ABSTRACT

CONLEY, RICHARD E. Teacher Migration From High-Performing Middle Schools: A Case Study (Under the direction of Paul F. Bitting).

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the dynamics of school climate and understand how it relates to teachers’ perceptions and attitudes towards teacher migration. The research was conducted through the eyes of a sixth grade language arts/social studies’ teacher. By spending extensive time and conducting multiple interviews with the teacher and other staff members, I was able to explore some of the reasons and conditions why teachers leave schools, particularly high-performing schools to teach in other high-performing schools.

Attending weekly meetings at all levels and content areas with migrating teachers, combined with thirteen interviews and ample document collection, allowed me to further understand the gap that exists between what a high-performing school professes to be and how it actually is perceived by its own teachers. This gap is what proves to be disconcerting and frustrating for teachers who are satisfied with teaching but consider relocation to meet further personal and professional challenges.

Utilizing the social cognitive theory of Albert Bandura (1977), I researched the school world of a middle school teacher, observing how he and other individual teachers worked together as a group. Social cognitive theory examines the self and organizational efficacy of teachers and schools as transformative agents. Teachers with high abilities do not necessarily perform well collectively or as an organization if specific cognitive, behavioral, and environmental conditions are not in place to support their collaborative work efforts. The study of these three conditions within the school organization provided me with an in depth look at how teachers feel or believe themselves to be validated.
The research takes a look at a high-performing middle school from the inside out. High-performing teachers are leaving high-performing schools. This introspective study can help guide future research efforts towards examining the criteria that enables a school organization to understand the designation *high-performing* according to authentic and local site-based school needs, not only state performance standards. The study may contribute to our greater understanding of why teachers opt to migrate from successful schools.
TEACHER MIGRATION FROM HIGH-PERFORMING MIDDLE SCHOOLS:

A CASE STUDY

by

RICHARD E. CONLEY

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty of North Carolina State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND POLICY STUDIES

Raleigh

2006

APPROVED BY:

Dr. Paul F. Bitting
Chair of Advisory Committee

Dr. Bonnie Fusarelli

Dr. Raymond Ting

Dr. Peter Hessling
BIOGRAPHY

Richard E. Conley is a New York City native son, the son of Richard and Phyllis Conley. Neither one finished high school in New York City in the 1940s and both were self-taught.

Rich attended the University of Arizona and Northern Arizona University in the 1970s, finally graduating in 1981, after ten years of combining full-time undergraduate work and full-time service in the merchant marines. He went back and forth from ship to university to ship during that time. He graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Spanish with a Spanish Interpretation certificate. His minor was in French. After six years of service as a United States Merchant Marine and eight years as a corporate travel agent, Rich switched careers at the age of forty, went into education, and moved to North Carolina.

Rich’s life changed when he joined the merchant marines after attending the Harry Lundeberg School of Seamanship in Piney Point, Maryland, in 1974. He flew to Japan as a twenty-one year old and traveled around the world for the next six years. He became an able-bodied seaman and sailed primarily on tankers and container ships to more than forty countries. During this time he met a veteran seaman, Joe Diosco, who introduced Rich to foreign languages. The two of them began a six month collaboration of foreign language study that eventually culminated in Rich learning five languages and returning to college to study in the field. Joe went back to get his GED soon after their encounter based on a mutual agreement that they made; Rich would return to college if Joe, then in his fifties, returned to get his high school diploma. Joe and Rich completed their promises. Joe died shortly thereafter in 1977.
Rich started out in public school education in Ligon GT Magnet Middle School in 1993 and worked for one year as a records clerk and Spanish teacher. He also coached girls track. He found employment as a full-time Spanish teacher at Apex Middle School the next year and also coached girls track again. After four years at Apex Middle School, Rich began pursuing his Master of Education in School Administration at Campbell University in Buies Creek, N.C., enrolling in 1995. He served a year as an administrative intern at Davis Drive Middle School in Cary, N.C., in 1997 and then became a full-time assistant principal at Davis Drive from 1998 to 2003. In 2003 he was selected to be the principal of Apex Middle School and served in that capacity for one year. In 2004 he decided to take a year for educational leave to complete his doctorate. Rich has been in the doctoral program at North Carolina State University since 1997. He has worked full-time as an administrator while attending classes at the university. His biography continues…….
I would like to extend my warm gratitude to the committee members for helping me become a better thinker and research writer. It was not easy but I believe the boy has become a man. Thank you so much Dr. Bitting, Dr. Hessling, Dr. Fusarelli, and Dr. Ting. Dr. Patricia Marshall was also instrumental in helping me overcome those scholarly hurdles and engaging me in deep thought and conviction about our society.

Dr. Bitting deserves extended gratitude for indulging my love for philosophy and bringing out the essence of my thought in that area. He also taught in the New York City school system and knows what a knish and an egg cream are, so he had instant credibility with me.

One of my greatest gifts is my son, Rickie, a high school senior, who will watch his father walk the stage with a PhD in hand. No Conley ever experienced such a moment and having my son there, watching, will complete one of the greatest dreams in my life. Tears will flow abundantly on that day. I love you Rickie.

My mother and sister have always believed in me and I love them for their patience and endless advice. They sustained me through some difficult times.

I met Joe Diosco, a merchant marine, in 1975 and worked with him for six months studying languages. He urged me relentlessly to return to school, study foreign languages, and get my degree. I wanted to please him and did return as he requested. I insisted that he return and get his high school diploma even though he was in his 50s. When I saw him receiving his GED certificate in a picture in the union paper, I cried.
I never saw him after 1975 and when I found out this year, thirty years later, that he died in 1977, only two years after our life-changing encounter, I cried profusely.

Thank you for changing my life Joe.

The pursuit and completion of my doctorate is dedicated to my late father, Dick Conley. Dick grew up in the 1930s and 1940s in New York City and dropped out of high school to go into the army. He had to hustle during those early years to make a dollar, not an easy thing to do in a tough Irish Catholic neighborhood on the west side of Manhattan. On occasion he and his brothers and sisters had to sleep in tents in Central Park because they could not maintain a stable living. Dad is my Cinderella Man. He never mentioned any of his background and it was only after his death that his brother, Larry told me about these tough times. Dad did not want me to know about those painful moments as a child.

My father had a gift for music and sang beautifully within a tenor range. He saved $2 a week to take singing lessons at the Brooklyn Academy of Music and did not tell anyone for fear of being called a sissy. He eventually sang operatic arias in Randalls Island during the summer concerts. I can never listen to “Che gelida menina” from La Boheme without hearing my father singing it as I was growing up.

He was a simple, hardworking man, as men tended to be in the Depression and war years. He brought me to my first Yankee game in 1961 and I watched Mickey Mantle in pinstripes in centerfield, hat over his heart, facing the American flag and singing the national anthem. It was like watching Moses himself. This one’s for you Dad. We did it.

And thank you Barry for being my lifelong friend, baseball buddy, and man of reason through some of my tough times.
You also understand that a well executed double play has as much aesthetic value as Michelangelo’s *Pieta*.

