009). Other principals also ponder the organizational aspects of the school during the hiring process—“to create a ‘mixture’ based on race and gender and a ‘match’ to the styles and personalities of the existing teachers in the school” (Rutledge et al., 2010, p. 214-215). It is the belief of some principals that students have a higher achievement rate and benefit more from teachers who are of the same race; therefore, in schools where the population is low income or a predominate minority, it is common to see teachers who are of the same race as their students (Jacob, 2011). Yet,

other principals desire to hire beginning teachers rather than veteran teachers since beginning teachers are easier to train, often more adaptable, and are not as biased about the educational system or the students as are veteran teachers (Watkins, 2005).

Previous studies could not accurately determine whether principals used partiality when hiring beginning teachers, although in a study conducted by Pinto, Portelli, Rottmann, Pashby, Barrett, and Mujuwamariya (2012), some principals interviewed felt that “attention to social justice, equity, and diversity was only necessary when working with students from conventionally marginalized populations” (p. 9-10). The demographics of classrooms today have greatly changed over the years and teachers have to be able to adapt to the diversity of their classroom. According to Darling-Hammond (2006):

In the classrooms most beginning teachers will enter, at least 25% of students live in poverty and many of them lack basic food, shelter, and health care; from 10% to 20% have identified learning differences; 15% speak a language other than English as their primary language (many more in urban settings); and about 40% are members of racial/ethnic "minority" groups, many of them recent immigrants from countries with different educational systems and cultural traditions.” (p. 1)

The study by Pinto et al. (2012) alluded to the possibility that partiality can occur during the hiring process, because principals want to ensure that the teacher they hire is able to relate and adapt to the cultural climate and demographics of their classrooms. Moreover, Rutledge et al. (2010) points out that due to the constant pressure to increase API and AYP, some principals may consider “...hiring and giv[ing] greater preferences to teachers they see as more likely to improve student achievement” (p. 216). However, the

overall findings of Pinto et al. (2012) concurred with that of other researchers. When hiring beginning teachers, principals seem primarily concerned with acquiring a teacher who has classroom management, curriculum, and people relational skills rather than “social justice, equity and diversity as part of [their] essential knowledge...” (p. 17). In other words, teacher quality and skill set are a higher priority to principals during the hiring process than the ability to relate to students culturally.

While beginning teachers have numerous needs, principals also have needs of their own. They need their beginning teachers to: be competent in their subject area, be able to manage a classroom, engage students in learning, have passion and drive, and be willing to collaborate and share with colleagues (Brown & Wynn, 2009; Rutledge et al., 2010; Blase & Kirby, 2009). Fullan (2014) similarly notes that principals seek to hire teachers who have the following primary qualities: “1) high moral commitment relative to the learning of *all students* regardless of background, 2) strong instructional practice, 3) desire to work collaboratively, and 4) commitment to continuous learning” (p. 74).

Lastly, principal interactions involve the concept of open communication, and idea from Kouzes and Posner (2007). When principals communicate what they are thinking and expect and vice versa with beginning teachers, a better relationship between the two groups is developed. Howell, Cook, and Faulkner (2013) recommend that principals, particularly middle school principals, explain and expound to their beginning teachers what they consider high quality teaching to be. By doing so, clear expectations are established, thereby reducing the stress level of beginning teachers and the frustration level of principals.

Principal Support

According to Brown and Wynn (2009), “School leaders play an important role in shaping building-level factors that can affect new teachers’ attitudes toward the profession and their sense of efficacy as educators” (p.43). When beginning teachers are hired at a school site, they look to the school leaders for support and guidance, and their perception of the teaching profession is often shaped by their experience during that first year, particularly by principal interactions or lack thereof (Brock & Grady, 2001). Wood (2005) notes, “Findings show that principals have five leadership roles...: (a) culture builder, (b) instructional leader, (c) coordinator/facilitator of mentors, (d) novice teacher recruiter, and (e) novice teacher advocate/retainer” (Abstract, p. 39). If beginning teachers do not experience the effects of those five leadership roles, their view of the field of education as a profession can be negatively skewed. Since the first year of a beginning teacher’s career is a determiner of whether he or she will remain in or leave the profession, Hope (1999) suggests that principals provide positive reinforcements and experiences for beginning teachers in order to increase the retention rate.

Just as beginning teachers form perceptions and have expectations, principals do as well. Teachers in other countries are simply required to teach; however, teachers in the United States have subsequent duties and responsibilities in addition to teaching (Good, 2014). In the United States, “...teachers are expected to influence students’ civic-mindedness,...prepare them for a life in a democratic society,...[and] nurture student creativity and responsibility....[However,] teachers are also expected... to mentor other teachers and to serve on school management leadership teams” (Good, 2014, p. 4).

Commonly, principals have high expectations for their teachers, particularly beginning teachers. Bigham, Hively, and Toole (2014) state,

Principals want beginning teachers who can connect with students. They seek teacher candidates who are academically prepared, understand their roles and responsibilities, demonstrate professionalism, and enjoy children. In addition, they want new teachers who are able to work as a team, with students and colleagues. (p.213)

For beginning teachers who have had only limited experience at a school site, most likely during their student teaching experience, this list of principal expectations can feel overwhelming. As a result, teacher burnout can often occur.

Determining the amount of support provided to beginning teachers from the induction programs (i.e. orientation and/or mentor programs) will indicate the amount of additional assistance needed from principals. This information is key to determining the reasons for teacher attrition or retention, since principals play a vital role in the success or failure of new probationary teachers. The research indicates that principal support is crucial for the retention process of beginning teachers (Brock & Grady, 2001; Hope, 1999; Minarik et al., 2003; Watkins, 2005). Furthermore, in Buckingham and Coffman's 1999 Gallup Poll (as cited in Minarik et al., 2003) "...the single most important variable in staff productivity and loyalty is the quality of the relationship between staff and their direct supervisors" (p.232). Ineffective relationships are one of the contributing factors for why an educator decides to leave the teaching profession.

One common reason beginning teachers decide to leave the teaching profession is the lack of support and assistance from the administration (Ingersoll, 2003). Brock and

Grady (2001) note that “first year teachers cannot be left in isolation and be expected to be successful. Principals must engage in a constant dialogue with the first year teacher as a means of support and reinforcement” (p. 26). Often times, principals rely on mentor teachers and staff, veteran teachers, and some type of an induction program or workshop to assist beginning teachers in effective acclimation to the school, policies, programs, procedures, and culture. While all of these support systems are positive reinforcement for a beginning teacher, it is still important for a principal to have frequent one-on-one interactions with them. Therefore, when there is a lack of principal support in these areas, it can negatively affect beginning teachers.

It is pertinent to determine the level of principal support and assistance offered to beginning teachers in order to conclude the degree to which it affects teacher quality and effectiveness. Although the BTGDI program is a requirement in the state of California, principals cannot depend on the mentors in the BTGDI program to be the primary educators for beginning teachers, since the first year of teaching is so monumental in a teacher’s career. Likewise, assigning a coach or veteran teacher to a novice teacher is useful, but principals also play a key role in the perceptions and sustainability of beginning teachers (Brown & Wynn, 2007/2009; Watkins, 2005). According to Brown and Wynn (2007), “Principals’ support for mentoring and induction programs—particularly, those related to collegial support—also appears to play a prominent role in beginning teachers’ decisions to quit or remain on the job” (p. 668). The principal needs to ensure that mentors have time to train beginning teachers. They also need to take an active, interested role in the suggestions and recommendations made by mentors working with the beginning teachers (Watkins, 2005). Therefore, any supports that can be

provided by the principal in regards to mentoring programs is crucial since that support helps lay a strong foundation for a beginning teacher's career.

Although many teachers need or want principal support, other teachers prefer the support in a less overbearing way. In their study of the interactions needed to effectively support beginning teachers, Brock and Grady (2001) found that teachers prefer a principal who gives them freedom to teach, but who is also visible and easily accessible. Brock and Grady (2001) state, "Beginning teachers...benefit from a clinical model of supervision. They benefit from frequent and specific feedback and opportunities to collaborate on ideas and strategies" (p. 114). Therefore, since there are mixed preferences of principal support among beginning teachers, it is crucial for principals not to assume that all beginning teachers need the same type of support. By being aware of beginning teachers' individual needs, a principal can provide a positive first year experience for a teacher.

Brown and Wynn (2009) note, "National and local research indicates a teacher's decision to stay at a school largely depends upon the principal and his or her leadership in the school" (p. 43). Principals sometimes underestimate the impact that their position and presence have on teachers, especially beginning teachers. Although their intent may be to provide support for beginning teachers, principals are pulled in multiple directions simultaneously. Therefore, it is not uncommon for a principal to provide support for the first month, after which time, other situations and requirements arise that need to be dealt with and ultimately take precedence over supporting beginning teachers. Nonetheless, Blase and Kirby (2009) made the following suggestions that principals should heed:

1) Know when to push and when to nudge, 2) Know how to give advice, particularly regarding instruction, 3) Provide training opportunities to reinforce goals and improve instruction, 4) Allow discretion in implementation of knowledge gained through staff development, 5) Assist teachers in evaluating newly attempt[ed] techniques, [and] 6) Keep informed of new developments in curriculum and instruction and provide relevant information to teachers (p. 90-91)

Providing beginning teachers with positive, memorable experiences assists and encourages them to stay in the profession rather than leave it. Some educators may find teaching to be natural for them; however, if the proper support, guidance, and positive experiences are not present during their first year, they may not decide to stay in the profession. Therefore, it is extremely important that principals create an environment that is both nurturing and supportive for first year teachers (Brock & Grady, 2001; Brown & Wynn, 2007/2009; Minarik et al., 2003; Watkins, 2005).

Furthermore, it is essential for beginning teachers to feel that they have a certain freedom to teach their students the way they feel is effective, while simultaneously having the assurance that the principal will provide direction and advice to them when needed (Brown & Wynn, 2007). Brown and Wynn (2007) commented after conducting their research, “It is a complex balancing act for principals to structure flexibility with an almost intuitive sense of treating beginning teachers as skilled professionals while recognizing that they need different types of support than do veteran teachers” (p. 692). Shared leadership, support, easy accessibility, approachability, and shared values are additional characteristics desired in principals, which result in the retention of beginning teachers (Brown & Wynn, 2007). Without support and assistance from principals,

beginning teachers are left to flounder on their own, maybe being successful and maybe not. Thus, it is pertinent for principal mentoring and support to occur for first year teachers.

Colleague Interactions and Support

For teachers, the socialization process is where they meet and interact with each other in an unstructured setting, such as during breaks or lunch (Fullan, 2014). There are many different ways that colleagues can interact at a school site, but the most common way is through socialization via professional development. Professional development is more structured; socialization occurs, but in a more formal manner (McCann & Johannessen, 2004). In a survey conducted by Algozzine et al. (2007), the researchers found that 96% of beginning teachers felt as if they were welcomed and included by their colleagues and 93% felt as if they had a sounding board with their colleagues when feeling frustrated or overwhelmed.

Key factors in beginning teachers continuing in the teaching profession past their first year are: 1) their ability to collaborate with fellow teachers, 2) to learn new strategies, and, 3) to feel supported by principals and colleagues (Brown and Wynn, 2007; Ingersoll, 2004; Womack-Wynne et al., 2011; and Watkins, 2005. Womack-Wynne et al. (2011) state that:

As new teachers strive to educate the whole child in their classrooms, so must administration and veteran teachers strive to train the whole teacher so that he or she is efficient, excited about the subject matter, and able to recognize student needs. (p.7)

Unfortunately, that type of teacher education and professional development is not always prevalent and once a beginning teacher realizes all that teaching entails, the school environment plus the lack of training and support, stress and frustration occur which lead to burnout and teachers leaving the profession.

Professional development.

Young (2011) combines the idea of socialization and professional development by coining the term “professional socialization” (p. 11). She notes that this type of socialization is critical for beginning teachers because it helps them to develop their self-image as a teacher. However, another way of describing “professional socialization” is through the lens of the social capital theory, the framework of this study, since social capital involves interacting with peers, agreeing on organizational norms, and developing trusting relationships. Without social capital, beginning teachers become nothing more than hermits whose only interactions are with the students they teach (Sass, Seal, & Martin, 2011).

Professional development, however, should include more than a brief introduction to the norms, policies, and requirements at the school site (Villani, 2002). It should support beginning teachers in areas where they feel weak, as well as provide suggestions for what they can do when various situations arise. Wynn et al., (2007) note, “Supportive conditions, including both physical and human factors, are a key component of strong learning communities” (p.224). The stronger the professional learning community, the higher the likelihood that teachers will not leave.

McCann and Johannessen (2004) advise “that those who train teachers and support their professional development focus on two areas: alleviating a potentially demoralizing

workload and developing positive relationships with students” (p. 145). It is customary for beginning teachers to need a colleague to speak with when trying to acclimate to circumstances they encounter during their first year. Villani (2002) states,

New teachers benefit from meeting with each other regularly; they realize that they are not alone in their feelings of being overwhelmed, uncertain about their competence, and/or confused by some of their experiences. They are also able to share coping strategies as well as things that have been successful in their classroom teaching. (p. 12)

Once beginning teachers have the experience of strong, supportive collegial interactions and professional development that meets their needs during their first year, they will become more self-assured of their teaching skills, pedagogy, and overall knowledge base (Blase & Kirby, 2009). As a result, they will want to remain in the teaching profession due to their positive experiences.

Professional Environment

The field of education has an abundance of professional influences that range from salaries, compensation, and working conditions to school culture and climate, all of which are found within the professional environment. Darling-Hammond (2003) comments: “Overall, teacher salaries are about 20 percent below the salaries of other professionals with comparable education and training” (p.9). Beginning teachers spend countless hours grading and lesson planning for which they do not receive compensation. Therefore, it is not surprising that salary is an area of criticism for beginning teachers.

Hughes’ (2012) research found the following percentages for why teachers chose not to remain in their vocation: “Salary was the most cited reason (82%), followed by

disruptive students (58%), administrative support (43%), lack of parental involvement (42%), working conditions (38%), lack of professional prestige (31%), personal reasons (30%), and lack of collegiality (19%)” (p. 247). All of these professional influences can heighten teacher burnout and cause beginning teachers to question why they entered the teaching profession.

School climate.

Townley and Schmeider-Ramirez (2011) describe school climate as “...the total environmental quality within an organization...hostile, rigid, warm, or open” (p.86). Both school climate and classroom climate are addressed in this study. Classroom climate can also be described using Townley and Schmeider-Ramirez’s definition (2011) of school climate. The only difference between the two is that classroom climate involves the climate solely in the classroom, whereas school climate deals with the school in its entirety.

There are a variety of factors that influence a classroom climate, such as: student behavior, teacher demeanor, teacher expectations, and classroom rules. These factors not only influence the classroom climate, but they also greatly impact student achievement, which is centered in the classroom. Students find it challenging to learn and be successful when they are in a chaotic, negative environment. Good (2014) states, “...sometimes subtle changes can have a huge impact on classroom environment (just as teachers make a difference, so do students)” (p. 8). Additionally, Villani (2002) notes, “New teachers might misread or misinterpret student classroom behaviors and, in so doing, may not respond to their students in ways that promote achievement in school” (p. 11). Teachers must take special precautions to create a classroom climate that is safe to

students. Pedota (2015) states, “A classroom based on encouragement can enhance a student’s sense of belonging and connection, which will increase academic self-image and success as well as increase teacher self-efficacy and the likelihood of retention” (p. 54). Teachers who are on the verge of leaving the profession often find that their classroom is chaotic, unorganized, and a challenging environment to teach in. In addition, they have no confidence in their teaching ability and feel as if they are a failure. Therefore, in order to ensure that teacher retention occurs, it is important that beginning teachers are equipped with the necessary tools to make their classroom calm and productive.

Just as it is essential to have a positive classroom climate for the success of students, it is equally important to have a positive school climate for the success of beginning teachers. An adverse, chaotic and tense school climate can negatively affect a teacher’s achievement. Part of having a successful climate is ensuring that trust is created; that collaboration is encouraged; and that maintaining relationships is prioritized (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). In order for teachers to have successful achievement in their career, principals must “...create a climate of collaboration they need to determine what the group needs in order to do their work and to build the team around common purpose and mutual respect” (Kouzes & Posner, p. 223). Therefore, by acquiring trust between colleagues and administration and by co-existing in a positive climate, beginning teachers will not feel isolated (Brown & Wynn, 2009), and they will be more likely to grasp the vision of the school, thus further ensuring that the school has a shared vision. Kouzes and Posner (2007) argue that “...shared values provides people with a common language” (p. 61). They assert that in order for there to be a commitment to a school’s

values, there must be an alignment between the personal and organizational values.

Therefore, it is pertinent for principals to take the time to foster a positive school climate in order to allow beginning teachers to feel comfortable in their new work surroundings but also to encourage the adaptation of the school's shared vision.

Brown and Wynn (2007/2009) discuss how much more successful beginning teachers can be if they feel as if they are part of a group, and they are welcomed by their colleagues. In addition to collaboration with colleagues in a supportive environment, ease of access with the principal is a factor conducive to the type of cultural atmosphere that causes beginning teachers to stay in the profession past their first year (Brown & Wynn, 2007/2009). Since principals want high quality teachers on their staff, they need to create the school climate that encourages high quality work (Brown & Wynn, 2009) and that fosters trust among the staff and administration. Moir (2009) notes:

Supportive school environments, where educators are valued, trusted, and have the time and ability to collaborate to improve instruction, are necessary for teachers to be successful. The workplace can either encourage or constrain good teaching and ultimately impact student learning and teacher retention (p.18).

Because it is important for students to receive a proper education while in a positive environment, decreasing the attrition rate and increasing the retention rate should be the goals of principals and school sites as a whole. In order to do that, relationships have to be formed, constant encouragement has to be present, and supportive interaction must occur.