And thank you Judy for being my best editor and believing in me.
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 1. Introduction to study</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List of Tables</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1. Introduction to study</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of Key Terms</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher migration</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research questions</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical framework</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scope and significance of study</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of Emergent Themes</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 2. Literature review</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Turnover</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Challenges Facing Beginning Teachers</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Climate</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open Communication between Teachers and Administration</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Recognition of Teachers</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obstacles to a Healthy School Climate</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site-based Management: The Transfer of Power</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-efficacy: Teacher as Believer</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Results of Low Self-Efficacy: Formidable Obstacles</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Efficacy: The Voices of Beginning Teachers</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges to the Effectiveness of Organizational Efficacy</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Efficacy to Organizational Efficacy: The Necessary Bridge</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaps in Existing Literature</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 3. Methodology</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Site Selection</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Design</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection Sampling</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix</td>
<td>Title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A</td>
<td>Staff Orientation Letter/School Opening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B</td>
<td>Fieldwork Guidelines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix C</td>
<td>Informed Consent Letter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix D</td>
<td>First Interview Questions for Anthony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix E</td>
<td>Second Interview Questions for Anthony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix F</td>
<td>Third Interview Questions for Anthony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix G</td>
<td>Interview Questions for Teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix H</td>
<td>Interview Questions for Principals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix I</td>
<td>Interview Questions for Assistant Principals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix J</td>
<td>Interview Questions for PTA president</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix K</td>
<td>Institutional Review Board (IRB) consent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix L</td>
<td>Wake County Public School System consent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table 1.</td>
<td>Middle School Teacher Turnover Rates in Wake County Public Schools, NC (in percentages) 2001-2005</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 2.</td>
<td>Teacher attrition and teacher migration, 1999-2001.</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 3.</td>
<td>Annual Teacher Turnover, 2004-2005 (United States) in percentages.</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.</td>
<td>Increase of teacher turnover rates among middle schools from 2003-2005</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wake County Public School System, N.C. (increase in percentages).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter One

Introduction to study

About half of the total teacher turnover is cross-school migration. Unlike attrition from the occupation, teacher migration is a form of turnover that does not decrease the overall supply of teachers because departures are simultaneously new hires. As a result, it would seem reasonable to conclude that teacher migration does not contribute to the problem of staffing schools. From a macro and systemic level of analysis, this is probably correct. However, from an organizational perspective, the data suggest teacher migration does contribute to the problem of staffing schools (Ingersoll, 2001a, p.4).

Opening Thoughts

The path towards the teacher migration issue went through two central doors, that of self and organizational efficacy, and that of school climate. By school climate, I refer to structural and curricular features such as bell schedule, number of classes per day, time allotted for instruction, behavioral policies, front office protocol, supervisory duties, teaming networks and more. By self and organizational efficacy, I refer to relationships and perceptions. One can even say that the efficacy question may be a school culture concern. A middle school operates with a given group of personnel required to perform defined tasks at given times. The ability for a school organization to perform at high levels of efficiency is based on the ability levels of the personnel and the motivating factors that determine to what degree the work will be done well or poorly.
Definitions of Key Terms

**Organizational efficacy**--- Organizational efficacy is a collective belief in the capability of carrying out a group task or goal.

**School climate**--- Those psychological and institutional attributes that give an organization its personality (Bulach, Malone, and Castleman, 1994). *School climate* is often thought of as the institutional effect on people’s attitudes and behaviors.

**School culture**--- *School culture* can be defined as the historically transmitted patterns of meaning that include the norms, values, beliefs, ceremonies, rituals, traditions, and myths understood, maybe in varying degrees, by members of the school community (Stolp and Smith 1994). The concept of culture came to education from the corporate workplace with the notion that it would provide direction for a more efficient and stable learning environment. *School culture* is often thought of as the effect on an organization over time.

**Self-efficacy**--- The belief in one’s abilities to perform a specific task. *Self-efficacy* is concerned with judgments of personal capability. Efficacy plays a key role in the self-regulation of motivation. Albert Bandura introduced the concept in 1977. *Self-efficacy* is often confused with *self-esteem* but they are entirely different.

**Self-esteem**--- The general belief in one’s self-worth. *Self-esteem* has several sources: from self-evaluations based on personal competence or on possession of attributes that are culturally invested with positive or negative value.

**Social Cognitive Theory**--- Often referred to as Social Learning Theory, Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) explains human behavior in a three-way reciprocal theory in which personal factors, environmental influences, and behavior continually interact. A basic premise of Social Cognitive Theory is that people learn not only through their own experiences, but also by observing the actions of others and the results of those actions. The theory was developed in the 1970s by Albert Bandura.

**Teacher attrition**--- A gradual, natural reduction in teacher membership or teacher personnel, as through retirement, resignation, or death.

**Teacher migration**--- The loss of teacher membership due to a transfer to another school or district.

**Teacher turnover**--- A gradual, natural reduction in teacher membership or teacher personnel. *Teacher turnover* includes both teacher attrition and teacher migration.
The Problem

The purpose of my research was to explore and further understand why so many teachers migrate or transfer from other schools, particularly high-performing schools. For the purposes of clarity the following research will draw the distinction between attrition (those teachers who leave the field of education) and migration (those teachers who transfer or migrate to another school or district but remain in the field) (Ingersoll, 2001). The study of migration was my primary focus since the ensuing research data revealed 18-25% migration rates at even high-performing schools which raised key questions linked to organizational efficacy (Department of Public Instruction, 2005). In an average size middle school in Wake County, North Carolina with sixty to seventy teachers on staff, a 20% annual migration rate is the equivalent of twelve to fourteen teachers migrating a year. In less than five years, it is not uncommon for these middle schools to turn over half the staff. This exodus consists largely of teachers transferring or migrating to other schools, either in the same district or out. The void left by the departing teacher creates numerous logistical, administrative, personnel, and classroom problems. Continuity and stability are central components of successful organizations. High teacher migration threatens both. My research will utilize local data from the Wake County Public School System, North Carolina data, and national data. My selection of Wake County was the result of twelve years of personal experience and knowledge of the system as a teacher and administrator. I focused on the middle school level since my experience was exclusively in middle schools.

The table that follows indicates the teacher turnover rate in Wake County, N.C., from 2001 to 2005. The table does not differentiate between those teachers who departed the field and those who departed a school to teach in another school. Research
shows that only 9.64% of all teachers in Wake County in 2004-2005 retired with full benefits. 13.07% left to teach in another North Carolina school system (North Carolina Public Schools, Statistical Profile 2005).

**TABLE 1.**  Middle School Teacher Turnover Rates in Wake County Public Schools, NC  
(in percentages)  
2001-2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Schools of Excellence</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90-100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools of Distinction</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-89%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools of Progress</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-79%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Recognition</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District (all schools)</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Honor Schools of Excellence (HSOE)**  
Under the ABCs of Public Education, Schools of Excellence have 90-100 percent of student scores at or above Achievement Level III and made expected or high growth and have satisfied the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) of all subgroups according to the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) act.

**Schools of Excellence (SOE)**  
Under the ABCs of Public Education, Schools of Excellence have 90-100 percent of student scores at or above Achievement Level III and made expected or high growth.
Schools of Distinction (SOD)
Under the ABCs of Public Education, Schools of Distinction have 80-89 percent of students' scores at or above Achievement Level III and made expected or high growth.

Schools of Progress (SOP)
Under the ABCs of Public Education, Schools of Progress have 60-79 percent of students' scores at or above Achievement Level III and made expected or high growth.

No Recognition (NR) - Under the ABCs of Public Education, schools of No Recognition did not meet expected or high growth.


Teacher migration

Teacher turnover rates, whether through attrition or migration, create staffing problems for the school which affects the school organization. This turnover becomes influenced by the “character and conditions of the organizations within which employees work” (Ingersoll, 2001 p.3). While much research has focused on teacher attrition rates (Boe & Gilford, 1992, Grissmer & Kirby, 1997, Ingersoll, 2000, Murnane, Singer, Willett, Kemple & Olsen, 1991, Price, 1989), less has been carried out for teacher migration, particularly looking at organizational characteristics and conditions (Ingersoll, 2001). Since teachers are members of a school organization and a school organization is largely guided in design and instruction by state and district legislated mandates, it was essential that I explore features of organizational design.