Principals have certain expectations and outcomes that they would like to see occur among their beginning teachers. Likewise, beginning teachers expect that they will

have an approachable and helpful administration to turn to should they need something. Both groups rely on each other in a way and if there is a lack of trust or confidence in one another, a negative school climate will ensue.

School culture.

Townley and Schmieder-Ramirez (2011) define school culture as "...the school's shared norms, values, assumptions, ideologies, and philosophies" (p.81). Therefore, it is the supposition that classroom culture follows the same guidelines delineated by Townley and Schmieder-Ramirez (2011) except they occur in a more condensed setting, namely the classroom. A more explicative definition of school culture is offered by Schein (2010):

Culture is constantly reenacted and created by our interactions with others and shaped by our behavior....At the same time, culture implies stability and rigidity in the sense that how we are supposed to perceive, feel, and act in a given society, organization, or occupation. (p. 3)

Without a strong and positive school culture, the possibility of teacher attrition is high because the beginning teachers have nothing constant to rely on during their already tumultuous first year.

A school's culture is one of the first observations beginning teachers make upon entering their new workplace. Whether they like or dislike the culture, they learn to adapt to it, and it greatly affects their interactions and experiences. Therefore, it is vital for principals to cultivate a collaborative culture among their faculty, while maintaining a relationship of trust among all participants. Fullan (2014) suggests that principals incorporate "relational trust" into their leadership priorities since it shows that "...the

culture supports continuous learning rather than early judgments about how weak or strong you might be” (p. 75). Beginning teachers need to feel supported and not condemned when they make a mistake and the stronger and more positive the social capital and the school culture are at a school site, the more a beginning teacher will benefit from the suggestions and assistance provided by the principal and faculty (Fullan, 2014). Teaching can be exciting, but if the school culture is mundane and does not encourage a teacher to be creative, or if the leadership that supports the school culture is weak, an educator can become bored and reconsider why he or she entered the profession.

Without a positive school culture, the likelihood of a beginning teacher wanting to stay at the work site is low. Hughes, Matt, and O’Reilly (2015) state:

Principals play a vital role in improving teacher retention by providing support in the following domains (environmental, instructional, technical, and emotional).

As the building’s instructional leader, school principals reinforce the institutional culture by providing guidance and support and offering instructional and institutional resources. (p. 130)

Although school culture is often defined in a general way, some researchers identified specific types of school culture. In the schools that participated in the study by Johnson and Kardos (2002), these researchers found that three types of professional cultures emerged: “veteran-oriented professional culture, novice-oriented professional culture, and integrated professional culture” (p. 13). According to Johnson and Kardos (2002), “veteran-oriented professional culture” (p. 13) is veteran teacher centered. In other words, educators are not encouraged to share their ideas and experiences, and there is no

socialization or interaction with their peers. In such an environment, beginning teachers are forced to work independently and survive on their own knowledge and expertise attained during their credential program training. “Novice-oriented professional culture” (Johnson & Kardos, 2002, p. 14) consists of a school staff that is new. Most are educators with little or no experience in the teaching profession. In this culture, much passion and drive exists but there is a sizeable gap in guidance and training. Finally, Johnson and Kardos (2002) explain the great benefit an “integrated professional culture” (p. 14) has on a beginning teacher as well as on the staff. This type of culture includes the collaboration of veteran and beginning teachers in an open venue where everyone feels comfortable sharing and learning from one another. As a result, participants feel like a team, and beginning teachers, in time, will gain confidence in the teaching profession and have an outlet to decompress and express their ideas via the opportunity to interact with their peers. Principals may not initially know the type of culture they would like to have at their school site, but over time and after observing and conversing with their faculty, the type of culture needed at the school in order to retain teachers will be created. Johnson and Kardos (2002) found in their study that “...new teachers working in settings with integrated professional cultures remained in their schools and in public school teaching in higher proportions than did their counter-parts in veteran-oriented or novice-oriented professional cultures” (p. 14). Therefore, school culture is pertinent to the success of beginning teachers, as well as teachers in general. Without it as a foundational aspect of a school, teacher attrition may occur (Johnson & Kardos, 2002).

Each beginning teacher has a different personality and will automatically prefer one of these three school cultures that best fits his or her personality. Unfortunately,

most beginning teachers do not have enough experience beforehand to know exactly which culture is best for them. Additionally, beginning teachers do not know the type of culture a school has until they are working there on a daily basis. Therefore, it is not uncommon for beginning teachers to encounter a school culture that is not to their liking, resulting in a challenging and frustrating first year for them, despite their attempts to adapt to it.

Summary

As discussed in this chapter, there are a variety of factors that contribute to the attrition and retention rates of first year middle school teachers. All of those factors center on the conceptual framework for this study, social capital theory. First year teachers constantly interact with administrators, colleagues, students, and community members, and with those interactions, trust must be developed among the parties in order for the classrooms and the school to be successful. Once trust is established, those relationships can continue to be developed as long as there is open communication.

The conceptual framework played a prominent role in every aspect of this study, including guidance in selecting the methodology for both the data collection and data analysis. Chapter 3 discusses all aspects of the methodology for this study, including how one-on-one interviews and a focus group were selected to collect data for this study, because those methodology forms allow the open communication, discussion of norms, networking, and relationship interactions to continue. Similarly, through the analysis of those interviews and focus groups, the researcher was able to better understand how the formed relationships among the interviewees and their peers do or do not intermingle on a regular basis at the school sites.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this ethnographic study was to examine the factors that occur during middle school teachers' first year in order to determine what preemptive measures can be put in place that will cause a reduction in their attrition rate and an increase in their retention rate. Attrition rates in the field of education continue to climb, which are partly due to beginning teachers' lack of fulfillment in their expectations of what teaching entails (Minarik et al., 2003). Therefore, interviews with one focus group consisting of four first year teachers, and one-on-one interviews with six principals and five first year teachers were conducted for this study, in order to identify why first year teachers are dissatisfied. Beginning teachers were interviewed to discover the variables that affect the successes and challenges of their first year. School site components such as: culture, climate, and demographics play key roles and were among the topics included in the interviews, but other critical factors (i.e. principal support, adjunct duties, stress, etc.) were also explored during the interview. Principals were interviewed to determine what their expectations of beginning teachers are and whether the principals feel that first year teachers meet, exceed, or supersede their expectations. Finally, a focus group was conducted in order to gain further in-depth information about teacher perceptions and expectations of their first year.

The framework for this study is the social capital theory, which focuses on the interactions and relationships first year teachers have with their principals, colleagues, staff members, and students. Additionally, the framework provides a platform to explain how rules, culture and climate are key components within this study. This framework is appropriate for the research questions because the questions seek to answer how key

people at a school site (i.e. principals, teachers, and staff) interact and support first year teachers. Thus, interviews and a focus group were chosen as the methods for collecting and analyzing data since both methodologies provide more in-depth knowledge than surveys and interviewees often expound and elaborate during the interviews.

Research Questions

The main research question guiding this study is:

How do site characteristics influence the attrition and retention rates of first year middle school teachers?

Further investigated areas revolved around the sub-research questions:

- How does principal interaction and support influence the attrition and retention rates of first year middle school teachers?
- How does colleague interaction and support influence the attrition and retention rates of first year middle school teachers?
- How does the professional environment influence the attrition and retention rates of first year middle school teachers?

Research Tradition

Since the main focus of this study is to understand the factors that contribute to the attrition and retention rates of first year middle school teachers, an ethnographic tradition is most appropriate, because it involves studying an entire culture or group of people when they are in their natural habitat (Singer, 2009). Additionally, an ethnography requires the researcher to enter the field, interact with subjects, observe, interview, and collect data (Singer, 2009), which is what was done for this study. This

study was conducted as an institutional case ethnography because it contained the following characteristics:

- description of behaviors of a group of people
- themed patterns
- experiences of people, and
- learning from a group of people rather than studying them.

According to Smith (2005), “Institutional ethnography... begins in the local actualities of the everyday world, with the concerns and perspectives of people located distinctively in the institutional process” (p. 34). Moreover, an institutional ethnography is narrowed and usually involves learning from a group that has been set apart within an institution. In this case, the institutional ethnography focused on first year middle school teachers.

The study’s research purposes involved understanding, interpreting, and contextualizing a particular phenomenon and assumption requiring an interpretivist approach. According to Glesne (2011) the paradigm variables are “complex, interwoven, and difficult to measure” (p. 9), as is the case with this study. Furthermore, the interpretivist paradigm worked well with this research study because some of the research methods used involved interacting with people within their own social realm as well as talking with these people about their perceptions, beliefs, and ideas (Glesne, 2011). Using this methodology, school site educators were observed during their one-on-one interviews and analyzed to determine their comprehension, perception, and ability to navigate around, or abide by, an institution’s rules. In addition, they were informally observed during the focus group by: how they interacted with one another, how their body language connected with what they said, and how their tone of voice conveyed their

answers to the interview questions. These observations of each person in the focus group were done to determine the effect the institution's system, procedures, and rules have on them both personally and professionally. According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2012), the final outcome in this institutionalized case study is a "holistic cultural portrait of the group that incorporates participants' views...as well as the researcher's views..." (p. 32).

Research Design

This research study involved six public middle schools, grades 6-8. Specific demographics and characteristics of the schools as well as detailed descriptions of the research setting, context and data collection procedures will be discussed later in the chapter. This study focused on the expectations and perceptions of the teachers interviewed as well as the additional factors contributing to their decision to stay or leave the profession. It is a descriptive study because it contains a literal, detailed description of a series of semi-structured, individual, in-depth interviews of five first year teachers and six principals, as well as a description of the interactions of one focus group. Finally, it is heuristic because it helps others understand the variables contributing to the attrition or retention rate of first year teachers from the perspectives of the teachers themselves as well as their principals.

This study described and interpreted the behaviors of first year teachers in the classroom, with colleagues, and with principals. The behaviors observed from the participants differed but were all interpreted; themed patterns emerged from the observations, interviews, and focus group. The research questions involved the experiences of the participants. Since interviews and one focus group were conducted in specific middle schools within southern California, the research study is bounded. It is

also particularistic because it focused on a particular situation, event, or phenomenon—namely, the reasons, perceptions, and factors of first year middle school teachers as to why they decide to stay or leave the teaching profession.

Research Setting and Context

The research setting involved two school districts within southern California, Meadows Unified (pseudonym) and Field Unified (pseudonym). Meadows Unified houses between 17,000-18,000 students from diverse backgrounds. Approximately 50% of students are low income, and the largest student populations are Latino (45-50%) and White (40-50%). Field Unified houses between 16,000-17,000 students from diverse backgrounds. Approximately 40% of students are low income, and the largest student populations are White (45-50%) and Latino (35-40%). Three middle schools, School A, B, and C, from Meadows Unified and three middle schools, School D, E, and F, from Field Unified were included in this study. Five of the public middle schools were Title I and four of the middle schools shared the following characteristics: 40-50% of students were Hispanic and socio-economically disadvantaged, over 40% of students were on free and reduced lunch, and the percentage for English Learners and students with special needs was 20% or lower.

The sites were selected based on ease of access in order to conduct the interviews. Although the preference was to remain within a certain area of the Leadership Valley (pseudonym) to conduct the research, the scope had to be broadened in order to obtain the six first year middle school teachers who participated in the study. The purpose of this study was to identify the factors that attribute to first year teacher attrition and retention

rates; therefore, by using a sampling strategy that involved more than one district, a valid study was ensured.

Access was gained to the participants and the sites by contacting principals at each location. I explained that I was conducting research for my dissertation by studying the factors that contribute to the attrition and retention rates of first year middle school teachers, as well as analyzing the perceptions and expectations principals have of those teachers.

Research Sample and Data Sources

The data sources for my study were first year teachers who had earned either a multiple subject or a single subject credential. Three of the interviewed teachers had multiple subject credentials and two of them had single subject credentials. The six one-on-one interviews with teachers were composed of five women and one man; their collective ages ranged from 21-45. Three of the six teachers were from different school sites. The subject areas they taught were core content areas (i.e. English and math) combined with an elective such as study skills. The focus group consisted of four teachers from the same school site.

Information regarding the placement of first year middle school teachers was obtained from the area Human Resource office at each district. The criteria for selecting the first year teachers from the list provided by Human Resources was that the person must be in their first year at both the school site and in the school district. Purposeful random sampling (i.e. choosing a specific group within the educational profession to analyze) was used when dealing with the selection of the first year teachers, in order to provide stronger credibility for my study. In order to better understand the factors for

first year middle school teachers' attrition and retention rates, data that is rich with information and describes detailed accounts of first year teacher experiences and principal perceptions was acquired.

For the principals, a homogenous sampling was used. Since they are all principals, homogenous sampling was ideal for this study because the criterion was that only individuals with similar experiences could be selected (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). The criterion for selecting the principals was that they must be the principal at one of the six middle school sites where the first year teachers were. The principal was purposely chosen as opposed to another person within the administration, because the interview had specific questions that only the principal could answer.

Data Collection Instruments

Interview protocol.

The interviews for the educators, which were conducted near the end of the school year, began with a general question (i.e. *Describe your first year of teaching*) followed by more specific questions relating to teacher preparedness, student interactions, teacher induction, principal interactions and support, colleague interactions, professional development, colleague support, mentoring, and the professional environment. These questions were asked to determine details regarding some of the positive and negative experiences during the first year. See Appendix D for a list of teacher interview questions. Principal interviews, which were conducted between the end of the first semester and the beginning of the second semester, focused on gathering information regarding principals' overall criteria for the hiring process, as well as their general perceptions and expectations of first year teachers. See Appendix E for a list of principal

interview questions. All interviews were transcribed and no follow-up interviews were needed. Invitations, consent forms, and interview protocols indicated that participation was voluntary, and explained the purpose of the study, the potential risks and discomforts to subjects, potential benefits, non-payment to subjects, procedures to maintain participants' confidentiality, participation and withdrawal, and the rights of the research subjects. Copies of the research invitation and informed consent forms can be found in Appendix A, Appendix B, and Appendix C.

Focus groups.

Focus group questions were formulated to elicit casual conversation among the participants and to allow them to be honest about their feelings and perceptions of their first year and their preparation for that experience. The group session began with background questions (i.e. *Where did you go to school, and where did you get your credential?*). Subsequent questions asked participants to reflect on their first year, to describe their first instructional day, to describe their workload, and to express anything they would change or keep the same from their first year. See Appendix F for a list of Focus Group questions.

Data Collection Procedures

Interview and focus group procedures.

I chose to conduct five teacher interviews and one teacher focus group in a location that was conducive for the teachers, either in their classrooms or at their school sites. The six principal interviews were conducted at the principals' individual school sites. It was my goal during the interview process to make the participants feel as comfortable as possible, as if they were simply having a conversation with another

person. The teacher participants selected for the interviews and focus groups were based first and foremost on availability. I needed first year middle school teachers who had recently completed their credential training and who had not taught before.

Once I identified educators qualified to participate in my study, I gave participant invitations to the teachers and principals asking for their participation in this study. When I found a teacher who had prior teaching experience, I eliminated them from the eligible participants and selected another person from the list. I did not have an overwhelming sample size to select from; therefore, I could not afford to conduct a more random type of sampling.

Collecting participants who were willing to participate in the focus group was challenging. The teachers were informed that they might be asked to participate in a focus group as well as a one-on-one interview. Though most seemed agreeable to be part of the focus group, when the time came, and they were asked to participate, only four teachers, who were from the same school site, agreed to participate. One of the participants was not interested in participating in the one-on-one interview, yet agreed to participate in the focus group. The focus group met only once due to the time constraints involved in the study as well as the fact that the school year was ending. During the meeting, participants sat in an L shape. I sat at the 90 degree position of the L and placed the recorder towards the middle of the table so it would capture all that was said during the session. Introductions occurred at the beginning of the session, followed by an explanation of my study and what would occur during the focus group. The session lasted approximately 35 minutes with everyone participating equally. After the session had been completed, I thanked the teachers for their participation.

The principals were selected based on the available middle schools in my research setting as well as on their willingness to participate in the study. No persuasion was necessary to acquire the principals' participation as they all readily agreed to participate. The interviews were conducted in their offices. I explained the purpose of my study and conducted the interview; afterwards, I thanked the principals for participating and informed them that I would return at a later date for their review of the transcriptions.

Since the principal was the gatekeeper for my study, he or she was the first person I contacted via telephone regarding participation. The study and the letter of participation were explained at that time. My introductory letters to the principals were hand-delivered along with the introductory letters to the beginning teachers. Upon receiving an acceptance from participants, I scheduled an interview day and time that was convenient for both of us. I made the participants' schedules the priority and rearranged my schedule to accommodate them. The interviews were purely voluntary; however, I did provide a Starbucks gift card to those who participated.

On the day each principal and teacher interview, I warmly greeted the participant and briefly talked with him or her in order to help ease any tension or nervousness that may have been present. I provided participants with the invitations and consent forms, explained what they were, gave them time to review the documents, and asked for signatures. I placed the digital recorder equidistance between us to ensure that both of our nuances and language were captured clearly and accurately. After the interview, I thanked participants and explained that I would be contacting them again to review the transcription.

Data Analysis

Preliminary data analysis.

After the interviews were conducted, there was a plethora of data that needed to be organized, transcribed, coded, and analyzed. I created an organizational color-coding system (Glesne, 2011) for the teacher interviews using the following topics: teacher preparedness, student interactions, teacher induction, principal interactions and support, colleague interactions and support, professional development, mentoring, and the professional environment such as salaries, workload, and school climate and culture. The data from principal interviews were organized using the following topics: their role as a principal, hiring preferences, teacher expectations, principal interactions, and principal supports

Data analysis of interviews.