Why would a quality instructor leave a high-performing public school to teach in another high-performing public school in the same district? Since entering the school system in 1993, approximately 50% of the teaching populations of three of my previous schools (all three recognized as Schools of Excellence by the state) have departed. If half the teachers
were departing after five years from quality schools to migrate to other schools, the problem was clear that the schools were losing personnel to other schools at a high rate. This exodus of qualified personnel, many of them quality teachers, poses a significant problem for the district and especially the individual school since replacement procedures require time, labor, and expertise to find a suitable teacher in a competitive arena (Ingersoll, 2001). All schools are also organizations so getting inside a high-performing school long enough to observe and understand its organizational features (an integral part of school climate) became a main focus for me. Ingersoll’s conclusion (2001) that the organizational settings in most schools is “impersonal and alienated” (Bulach, 2001, p. 16) guided my inquiry.

I have spoken to many teachers over the years and a recurrent theme was the lack of validation in the decisionmaking process either at the team or administrative level. Understanding the ramifications of losing so many teachers who potentially stabilize school climates and organizations due to their experience and familiarity with the organization, I believed it essential to talk to teachers who had recently transferred or “migrated.” Further understanding that each school has a particular school climate, I found it problematic that three high-performing middle schools lost so much personnel at such an accelerated rate, an average of 10 to 14 teachers a year.

Table I indicates that the range of teacher turnover in the middle schools from 2001-2005 was 18% to 28%, with the North Carolina average at 23%. It was apparent that, regardless of student achievement scores according to state standards, middle school turnover rates were still relatively high. Studying a school climate from inside the building over four months would help me understand the organizational design and features of a high-performing school. Daily routines, organizational protocol, and teachers’ voices would all
become potentially important data. Since the school being observed was only in its second year, all the teachers except the first year teachers would have migrated. That common characteristic strengthened the robustness and trustworthiness of the research. Once I had researched these concerns, my fieldwork helped me understand the organizational flow of information and operations at the school level better and I was able to understand the phenomenon of teacher migration more competently. The interviews revealed insightful information about perceptions of a high-performing middle school and amplified the definition of high-performing. The interviews also aided in understanding the differences between self-efficacy and organizational efficacy to be revealed later in the research document.

The Case

My research was a case study of a middle school language arts/social studies teacher at a high-performing traditional middle school in the Wake County Public School System in Raleigh, North Carolina. The teacher was nationally board certified and had recently migrated from another high-performing middle school after seven years of teaching. I designated the school of study, PLC Middle School, for purposes of anonymity. PLC Middle School was designated an Honor School of Excellence (90% of the students at grade level or above according to End of Grade test scores and successful completion of all Adequate Yearly Progress goals according to No Child Left Behind legislation) in 2004-2005 by the North Carolina State Board of Education. I observed, conducted multiple interviews, attended meetings, and maintained an ongoing dialogue with the case study teacher who, from this point forward, will be referred to as Anthony, a pseudonym.

Observing Anthony over the course of a semester helped me “understand something
else” (Stake, 1995, p.3), the phenomenon of school climate and its effect on his perceptions. Understanding Anthony as a unique case was not my goal since he was one of many teachers who had migrated from various middle schools in the district. I had limited interest in Anthony inherently as a teacher but was interested more in his serving as a vehicle to understand school climate and organizational structure and processes and their effect on teachers’ attitudes and perceptions. Because the study of Anthony provided me with valid data and was instrumental in understanding the school climate question, the study became an instrumental case study (Stake, 1995). Anthony was a “typical” migrator in PLC Middle School, a teacher who had transferred to another school voluntarily due to various reasons (Patton, 2002). The interviews revealed that many of those reasons had to do less with self-efficacy than organizational efficacy. That is to say that some dissatisfaction existed between the teacher and administration regarding the school vision or school practices collectively.

Anthony was not studied in isolation but was part of a larger group of teachers. Therefore, it was important to understand the perceptions of others interacting with him during the semester. These cases which consisted of ten other educators, nine in the same building, were designated as subcases. The research focused on Anthony yet the addition of valuable input from Anthony’s peers, all migrated teachers, represented a “thematic analysis” across the cases, a form of “layering” (Patton, 2002, p.297).

He is on a two teacher team and is teaching language arts and social studies. Language arts is a new content area for him even though his certification is in language arts/social studies (K-6). In fact, his transfer was not only to a new school but to a new content area. I gathered information about his transfer (“migration”) from an organizational and personal point of view to further explore and understand the phenomena called school
climate and its effect on his transition. Since much of my study was to observe teachers working collectively, teacher-teacher relationships were key to the research (Hoy, 1998). Teacher-teacher relationships are a “salient dimension of climate” (Cafasso, Camic & Rhodes, 2002).

Since PLC Middle School was only in its second year of operation, all teachers except first year teachers had migrated. I chose a range of teachers to interview from first year teachers to twenty-seven year veterans. The reason I included first year teachers in the interviews was because teacher turnover rates are exceptionally high during the first three years, averaging 33% (Ingersoll, 2003a). Talking to the beginning teachers could shed light on some of the findings from totally new perspectives. Conducting interviews with other key school personnel in the building diversified and triangulated the data collection, examining the multiple perspectives of organizational efficacy. I interviewed the two principals of Anthony’s present and previous schools along with two assistant principals, the academically gifted student coordinator, and the PTA president. The PTA president was a former math teacher in the district.

Thus, my research explored the teachers’ perceptions which helped shape their self-efficacy and overall perception of organizational or collective efficacy. Self-efficacy is a primary component of motivational and performance indicators (Bandura, 1997). 32% of the nation’s teachers transfer to other schools due to dissatisfaction. Of the 32% who migrate, 51% cite poor administrative support (Ingersoll, 2001a). I attempted to explore the ‘why’ and ‘how’ of this phenomenon to determine any relationship, if any, from an organizational point of view.
The Context

The decision to select PLC Middle School as the context for the case study was based on several factors:

- It was recognized as an Honor School of Excellence by the state of North Carolina. Therefore it was deemed a high-performing school.

- Although in its second year of operation, every teacher and staff member in the school had migrated from other schools.

- I knew the caliber of teaching of many teachers in the school since I had worked with them previously. The question of validity and bias will be addressed in chapter four, the methodology section.

- The principal had implemented an unprecedented organizational design called a Professional Learning Community (DuFour, 1998) which brought the teachers close together organizationally through constant collaboration.

- The principal was very receptive to the study since he was reform-minded and innovative.

PLC Middle School is a traditional 6-8 middle school operating on a ten month calendar year. It opened its doors in 2004 and is in its second year. It is located in a small urban area, relatively affluent, near the capital city. The student enrollment was 662 in the first year, 2004-2005 and is presently at 885. In 2004, there were 45 classroom teachers and that number has increased as enrollment increases. The district average for middle schools is 64. 93% of the teachers in PLC Middle School are fully certified and 40% of the teachers have advanced degrees. Ten are nationally board certified teachers compared to the
state average of four per school. The breakdown on years of teaching experience at PLC Middle School is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-3 years</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-10 years</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10+ years</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

97% of the students attend school daily. 100% of the classrooms are connected to the Internet.