I began interviewing in October 2014 and ended in June 2015. The majority of the principals were interviewed toward the beginning of the year, and the majority of the teachers were interviewed toward the end of the year. After the collection of my data, I used several forms of data analysis. Since I conducted many interviews, one of my primary methods was to use narrative analysis. To use such an analysis required that I, during the interview process, carefully paid attention to the teacher accounts, explanations, and recollections of their first year, in order to determine how those details connected with my study's conceptual framework. The teacher interview questions and focus group questions were open-ended and provided interviewees with many opportunities to recollect and recount stories from their first year as teachers. Two primary focus areas of the interview were their expectations of their first year as a teacher and the factors that contributed to their decisions to stay or leave the profession.

Therefore, as Glesne (2011) points out, “Rather than dissect these stories into themes and patterns, the analysis process is often concerned with both the story itself and the telling of the story” (p.185). In other words, much information was gathered by simply listening to an interviewee relate a story or experience rather than analyzing it while it was being told. By using this method, richer content was revealed because I was focused on the teachers’ explanation and their body language. I used a digital recording device during both the interviews and the focus group and took notes regarding key points and body language, such as patting the table with their hand or twisting in their chair. I relied on the digital recorder for all verbal information. As soon as possible after each interview, I transcribed it.

Once the transcriptions were completed, I used thematic analysis to find themes and patterns in my data. This type of analysis required that I use data coding; therefore, I created a chart that included summaries of quotes or key concepts from the interviews. Once I determined basic categories for the data (i.e. teacher preparation, student interactions, principal support, etc), I assigned a color to each category and then color-coded the interviews. Once that was complete, I created an outline of the data coding process.

Roles of the researcher.

I had multiple roles as I conducted this study. My key role was that of a researcher, doctoral student, and educational professional. Not only am I an educator, but I have served in various out-of-the classroom/coordinator positions at school sites. I am a lifelong learner who believes in the importance of getting a good education. As a principle investigator, I also have the roles of: advocate, potential reformer, and writer.

Bias.

I made the assumption that candidates in all types of credential programs lacked sufficient fieldwork experience, but that the education in the multiple subject program was well-rounded in pedagogy, while the single subject program was more pedagogically focused. I believed that candidates' success in the credential program and with student teaching indicated how successful their first year would be for them. I also assumed that first year teachers needed to have more assistance provided to them at a school site. In addition, I was concerned with the amount of practice teaching time that was provided to the candidates during student teaching, the lack of sufficient instruction in classroom management during preservice training, the teaching assignments first year teachers commonly received, and whether they were given enough support from either their peers or from the principal during their first year.

Researcher effects on the case.

These biases could have affected my case overall and my participants' reactions during the interviews in several ways. My interviewees could have detected that I felt credential programs in general lack sufficient instruction in classroom management, and could have tried to answer my questions with an answer that I wanted. However, I avoided biasing my interview in any way. I utilized several strategies to avoid this potential effect. First, I guarded my facial expressions and comments carefully so as not to sway the interviewee one way or another. Second, I asked the questions in a neutral manner trying not to put emphasis on certain words or phrases, since doing that would make my questions leading and generate a skewed response. Third, I asked for positive and negative experiences from my interviewees to get an equal perspective from them

and not focus solely on the areas that I felt were in need of improvement. A final strategy I incorporated into my research was member checks with various colleagues involved in a K-12 setting to ensure that my analysis of the interviews was appropriate and accurate (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012).

Case effects on the researcher.

The answers of my interviewees could have had an effect on how I interpreted my data. Since I entered this research study with a fixed set of values and beliefs based on personal experiences, I could have kept a trained ear for answers that mirror those values and beliefs. However, in the process of doing so, I might have missed valuable information, patterns, or themes my interviewees may have expressed in their answers. In order to avoid this, I did the following: (a) triangulated my data, (b) analyzed not only my data from first year teachers, but also data from principals, and (c) asked for peer/colleague review of my data along with feedback. If my colleagues extracted the same themes and patterns that I did, I felt more assured that my analysis remained neutral rather than biased (Volpe & Bloomberg, 2012).

Summary

In this methodology chapter, a variety of qualitative research characteristics and components were disseminated, explanations were provided for how the chosen methodology connects to this study's conceptual framework, and details were given for how the data collection was valid and how bias was avoided. The methods used to gather the findings were appropriate to this study because they produced more in-depth data collection, which would not have been possible without the close interaction with the participants. Finally, by using the social capital framework within this qualitative study, I

was able to see firsthand how it functions within an educational setting. The subsequent chapter discusses the results of my study and includes pertinent data that address the topic of this study.

Chapter 4: Data Findings

Introduction

The presentation of the findings for this study will be outlined and described using the following themes that emerged from the interviews: teacher preparedness, student interactions, teacher induction, principal interactions and support, colleague interactions and support, professional environment, school climate, and school culture.

Teacher Preparation

According to the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (2003), "To ensure that teachers are qualified to meet the teaching requirements and the learning needs of a digital age, we must insist on quality preparation for teachers, rigorous accreditation standards, and licensure that meets high standards" (p.190).

Although all three of these goals and requirements outlined by NCTAF (2003) are critical in order to produce an effective teacher, this study researched teacher preparation as one of the reasons why teachers decide to leave or to stay in the profession and explained how it relates to pedagogy, classroom management, the BTGDI program, and mentoring. As indicated in the literature review, lack of training in pedagogy and lack of student teaching experience while in the credential program were two predominant reasons why teachers felt unprepared when they obtained their own classroom (Brock & Grady, 2006; Ingersoll et al., 2012; NCATE, 2015).

I asked each of the teachers if they felt that their credential program prepared them with the knowledge and skills they needed in order to deal with their first year experiences. The results were unanimous regarding pedagogical training. All the teachers felt that they were given the knowledge needed to write lesson plans and to

interpret state standards. However, the responses slightly differed in regard to adequate student teaching experience. One teacher, J. Marks (pseudonym) commented that she had an abundance of fieldwork experience along with helpful feedback from her master teacher while in the credential program (personal communication, April 21, 2015). In addition, she had confidence in her abilities. She said, "...I had the skills to come in as a new teacher and to be successful. And if I didn't, [I knew] the tools [the people] on who to seek...and what questions I needed to ask." While this was a positive response regarding teacher preparation, the remaining four teachers had negative experiences which dovetailed with the research by Ingersoll et al. (2012) and Brock and Grady (2001). Four of the teachers felt that their credential program was mundane with needless, repetitive classes, such as classes focusing on various theories, how to create lesson plans, or how to communicate with parents. Moreover, they agreed that the program did not prepare them for the everyday teaching and classroom occurrences such as: dealing with classroom behavior issues, teaching several levels of students in one class using different sets of curriculum, or dealing with and teaching students with special needs. They felt unknowledgeable and unprepared for dealing with student behavior and classroom management—two factors which are leading causes for teacher attrition (Hughes, 2012 and Good, 2014). S. Jackson (pseudonym) summarized the amount of training her credential program provided her in teaching skills: "...my credential program...didn't talk about classroom management; they didn't talk about positive behavior support, [or] real important issues like how to deal with students with reoccurring problems [such as] behavior...They don't teach you the real stuff." (personal communication, November 17, 2014). Similarly, L. Pajaro (pseudonym) said that in

some ways her credential program completely prepared her and in other ways it did not prepare her at all (personal communication, May 8, 2015). This statement seemed like an oxymoron, so she further elaborated by stating,

I wasn't crying every night; I feel like I was prepared as much as I could 'cause I did [my job] without massive failure. But then at the same time, when I think about all the things that I really do in my job, those were none of the things I learned in my classes.

When beginning teachers cry, especially during their first year, it often means they are stressed, frustrated, or need support and encouragement. It is virtually impossible for a beginning teacher to be completely prepared for various issues and situations that are common during the first year. As the interviewed teachers repeatedly commented, a credential program can only prepare a person to a point. The rest of the learning occurs by beginning teachers practicing and trying to find their way during that first year. S. Jackson (personal communication, November 17, 2014) commented,

You can take as many of those theory classes but...and even like the student teaching—it's not the same when it's your own classroom, your own rules, your own environment and doing it on your own....Because when you're working somebody else's classroom, I don't want to say you don't put your best forth...It's just different when it's your own classroom and you take things a lot more personally...You're invested a lot more...

Another aspect involved in teacher preparation is the lack of preparedness experienced by beginning teachers who were trained to teach at an elementary level but who wind up teaching at a secondary level in middle school. Very little research was

found regarding this topic; however, it was addressed by two of the interviewed teachers.

L. Pajaro (personal communication, May 8, 2015) explained:

We learned a lot of theory but at the same time, personally I feel like I am better prepared to teach middle school than a lot of Single Subject credentialed candidates are because I was trained how to teach a kid from day 1....So I bring those [skills] up to middle school, where I see a lot of my peers who went through problems struggle so much more because they're applying these lessons and management strategies designed for a twelfth grader to a seventh grader, and it doesn't work.

Her statement suggests that the Multiple Subject credential program provides teachers with the knowledge and skillset needed to address the needs of the whole child, especially if that child is functioning below grade level. In contrast, she intimates that the Single Subject credential program does not offer that same knowledge to its candidates and focuses on training candidates for dealing with a certain age group. As she implies, that program prepares teachers more for dealing with high schoolers but not necessarily middle schoolers, who are in the transition phase of their lives.

T. Lobos (pseudonym) did not have difficulty teaching the content required at a secondary level but rather expressed her frustration with middle school student behavior. (personal communication, May 8, 2015). She stated:

[The credential program did not prepare me] management wise [or] behavior wise...I was used to dealing with third graders and kindergartners. And when I walked into the classroom with 40 seventh graders who were loud and screaming

and yelling and wouldn't listen to me and were laughing in my face—I didn't expect that.

Despite the lack of training in the credential program in learning how to adapt to different environments and different students, S. Jones (pseudonym) was able to internalize that lesson anyway. (personal communication, June 17, 2015). He commented:

...I kind of realized this in student teaching. In order to be a really effective teacher, you have to find your voice. And then you have to find a way to express your voice for as many different classes as you have, 'cause what works in 1st period isn't going to work in 3rd period. And I think that's a reality that doesn't get focused on enough in the credential program.

Wegmann et al. (2005) recognize that regardless of how much student teaching time beginning teachers received while in their credential program or the fact that they are qualified to teach because they have a credential, they are still vastly inexperienced in how to run a classroom, which is where the BTGDI program is beneficial. Mentors from the induction program provide support and assistance to beginning teachers. The induction program will be discussed in more detail later in the chapter. Because of the disadvantage teaching experience causes, Wegmann et al. (2005) suggest that "...along with the development of teacher competencies, educator preparation programs should support the development of positive beliefs, a sense of commitment, and perceptions of self-efficacy" (p.238) among its teacher trainees. Until those necessary measures are adopted by credential programs, Doney (2013) notes, "To be successful, individuals in new job situations [need to] adopt protective safeguards that allow them to exist and often thrive as they adjust to their new environment" (p.646). Those protective safeguards will

be different for each beginning teacher; nonetheless, they are a necessity and will eventually help to balance out the disadvantage in preparedness that they will arrive with at the school site. Furthermore, those safeguards will help them through the adaptation process as well.

Principals also have a concern about the level of preparedness beginning teachers possess. The interviewed principals concurred that they want beginning teachers who are skilled in pedagogy, who are able to relate to students, and who are excited about their job. F. Orchata (pseudonym) understood the lack of training that beginning teachers have when they begin their first year when he stated, "...I think they get a lot of practice in their programs but...it's one thing to design a step by step lesson plan for a college class...[and another thing to teach that lesson plan]." (personal communication, November 10, 2014). Likewise, J. Forest (personal communication, April 23, 2015) remarked, "The experience [beginning teachers] get as a student teacher really does provide some help but it's nothing in comparison to when they move into a classroom." Moreover, all the interviewed principals' viewpoints of teacher preparation can be summarized when he says, "...I think really good teachers are hard to come by...because anyone can teach but...not everyone can teach well." Realizing that finding effective superb teachers are a rarity, principals should ensure that the necessary supports are put into place in order to retain first year teachers at their site. The main research question of this study deals with how site characteristics impact the attrition and retention rate of teachers. When teachers are pleased with the site characteristics, they see no reason to leave. Therefore, principals can influence beginning teacher satisfaction by ensuring that

their first year is not arduous due to extensive preps or large class sizes; thus impacting teacher attrition and retention rates.

According to the literature review, research has shown that many principals have a variety of aspects they are looking for in beginning teachers, but fluency in pedagogical skills is the primary characteristic of an effective teacher (Brown & Wynn, 2009; Rutledge et al., 2010; Blase & Kirby, 2009). Likewise, F. Orchata (personal communication, November 10, 2014) emphasized the importance of beginning teachers having this quality as well. He said:

What am I looking for? Content knowledge. It's always content knowledge. I mean, if they don't truly understand the material, then you know... They have to be a master of it 'cause that's how you're gonna get follow up questions that really help to pull the kids in.

In general, the types of qualities and characteristics that the interviewed principals look for in beginning teachers can be found in the statement by C. Morehouse (pseudonym): "...you can teach a lot of things but you can't teach someone work ethic, and wanting to learn, and an eagerness for their subject area and honing their craft, and also connection with kids." (personal communication, November 17, 2014). Finally, M. Ceviche (pseudonym) felt differently than the other principals about the necessary qualities that he looks for when hiring a beginning teacher, and gave a refreshing perspective when he stated:

The way I look at the teaching profession... [is I] think of it as a calling. So I look for teachers that have that same passion that I do and I get a sense that nothing's going to sway that passion, regardless of changes in the economy, the community,

etc....[The sense that] they're still gonna have that passion and belief that kids can succeed and they're committed to making that happen....(personal communication, November 13, 2014)

Beginning teachers may have challenges in various aspects of teaching requirements and skills, and often times those struggles are viewed as lack of preparation or labeled as ineffective by principals. According to the interviewed principals, some of those challenges are:

- Inability to adapt to student needs
- Lack of collaboration
- Ineffective parent communication
- Disorganization, especially in regards to grade reporting
- Difficulty creating lesson plans
- Difficulty with classroom management
- Frequent referrals for student behavior; lack of classroom management
- Inability to effectively communicate and relate to students
- Inability to accept suggestions or positive criticism

Since the findings reveal an awareness by the principals that first year teachers commonly have these challenges, the principals should consider addressing these issues during beginning teacher orientation, in order to try to avoid them occurring in a subsequent year. In the end, regardless of the strengths or weaknesses each individual teacher may possess, their job is still one of the highest “callings,” according to M. Ceviche (personal communication, November 13, 2014). He declared:

I love working with brand new teachers because they're so excited and they're moldable....there are two types of teachers and I firmly believe this to this day. There are the teachers who come in and do their job because it's their job, and they are perfectly adequate. Then there are teachers who teach because that's who they are, and they can't do anything else. And those are the teachers I want to be [like], and I want to be around those people.

Student Interactions

Teaching middle school can be filled with surprising experiences at times, but more so for a beginning teacher who was trained to teach elementary school students and who also did their student teaching in elementary school. J. Marks (personal communication, April 21, 2015) stated, "...most of my experience has been in the elementary school, so it's more of a culture shock coming into middle school." T. Lobos (personal communication, May 8, 2015), who was also trained in an elementary background, recounted her student interactions at the beginning of the year:

When I first started, I had two 6th grade classes and a 7th grade class. And my 7th grade class was very very hard because there were 40 of them. And they were very rowdy; they wouldn't listen to me...they didn't care what I said....And I found it difficult and I many times, I wanted to quit.

However, she decided to forge ahead and shortly after, she was given all 6th grade classes, primarily since she possessed a multiple subject credential. What had originally been a moment of defeat and questioning as to why she entered the profession, according to T. Lobos, turned into happiness when she was able to start over with new faces. However, the class size was too large. There is a possibility that if the class size

had been reduced, T. Lobos would not have found it so challenging to manage and to teach the class. L. Pajaro (personal communication, May 8, 2015) explained her unusual introduction to middle school, when she was hired after the school year had already commenced. Like J. Marks and T. Lobos, she had been trained to teach elementary school as well. She states, "...I was always interested in middle school....But I had no student teaching experience in a middle school classroom. So I came and observed the previous teacher for two days and then I started the following Monday." The most astounding thing about L. Pajaro's newly acquired job is that she was asked to become a mentor teacher while still in her first year. Needless to say, she had a large amount of responsibilities and duties. L. Pajaro also commented about the group of students she acquired during her first year, which caused a large amount of stress for her. She remarked:

"...the behavior issues were pretty intense. I had a lot of difficult students, a lot of profanity, a lot of inappropriate sexual references, students dealing with very difficult things. I had a student cut herself in the middle of class on only my 2nd week.... [I had] students with severe Autism throwing desks, being violent, lots of stuff like that.... No one tells you how to respond when a kid tells another kid, or you, to "f" off and then throws something across the room. And no one has that answer either.

It was unclear from the interview if principal support was provided to L. Pajaro during that challenging time of her career, but if it had been provided, along with a BTGDI mentor, she would have learned that there is an answer in dealing with such situations. These interviewed teachers, who were not completely prepared to enter middle school as

a teacher, found that they had many surprises and shocks. As J. Marks (personal communication, April 21, 2015) simply stated, “You know, it’s just—it’s middle school. It’s like I said, a lot of things that they say to you are really shocking. Shocking what they do and say, but you know...I’ve learned as a first year teacher to just pick my battles.”

Along with preparation, especially for those not trained for middle school classes, class size and class demographics play pivotal roles in beginning teachers relating and interacting with their students. Kersaint et al., (2007) note the important role these two aspects have in the attrition or retention rates of beginning teachers when he states:

...new teachers who are assigned all low-end courses, students with known behavior difficulty, or excessive class preparation may not find teaching as enjoyable as others with different assignments and students. Each teacher should be provided a course load that allows them to experience the joy of teaching during the course of their day.” (p.791)

Principals should be cognizant of the challenges that beginning teachers face during their first year: adapting to student needs, familiarizing themselves with the curriculum, following a pacing guide, differentiating instruction, and dealing with student behavior and classroom management. Therefore, principals should not allow beginning teachers to be given such assignments as Kersaint et al., (2007) described but rather follow the advice of Kersaint et al., (2007) and allow the beginning teacher to enjoy and adapt to their first year.

All the interviewed teachers remarked that they felt their class size was too large; however, one teacher described a shocking schedule for a beginning teacher. S. Jackson (personal communication, November 17, 2014) stated, “I taught 7th grade English [32

students], 7th grade social studies [34 students], and then I taught ELD 3 and the SDAIE cluster for social studies. I had 18 [English Learner] kids for social studies—levels 1, 2, 3, and 4... [and study hall] was 34 [students].” Giving this teacher five preps during her first year can be taxing to a beginning teacher, which shows that site characteristics greatly influence teachers. Several of the interviewed teachers remarked that they had several large combined classes that consisted of wide range of students (i.e. special needs, English Learners, and Gifted and Talented. Furthermore, principals are aware of the challenging classes beginning teachers frequently acquire. As L. Papel (pseudonym) noted, “And usually the person who’s hired is [given] a horrible schedule because they’re hired at the end and that’s what they get and it’s yucky.” (personal communication, March 30, 2015). Although a challenging schedule may be what is initially assigned to a first year teacher, a principal can modify that schedule to make it easier for a beginning teacher to adapt to their first year.

Teacher Induction

Although BTGDI is the most current term for California’s teacher induction program, the interviewed teachers and principals referred to it by its former name, BTSA. F. Orchata (personal communication, November 10, 2014) mentioned that only one of his beginning teachers experienced BTSA simply because it was a requirement of her credential program. However, in F. Orchata’s school district, the BTSA program no longer exists for beginning teachers. He states, “...when you have someone there that you know they’re assigned to you, it just makes it a lot easier [for beginning teachers] to go and ask for help.” However, L. Papel (personal communication, March 30, 2015)

acknowledged the amount of work and stress that BTSA can cause for beginning teachers when she commiserated:

BTSA can be very overwhelming for a brand new teacher, even when the BTSA personnel are great, and they're supportive and cooperative and help them. But many teachers just feel like it's an added something they have to do when they're already working so hard not to flounder...

Several of the principals interviewed indicated that they provide beginning teachers with a brief orientation/induction program. Yet, the majority of the principals made it clear that BTSA was where they expected teachers to receive their induction. Several interviewed teachers (J. Marks and S. Jackson) on the other hand, explained that they were enrolled in BTSA only because their credential would soon be expiring. T. Lobos (personal communication, May 8, 2015) remarked how challenging BTSA was for her, primarily because it took many hours and required her to complete a large amount of unnecessary paperwork. She did, however, speak highly of her BTSA support provider and felt that she was very knowledgeable and helpful to her during her first year of teaching.

According to Wynn et al. (2007), "Effective mentoring programs reflect two key components of professional learning communities, collective learning and shared practices" (p.225). Based on the findings from the interviews of both groups, the principals and the beginning teachers, BTSA was a supportive organization but did not necessarily provide those key components previously listed by Wynn et al. (2007). Therefore, the failure to address all these aspects within the induction program may result in teacher attrition over time.

Principal Interactions and Support

Research has shown that principal interactions and support cause beginning teachers to be more resilient during their first year. Quinn (2005) comments that “...teachers will remain in more difficult assignments when they feel their principals encourage them in their efforts to teach students” (p.228). For the purpose of this study, principal interactions focused on the interactive role principals have with beginning teachers, the perceptions and assumptions principals make during the hiring process, as well as what principals look for in an effective teacher. Similarly in this study, principal support centered on the various types of assistance principals provided for beginning teachers.

LoCascio, Smeaton, and Waters (2014) discussed the importance of principals keeping informed by being physically present to observe the interactions of beginning teachers with their mentoring program; by giving advice and assistance when needed; and by intervening when necessary. The interviewed teachers reflected on their positive and negative interactions with their principal. J. Marks (personal communication, April 21, 2015) commented that the principal who hired her did not remain at the school site; therefore, she had to adapt to a new principal. S. Jackson (personal communication, November 17, 2014) between other than if she was having a formal observation. Three of the five teachers offered nothing but high accolades regarding their principal’s interactions and pointed out that their principal was very complimentary, congenial, upbeat, friendly, approachable, and helpful.

The interviewed principals were asked how they perceived their role in interacting with beginning teachers as well as their interactions during the hiring process. A. Shasta (pseudonym) stated:

My role is primarily to have a teacher acquainted with the school site, procedures, comfort[able] with interaction with students, minimizing the amount of what can be potential unnecessary barriers so they can get to the heart of what their craft is all about, so that they can implement and exercise and experiment with those things that they are learning directly out of school. (personal communication, April 21, 2015).

F. Orchata (personal communication, November 10, 2014) felt that his interactive role involved consistent queries of beginning teachers as to their welfare and survival of their first year, as well as providing them with any necessary assistance. J. Forest (personal communication, April 23, 2015) remarked:

[My role is] providing them the structure and support so they can not only learn the culture of the school...but also to be able to support them as they continue to develop their skill and really figure out who they are as a teacher.

Likewise, L. Papel (personal communication, March 30, 2015) felt that her primary role was “support and guidance.” All the principals expressed an interest in providing support to their first year teachers, whether that support came via another themselves, another administrator, a faculty member, or a staff member.

The final piece for this study involving principal interactions is the qualities principals look for during the hiring process. The findings from the interviews revealed that the principals wanted effective beginning teachers for the sake of student

achievement. L. Papel also mentioned a desire to hire a beginning teacher who had longevity; someone who did not intend to leave the profession within the first few years of teaching (personal communication, March 30, 2015). The statement by Brill and McCartney (2008) expound why hiring a teacher with longevity is a need rather than a desire for some principals:

As trained teachers leave their skills, a double loss occurs: money has been lost in training that will not be applied as a tool for improvement at that particular school, and more money has to be spent in the training of incoming teachers (p.753).

According to the principals interviewed, the preferred characteristics of a beginning teacher are:

- “Rock stars” (F. Orchata)
- “Risk-takers” (A. Shasta)
- Not a gossip and complainer (M. Ceviche)
- Fluent and creative with technology (J. Forest)
- “Coachable” (C. Morehouse)
- Has “drive and passion” (J. Forest and M. Ceviche)
- Assists in extracurricular activities (F. Orchata)
- “Emotional capacity to relate to students” (A. Shasta)
- Collaborative (A. Shasta and M. Ceviche)
- “Team player” (L. Papel)
- “Authentic care for kids” (L. Papel)
- “Laugh at their mistakes” (L. Papel)

- “Willing to take constructive criticism” (L. Papel)
- Introspective and a life-long learner (M. Ceviche)

In the literature review, Bigham, Hively, and Toole (2014) condensed this extensive list from the interview into major categories involving student interactions, colleague interactions, and passion for teaching, but the authors revealed that there is a similarity in the qualities principals desire their teachers to have. No indication was given during the interviews, however, that the principals worked with the beginning teachers in order to ensure that they began to embody those characteristics.

Lack of principal support has been mentioned throughout the research as being one of the major reasons why teachers decide to leave the profession (Brock & Grady, 2001; Brown & Wynn 2007/2009) and one of this study’s research questions dealt expressly with this topic. When the teachers were asked during the interviews who provided them with the most assistance during their first year, none of them mentioned the principal. T. Lobos (personal communication, May 8, 2015) mentioned an assistant principal but that was the closest to the administration that any of the teachers referenced. All but one teacher commented that they felt that their principal was there for them if they needed them; however, as S. Jackson (personal communication, November 17, 2014) stated, “It’s really hard to see [the administrators]. You don’t see them too often, and if you do, it’s in a very formal setting where...you don’t really discuss anything.” Furthermore, she stated, “We had from the administration...once a month...20 minute conversation[s]...where they...spent about 15 minutes just reviewing the calendar and administrative stuff...and offered a window of time for us to ask any questions about testing, deadlines, and such.”

In a school setting, principals can provide support in a variety of ways, one of which is through clear communication. Unfortunately, for S. Jackson (personal communication, November 17, 2014), there were many instances of unclear expectations or information that was never disseminated to her, leaving her feeling frustrated and stressed. Hence, this finding dovetails with the findings by Howell et al. (2014) that lack of communication from the principal with beginning teachers can affect teacher attrition. Similarly, S. Jones (personal communication, June 17, 2015) commented that there are some areas that are challenging to work on with the administration due to conflicts of interest, unfamiliarity or fluency of the content or environment, and unrealistic expectations. He stated, “I think it’s really difficult working with them when it comes to curriculum [because] I know my principal was only an elementary school teacher...” Thus, he inferred that his principal may be inexperienced with using the middle school curriculum and therefore unable to provide the necessary feedback regarding the curriculum. Moreover, he expounded on why he experiences exasperation with the administration at times when he explained:

And so none of them have ever taught middle school math. And so it can be frustrating because they really push project-based learning and they really push working collaboratively, which is awesome. But then it’s really difficult because...I think they assume it’s easier than it is.

In contrast, another teacher had a positive experience involving principal support. Various researchers have discussed the value for principals to establish an approachable and positive relationship with their beginning teachers, while allowing their humanistic side to be revealed (Brock & Grady, 2001; Brown & Wynn, 2009; and Kouzes & Posner,

2007). According to L. Pajaro (personal communication, May 8, 2015), her principal expressed warmth and his ability to simply be a down-to-earth person, as opposed to someone who is stiff and unapproachable. She recounted how genuinely happy he was when she was hired because "...he shouted down the hall to the AP, 'She's gonna stay! She's not leaving!'. ...It was the first time I had seen him as a person and not just the boss. And that was nice."

Part of the way a principal shows support to beginning teachers is by ensuring them that they are valued assets to the school site (Ingersoll, 2003). T. Lobos (personal communication, May 8, 2015) remarked, "So, I didn't feel intimidated; I did not feel worried about doing something wrong and [the administrators] being like, 'Oh, maybe we don't want her working for us.' I was never made to feel that way." S. Jones (personal communication, June 17, 2015) stated, "I always felt that the administration, the principal and assistant principals, would make time if I needed it. But they're always so busy, so I never really...felt comfortable going to them." According to J. Forest (personal communication, April 23, 2015), it is necessary to constantly show support to beginning teachers through a variety of ways but primarily via encouragement. He mentioned that in his viewpoint, teachers need to have "...the willingness to make mistakes and to learn from it" if they want to be effective. Furthermore, he stated, "Teachers are gonna make mistakes and they're gonna struggle...There's nothing wrong with that." M. Ceviche (personal communication, November 13, 2014) summarized a principal's role in the same manner as Brock and Grady (2001). M. Ceviche stated, "Principals need to walk that fine line of being the shoulder to cry on for new teachers along with giving suggestions and being the tough guy."

The first month or two of a beginning teacher's initial year passes quickly. Researchers have found that when beginning teachers are provided with a solid foundation of the basics about the school and their job, calmness and confidence often prevails (Brock & Grady, 2001; Brown & Wynn, 2007; and Jung, 2007). "In addition, frequent contact [by the principal] in the initial days and an accurate knowledge base regarding the policy and procedures of the school and effective teaching makes a positive difference (LoCascio et al., 2014, p.18). F. Orchata (personal communication, November 10, 2014) makes it his mission to implement the suggestions from these researchers. He declared,

...I think as a principal it's important to constantly be checking and saying, 'Hey, how's everything going? Do you need anything? Do you have any questions about anything? That's the biggest piece. We do new teacher meetings every month to help new teachers...get acclimated to the campus and to the programs and to the different services that we offer. And just really give them as much knowledge and support as they need.

Likewise, L. Papel (personal communication, March 30, 2015) understands the importance of supporting beginning teachers, especially during their initial transition phase. She commented,

As soon as they're hired...I give them my cell phone number, and we plan to meet. And then I give them an hour or two of my time before school even starts.... I do everything to help them so that on that first day when they're here with [the] staff,...they aren't worrying about other things.

Overall, the criticalness of principal interactions and support as it relates to beginning teachers can be summarized by F. Orchata (personal communication, November 10, 2014) when he points out that “it takes a village” to help to support beginning teachers. Moreover, his elaboration meshes with the findings from some researchers regarding the viewpoints, perceptions, and expectations principals have regarding beginning teachers (Brown & Wynn, 2009; Minarik et al., 2003; and Wood, 2005). F. Orchata expressed the following:

...ultimately, I want to provide avenues for the new teacher. I mean, in some ways it's the new teacher's responsibility to reach out, and I...want to check in, in case they are a little fearful or reticent to reach out. I know sometimes they think it might make them look bad or something.... Once [a beginning teacher] join[s] [our school] family, it's like, [and] ‘What can we do to make it work well?’

Colleague Interactions and Support

This topic relates to the research question: *How does colleague interaction and support influence the attrition and retention rates of first year teachers?* Colleague interactions via professional development along with colleague support are vital necessities in the survival of beginning teachers as they progress through their first year (Blase & Kirby, 2009; Sass et al., 2011; and Wynn et al., 2007). At L. Papel's school site, her faculty and staff make a special effort to welcome beginning teachers by meeting them at the school site as they are preparing their rooms during the summer. In this way, colleague interaction has already occurred before the school year begins. Most importantly, beginning teachers are warmly welcomed and made to feel as if they are part

of a family. J. Forest (personal communication, April 23, 2015) had a similar experience at his site. He stated,

...I clearly know that there's a need for teachers out there and they probably have their choice about where they went. And then to have gone and accepted the offer to me is a big deal...They are saying that they want to be part of what I see as a family...

Four of the interviewed principals did not comment about a sense of family at their school sites. Similarly, none of the principals mentioned professional development for beginning teachers other than a few monthly informational sessions that occur at the school sites of J. Marks and S. Jackson, School A and School B.

Although two of the principals addressed the topic of collegial interaction at their site by referring to it as a family, the viewpoints from the interviewed teachers vary as to the type of collegial interaction and support present at their sites. First, they all agreed that the professional development they received was time consuming and dull. So, although the principal had a set aside time each week for professional development, unless it was a department meeting with their colleagues, they were unimpressed and bored with the training. S. Jones (personal communication, November 17, 2014) negatively commented, "...I can't think of a professional development that I walked away saying, "Yes! This is it!" I think it's a lot of stuff that I've heard before, so kind of redundant. Not bad necessarily, but you know—just the same." L. Pajaro (personal communication, May 8, 2015) responded to the professional development query by saying:

...most of the time [professional development days] are open for collaboration. We might have to work with our PBL [Project Based Learning] team or we can just use the time for whatever meetings.... We [the teachers] get along great but we don't really collaborate. Occasionally we collaborate, but usually it's just me doing it and giving it, unfortunately. I still collaborate a little bit with other teachers from other grades...but nothing formal. More just throwing ideas and helping each other a bit.

This teacher's frustrating experiences indicate that proper networking and interactions, two key aspects in this study's conceptual framework, are not prevalent at her site. S. Jackson (personal communication, November 17, 2014) noted, "In all honesty, it was a waste of time. So for the most part...the professional development that they offered at the school site was not productive at all." Finally J. Marks (personal communication, April 21, 2015) stated, "But it's more sought out on your own time, other than professional development... [A] challenging [thing] would be just finding time to meet...everybody is just so busy."

All the interviewed teachers remarked how helpful and supportive their colleagues were during the first year. One teacher, S. Jackson, was required to find her own mentor because that was the protocol at her site for beginning teachers. However, she managed to find a colleague who became her most influential and beneficial support system, and who was not only her mentor, but her friend. By selecting him, she was able to learn more from her mentor than she might have if she had not been given a choice (McCann & Johannesen, 2004).

J. Marks (personal communication, April 21, 2015) noted how refreshing it is to be around colleagues who are kind in word and deed; T. Lobos (personal communication, May 8, 2015) explained that the generosity and longsuffering actions that her colleagues had with her was astounding. She stated, “Well, everyone here is very helpful. I asked sooo many questions and I was waiting for people to get annoyed with me and it never happened.” T. Lobos also mentioned how congenial the office staff was and how hard-working and supportive the school counselor was. These statements reveal that their schools have a strongly knit support system and strong school cultures at their sites comprised of not just colleagues but other staff members as well. S. Jones (personal communication, June 17, 2015) also felt that the office staff was dependable and supportive and stated, “The [people] that worked in the office were absolutely unbelievable. Super sweet; anything I needed, they would take care of me; anytime I messed up they were like, ‘Hey, don’t worry. Let’s show you how to get it done.’” Finally, S. Jackson (personal communication, November 17, 2014) explained how equally enjoyable yet frustrating it can be to work with her colleagues. She said,

Um, all the teachers here are happy to offer help. That’s only if you ask for it, of course. They’re experienced and definitely a really good resource. Negative [would be]...just having differences in teaching styles. Sometimes that would conflict, and a lot of teachers here can be vocal.

Based on the findings from these interviews, collegial interactions can occur in a variety of settings, just as collegial support (i.e. mentoring) can occur in a variety of forms. Although these interactions and support are not synonymous, they both serve a similar function, namely, assisting beginning teachers in getting through their first year.