PLC Middle School has been designated an Honor School of Excellence (HSOE) by the state for having 90% of its student population performing at grade level or above on the End of Grade standardized testing (95.3%). It has also complied with all twenty five of its No Child Left Behind performance targets. The state recognized it as one of the most improved schools in during the 2004-2005 academic year.

**Background**

The path to this research came from a chance moment, a moment of reflection upon twelve years of being a public school educator in the Wake County Public School System. After having worked in three schools (twice in the same PLC Middle Schools teacher and principal), I happened to find a staff photo of a middle school (School 1) in 2003 that was dated from the 1997-1998 school year. While looking over the photo I noticed how many educators were still at the school, five years later. Of the seventy teachers in the picture, about 37 still remained or 53% of the staff. It suddenly seemed odd to me as an
educator that in a school deemed high-performing (School of Excellence) by the state of North Carolina, that so many staff members were no longer present only five years later. The Department of Public Instruction recognized School 1 as a School of Excellence because 90% or more of the student population, grades 6-8, performed at or above grade level on the End-of-Grade tests the previous year. In fact, the school earned that distinction from 1998 until the present time, 2004. Why did so many teachers depart a high-performing school in an affluent area of the county? Did the teachers leave the profession or transfer to another school? The questions puzzled me because traditionally we think of the lower teacher retention rates in more impoverished areas that are challenged for instructional and building resources. Yet this school was located in a well-to-do area, touted by developers and realtors as an area of high quality living, with excellent schools and community services.

Subsequently, I looked for an old staff directory at the first Wake County public school I worked at in 1993-1994, School 2, in downtown Raleigh, and looked over the names from nine years earlier. I then went on the school’s website and looked over the 2003 roster noticing a similar occurrence, even more dramatic than that at School 1. Fewer than six teachers of a staff of more than seventy teachers still remained, some nine years later. This represented only 8% of the staff. 92% of the original staff had left, few of retirement age, including all four administrators. The phenomenon at School 2 was also puzzling because the school was also a high-performing school, a feeder school for School 4, one of the best high schools in the country. Logically, I then looked over the next school’s roster, that of School 3, where I had worked as a teacher from 1994-1997. School 3 was also a School of Excellence. Now, six years later, as I went over the directory, I recognized about thirty names from 1997, 43% of the teaching population. 57% of the teachers at School 3 were no
longer present at that school. None of the three original administrators remained at the school. I proceeded to look at teacher turnover rates for all twenty-seven middle schools in the district broken down into Honor Schools of Excellence, Schools of Excellence, Schools of Distinction, and schools of No Recognition (See Table 1).

Observing that almost 50% of the teaching populations of three excellent schools in the county had departed, gave birth to an underlying premise supporting the following research question. Why do teachers leave a school (or profession) even though it is noted as “high-performing?” To truly understand the concept of teacher turnover, it was essential that I examine the school organization because turnover is linked to performance and efficacy of organizations (Ingersoll, 2001). Since schools are institutions governed by rules, policies, legislation, and mandates sent from legislative branches, government agencies, and the boards of education, it was important to understand the dynamics of organizational design and how it related to school climate.

I decided to conduct a case study of a high-performing middle school in the district in an effort to shed light on the central question of the effect of school climate on teachers’ perceptions. My previous observations as a school employee provided me with an organizational vantage point from “inside the building.” Conducting research in these same buildings as a social science researcher twelve years later provided a rare viewpoint. The dual perspective afforded me an insight into what I lived in the school, the praxis, versus what I studied in the university, the theory. My efforts to elucidate the problem through greater understanding of the teachers and their decisions to leave schools supported my belief that praxis and theory are not mutually exclusive, quite the opposite. Praxis and theory are necessary complements in a high-functioning organization that thrives on both, albeit in
different proportions. The voices of some of the interviewees resonated clearly with me in all three roles: as a teacher, I had beginning experiences to talk about from my past; as an assistant principal, I had overseen formal observations and observed instruction on a daily basis; as a principal, I had interacted with all the teachers in the middle school setting and learned much about consensus, politics, and organizational design.

After completing the research, I analyzed the data and drew several conclusions, one of which pointed to a recurrent theme, the lack of an authentic voice on the part of the teachers. Another was the conclusion that beginning teachers cross a large divide between teacher education programs in the university and the immediate classroom requirements. However they often will remain in their assigned school for the most part through the “survival” period, the first three years. After that period, if they do not view themselves and their ideals as being challenged and validated by the administration or other instructors, many may migrate. Frank, a National Board Certified teacher, elaborated:

By the time teachers put in three or four years in, they’re ready to spread their wings and assert themselves in a professional environment. If they’re in a building and the administration doesn’t teach people to work with dissent and value it, those teachers are going to leave out of frustration. Accomplished teachers will also leave and I think if you look at the migration pattern you see that lots of teachers in that central part of their teaching career, four to seven years in, are the ones leaving. They’re past the survival mode and are approaching the professional part of their career.

Many beginning teachers are not prepared successfully for the transition from college
to the classroom yet depend on experienced educators to “show them the way” and serve as moral support during this novice period. Let us call this designated period the three year period, since the state and district do so and call these teachers, Initially Licensed Teachers or ILTs. Likewise, many public schools themselves may not be prepared to thoroughly acculturate these beginning teachers through an ongoing process outside of the mentoring program required by the district.

The ensuing research led me from self efficacy to organizational efficacy to questions of beginning teachers being better prepared for their assignments. The issue of how public schools and the university can forge more effective programs together to support professional growth surfaced during my interviews with the beginning teachers. I believe that these new teachers would be better prepared not only for entry into teaching assignments, but more confident as they transition through their careers.

While there is research on the importance of school climate for student achievement (Bulach, Malone, & Castleman, 1995; Bandura, 1997; Pajares, 1997), there is less on teacher satisfaction and self efficacy, particularly on schools in the same district or county. Bahamonde & Gunnell (2000) researched teacher job satisfaction and its influence on their perception of school climate and Hirase (2000) researched the teacher’s sense of efficacy in positive school climates. This research focuses on the teacher and his/her perceptions of the school climate. More work needs to be done on the effect of the school’s organizational features and their effects on the teacher. Still more research needs to be done on the interrelationship between the teacher and the school organization in order to assess the health of the relationship. Teacher empowerment is important towards developing a strong sense of worth and validation for the beginning teachers as well as experienced teachers.
Research Questions

The primary research question was “What effect does school climate have on teachers’ perceptions?” By following and observing a 6th grade teacher through a semester of teaching, I was able to explore the makeup of a school climate of a high-performing school. I attempted to determine how a school climate positively or negatively affected Anthony’s. These perceptions, along with those of other migrating teachers, were instrumental in their decision to leave high-performing schools. Based on the self-efficacy model of Bandura (1986), I pursued the following secondary questions:

A. Why do teachers leave high-performing schools to teach in other high-performing schools?

B. What role does the organizational design of a school play in its performance level?

C. How may beginning teachers receive more sustained organizational support to ensure their growth and increase teacher retention?

D. How does self-efficacy relate to organizational efficacy? Can teachers with strong self-efficacy be productive if organizational efficacy or collective efficacy is weak?

Theoretical Framework

Teachers need to feel empowered and competent in order to promote their sense of self-efficacy. High self-efficacy is essentially, the teachers’ belief in their ability to make a difference both in the classroom and in the organization (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998). If they feel that they are not doing so, dissatisfaction and sometimes, indifference sets in and teacher migration may become an issue (Ingersoll, 2001). In 1977, Albert Bandura developed a social cognitive theory that viewed individuals as “self-organizing, proactive,
and self-regulating rather than reactive and shaped by external events” (Pajares, 2002, p.116).

From the theory, Bandura went on to examine self-efficacy beliefs, individual beliefs in capabilities of performing specific tasks (Bandura, 1977). He discovered that the first years of teaching were crucial to a teacher’s sense of self-efficacy since efficacy may be most “malleable early in learning” (Woolfolk Hoy, 2000, p.2). Beginning teachers walk into a building and onto a team in most middle school organizations. Not fully knowing what to expect, the experience of socialization may be “comparatively intense” (Etzioni, 1975, p.246). This phenomenon is heightened just before and shortly after the teachers become part of the school (Woolfolk Hoy, 2000).

The resulting educator interviews revealed that high quality teachers working in the same school do not necessarily translate into a high quality school collectively. In fact, many migrating teachers feel isolated and eventually leave schools if they do not perceive adequate administrative support or are not directly involved in decision-making (Ingersoll, 2003). The skill level of these teachers is negated by the negative perceptions regarding collective apathy, indifference, or futility. Understanding this, a theoretical approach or framework, addressing the affective and perceptual attitudes of teachers was essential. Albert Bandura’s self-efficacy model (1987) stemmed from his social cognitive theory which contends that behavior is primarily self-regulated. Self-efficacy is also related to goal setting (Locke & Latham, 1990). Self-efficacy, in an educational environment, looks at teachers as capable of achieving specific levels of performance from beliefs in their capability, not simply talent or skill. The process, called triadic reciprocal causation, states that the future behavior of beginning teachers is the result of three interrelated forces: environmental influences, behavior, and internal personal factors such as cognitive, affective, and biological processes.
This triad of factors determines how teachers believe in themselves and affects the choices they make and actions they take (Henson, 2001). Rather than human beings claiming environmental or biological constructs for performance levels, self-efficacy looks at human beings as “products of the dynamic interplay between the external, the internal, and our current and past behavior” (Henson, 2001, p. 3).

Bandura’s seminal work, his 1977 article, “Self-Efficacy: Toward a Unifying Theory of Behavioral Change,” introduced his concept of self-efficacy. He defined it as “beliefs in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the course of action required to produce given attainments” (p. 3). In 1986 Bandura labeled his theory of behavior, social cognitive theory, with his book Social Foundations of Thought and Action: A Socially Cognitive Theory. Bandura added to and expanded the existing model of social learning theory by introducing the person as an active agent, capable of generating motivation and greater performance. Self-efficacy has been linked directly to learning and motivation in a school setting (Bandura, 1977). Armor et al. (1976) determined that teacher efficacy, the belief that they are capable, related positively to student achievement in a study by the RAND Corporation.

Scope and Significance of Study

My intention was to conduct a case study by visiting, observing, and interviewing a nationally board certified teacher in a high-performing middle school in Wake County (both under the same state and district guidelines) for one semester, a little more than four months. The research done with Anthony examined the multiple perspectives that existed in the same building. By examining the school climate and organization from multiple vantage points, I was provided clearer answers to whether school climate or the larger organizational climate
and design is a factor in the exodus of teachers. Since the primary research thrust is understanding why teachers leave high-performing schools, the self-efficacy model was an important link due to teachers’ perceptions of motivation and performance. The link from self-efficacy to organizational efficacy is the level of high performance experienced by a cohesive, collaborative staff which leads to a higher performing learning environment. How a school may be recognized as a high-performing organization, yet still lose an inordinate amount of teachers on an annual basis, invites a closer look at the self-efficacy to organizational efficacy link. This is not occurring systematically presently based on the high migration rates. I explored some of the essential reasons which may provide valuable information to the district in an effort to help retain teachers, many of our best teachers.

**Summary of Emergent Themes**

The emergent themes in Chapter One form a delicate interplay, a thematic dance, if you will. The emergence of these three central themes; teacher migration, school climate, and teachers’ perceptions evolved over years, some eight years as a public school administrator. It would have been simpler in some respects to have just explored the phenomenon of teacher migration in high-performing schools by looking at the numbers. Although the district and state aggregates teacher turnover rates on an annual basis, they do not differentiate between teacher migration at high-performing schools and non high-performing schools at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. To attempt to access, collect, and talk to specific teachers who have migrated at the district level, I would have needed personal information from the Human Resources department deemed confidential and closed to me as a researcher. Such obstacles would have impeded my ability to move forward
Another factor that persuaded me to conduct a qualitative design within one school was the understanding that teachers work in social settings, in organizations and not in total isolation. Conducting interviews and surveys with migrating teachers throughout the district, in an isolated manner, would not have allowed me to observe the organization in movement, the day to day operations of a large, high-performing group, with one mission and the same organizational goals. Getting inside a school building of a high-performing organization allowed me to understand the interplay of school climate with all its variables and how teachers interact within them. This interplay sets the stage for teachers’ cognitive experiences as they form perceptions and opinions of their sense of belonging in the organization. These issues are crucial to teacher migration, whether teachers want to seek better learning environments more consistent with their values and beliefs, or remain where they are.

Attempting to link the problem or issue of teacher migration together with school climate and teachers’ perceptions was challenging since I was not seeking causality and had to adhere to the exploratory nature of the research. I wanted to experience the school climate over a period of time and observe how teachers operated within its setting, all through the eyes of one 6th grade teacher.

The underlying theoretical lens I employed was Bandura’s self-efficacy (1997) theory, emanating from his earlier social-cognitive theory (1977). Self-efficacy, the teachers’ belief in their capability to perform given tasks, was strongly linked to performance and motivation. Therefore, its underlying significance to teachers working in task-related environments became important to the research. Of even greater importance was organizational efficacy, a group’s belief in their capability to perform given tasks. How well or how poorly teachers
worked together in an existing school climate was central to the teacher migration issue. The ensuing literature review looked at the multiple perspectives of teacher migration, school climate, and self and organizational efficacy.
Teachers operate collectively within an interactive social system rather than as isolates. Therefore, educational development through efficacy enhancement must address the social and organizational structure of educational systems (Bandura, 1997, p. 243)

Teacher Turnover

Approximately 30% of new teachers depart teaching within three years and 40 to 50% depart within five years (Ingersoll, 2002; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). The highest turnover is in the fields of special education, mathematics, and science (Ingersoll, 2001). Of those beginning teachers, those who are dissatisfied with student discipline and the school environment are more likely to migrate or leave the profession (Boser, 2000).