Professional Environment

Along with support and interaction, climate and culture in an organization is largely explained through the social capital theory, which is the conceptual framework for this study. Based on the interviews, none of the principals felt their role involved shaping the school climate and school culture. Although some of the principals referred to their school as a “family,” the principals still expressed their inactive role regarding climate and culture. The principals indicated that the teachers were the ones who created and maintained the school climate, school culture, classroom climate, and classroom culture, and that the principals merely encouraged them to maintain positive school climates and school cultures. However, the school climate at one site was not always positive. T. Lobos (personal communication, May 8, 2015) related how surprised she was to discover the hostile climates that can exist at a school site, when she witnessed two teachers in loud verbal combat with one another during a meeting. S. Jones (personal communication, June 17, 2015) and L. Pajaro (personal communication, May 8, 2015) expressed their experiences of dealing with hostile classroom climates. L. Pajaro described shadowing a teacher and walking into her soon-to-be classroom filled with students who were combative, rude, disrespectful, and rebellious. The prior teacher had allowed such a classroom climate to exist; however, L. Pajaro had a large amount of work to do in order to convert such a hostile environment into a safe learning environment, which she did. Likewise, S. Jones likened the introduction to his new classroom as a hostile takeover. He stated, “...I was a stranger coming into their territory because it had been their classroom, the students...for such a long time....And so, because I came in so late, I was no longer a figure of authority. I was a stranger. I was an

invader on their territory.” Both teachers had to recreate the classroom climate, while simultaneously developing a classroom culture that exuded trust, norms, and common goals. Having to endure with such types of challenging environments are some of the reasons first year teachers decide to leave the profession, according to Wegmann et al. (2005).

One aspect of this study focused on a beginning teacher’s workload, specifically on extracurricular duties or requirements. Additionally, the workload included grading, testing, and lesson planning. A subsequent aspect of professional environment dealt with classroom resources, teacher salaries, school climate, and school culture. The research question addressed by this topic is: *How does the professional environment influence the attrition and retention rates of first year middle school teachers?*

Thibodeaux et al., (2015) acknowledges the type of workload beginning teachers endure when he states, “...administrators place more pressure on state-measured subject area teachers than non-state measured subject area teachers” (p.245). In other words, teachers who teach the core subjects (i.e. English, math, history, and social studies), such as those who were interviewed, have more pressure to produce excellent results from their students than does a P.E. or elective teacher. T. Lobos (personal communication, May 8, 2015) felt it necessary to spend numerous hours before and after school to plan and prepare for her core subject area classes. In addition, she related that those preparation hours were the only planning times she had since teachers at her site are not given prep periods. J. Marks (personal communication, April 21, 2015), who came from an elementary background, commented, “There is a lot more paperwork; there is a lot more IEP meetings; ...there’s referrals...we [also] document behavior...I have to keep

up with that, which can be overwhelming.” S. Jackson (personal communication, November 17, 2014) stated that at her school site, prep periods were awarded only to tenured teachers. She remarked that she had no access to curriculum for one of her classes and had to create daily lessons from scratch because the textbook for her class was too advanced for her English Learners. She also noted the overabundance of paperwork she went through, whether it was for student copies, lesson plans, or worksheets. “There was a lot of paper work for sure [my] first year—way too much. I think I was like one of...two teachers on the entire campus who asked to get her printer replaced...” S. Jackson also reflected on a period of time during her first year when she was required to attend an off-campus meeting per the directive of her principal. However, she was not given enough prior notice to adequately prepare for a substitute, especially when “just planning for a lesson plan for a sub [took] me like 3 hours ‘cause I [had] so many preps.” She was reticent about attending the meeting due to the extra pressure and workload preparing for her absence would require of her. She remarked, “...I was upset; I didn’t want to go; and you can’t say no...” The stress and overwhelming workload before and after her meeting put her near the brink of burnout. The literature review revealed that beginning teachers experience feelings of helplessness, frustration, and stress due to the workload of their first year (Brock & Grady, 2001 and Fantilli & McDougall, 2009). L. Pajaro (personal communication, May 8, 2015) commented that his overwhelming frustrations were due to trying to teach different classes while simultaneously navigating through three different sets of curriculum.

The other element of professional environment in this study deals with classroom resources, teacher salaries, school climate, and school culture. According to the teachers interviewed, all the classroom supplies were accessible; however, one teacher initially had a difficult time traversing through her school's system to find materials. J. Marks (personal communication, April 21, 2015) indicated:

Um again, I came from an elementary school where supplies were—construction paper is there, everything is there for you and it's easy to go to the office manager. It was a total culture shock coming here because there is no supply room; there [is] no paper; there's no colored paper; there's no construction paper; there's nothing....I mean there are...I had to ask and it took me a while...And [it was] partly my fault [for] not reaching out because [I was] a first year teacher..."

Eventually, J. Marks learned that her school supplied the primary everyday items such as tape and printing paper; however, any additional items were not readily accessible and had to be ordered by the individual teacher with the distributed annual allotment of \$33 that was provided to them by the school. Since she needed numerous supplies, she commented on how grateful she was for veteran colleagues who shared their own supplies with her. In contrast, S. Jackson (personal communication, November 17, 2014) had a very different experience with getting the necessary resources for her room. She indicated that unlimited photo copies were at her disposal, and she had so many materials and curriculum books to sift through that they ended up collecting dust on her shelves during the course of her first year. She stated:

...overall, I think I had access to all the materials I really needed. It was just a matter of having enough time to sort through it and figure out how to use it. In all

honesty, I had my bookshelves stacked with curriculum and material, and I don't know if they were any good or what they were. I just didn't have time....It took me an entire year just to learn how to use [the] textbook properly!

Hughes (2012) suggests that principals can be a helpful component in easing the workload of beginning teachers that aids in reducing teacher attrition.

None of the interviewed principals or teachers mentioned salaries. All of the teachers seemed to assume that the extracurricular activities and duties they perform are simply a requirement. Three of the principals emphasized that they expect beginning teachers to perform the same supervision duties as veteran teachers, while J. Forest (personal communication, April 23, 2015) requires beginning teachers to participate in at least two extracurricular activities per year. Similarly, F. Orchata (personal communication, November 10, 2014) expressed that he would like beginning teachers to volunteer for extra assignments. Only three of the principals mentioned their expectations of first year teachers to spend time honing their craft rather than getting involved in other school duties.

According to Wynn et al., (2007), "Working conditions, a component of school climate, have been clearly linked with beginning teacher's retention and often includes principal support" (p.213). Research has shown that a positive school climate can benefit beginning teachers and produce effective teaching, just as a positive classroom climate can result in student achievement (Brown & Wynn, 2007/2009; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; and Pedota, 2015). J. Forest (personal communication, April 23, 2015) and M. Ceviche (personal communication, November 13, 2014) were the only two principals who addressed school climate. Both of them emphasized the need to create a warm and

understanding climate because they realize that such an environment encourages beginning teachers and will increase the likelihood of the teachers remaining in the profession. The type of climate that principals create at their school site can have a simultaneous effect on a teacher's classroom climate (Brock & Grady, 2001).

All the interviewed teachers agreed that they want a climate in their classroom that enhances student learning, that is creative, and that is clear in its expectations, rules, and requirements. M. Brown (personal communication, June 5, 2015) accentuated her desire "...to be able to maintain [a] positive learning environment [while] still getting through the curriculum." However, five of the six teachers indicated that their utopian classroom climate did not always come to fruition. Five of the interviewees explained that they did not always have consistent follow through in regards to managing student behavior or administering consequences. T. Lobos (personal communication, May 8, 2015) commented how much of a rough start she and her students had in the beginning while attempting to adjust to one another. Nevertheless, T. Lobos proudly noted that the students have bonded with her now because they know what her expectations are. In addition, she remarked how much the students want to please her, which coincides with the advice by one of the researchers in the literature review. Pedota (2015) recognizes that responsibility teachers have to create a classroom climate that is conducive to student learning and he suggests that teachers "...develop an environment that offers encouragement and that focuses primarily on supporting student effort or improvement" (p.54). Based on the findings from the interviewed teachers, their classrooms reflect such a climate now.

Just as teachers have a great responsibility in creating a safe and learning centered climate, principals have a similar responsibility. Although only two of the six interviewed principals discussed school climate, it remains a topic largely discussed by several researchers such as Brock and Grady (2001) and Kouzes and Posner (2007). In addition, these researchers found that a positive school climate can result in more teacher retention among beginning teachers. Moreover, Wynn et al., (2007) states, “Principals who work to create professional learning communities that support and invite beginning teacher participation can foster greater satisfaction among new teachers” (p.224). Beginning teachers feel validated as a teacher and are encouraged to continue in the profession when they have a sense of belonging among their colleagues and when they feel as if their opinion and suggestions matter and are taken seriously when in a group setting.

School culture and classroom culture play as important a role as school climate and classroom climate. All of the interviewed teachers commented about the culture of their school is one in which the veteran teachers help the beginning teachers. Furthermore, J. Forest (personal communication, April 23, 2015) noted that all of his veteran teachers go out of their way to aid beginning teachers as they transition into their classrooms, departments, and teams by providing them with an orientation notebook. M. Ceviche (personal communication, November 13, 2014) remarked how unique his campus is because his school has a culture where “...none of [his] teachers hang out in the lunchroom.” He elaborated that the benefit of this non-interaction only in the lunchroom is that his teachers avoid the gossip trap that is commonly associated with the teacher cafeteria. He also explained that he encourages his teachers to eat outside or in

other areas of the campus, and basically admonishes them to make wise choices as to with whom they decide to eat. While some may consider this encouragement to be a form of control, M. Ceviche simply said, “But I always worry...that they’re gonna walk away [from the lunchroom] being jaded if there’s a jaded teacher at the table.” So, in an effort to keep positive teachers, a positive school culture, and positive classroom cultures, he encourages the avoidance of the cafeteria. This advice ensures that the social capital framework is prevalent at his site, since trust will continue to be developed among the staff, and relationships will be strengthened rather than torn down by negativity.

Finally, all of the six interviewed principals agreed that beginning teachers have a culture that is unique to their group, namely teacher burnout. According to the principals, they have noticed that beginning teachers display common signs that they are struggling at specific times of the school year. M. Ceviche (personal communication, November 13, 2014) stated it best when he said,

The fifth week of school tends to be a bit of a cracking point for teachers... You see that in new teacher[s]...[and] some less successful teachers never recover from that... And of course, by Thanksgiving...they’re thinking about never coming back. And by then the class, unless you have intervened as an administrator, the class is probably a disaster and they’re [the beginning teachers] thinking, ‘How am I gonna get through the year?’

Each school has its own unique school climate and school culture, as does each classroom. As several researchers have indicated, the principal creates the school climate and culture he or she wants, and a classroom teacher does the same for his or her

classroom environment (Brown & Wynn, 2007; Hughes et. al., 2015; and Johnson & Kardos, 2002).

Summary

All of the interviewed teachers stated that they would like to remain in the profession. However, two of the teachers alluded that they would probably only stay in the profession a few more years because they might move on to something different, since they accomplished their goal of becoming a teacher. They gave no exact reasons for why they may not stay longer, other than the challenges they mentioned during their interviews. S. Jackson (personal communication, November 17, 2014) expressed how “haunting” her first year was and how “discouraged” she felt. When questioned where the discouragement originated from, she stated,

The discouragement I want to say came from a lot of places. One, within myself. Um, maybe I just put too much pressure on me or I have higher expectations or discouragement on my end of just having negative thinking, just a negative brainwork in my mind. [Second was] family...family pressure of, you know, ‘Oh, I told you so. You could’ve done something else with your life’...And [finally] just a lack of support from um, formally, um from administration, teachers, colleagues, and as well as myself....

Based on her statement, there were a combination of personal and professional factors influencing her potential future attrition decision. Between the two teachers who were considering leaving the profession at some point, their challenges were (but not limited to): lack of principal support, lack of effective communication from the principal, too

much stress planning for numerous classes that each had its own curriculum, and large class sizes.

Additionally, the following conclusions were made regarding teacher retention among first year middle school teachers:

- Middle school teachers choose to remain in the profession because they enjoy teaching that age group.
- Middle school teachers choose to remain in the profession because they have ample support from the principal, colleagues, or family to be able to survive the first year.
- Middle school teachers enjoy the diversity of the classes and students. For example, they don't have to be with the same group of students all day long.
- Middle school teachers feel they are making a difference in the lives of their students.
- Middle school teachers have a passion for teaching.

The purpose of this study was to identify the factors leading to attrition and retention rates of beginning teachers. By identifying the factors causing attrition, principals are more aware of the safeguards and strong systems of support that need to be present at their school sites. After collecting the findings for this study, it appears that the same factors causing teacher attrition 30 years ago are still prevalent today among our schools, which is continuing to drastically impact our students, school districts, and the nation. In the subsequent chapter, the findings presented in this chapter will be interpreted and analyzed, and recommendations will be provided for how to avoid perpetuating the problem of high teacher attrition and low teacher retention.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to determine the elements that generate attrition and retention among first year middle school teachers. Having a comprehensive awareness and understanding of these factors are advantageous because that knowledge can facilitate the reduction of teacher attrition and the increase of teacher retention; thus benefiting the students, the schools, and the school systems. The main research question guiding this study was “How do site characteristics influence the attrition and retention rates of first year middle school teachers?” In order to attain as much in-depth information as possible during the study, the following three sub-questions were researched: 1) How does principal support and interaction influence the attrition and retention rates of first year middle school teachers? 2) How does colleague support and interaction influence the attrition and retention rates of first year middle school teachers? and 3) How does the professional environment influence the attrition and retention rates of first year middle school teachers?

Interview protocols, which were the methods used to gather data from principals and first year teachers, were developed using these research questions as a foundation. The findings from the data collection were the result of visiting six urban middle schools in southern California where one-on-one interviews with six different principals occurred, as well as five one-on-one interviews with first year teachers, and one focus group consisting of four people, three of whom had participated in an individual interview.

The major themes that emerged from the interviews were: teacher preparedness, student interactions, teacher induction, principal interactions and support, colleague

interactions and support, professional environment, school climate, and school culture. In addition, four common factors affecting first year teacher attrition and retention emerged from the findings (See Figure 5.1).

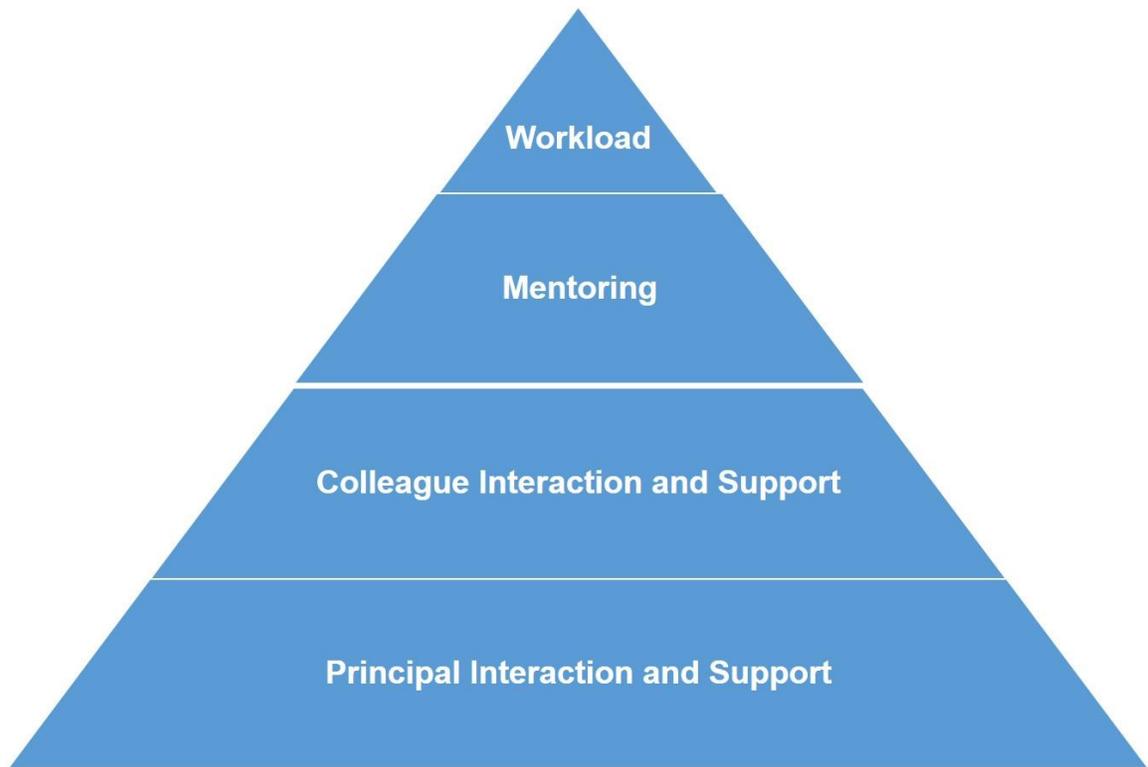


Figure 5.1 displays the foundational layers contributing to teacher attrition and retention

All of these factors layer on top of each other to provide the foundation needed for beginning teachers to have a successful first year. If any component of this triangular structure is missing, the first year teacher becomes less confident and possibly less successful. Furthermore, without the strength that each layer provides, that first year will slowly begin to unravel causing beginning teachers to become frustrated, overwhelmed, and possibly lead to their decision to leave the profession. Further explanation regarding how these layers interconnect will be discussed later in this chapter.

Discussion of Findings

The conceptual framework encompassing this study was the social capital theory by Jacobs (1961), which involves the interaction of people and the development of their relationships while networking within a familiar setting. Every identified theme in this study had social capital at its roots because it could not exist without the interaction of people in one form or another. For example, the theme of teacher preparedness required interaction and a relationship development with the pre-first year teachers, their instructors in the credential program, and their master teachers. Similarly, teacher induction assumes that a beginning teacher will interact with their BTGDI provider. Additionally, the beginning teachers who felt they had an overwhelming workload had to feel comfortable enough to discuss this issue with colleagues or their principal. Finally, a seemingly non-interactive theme such as professional environment, that involved workload, salaries, and resource availability, also incorporated social interaction and relationships. Teachers informally interact with one another and have discussions regarding their workload and whether their salary fairly compensates them for the amount of hours they spend at their job. Additionally, strong social relationships can be gained when teachers work together to help ease the workload of their colleagues or when they aid them in finding the necessary resources needed to be successful in their classrooms. In contrast, weak social relationships can also occur at a school site if colleagues refuse to help one another and instead act as if each teacher has to find his or her own way in the teaching profession individually. Likewise, when the interviewed teachers needed to find out where the supply room was or how they could get key classroom resources, they had to interact with a secretary or a colleague in order to become familiarized with the

procedures for obtaining those resources. Furthermore, teacher induction, principal and colleague support, and culture and climate of the school and the classrooms all relied heavily on social capital. Without the development of trust, the consistent interaction, and the expression of values and norms among the participants, none of the parties could have discovered what their common goals were, namely to help students to be successful and to support first year teachers.

How do site characteristics influence the attrition and retention rates of first year middle school teachers?

As a whole, based on the interviews, site characteristics have a huge impact on whether first year teachers decide to remain in the profession or to leave it. The simple explanation of the findings is if the site characteristics are primarily negative, such as providing: little or no support from the principal and colleagues, challenging student demographics combined with student discipline issues, an overwhelming workload and schedule, all combined with feelings of unpreparedness, the first year teachers commonly desire to leave the profession. However, if the site characteristics are primarily positive, such as: including a supportive principal and colleagues, multi-faceted student demographics with manageable student discipline issues, a feasible workload and schedule, all connected with adequate teacher preparedness, the first year teachers wish to remain in the profession. Furthermore, the literature and the research findings indicated that when a beginning teacher's first year is fraught with a large amount of negative experiences, he or she experiences feelings of discouragement, stress, and frustration. In contrast, when the first year is primarily positive, a beginning teacher feels confident in his or her teaching skills; tends to interact more with colleagues, and is encouraged to

continue teaching. T. Lobos (personal communication, May 8, 2015) enthusiastically stated her desire to remain in the profession, despite encountering numerous challenges during her first year. In concurrence with the literature, her positive response was the result of proactive and helpful measures at her school site. She found a large amount of support from her colleagues and others in the administration, aside from her direct principal; she was exposed to helpful professional development, which assisted her in transition through the challenges of her first year; and she felt like she was making a difference in the lives of her students. She stated, “I love being around children all day; I love how they’re [un]inhibited; I like the hours; I like being in control of my own little environment; I like the pay. Yeah, I could see myself doing this for many years.”

As stated in the literature review, there are numerous site characteristics that contribute to a beginning teacher’s decision to stay in or to leave the profession (i.e. principal support, colleague support and interaction, negative student interactions and behavior, school climate, school culture, resource accessibility, workload, and classroom demographics). All of these factors become intertwined, are fueled by each other, and eventually become a muddled mess in a beginning teacher’s mind (Brock and Grady, 2001). In order to provide more clarity into the three most commonly mentioned factors that influence first year teacher attrition and retention, the discussion of the findings will be separated via the sub-research questions.

How does principal support and interaction influence the attrition and retention rates of first year middle school teachers?

As the interviewed teachers described their first year, they all mentioned that their primary interaction with the principal was during the hiring process. After that, even if a

principal offered assistance and support, the interviewed teacher either did not want to approach the principal for fear that he or she might be interrupting the person's busy schedule, or because they did not want to bother the principal with things that their colleagues could better assist them with. Without any feedback from the teachers, the principal felt they were properly and amply assisting and supporting their first year teachers, when in reality, they were not. The teachers would have preferred to have more frequent contact with their principals, which would allow the teachers to feel assured that their principal was aware of their overpowering workload and frustrations and was willing to provide support to them. For the majority of the principals, the findings indicated that they took care of the initial supports (i.e. introduction to the campus and basic procedures), and they stated that they were available if further supports were needed. Yet when they were further questioned, their statements revealed that when they were approached by beginning teachers, the support consisted of delegating another principal, department chair, or mentor teacher with meeting the needs of the beginning teacher. Therefore, the beginning teachers needed more personalized support from their principal.

The interviewed principals all indicated that they were the ones who were in charge of the first year teachers, but when they expounded on what being in charge meant, they all described their interactions in the form of evaluations. Thus, implying a lack of informal conversations or meetings between the principals and beginning teachers, interactions which are critical to the success of a beginning teacher's first year. F. Orchata (personal communication, November 10, 2014) elaborated on the monthly beginning teacher meetings he held by outlining the types of discussion topics he

incorporated into the meetings; however, the teacher at his site commented that they were merely brief informative meetings that did not allow much time for questions and answers. Therefore, for the beginning teacher at the site, that type of principal support was not helpful, since it was not relevant to the mounting frustration and stress she was experiencing at the time. The only type of principal support that she felt was helpful was when the assistant principal stopped by for evaluations and observations and provided “constructive feedback,” because it assisted her in identifying the areas she needed to improve.

Three of the teachers commented about the helpfulness of receiving compliments and praise from their principal. In fact, the teachers in the focus group, who all came from the same school, questioned how their principal was able to know enough about them in order to give such high accolades to each person during professional development meetings. While they all felt that their principal was genuine in his compliments, it was obvious that they were unsure how he obtained the information, leading the researcher to question the extent to which the principal did not interact or support the beginning teachers enough. During that principal’s interview, he voluntarily commented that one of his personal goals was to get into the classrooms more, since he had been unable to do so prior to the interview as his schedule was so hectic.

Finally, another issue, in regard to principal interaction and support is the communication between a principal and a beginning teacher. Ineffective communication of expectations was mentioned by several of the teachers. Based on the information provided during the principal interviews, the principals felt that all their expectations were clearly delineated to their first year teachers; however, the teacher interviews

revealed that they had to receive clarification and assistance from other colleagues in regards to some protocols such as testing or classroom management. For two of the teachers, who were hired once the school year had begun, there was not much time for sufficient communication, since the teachers were trying to quickly adapt to their new surroundings while shadowing the teacher whom they would soon be replacing. One teacher also mentioned unreasonable expectations of principals as a frustration, because of the principal's lack of familiarity with the grade level and subject content. Yet, he did not feel comfortable expressing his frustration to the principal, and instead left one to assume that he attempted to meet the expectations.

In the literature, Brown and Wynn (2007) and Brock and Grady (2001) discussed the important roles that principals have in relation to beginning teachers. They explained that beginning teachers benefit from colleague support, but that they need to know that their principal is not just a person in title alone. Frequent interactions throughout their first year, whether formal or informal, is a critical necessity for beginning teachers to feel encouraged in the work they are doing. If the principal interactions are solely to disseminate information or to critique teaching skills, a beginning teacher views that as a frustration rather than a support, according to Brock and Grady (2001). In the literature, Wood (2005) expounded on the five leadership roles that principals should embody and how impactful those roles are on a beginning teacher's decision to stay in the profession or to leave it. However, one thing that the literature did not fully address that was revealed in the findings of the data collection is that beginning teachers may not receive the necessary interaction or support from the principal that is personally needed, yet, they choose to remain in the profession. The reason for this decision is that mentor teachers

and other colleagues often provide the missing support that was not provided by the principal. As a result, the beginning teacher's needs are still met enough to cause them to remain in the profession. Thus, colleague interaction and support can be equally as important as principal interaction and support.

How does colleague support and interaction influence the attrition and retention rates of first year middle school teachers?

The literature by Sass et al. (2011) explored the idea of beginning teachers resorting to hermit-like behavior if no colleague interaction is present. Colleague support and interaction largely centers on the conceptual framework of this study, the social capital theory (Fullan, 2014). The findings indicated that the interviewed teachers did not work in seclusion during the first year, but rather mingled with their colleagues and formed relationships. The majority of the interviewed teachers made it very clear that the welcoming feeling they experienced during their first year came mostly from their colleagues or other staff such as secretaries. These findings coincide with the literature by Algozzine et al. (2007) that over 90% of beginning teachers feel that their colleagues interact, support and encourage them during their first year. This type of support can also be attributed to the school culture; however, culture and climate will be discussed in further detail in the subsequent section.

Based on the findings of the data collection, one commonality emerged in regards to this theme—the beginning teachers experienced plenty of informal interaction and support, but not enough formal interaction and support. The teacher interviews revealed that offers of support and quick spurts of interaction occurred between classes, during breaks, and during lunch, but when it was time for professional development, the

interaction and support was ineffective and difficult to find, leaving the beginning teachers to work in isolation to develop lessons. The beginning teachers enjoyed the experience of interacting with colleagues during breaks or lunch, yet did not have enough interaction time during professional development. The findings indicated that when the faculty was given the choice of forming a team or working as a department, it was often just the mentor teacher who interacted with, and supported, the beginning teacher. The teachers interviewed did explain, though, that support from other colleagues was offered as well, but usually only if the beginning teacher asked for assistance.

The literature specified the pertinent role that mentoring has on the success or failure of first year teachers (Brill & McCartney, 2008 and Wynn et al., 2007), and based on the findings from the data collection, the literature is valid. The beginning teachers' stated that their mentor was their link to sanity, stability, and encouragement, and was the person that offered the most assistance in regards to teaching suggestions, advice for classroom management, routines and procedures of the site, and just gave a listening ear. After analyzing the data from the two teachers who were indecisive about remaining in the the teaching profession, it was recognizable that they could have chosen to leave the profession had it not been for their interaction and support with their mentor teacher.

How does the professional environment influence the attrition and retention rates of first year middle school teachers?

For the purpose of this study, the term *professional environment* entailed the working conditions, teacher compensation, workload, school climate, school culture, classroom climate, and classroom culture. According to Johnson and Birkeland (2003),

Deciding to become a teacher today raises many of the same concerns that teachers have encountered in U.S. public schools for more than a century—low pay and prestige, inadequate resources, isolating work, subordinate status, and limited career opportunities (p.582).

For some teachers, simply having the passion is not enough to sustain them for a lifelong career in the field of education, if they must face the odds that Johnson and Birkeland (2003) noted. The realities of low compensation, poor working conditions, and negative professional influences (Sass, et al., 2011 and Wynn et al., 2007) can cause beginning teachers “[to] leave the profession [feeling] frustration and a sense of helplessness or failure...” (Wegmann, Adams, Higgins, Miller, Price, Simpson, & Swicegood, 2005, p.237). None of the teachers spoke negatively about their working conditions on the campus, aside from their classrooms. In fact, they all commented how pleased they were to be working at their schools and in such great environments. Therefore, the research by Hughes (2012) indicating that working conditions played a role in the attrition and retention rates of first year teachers was not relevant in this study. Similarly, Hughes (2012) stated that compensation was the primary reason in his study for why teachers chose not to remain in the profession; however, the data collected for this study revealed one of two responses: teachers were content with their salary or they did not think to ask for compensation when engaging in extracurricular activities. Based on their responses, extracurricular activities were voluntary or part of their contract; therefore, compensation was not expected by the beginning teachers.

Frustration over teacher workload was a strong component for the teachers interviewed. Although several of them laughingly said they were overloaded, their tone,

facial expressions, and body language (i.e. crossed arms) revealed the stress they were facing. Because of her outstanding competencies, L. Pajaro (personal communication, May 8, 2015) was saddled with additional duties (i.e. she was asked to be a mentor teacher) that she was inexperienced to handle, while she was concurrently trying to navigate and survive her first year; S. Jones (personal communication, June 17, 2015) endured trying to teach multiple preps each with its own curriculum; S. Jackson (personal communication, November 17, 2014) was given classes that appeared to be a conglomeration of whatever other teachers did not want; and J. Marks (personal communication, April 21, 2015) constantly volunteered for extracurricular activities thinking she would ensure a position on staff the following year.

When the principals were asked about the viewpoints for beginning teachers engaging in additional activities rather than honing their craft, only two of the six principals preferred that first year teachers become acclimated to the school, to their classroom, and to teaching. The remaining four principals had one of three responses: 1) they encouraged first year teachers to become involved in additional activities, 2) they required participation in adjunct duties because it was part of the district contract, or 3) they saw nothing wrong with a beginning teacher volunteering and was glad that someone would be performing a task that needed to be filled. The literature review described how critical it is for first year teachers to have a minimal workload as it not only avoids additional unnecessary stress, but it also allows beginning teachers to learn their craft. According to this research study, overwhelming a beginning teacher with additional duties can cause burnout and early departure from the educational field;

therefore, it is an anomaly that the interviewed teachers for this study did not decide to quit.

Other findings from the interviews indicated that the beginning teachers approached their classroom climate and culture according to the age of the students they were dealing with: middle schoolers. Several female teachers remarked on the immaturity of middle schoolers and how the students could not be dealt with as if they were high schoolers. Using such an outlook when creating a classroom climate and culture can be beneficial as it somewhat lowers the level of expectation by the teacher and does not cause unnecessary frustration if his or her students do not behave like a high school student.

Conclusions

One of the reasons this study was significant as well as pertinent for the field of education is because limited research was found indicating how many teachers chose to leave the teaching profession during their probationary period (first or second year), despite having received support from principals and colleagues. Moreover, limited research was found signifying the percentage of teachers as a whole who chose to remain in the profession. Numerous studies researching the attrition and retention rates of first year teachers have been conducted; researchers such as Norton (1999) and Levine (2006) have described the economic loss due to the percentage of teacher attrition; and studies have specified that teacher attrition and retention have impacted students, schools, school districts, and the nation. Yet, limited research was also found representing the amount of first year middle school teachers, more specifically, those who held a multiple subject

credential, who decided to stay or leave the profession. Furthermore, the few studies that were found focused on science and math teachers rather than other content area teachers.

Although there were several limitations in the research, several conclusions about first year teacher attrition among middle school teachers were made. After reviewing the literature and analyzing the collected data, the following deductions were made:

- Principals do not provide ample support to first year teachers. Frequent interactions need to occur throughout the entire year, not just during the first few months; more informal conversations and interactions with the principal and beginning teachers need to be prevalent at the school site; and principals need to assume the task of being the primary on-site trainer and supporter of first year teachers.
- First year teachers are given classes that are too challenging. For example, combining students with special needs, all levels of English Learners, and GATE students into one class is a challenge for an experienced veteran teacher, let alone an inexperienced first year teacher. Class sizes should be smaller for first year teachers in order to allow them to adapt to common classroom challenges. Moreover, less preps need to be given to first year teachers in order to allow them time to prepare quality lessons for a feasible amount of classes.
- Teacher preparation programs do not provide adequate exposure of dealing with classroom management while pre-service teachers complete their fieldwork.
- First year teachers are not provided with the type of professional development that is conducive to their level of experience. They should attend on-site and off-site professional development meetings that relate to specific first year topics.

- Colleagues and veteran teachers need to collaborate more with beginning teachers. While first year teachers may not have as much experience as a veteran teacher, their ideas and viewpoints should be honored in a professional development setting. In other words, all the teachers should work together as a team to create lesson plans and activities for their department and grade level.
- When principal support and interaction is lacking, veteran colleagues often try to make up for the lack of principal support by providing whatever assistance is needed by the first year teacher. Veteran teachers should be provided with a list of helpful supports from the principal that can be offered to beginning teachers. By doing this, additional administrative responsibilities and duties are not placed on veteran teachers.
- Principals should put a limit on the amount of extracurricular activities for first year teachers in order to allow them time to perfect their teaching skills and prepare for quality lessons. Principals feel that by having a first year teacher participate in extracurricular activities, they become more acclimated to the school, the students, and the colleagues. However, the principals are not considering that every additional activity that a first year teacher engages in, he or she feels compelled to complete the task with outstanding effectiveness in order to prove his or her worth as a first year teacher. This type of pressure to excel causes additional stress and increases the chances for burnout to occur at a faster rate.
- First year teachers should not be expected to deal with some of the most difficult students who have severe discipline issues. Often times the other teachers do not

want to deal with those behavior issues and as a result, the beginning teacher is saddled with those disciplinary issues. Moreover, the beginning teacher is more apt to struggle and to find ways of coping with those issues rather than speaking up about his or her dissatisfaction with the classroom student demographics.

- Principals need to have on-site supports and mentoring for first year teachers imbedded in their activities throughout the school year. Most principals rely on the BTGDI provider to give necessary supports to a first year teacher. Teachers, on the other hand, find that the providers' suggestions are helpful, but that the majority of the BTGDI program is nothing more than an endless stream of paperwork, which does not provide them with any assistance. Principals, who work in a school district where BTGDI has been eliminated, often expect either their assistant principals or their mentor teachers to provide the assistance that the BTGDI provider normally would.

Recommendations for Change

Based on the findings, the following recommendations for change are given:

- Frequent teacher surveys need to be done throughout the school year in order to better understand if current supports are helpful or if something needs to be changed.
- Principals need to have more one-one-one time with their first year teachers.
- Beginning teachers need to feel comfortable approaching their principal and asking for help.
- More specific professional development needs to be geared toward assisting first year teachers.

- First year teachers should not be allowed to engage in additional duties or assignments in order to give them an opportunity to focus on their teaching.
- Mentors and colleagues should not be the primary source of assistance and support for first year teachers, because the principal should fulfill this position.
- Principals need to provide clear expectations and have clear communication with teachers.