Richard Ingersoll (2003) of the University of Pennsylvania concluded in a report for the Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy that teacher recruitment programs will not be effective in stemming the tide of teacher turnover unless greater scrutiny of the organizational issues are defined and examined. The traditional approach to teacher turnover has been to enhance and strengthen recruitment programs and hire more teachers. However, the real problem is the “revolving door” of teaching at the public school level. What is often overlooked is teacher migration (teachers transferring to other schools or districts) as opposed to teachers leaving the profession. Regardless of what the reason is for the teacher departures, they must be replaced, and that void requires interviewing, hiring, becoming acculturated to a new school, fitting in with the existing staff, and familiarity with parents.
The following table provides information on teacher attrition and teacher migration including costs:

**TABLE 2. Teacher attrition and teacher migration, 1999-2001.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Total number of teachers*</th>
<th>Teachers leaving the profession **</th>
<th>Cost related to teachers who leave the profession***</th>
<th>Teachers transferring to other schools**</th>
<th>Cost related to teachers who transfer to other schools***</th>
<th>Total teacher turnover cost (Not including retirement)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>266,661</td>
<td>19,034</td>
<td>$ 214,509,448</td>
<td>25,768</td>
<td>$ 290,407,937</td>
<td>$ 504,917,385</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California</td>
<td>279,945</td>
<td>14,417</td>
<td>$ 206,213,616</td>
<td>17,444</td>
<td>$ 249,518,976</td>
<td>$ 455,732,592</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>208,278</td>
<td>13,760</td>
<td>$ 210,614,387</td>
<td>9,999</td>
<td>$ 153,046,225</td>
<td>$ 363,660,611</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>137,204</td>
<td>5,662</td>
<td>$ 78,961,817</td>
<td>10,405</td>
<td>$ 145,106,049</td>
<td>$ 224,067,866</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>123,370</td>
<td>8,900</td>
<td>$ 110,627,905</td>
<td>7,708</td>
<td>$ 95,816,606</td>
<td>$ 206,444,511</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>128,436</td>
<td>7,152</td>
<td>$ 78,790,723</td>
<td>10,244</td>
<td>$ 112,854,050</td>
<td>$ 191,644,774</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td>85,573</td>
<td>7,148</td>
<td>$ 84,497,347</td>
<td>8,804</td>
<td>$ 104,067,934</td>
<td>$ 188,565,281</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**State estimations based on analysis by Richard Ingersoll, Professor of Education and Sociology, University of Pennsylvania, from the National Center for Education Statistics Student and Staffing Survey, and therefore include a slight margin of error. Additional data available at [http://www.gse.upenn.edu/faculty_research/Shortage-RMI-09-2003.pdf](http://www.gse.upenn.edu/faculty_research/Shortage-RMI-09-2003.pdf).**

A conservative estimate of the cost incurred for replacing public school teachers who have migrated to other schools or districts is $2.7 billion a year, compared to $2.2 billion for teachers leaving the profession (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005). The range for migration alone extends from $3.5 million in North Dakota to $214.5 million dollars in Texas annually (NCES, 1999-2000). North Carolina spent $20 million more in teacher transfers or migration ($104 million) than in replacing teachers leaving the profession ($84 million) (NCES, 1999-2000). A cursory response to why the teacher turnover rate is so high would focus on retirement with the “graying” of America and professionals now in their 50s and early 60s. Retirement, in fact, is not a primary factor in teacher turnover numbers. Job dissatisfaction or to pursue another job were reported as having higher frequencies for teacher turnover. Some of the reasons for the reported dissatisfaction were:

- Lack of planning time (65%)
- Too heavy a workload (60%)
- Problematic student behavior (53%)
- A lack of influence over school policy (52%) (Provasnik & Dorfman, 2005).

Nearly half of all new teachers in urban public schools quit within five years (Haycock, 1998). Yet the problem is not confined to urban public schools. According to the data from the National Center for Education Statistics (2003) for the 1999-2000 school year,
it is estimated that almost a third of the country’s teachers leave the profession sometime
during their first three years of teaching. The cost for teacher turnover is expensive.
Replacing almost 16 percent of the country’s teachers every year seriously undermines the
fiscal allocation to fund other more essential areas of need. A recent study in Texas revealed
the state’s annual turnover rate of 15.5 percent of all teachers, which includes a 40 percent
rate for teachers in their first three years, costs a “conservative” $329 million a year. When
organizational costs for termination, substitutes, learning curve loss, and new training are
included, the cost may more than double the $329 million (Texas State Board for Educator
Certification, 2000). While the greatest challenge posed by this exodus is replacing valuable
resources, not all teachers leave schools to exit the teaching profession. In fact, Ingersoll
(2001) discovered that the movement from one school to another and one district to another
(migration), accounts for 50% of the turnover that schools and districts experience (Ingersoll,
2001). The loss of a good teacher, whether to another profession or to another school, means
losing a very integral resource. That teacher has become familiar with school practices;
understands the school’s curricular practices and instructional focus; has built a rapport with
students, parents, and colleagues, and the search for an adequate replacement taxes the
administrative team in time, labor, and resources (Johnson & Birkland, 2003).
The following shows annual teacher turnover rates for the nation in percentages:

Table 3. Annual Teacher Turnover (United States) in percentages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Attrition</th>
<th>Migration</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1988-89</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991-92</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994-95</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-01</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>15.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Since 1984, student enrollment and teacher retirements in the nation’s public school systems have simultaneously increased (Snyder, Hoffman, & Geddes, 1997). However, these are not the primary reason for the nationwide demand for new teachers and staffing challenges. Teacher attrition, the loss of so many teachers, including beginning teachers, is the primary factor (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). The ability for a healthy organization to function at high levels is in jeopardy when large amounts of its employees flow in and out of the system on an annual basis (Mobley, 1982; Ingersoll, 1999, 2001, 2002). In a typical middle school in Wake County with 60-70 teachers, A 20% teacher turnover rate would represent 12 to 14 teachers departing annually, at least half of those to other schools . The average turnover rate in the Wake County Public School System, even for the Schools of Excellence was 18% compared to 26% for non Schools of Excellence in 2004-2005 (Department of Evaluation and Research, Wake County Public Schools, 2005).
Ingersoll (2003), using the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) and its supplement, the Teacher Follow up Survey (TFS), conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics, discovered that the two primary reasons beginning teachers left the profession were pursuit of another job (39%) and dissatisfaction (29%). SASS/TFS represents the largest comprehensive data source available on teachers, staffing, occupational, and organizational aspects of school (Ingersoll, 2003). An interesting finding in the Ingersoll study is that the dissatisfaction expressed by the teachers did not result from student demographics or other external factors but rather from organizational factors, such as questions of leadership and teacher decision-making. With even relatively successful schools showing a steady turnover rate, the problem points to the school organization itself and a lack of congruence between teachers’ perceptions and administrative perceptions (Ingersoll, 2003).

The high turnover rate affects beginning teachers more than others. Traditionally, the teaching profession has lost many teachers early in their careers, well before retirement (Johnson & Birkeland, in press; Lortie, 1975; Murnane, Singer, Willett, Kemple, & Olsen, 1991). A survey conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (1994-1995) revealed that 29 percent of the teacher attrition rate was due to job dissatisfaction as a major reason for leaving. More than three-fourths of the respondents cited the following reasons for their departure: school working conditions; student discipline problems; lack of support from the PLC Middle School administration; poor student motivation; and lack of teacher influence over school wide and classroom decision making (Ingersoll, 2003). Thus, simply hiring new teachers as replacements is a reaction to the problem not a prescription for further improvement.
Beginning teachers may be receiving all the requisites of organizational mentoring, peer support, and adequate resources but their sustained professional growth begins to lessen after the first few years. For instance, the district requires each school to assign a mentor to each initially licensed teacher yet that teacher teaches the same workload and same amount of students as a veteran teacher. New teachers are “thrown into” their experiences and provided support while they are undergoing the stress and anxiety of learning how to stand in front of one hundred or more young students every day to deliver a quality presentation. Sharon Feiman-Nemser (2003, p. 25) reinforces the notion that beginning teachers need constant support; “Keeping new teachers in teaching is not the same as helping them become good teachers.” Moreover, most beginning teachers need three or more years to achieve competence and several more to reach proficiency (Feiman-Nemser, 2003 p.27).

If middle school administrators do not see beyond the pretense of a fleeting social recognition for teachers, they run the risk of losing potentially excellent teachers to other professions or other schools. Also, different schools in a school system as large as Wake County’s (more than 100 schools), may look radically different on a daily basis regarding “best practices” and curricular and leadership modeling. Beginning teachers may become discouraged if their particular school does not have a clear vision and a supportive infrastructure. These teachers may either leave the profession or become part of the migration to another school.