Recommendations for Future Study

The findings for this study indicated that four of the six teachers held a multiple subject credential while teaching middle school, which allowed them a different way of approach with their students as opposed to their colleagues who help a single subject credential. As a result, those teachers expressed more preparedness and confidence in teaching middle school than did the teachers who only had a single subject credential. A recommendation for further study is to duplicate this study in suburban or rural districts to determine if the findings for why teachers leave or stay in the profession differ from what was found in this study. Another recommendation is to conduct in-depth research as to the type of classes, courses, and fieldwork provided to pre-service teachers in multiple subject programs and the single subject programs, in order to determine what aspects are lacking which could provide more confidence and preparedness among their graduates. Because this study had an extremely small sample size, a recommendation for future research would be to have a larger sample size of principals and first year teachers from multiple urban school districts that would include findings from classroom observations, surveys, interviews, and focus groups. A subsequent recommendation for this larger study would involve returning every year to determine if recommendations

were adhered to and to determine if those recommendations caused a larger population of teachers to decide to remain in the profession rather than leave it, thereby making a greater impact on the issues of attrition and retention. Similarly another possibility for future study would involve sampling first year teachers who are currently enrolled in the BTGDI program at the time the study is conducted. Because they would be receiving continual support from a mentor in the induction program, the teachers may reveal different challenges than the teachers involved in this study. A final recommendation for future study would be to interview first year teachers who were receiving no support from principals, colleagues, mentors, or the induction program to determine if the reasons for teacher attrition and retention stay the same.

Summary

The literature and the findings from this study reveal that the primary factors contributing to the attrition and retention rates of first year middle school teachers are: principal support and interaction, colleague support and interaction, mentoring, and teacher workload. These factors have a substantial impact on first year teachers because they are layered on each other in a positive or negative way (see Figure 3.1). In other words, principal support and interaction seemed to be the foundation (i.e. the first layer) of a first year teacher's decision to stay or leave the profession according to the findings. The second layer is colleague support and interaction, followed by mentoring, and ending with teacher workload. If the first layer is strong and provides enough support, all the other layers increase and are strengthened and a strong foundation exists, which makes teacher attrition less likely. However, if the first layer is not present or does not provide enough support, the next layer, colleague support and interaction, needs to make up the

sturdiness that is missing by increasing the support. Unfortunately, if the second layer is weak and not supportive enough, the third layer, mentoring, tries to perform double duty by helping the beginning teacher keep his or her head above water, while simultaneously trying to provide all the support that the other two layers were lacking. Finally, if all three layers are not strong enough, the teacher's workload will have no foundational support whatsoever, and a beginning teacher is left to try to muddle through the chaos. Eventually, he or she will be unable to deal with it all on his or her own, will give up, and will eventually decide to leave the profession.

References

- Algozzine, B., Gretes, J., Queen, A., & Cowan-Hathcock, M. (2007). Beginning teachers' perceptions of their induction program experiences. *The Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas*, 80(3), 137-143.
- Angelle, P.S. (2006). Instructional leadership and monitoring: Increasing teacher intent to stay through socialization. *NASSP Bulletin*, 90(4), 318-334.
- Bickmore, D. & Bickmore, S. (2010). A multifaceted approach to teacher induction. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 26(4), 1006-1014.
- Bigham, S. H., Hively, D.E., & Toole, G.H. (2014). Principals' and cooperating teachers' expectations of teacher candidates. *Education*, 135 (2), 211-229.
- Blase, J., & Kirby, P.C. (2009). Bringing out the best in teachers: What effective principals do. (3rd ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Bloomberg, L. D., & Volpe, M. (2012). *Completing your qualitative dissertation: A roadmap from beginning to end*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Boyd, D., Lankford, H., Loeb, S., & Wyckoff, J. (2005). The draw of home: How teachers' preferences for proximity disadvantage urban schools. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 24(1), 113-132.
- Brill, S., & McCartney, A. (2008). Stopping the revolving door: Increasing teacher retention. *Politics and Policy*, 36(5), 750-774.
- Brock, B., & Grady, M. (2001). *From first-year to first-rate: Principals guiding beginning teachers*. (2nd ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, Inc.

- Brock, B., & Grady, M. (2006). *Developing a teacher induction plan*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Brown, K. M., & Wynn, S.R. (2007). Teacher retention issues: How some principals are supporting and keeping new teachers. *Journal of School Leadership, 17*(6), 664-698.
- Brown, K.M., & Wynn, S.R. (2009). Finding, supporting, and keeping: The role of the principal in teacher retention issues. *Leadership and Policy in Schools, 8*(1), 37-63.
- California Department of Education (2015). *Highly qualified teacher (HQT) guide*. Retrieved August 2015 from <http://www.cde.ca.gov/nclb/sr/tq/documents/hqtguide.doc>
- Coleman, J. S. (1988). Social capital in the creation of human capital. *American Journal of Sociology, 94*(S1), S95-S120.
- Conklin, H. (2014a). Student learning in the middle school social studies classroom: The role of differing teacher preparation. *The Elementary School Journal, 114*(4), 455-478.
- Conklin, H. (2014b). Toward more joyful learning: Integrating play into framework of middle grades teaching. *American Educational Research Journal, 51*(6), 1227-1255.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2000). *Solving the dilemmas of teacher supply, demand, and standards: How we can ensure a competent, caring and qualified teacher for*

every child. New York: National Commission on Teaching and America's Future.

Darling-Hammond, L. (2003). Keeping good teachers: Why it matters, what leaders can do. *Educational Leadership*, 60(8), 6-13.

Darling-Hammond, L. (2006). Constructing 21st century teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 57(3), 300-314.

Darling-Hammond, L. (2010). Teacher education and the American future. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 61(1-2), 35-47. doi: 10.1177/0022487109348024

Doney, P. (2013). Fostering resilience: A necessary skill for teacher retention. *Journal of Science Teacher Education*, 24(4), 645-664.

Fantilli, R. D., & McDougall, D. E. (2009). A study of novice teachers: Challenges and supports in the first years. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 25, 814-825.

Fullan, M. (2014). The principal: *The principal: Three keys to maximizing impact*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Glesne, C. (2011). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction* (4th ed). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Good, T. L. (2014). What do we know about how teachers influence student performance on standardized tests: And why do we know so little about other student outcomes? *Teachers College Record*, 116(1), 1-41.

- Heller, D. (2004). *Teachers wanted: Attracting and retaining good teachers*. Alexandria, VA: Association for supervision and curriculum development.
- Hixon, E., & So, H. (2009). Technology's role in field experiences for preservice teacher training, *Educational Technology & Society*, 12(4), 294-304.
- Hong, J. Y. (2010). Pre-service and beginning teachers' professional identity and its relation to dropping out of the profession. *Teaching and Teacher Education: An International Journal of Research and Studies*, 26(8), 1530-1543.
- Hope, W. C. (1999). Principals' orientation and induction activities as factors in teacher retention. *The Clearing House*, 73(1), 54-56.
- Howell, P., Cook, C., & Faulkner, S. (2013). Effective middle level teaching perceptions on the preparedness of newly hired teachers. *Middle Grades Research Journal*, 8(3), 1-9.
- Hughes, G. (2012). Teacher retention: Teacher characteristics, school characteristics, organizational characteristics, and teacher efficacy. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 105(4), 245-255.
- Hughes, A. L., Matt, J. J., & O'Reilly, F.L. (2015). Principal support is imperative of the retention of teachers in hard-to-staff schools. *Journal of Education and Training Studies*, 3(1), 129-134.
- Ingersoll, R. M. (2001). Teacher turnover and teacher shortages: An organizational analysis. *American Educational Research*, 38(3), 499-534.

- Ingersoll, R. M. (2003). *Who controls teachers' work?: Power and accountability in America's schools*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Ingersoll, R. M. (2004). *Why do high poverty schools have difficulty staffing their classrooms with qualified teachers?* (CAP Report 1205). Retrieved from Center for American Progress website: <http://www.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/kf/Ingersoll-final.pdf>
- Ingersoll, R. M. & Kralik, J. (2004). *The impact of mentoring on teacher retention: What the research says*. Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States.
- Ingersoll, R. M, Merrill, L., & May, H. (2012). Retaining teachers: How preparation matters. *Educational Leadership*, 69(8), 30-34.
- Ingersoll, R. M., & Smith, T. M. (2003). The wrong solution to the teacher shortage. *Educational Leadership*, 60(8), 30-33.
- Ingersoll, R. M. & Smith, T. M. (2004). Do teacher induction and mentoring matter? *NASSP Bulletin*, 88, 28-40.
- Jacob, B.A. (2011). Principled principals. *Education Next*, 11(4), 70-76.
- Jacobs, J. (1961). *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. New York: Random House, Inc.
- Johnson, S. S., & Kardos, S. M. (2002). Keeping new teachers in mind. *Educational Leadership*, 59(6), 12-16.

Johnson, S.M., & Birkeland, S. E. (2003). Pursuing a “sense of success”: New teachers explain their career decisions. *American Educational Research Journal*, 40(3), 581-617.

Jung, W. S. (2007). Preservice teacher training for successful inclusion. *Education*, 128(1), 106-113.

Kersaint, G., Lewis, J., Potter, R., & Meisels, G. (2007). Why teachers leave: Factors that influence retention and resignation. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 23(6), 775-794.

Kousez, J., & Posner, B. (2007). *The Leadership Challenge*. (4th ed). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Levine, A. (2006). *Educating school teachers*. Washington D.C.: The Education Schools Project. Retrieved from www.edschools.org

LoCascio, S. J. Smeaton, P.S. & Waters, F.H. (2014). How induction programs affect the decision of alternate route urban teachers to remain teaching. *Education and Urban Society*, p.1-23. doi: 10.1177P0013124513514772

McCann, T. M. & Johannessen, L. R. (2004). Why do new teachers cry? *The Clearing House*, 77(4), 138-145.

Miller, N. C., Thompson, N. L. & Xu, J. (2012). In the MIDDLE: Elementary education preservice teachers’ experiences, efficacy, and interest in the education of young adolescents. *Middle Grades Research Journal*, 7(4), 15-30.

- Minarik, M., Thornton, B., & Perreault, G. (2003). Systems thinking can improve teacher retention. *The Clearing House*, 76(5), 230-234.
- Moir, E. (2009). Accelerating teacher effectiveness: Lessons learned from two decades of new teacher induction. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 91(2), 14-21.
- Nasser-Abu Alhija, F., & Fresko, B. (2010). Socialization of new teachers: Does induction matter?. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 26(8), 1592-1597.
- National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (2003). No dream denied: A pledge to America's children. Retrieved from <http://nctaf.org/wp-content/uploads/no-dream-denied-summary-report.pdf>
- National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (2007). The high cost of teacher turnover. Washington, D.C.
- National Council of Accreditation of Teacher Education (2015). What makes a teacher effective? Retrieved from National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education website:
<http://www.ncate.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=JFRrmWqaljU%3d&tabid=361>
- Norton, M. S. (1999). Teacher retention: Reducing costly teacher turnover. *Contemporary Education*, 70(3), 52-55.
- Olebe, M. (2005). Helping new teachers enter and stay in the profession, *The Clearing House*, 78(4), 158-163.
- Pedota, P. (2015). How can student success support teacher self-efficacy and retention?. *A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues, and Ideas*, 88(2), 54-61.

- Peter, J. (2005). The contribution of volunteering, trust, and networks to educational performance. *Policy Studies Journal*, 33(4), 635-656. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/210572479?accounted=7285>.
- Pinto, L., Portelli, J.P., Rottmann, C., Pashby, K., Barrett, S., & Mujuwamariya, D. (2012). Social justice: The missing link in school administrators' perspectives on teacher induction. *Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy*, (129), 1-22.
- Portner, H. (2003). Mentoring new teachers. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.
- Putnam, R. D. (1995). Lecture: "Tuning in, tuning out, the strange disappearance of social capital in America." *Political Science and Politics*, December. (664-83).
<http://www.uvm.edu/~dguber/POLS293/articles/putnaml.pdf>
- Quinn, T. (2005). Principals' impact on teacher retention. *Academic Exchange Quarterly*, 9(2), 225-229.
- Reed, D., Rueben, K., & Barbour, E. (2006). *Retention of new teachers in California*. San Francisco, CA: Public Policy Institute of California.
- Rutledge, S.A., Harris, D.N., & Ingle, W.K. (2010). How principals "bridge and buffer" the new demands of teacher quality and accountability: A mixed-methods analysis of teacher hiring. *American Journal of Education*, 116(2), 211-242.
- Sass, D., Seal, A., & Martin, N. (2011). Predicting teacher retention using stress and support variables. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 49(2), 200-215.

- Schein, E. H. (2010). *Organizational culture and leadership defined* (4th ed). San Francisco, Jossey Bass.
- Scherer, M. (2012). The challenges of supporting new teachers: A conversation with Linda Darling-Hammond. *Educational Leadership*, 69(8), 18-23.
- Shaw, J., & Newton, J. (2014). Teacher retention and satisfaction with a servant leader as principal. *Education*, 135(1), 101-106.
- Singer, J. B. (2009). Ethnography. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 86(1), 191-198.
- Smith, D.E. (2005). *Institutional ethnography: A sociology for people*. Lanham, MD: Alta Mira Press.
- Smith, T. M., & Ingersoll, R. M. (2004). What are the effects of induction and mentoring on beginning teacher turnover? *American Educational Research Journal*, 41(3), 687-714.
- Strawn, C., Fox, K., & Duck, L. (2008). Preventing teacher failure: Six keys to success in moving beyond the “sink or swim” mentality, *The Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues, and Ideas*, 81(6), 271-277.
- Tait, M. (2008). Resilience as a contributor to novice teacher success, commitment and retention. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 35(4), 57-75.
- Thibodeaux, A. K., Labat, M. B., Lee, D. E., & Labat, C. A. (2015). The effects of leadership and high-stakes testing on teacher retention. *Academy of Educational Leadership Journal*, 19(1), 227-249.

- Townley, A. J., & Schmieder-Ramirez, J. H. (2011). *School personnel administration/human resources*. (7th ed). Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall Hunt Publishing Co.
- U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (2015). Public school teacher attrition and mobility in the first five years (NCES Publication No. 2015-337). Retrieved from <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2015/2015337.pdf>
- Villani, S. (2002). *Mentoring programs for new teachers: Models of induction and support*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, Inc.
- Vorhaus, J. S. (2014). Education, social capital and the accordion effect. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 48(1), 28-47. Abstract retrieved from <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1467-9752.12045/abstract>
- Watkins, P. (2005). The principal's role in attracting, retaining, and developing new teachers: Three strategies for collaboration and support. *Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues, and Ideas*, 79(2-), 83-87.
- Waynes, A. J., Youngs, P., & Fleishman, S. (2005). Research matters: Improving teacher induction. *Supporting New Educators*, 62(8), 76-78.
- Wegmann, S., Adams, P., Higgins, B., Miller, M., Price, D., Simpson, C., & Swicegood, P. (Fall, 2005). Teacher's efficacy in preparation and retention. *Academic Exchange Quarterly*, 9(3), 235-239.

- Womack-Wynne, C., Dees, E., Leech, D., LaPlant, J., Brockmeier, L., & Gibson, N. (2011). Teacher's perceptions of the first-year experience and mentoring. *International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation*, 6(4), 1-11.
- Wood, A. (2005). The importance of principals: Site administrators' roles in novice teacher induction. *American Secondary Education*, 33(2), 39-63. Abstract retrieved from eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ692487
- Wynn, S., Patall, E., & Carboni, L. (2007). Beginning teachers perceptions of mentoring, climate, and leadership: Promoting retention through a learning communities perspective. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, 6(3), 209-229.
- Young, K. S. (2011). Combined credential programs: Pedagogic, practical, and ideological concerns. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 38(2), 7-26.

Appendix A: Research Invitation

**CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE
STUDENT TEACHING/EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION STUDY
INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH**

Dear Teacher,

I am writing to inform you about a dissertation study that is being conducted at California State University, Northridge (CSUN) regarding credential programs, student teaching, and experiential education. Kathleen Reams, a doctoral candidate, is conducting the study as part of the Ed.D. degree requirements.

The purpose of Kathleen Reams' dissertation study is to explore the perceptions of first year secondary teachers who have earned a multiple subject or single subject credential regarding their experience in the credential program and their prior student teaching experiences in a university teacher education program as well as their perceptions of their first year of teaching. This study will add new knowledge to existing information regarding the credential program as an experiential experience. Your participation in this study would be to participate in one 45 to 60 minute interview.

Any personally identifiable characteristics, such as your name or school, will not appear in the study. Participating in this study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time.

Your time investment in this study is greatly appreciated. If you would like to participate, please contact Kathleen Reams at kathleen.l.reams@my.csun.edu or (818)654-3346. Thank you in advance for considering participation in this study.

Sincerely,

Appendix B: Research Invitation

**CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE
STUDENT TEACHING/EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION STUDY
INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH**

Dear Administrator,

I am writing to inform you about a dissertation study that is being conducted at California State University, Northridge (CSUN) regarding credential programs, student teaching, and experiential education. Kathleen Reams, a doctoral candidate, is conducting the study as part of the Ed.D. degree requirements.

The purpose of Kathleen Reams' dissertation study is to explore the perceptions and experiences of first year secondary teachers who have earned a multiple subject or single subject credential in order to determine how those experiences and perceptions affect their decision to stay or leave the teaching profession. In addition, the study will explore the perceptions and expectations administrators have for first year teachers. This study will add new knowledge to existing information regarding attrition and retention rates of first year teachers. Your participation in this study would be to participate in one 45 to 60 minute interview.

Any personally identifiable characteristics, such as your name or school, will not appear in the study. Participating in this study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time.

Your time investment in this study is greatly appreciated. If you would like to participate, please contact Kathleen Reams at kathleen.l.reams@my.csun.edu or (818) 515-1160. Thank you in advance for considering participation in this study.