New teachers coming to the school must learn the existing culture and successful adaptation skills. This is not enough though, for a beginning teacher needs to develop professionally and show intrinsic motivation and growth to further succeed in the profession. Another factor posing potential stress for a beginning teacher is the paramount focus on high-
stakes’ testing and rigorous accountability. The message from the federal government (i.e. No Child Left Behind legislation) is clear that a strong focus falls on standardized testing and subsequent categorical assessment of subgroups. For instance, schools in Wake County are required to assess and evaluate ten different subgroups of students (i.e. African-American, Hispanic, White, Native American, Asian, Free and Reduced Lunch, Students with disabilities, etc.) according to End of Grade (elementary and middle schools) and End of Course (high school) standardized test results (Wake County Public School System, 2004). These standards are an integral part of the federal government’s No Child Left Behind legislation and are called AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress). While establishing a worthy goal, the attainment of equity for all public school students, testing becomes a driving force at the expense of a more concentrated curriculum and instructional agenda. All teachers, especially beginning teachers, must be provided professional training to successfully confront the dramatic changes to school organization such as No Child Left Behind or any other significant legislation mandates.

What follows are a few of the basic obstacles that teachers encounter in a professional demanding more accountability and exacting standards.

The challenges facing beginning teachers: the surfacing of attitudes

Sugarman (1996) stated that Western cultures have a clear emphasis on a “distinctly individualist flavor,” “being able to exercise control over one’s life, being self-reliant, fulfilling personal potential and accepting responsibility for one’s actions” (p. 293). Therefore, beginning teachers find themselves engaged in an evolving dilemma; how to reconcile independence as a developing teacher with the need to be a group member, a part
of a greater whole? This is particularly germane at the middle school level whose organization and design is team-oriented due to the necessity of working with fellow team members on a daily basis.

At the local level, another potential challenge for beginning teachers in Wake County is the management of documentation and observation data required by the state for licensure and certification. Beginning teachers are required to have four formal observations, to develop a professional growth plan, and undergo a summative evaluation (Department of Human Resources, Wake County Public School System, 2004). Ongoing staff development classes, monthly mentor/mentee meetings, and a regular teaching load of some 125 students in five or more different classes prevail in most middle school organizations. Lesson plan writing, parent/teacher conferences, grading papers and presentations, IEP (Individualized Education Plan) meetings for special programs’ students, private student/teacher conferences, standardized test preparation, and perhaps the most time-consuming task of all in some schools, discipline, complete some of the overwhelming tasks required of beginning teachers. Where is the teacher’s “voice” in all of this?

The idea of representation as participation (Cotton et al., 1988) in no way reveals the level of participation of beginning teachers and their validation by more experienced teachers. Simply being on a committee does not mean that one is being “heard.” In fact, Glew et al. (1995) cite a higher and lower level of participation. The higher level implies “role-expanding opportunities” (p. 402) while the lower level simply allows the participant to “have a greater voice” (p. 402). Beginning teachers, in an effort to develop greater self-efficacy, need to know their voices truly make a difference. Organizations may have more influence on participation than individual teacher differences (Steers, 1977).
The overly bureaucratic organization, replete with rules and regulations, limits beginning teachers’ autonomy and ability to be a successful practitioner (Conger & Kanungo, 1988). Neumann (1989) cited three categories why people are reluctant to participate in decision-making: (1) structural (the real decisions are made outside the participatory setting), (2) relational (precedence of hierarchical rank and status on the committee), (3) societal (employee socialization, ideology, or school history between teachers and administrators). Beginning teachers exhibit a professional vulnerability in the initial stages of teacher entry as their sense of self-efficacy is in question, their belief in their ability to perform the task of teaching. While self-efficacy increases during the preservice years, it declines during the student teaching phase (Hoy & Woolfok, 1990; Spector, 1990). Therefore, beginning teachers may be susceptible to the level of support provided by other teachers or administrators in the initial stages of teaching. Self-efficacy displays a resistance to change once it has become established (Woolfolk Hoy, 2000). Thus early experiences set the tone for teachers’ beliefs in their personal capabilities as effective teachers.

The stronger the belief in the group’s efficacy to mobilize more participation needed to succeed in proposed changes, along with the greater the expected share benefits, the higher the participation rate (Kerr, 1996). One of the keys to organizational success is linking diverse self-interests to a common goal which serves as a key motivational device (Alinsky, 1971). This can be a formidable challenge to site-based administrators. What is a powerful ‘common goal’ that is not too general, vague and still compelling? When teacher challenges and dilemmas become overwhelming, the diminished belief in making a difference ensues, and a lower self-efficacy is a result.
School Climate

Hoy and Miskel (1996) define school climate as a “relatively enduring quality of school environment that is experienced by participants, affects their behaviors, and is based on their collective perceptions of behavior in schools” (p. 141). School climate differs from school culture in that culture consists of shared assumptions and ideologies, whereas climate is defined by shared perceptions of behavior (Ashforth, 1985). As beginning teachers enter into a unique organizational climate to begin teaching, they become immersed in a unique and distinctive school environment, a school climate (Hoy & Miskel, 1996). Each school has a climate and when one enters the building there is a certain “feel” that is produced by cleanliness, student behaviors, front office approachability, staff attitudes, posters, bulletin boards, etc. All of these are parts of what would constitute this school “climate.”

On July 30, 2004, less than two weeks before the opening of the traditional school year, during a county wide administrative “kick off,” hundreds of Wake County administrators watched an overhead entitled, School Climate. Under the title were the following categories: dress code, intimidation/disrespect, and inappropriate language. The message focused on the importance of a strong school climate and strict enforcement of the cited categories. I believe an important point was missed that day as the administrators went back to their schools with a very limited perspective of school climate. The county focused on student behavior, an important feature of school climate but only one part of it, a management function. No mention was made of teacher support, collaboration, reflective practices, etc. as part of a school’s “climate.” A school climate is wider and more encompassing than management issues if a site-based organization is to experience organizational efficacy. Bulach & Malone (1994) in their research on twenty schools found a
significant difference in student achievement between schools with a good school climate and those with a poor school climate. Hirase (2000) and Erpelding (1999) also found that schools with a positive climate had higher academic achievement.

A School of Excellence, or a high-performing middle school according to the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, may operate with low organizational efficacy (i.e. poor morale, low success with particular subgroups consistently, etc.) yet still produce noteworthy numbers on the standardized test assessment tool. The teachers may be doing their job and doing it well but organizational health and growth is not being sustained. The important distinction here is the term, organizational group growth. Group growth among teachers can only take place when the organizational efficacy is high. Pockets of effective growth may take place but existing power structures within the school may have an adverse effect on the true growth of the middle school and adversely affect both self and organizational efficacy.

When beginning teachers cannot solely find assistance from other team members or other teachers, they resort to the school administrators. One example is the behavioral component that may take a significant amount of a teacher’s time and resources to address, including talks with students, discipline referrals, calls to parents and e-mails to administrators. Communication is essential to facilitate this flow of information.