Sincerely

Appendix C: Informed Consent Form

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE STUDENT TEACHING/EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION STUDY INFORMED CONSENT FORM

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Kathleen Reams. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you (1) are a first year teacher, (2) have completed a student teaching experience from a pre-selected university, and (3) are willing to share your perceptions. Your participation in this research study is voluntary.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the perceptions of first year secondary teachers who hold a multiple subject or a secondary credential regarding their credential program experiences during a university-based teacher education program. One lens to evaluate the conditions the credential programs as well as the conditions of student teaching is through the principles of experiential education, which will be used to inform and guide this study's design. Specifically, the eight principles of experiential education, as defined by the National Society of Experiential Education, will be used to provide a context in which to understand the student teaching experiences of first year secondary teachers.

Procedures

If you elect to participate in this study you will be asked to (1) complete a 45-60 minute one-on-one interview.

Potential Risks and Discomforts to Participants

Given the purpose of the study on issues that may be personal, some interview questions could be more sensitive, including questions related to experiences with and/or perceptions of teaching, experiences related to academic study within the teacher education program, and feeling about who you are as a teacher. You may feel uneasy about answering some of these interview questions. You may elect not to answer any of the questions with which you feel uneasy and still remain as a participant in the study. If, after your participation in the study, you feel that you need to seek support services, please contact CSUN's University Counseling Services in Bayramian Hall, Suite 520, 818-677-2366. 818-677-7834 (TTY), or email: coun@csun.edu.

Potential Benefits to Participants

You may not benefit personally from your participation in this study. However, this study examines first year, secondary teacher perceptions on the student teaching experiences. As a participant in the one-on-one interview, you may develop a greater awareness of the development of your own teaching, which may facilitate change for you personally. In addition, findings from this study may contribute to our knowledge on the subject. The information gleaned from the study may lead to greater awareness among teacher education programs of the needs to create comprehensive, meaningful student teaching experiences and to develop supportive teacher education programs.

Payment to Participants for Participation

Research participants will not be paid for their participation in this study.

Audio Recording of Participants

During the course of the project, participants may be audio recorded. Your initial here _____ signify your consent to be audio recorded. You will be audio recorded for reasons related to data analysis and interpretation. During the audio recording, you may decline to be recorded and have the recorder turned off at any time during the interview. Digital audio recordings (i.e. files) will be stored on the laptop (password protected of the principal investigator). De-identified records in the form of transcriptions (i.e. files) will be maintained on the laptop (password protected) of the principle investigator for the period through which findings from the study will be disseminated. After this period, digital audio files and transcription files will be destroyed.

Confidentiality of Data

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Names will not be used in the reporting of findings. Every effort will be taken to ensure your confidentiality as a participant in this study. If you consent to participate, you will be assigned a random, three-digit number to protect you. No identifying information will be used, and your institution and/or program will not be identified by name in any published report.

Uses of Data

The information that you provide in this study may be used in institutional reports, instructional material, and/or scholarly presentations and publications. Any information

that you provide in connection with this study will not be associated with your name or your personally identifying characteristics. That is, any direct quotations of what you say in connection with this study will be used in published or publically available documents in a way that cannot be associated with you.

Participation, Withdrawal, and Review

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You are not obligated whatsoever to answer or respond to any question or to discuss anything that you are not inclined to answer or discuss. You can skip any question, or any part of any question, and will not face any penalty for answering, or not answering, any question in any way. You may ask that the audiotape be stopped at any time and/or may leave the interview at any time for any reason without consequences of any kind. Once your participation in interviews has concluded, you will have a period of 30 days (from the date of the final interview) to review digital audio files and/or transcriptions (whichever are available) from your interviews and/or withdrawal consent and participation in this study. If you withdraw consent after participation in the interviews has concluded, digital audio files and/or transcription files (whichever are available) from your interviews will be immediately destroyed.

Identification of Investigators

If you have any questions, concerns, or comments about this research and your participation in this study, you may contact the following: Kathleen Reams via email at kathleen.l.reams@my.csun.edu or office telephone at (818) 654-3346. In addition, you may contact the following: Dr. Jody Dunlap via email at jody.dunlap@csun.edu or office telephone at (818) 677-3078.

Rights of Research Participants

You may withdraw consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You can halt your participation in the study at any time. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, the details of this study, or any other concerns please contact the Office of Research and Sponsored Projects, California State University, Northridge, 265 University Hall, 18111 Nordhoff Street, Northridge, CA 91330, 818-677-2901.

Affirmation by Signature of Research Participant

I have read and understand the procedures described in this “Consent to Participate in Research.” My questions have all been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

Affirmation by Signature of Investigator or Designee

In my judgment the research participant is voluntarily and knowingly giving informed consent and possesses the legal capacity to give informed consent to participate in this research study.

Name of Investigator or Designee

Signature of Investigator or Designee

Date

Appendix D: Interview Protocol

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE STUDENT TEACHING/EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION STUDY INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

I. Pre-interview Session: Introduction/Background

Welcome and introduction:

Good morning/afternoon/evening. Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today. Before we begin the interview session, I'd like to give you the opportunity to read and sign the Consent to Participate in Research form.

Purpose of the interview:

As we discussed, this interview is a one-on-one interview intended to collect information for a research study that explores teacher perceptions regarding their prior student teaching experiences. During this interview, we will talk about your student teaching experiences and attitudes about your student teaching experiences as well as your feelings about your credential program experience.

Confidentiality:

Any information you share with me today will be used for research purposes only. I will be aggregating results from all interviews and will not be attributing comments to any particular person. Personally identifiable characteristics, such as your name and school, will not be used to identify you in any report or document. Today's interview session will be audio-recorded. I will also be taking notes of the conversation. The audio recordings may be transcribed for analysis. The audio recorded file, transcribed file, and notes will be stored securely in a password-protected laptop of the principle investigator until completion of interview analysis. Upon completion of analysis, files and notes will be destroyed. Only the researchers identified in the Consent to Participate will have access to the files and notes. The files and notes will be accessed and analyzed in strict confidentiality. Finally, your name or personally identifying information will not be used in any published or public reports.

Informed consent:

This consent notice summarizes some information from the Consent to Participate in Research and communicates the procedures, potential risks and discomforts for participants, potential benefits to participants, payment to participants for participation, participation and withdrawal, and rights of research participants. Procedures in this interview are limited to semi-structured personal interview sessions. Because the study deals with issues that are sensitive, some interview questions may involve issues of a personal nature. You may feel uneasy about answering some of these interview questions. You may elect not to answer any of the questions with which you feel uneasy and still remain as a participant in the study. You may not benefit personally from your participation in this study. However, findings from this study may provide insights into student teaching and may contribute to our knowledge on this subject. Interview participants will not be paid for their participation in the interview. Your participation in this interview is voluntary. You are not obligated whatsoever to answer or respond to any question or to discuss anything that you are not inclined to answer or discuss. You can skip any question, or any part of any question, and will not face any penalty for answering, or not answering, any question in any way. You may ask that the audio recording be stopped at any time and/or may leave the interview at any time for any reason without consequences of any kind. You may withdraw consent at any time and discontinue participation without interviewing. You can halt your participation in the interview at any time. You are not waiving legal claims, rights, or remedies because of your participation in this interview.

Timing:

Today's interview will last approximately 45 to 60 minutes. Are there any questions before I get started?

II. Interview Session

Main Questions:

1. Describe your experiences of completing the credential program at your university.
 - What was the biggest benefit of completing your credential program there?
 - What was the biggest challenge of completing your credential program there?

2. What were the requirements in order to be enrolled in the credential program?
 - Were there any requirements you strongly agreed with and felt were necessary? If so, which ones?
 - Were there any requirements you strongly disagreed with and felt were unnecessary? If so, which ones?
3. What do you feel is the most important component of the credential program? Why?
4. Were there any aspects of the credential program that you wish there had been more of? If so, what were they and why do you feel that way?
 - Were there any aspects of the credential program that you wish there had been less of? If so, what were they and why do you feel that way?
5. Describe your student teaching experience
 - What were the positives?
 - What were the negatives?
6. How do you feel student teaching helped prepare you for your first year of teaching?
7. Describe your first year of teaching.
 - What was the most memorable moment?
 - What was the most challenging moment?
8. What were your perceptions and expectations for your first year of teaching?
9. Do you have any ideas for how to improve the credential program experience?

Closing Questions:

I would like to give you a final opportunity to help us examine these issues. Before I end today, is there anything that I missed? Do you have anything else to add at this time? Have you said everything that you wanted to say but didn't get a chance to say? Have you shared everything that is significant about these experiences with me? If there's anything else that you recall after our interview session, I invite you to share it by contacting me.

III. Post-Interview Session: Debriefing and Closing

Thank you for participating in today's interview session. I greatly appreciate you taking the time and sharing your ideas with me. I also want to restate that what you have shared with me is confidential. No part of our discussion that includes names or other identifiable characteristics will be used in any report or document. Finally, I want to provide you with a chance to ask any questions that you might have about this interview. Do you have any questions at this time?

Appendix E: Interview Protocol

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE STUDENT TEACHING/EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION STUDY INTERVIEW PROTOCOL (for Administrators)

I. Pre-interview Session: Introduction/Background

Welcome and introduction:

Good morning/afternoon/evening. Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today. Before we begin the interview session, I'd like to give you the opportunity to read and sign the Consent to Participate in Research form.

Purpose of the interview:

As we discussed, this interview is a one-on-one interview intended to collect information for a research study that explores the administrator's role as well as his or her perceptions and expectations of first year teachers.

Confidentiality:

Any information you share with me today will be used for research purposes only. I will be aggregating results from all interviews and will not be attributing comments to any particular person. Personally identifiable characteristics, such as your name and school, will not be used to identify you in any report or document. Today's interview session will be audio-recorded. I will also be taking notes of the conversation. The audio recordings may be transcribed for analysis. The audio recorded file, transcribed file, and notes will be stored securely in a password-protected laptop of the principle investigator until completion of interview analysis. Upon completion of analysis, files and notes will be destroyed. Only the researchers identified in the Consent to Participate will have access to the files and notes. The files and notes will be accessed and analyzed in strict confidentiality. Finally, your name or personally identifying information will not be used in any published or public reports.

Informed consent:

This consent notice summarizes some information from the Consent to Participate in Research and communicates the procedures, potential risks and discomforts for participants, potential benefits to participants, payment to participants for participation, participation and withdrawal, and rights of research participants. Procedures in this interview are limited to semi-structured personal interview sessions. Because the study deals with issues that are sensitive, some interview questions may involve issues of a personal nature. You may feel uneasy about answering some of these interview questions. You may elect not to answer any of the questions with which you feel uneasy and still remain as a participant in the study.

You may not benefit personally from your participation in this study. However, findings from this study may provide insights into student teaching and may contribute to our knowledge on this subject. Interview participants will not be paid for their participation in the interview. Your participation in this interview is voluntary. You are not obligated whatsoever to answer or respond to any question or to discuss anything that you are not inclined to answer or discuss. You can skip any question, or any part of any question, and will not face any penalty for answering, or not answering, any question in any way. You may ask that the audio recording be stopped at any time and/or may leave the interview at any time for any reason without consequences of any kind. You may withdraw consent at any time and discontinue participation without interviewing. You can halt your participation in the interview at any time. You are not waiving legal claims, rights, or remedies because of your participation in this interview.

Timing:

Today's interview will last approximately 45 to 60 minutes. Are there any questions before I get started?

II. Interview Session

Main Questions:

1. How do you perceive your role in interacting with first year teachers?
2. What do you look for when bringing someone onto your staff?
 - Do your expectations change if the person is new to the district as opposed to just new to the school?
3. If you elect to bring a brand new teacher on board at your school site and into the profession, what is it during the interview process that made you aware of the fact that you would like to have this person at your site?
4. I understand you have no choice with a RIF person, but I would like to know when you are given a choice to recruit for a new teacher, what are the attributes you look for?
5. In your tenure as a principal, what are the 3-4 characteristics that you notice in the first year for successful teachers?
 - What are 3-4 characteristics that surface during your principalship that indicate a teacher is struggling?
 - Based on your experience, when do these signs commonly occur?
6. What kind of assistance is provided for a struggling teacher? Can you walk me through the steps?

7. What programs do you have in place for new teachers? Give me 3-4 examples.
8. What kinds of things are in place for the first year teacher aside from programs?
Please list as many as you can think of.
9. Who is in charge of first year teachers at your school site?
10. Do you have structures in place to allow the first year teacher to focus solely on their craft rather than engaging in extra assignments?
 - What is your policy, if any, for the responsibilities and duties of a first year teacher?
11. If I was your first year teacher, can you walk me through what kinds of things I would receive on my first day? First faculty meeting?

Closing Questions:

I would like to give you a final opportunity to help us examine these issues. Before I end today, is there anything that I missed? Do you have anything else to add at this time? Have you said everything that you wanted to say but didn't get a chance to say? Have you shared everything that is significant about these experiences with me? If there's anything else that you recall after our interview session, I invite you to share it by contacting me.

III. Post-Interview Session: Debriefing and Closing

Thank you for participating in today's interview session. I greatly appreciate you taking the time and sharing your ideas with me. I also want to restate that what you have shared with me is confidential. No part of our discussion that includes names or other identifiable characteristics will be used in any report or document. Finally, I want to provide you with a chance to ask any questions that you might have about this interview. Do you have any questions at this time?

Appendix F: Focus Group Protocol

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE STUDENT TEACHING/EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION STUDY FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS (for Teachers)

Pre-Focus Group Session: Introduction/Background

Welcome and introduction:

Good morning/afternoon/evening. Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today. Before we begin the focus group, I'd like to give you the opportunity to read and sign the Consent to Participate in Research form.

Purpose of the interview:

As we discussed, this focus group is intended to collect information for a research study that explores the first year teacher's experiences, expectations, and perceptions. The questions I ask you during this time are very broad and are simply asked to give me a general idea of your perceptions, expectations, and experiences as a first year teacher. Most importantly, this is an open dialogue without any judgments on my part.

Confidentiality:

Any information you share with me today will be used for research purposes only. I will be aggregating results from all interviews and will not be attributing comments to any particular person. Personally identifiable characteristics, such as your name and school, will not be used to identify you in any report or document. Today's focus group will be audio-recorded. I will also be taking notes of the conversation. The audio recordings may be transcribed for analysis. The audio recorded file, transcribed file, and notes will be stored securely in a password-protected laptop of the principle investigator until completion of the focus group analysis. Upon completion of analysis, files and notes will be destroyed. Only the researchers identified in the Consent to Participate will have access to the files and notes. The files and notes will be accessed and analyzed in strict confidentiality. Finally, your name or personally identifying information will not be used in any published or public reports.

Informed consent:

This consent notice summarizes some information from the Consent to Participate in Research and communicates the procedures, potential risks and discomforts for participants, potential benefits to participants, payment to participants for participation, participation and withdrawal, and rights of research participants. Procedures in this focus group are limited to semi-structured interview session.

Because the study deals with issues that are sensitive, some questions may involve issues of a personal nature. You may feel uneasy about answering some of these questions. You may elect not to answer any of the questions with which you feel uneasy and still remain as a participant in the study. You may not benefit personally from your participation in this study. However, findings from this study may provide insights into student teaching and may contribute to our knowledge on this subject. Interview participants will not be paid for their participation in the interview. Your participation in this interview is voluntary. You are not obligated whatsoever to answer or respond to any question or to discuss anything that you are not inclined to answer or discuss. You can skip any question, or any part of any question, and will not face any penalty for answering, or not answering, any question in any way. You may ask that the audio recording be stopped at any time and/or may leave the interview at any time for any reason without consequences of any kind. You may withdraw consent at any time and discontinue participation without interviewing. You can halt your participation in the focus group at any time. You are not waiving legal claims, rights, or remedies because of your participation in this interview.

Timing:

Today's focus group will last approximately 45 to 60 minutes. Are there any questions before I get started?

Focus Group Session

Questions:

1. Where did you go to school and where did you get your credential?

2. You're almost at the end of your first year. I want you to go back in time to last August when you first set foot on this campus--describe that first day to me.
3. Describe your first instructional day

4. If one of your professors from your credential program had talked to you at the end of your first instructional day, what would you have told them about?
 - Did your first instructional day turn out the way you anticipated? Explain.
 - Did you expect something different to occur? Explain.

5. At the opening faculty meeting, were you introduced to the staff?
 - If so, how were you introduced? What happened during that faculty meeting?
 - Did you introduce yourself to the staff? Did the staff introduce themselves to you?

- Was there a brunch or meet and greet portion of time set aside for the staff? If so, were you introduced to anyone who became your ‘go-to’ person for the rest of the year?
6. When was the first day you went to the teachers’ cafeteria at lunchtime?
 - What was your opinion of that experience in the teachers’ cafeteria?
 7. How many of you, if you had gym memberships, gave up your memberships after the 4th or 5th week of school?
 - If you gave it up why?
 - If you didn’t, why not?
 8. Look back over the past year--How much of your personal time Monday-Thursday and the weekend went into planning, lesson building and grading papers?
 9. Regarding student demographics, look at the classes you taught over this past year....were the demographics what you expected them to be? How so?
 - Were they different? How so?
 - Were they larger or smaller than you expected?
 - Did your student teaching experiences replicate the student demographics of your classroom? Can you explain?
 10. If you could change one thing about your first year what would it be?
 - If you could keep one thing the same about your first year, what would it be?

Closing Questions:

I would like to give you a final opportunity to help us examine these issues. Before I end today, is there anything that I missed? Do you have anything else to add at this time? Have you said everything that you wanted to say but didn’t get a chance to say? Have you shared everything that is significant about these experiences with me? If there’s anything else that you recall after our interview session, I invite you to share it by contacting me.

III. Post-Interview Session: Debriefing and Closing

Thank you for participating in today’s interview session. I greatly appreciate you taking the time and sharing your ideas with me. I also want to restate that what you have shared with me is confidential. No part of our discussion that includes names or other identifiable characteristics will be used in any report or document. Finally, I want to

provide you with a chance to ask any questions that you might have about this interview.
Do you have any questions at this time?