**Open communication between teachers and administration**

One salient example of an external constraint for beginning teachers is the lack of relevant information provided by management, or in the case of the school, the administration. Major decisions are made regarding curriculum, instruction, facilities,
management, and operations, yet if the organizational climate does not support leadership
dissemination, many of those decisions are simply “passed on” to the rest of the staff from
the principal via memos or e-mails. At times, beginning teachers are not sure that a particular
task is done thoroughly because from their perception, adequate information is not provided
by administration. Maintaining a “full, open, and decentralized communication system”
(Pacanowsky 1988, p.374) is essential for organizational efficacy. The larger the school, the
more insignificant the individual effort of the teacher may appear (Kerr, 1996). Beginning
teachers need to be heard and acknowledged for the rich experiences that they already bring
to the organization, not for the existing paradigm that they must “pay their dues” and only
with experience will they be able to contribute worthily to the ongoing educational narrative.

Beginning teachers may have a strong sense of self-efficacy in the area of
competence but not in the area of authority. This is because the teacher already is aware of
the level of competence and simply needs more time and experience to support that belief.
On the contrary, authority is “granted” by the higher powers within the organizational
structure and therefore is somewhat out of the direct control of the beginning teacher. The
limited power entrusted in beginning teachers recognizes that they are lower in the teaching
hierarchy. Recognition of teachers needs to come from fellow teachers and administrators in
a way that will support constant growth.

**Social recognition of teachers**

Social recognition for the beginning teacher serves as a reinforcer in the organization
but is not well understood. Social recognition in this context has been largely overlooked and
not researched extensively (Bandura, 1986; Luthans & Stajkovic, 2000). Miller (1978) noted
that social recognition is “one of the most neglected, taken for granted and poorly performed management functions” (p.115). The effectiveness of social recognition for beginning teachers lies in its motivation potential, its sense of predictive value (Bandura, 1986; Luthans & Stajkovic, 2000). Predictive value lends more importance to desired behaviors and validation of beginning teachers as active agents in the organization. Teachers need social recognition but not in an arbitrary, isolated manner which proves ineffective, an empty reward that does not sustain motivation. Beginning teachers need genuine appreciation with specific tangible benefits. For example, providing praise for a beginning teacher after an excellent class (on the part of an administrator or other formal evaluator) is appropriate and appreciated but not sufficient enough to sustain motivation over a longer period of time.

Presently, many administrators “drop in” on a class to complete formal observations and then move on to the next teacher. Over the years my discussions as an administrator with teachers have revealed that these brief and infrequent observations are sometimes more intimidating than supportive of the teacher’s growth. With increased familiarity and a continued presence in a teacher’s class, the administrator and teacher may develop a sound working rapport if the administrator is supportive. Engaged, empowered beginning teachers are more motivated and more motivated employees lead to greater work performance. The supervisor plays an important role here because of their effect on the morale and collective efficacy of the organization. However, school administrators are often selected and function because of their “technical competencies and job-related knowledge” (Bandura, 2000 p.9). Beginning teachers need the essential interpersonal support of administrative guidance, enablement, and motivation. In a day filled with responses to discipline problems, classroom observations, and supervisory duties (i.e. cafeteria, hallway, bus, etc.), the administrator is
challenged to adequately foster this systematic support so badly needed by beginning teachers. The absence of this crucial component systematically in a school climate may have an adverse effect on beginning teachers’ attitudes.

As individual teachers confront organizational challenges and obstacles, a healthy school climate also encounters obstacles in a collective setting. The following cites the major challenges in a school climate, the area referred to in this research as organizational efficacy, or collective efficacy.

**Obstacles to a healthy school climate**

Although more and more public schools are designated as site-based institutions with certain control over curricular and administrative policies, in fact, their autonomy and efficiency are impeded by centralized mandates and policies, some imperative, some “good practices.” One of the greatest obstacles is “time” (Ceperley 1991, p.8). An average instructional day in the Wake County Public School System for middle schools is 400-430 minutes (Wake County Public School System, 2005).

The following is an estimate of the breakdown of time allotted in a typical middle school schedule in Wake County. It follows a teacher’s daily schedule and although designated a “flexible schedule” by the district, actually models itself on a high school block schedule from a time standpoint (Wake County Public School System, 2005). A fundamental difference is that in high school, students complete a required class in a school semester or half year. Middle school students may do that with science, social studies, or electives but take language arts and mathematics for the entire year. The change from a traditional six or seven period day of approximately 50-55 minutes a class to a 90 minute class is dramatic.
The changes to the middle school schedules started to take place around 2003 with most schools (NC Standard Course of Study, 2005):

270 minutes for classroom instruction 67% of school day
90 minutes for a planning period 22% of school day
30 minutes for lunch 7% of school day
20 minutes for hallway transitions, supervisory duties, etc. 4% of school day

Typical middle school teachers will most likely not be able to employ 90 minutes for planning instruction since administrative and management necessities such as IEP (Individualized Education Plans) meetings for special programs’ students, parent/teacher conferences and planning for fieldtrips and special events may take precedence and reduce actual time for instruction. If middle school teachers were to employ 30 minutes daily for these noninstructional priorities, that would leave 60 minutes for planning or 15% of the day for instructional purposes.

Site-based or school-based management: the transfer of power

The school climates of today differ dramatically from those of yesterday because of the recurrent reform from centralization (Federal government, states, school districts, and school boards) to decentralization (individual schools) (Cotton, 1992). The moves towards decentralization follows the path of the trend in the 1960s, pressured by civil rights issues in an effort to be more responsive to the local communities. In an effort to “foster equal and
uniform treatment of clients, standardization of products and services, and to prevent arbitrary or capricious decision-making” (Darling-Hammond 1988, p. 11), the mid-1970s and early 1980s witnessed a significant return to federal and state centralization. However, the paradox is that presently, in what is supposed to be site-based management, the individual schools take on the external weight of mandates and legislation from the centralized agencies. This diluted form of site-based operations makes it more difficult for a staff to identify, address, and implement its own unique needs with those of outside bureaucratic forces.

One of the main problems of centralized decision-making is that it does not provide the desired outcomes. As is typical of all large bureaucracies, they are “impersonal and maddeningly slow moving” (Cotton, 1992, p.7). The move towards site-based management was an effort to counter the sluggishness of the bureaucratic movement and invest the individual schools with more control over their own decisions. In theory, administrators and teachers become more involved with decision making at a much broader level.

Some of the features of site-based management that affect school climate are (Cotton, 1992, p.5):

- Increased autonomy of the school
- Increased school-site accountability
- The power to establish local policy
- Areas of decision-making
- Distribution of authority

Ultimately, the question remains; does school reform emerge from the school itself or by initiatives from the central office and/or state? What autonomy does the school itself have to
Professional Learning Communities

PLC Middle School was embarking on a course to fully implement a Professional Learning Community (PLC) model according to the design of Richard DuFour (1998). The primary focus of DuFour’s model shifted from teaching to learning, and not simply learning among students but also among teachers. Aside from the collaborative structure of the PLC, three crucial questions served to drive the staff according to DuFour:

1. What do we want each student to learn?
2. How will we know when each student has learned it?
3. How will we respond when a student experiences difficulty in learning?

Any attempt at school organizational reform that did not address these three questions directly was by definition a professional learning community. The PLC model became results-oriented, with assessment integrated into instruction, rather than after instruction via quizzes or tests. The principal’s leadership and determination became central to the success of the community along with a “critical mass of teacher leaders” (Hipp & Huffman, 2003, p. 19).

According to Fullan (2000), the change process would take place slowly. In fact, it takes several years before determining whether implementation of the model is going to be successful. Predictable barriers may surface with the PLC model (Hipp & Huffman, 2003). These barriers could possibly consist of:

- Financial limitations
- Time constraints
• Possible teacher resistance
• Lack of internal communication
• Stress
• Overload
• Lack of positive reinforcement

A key point regarding professional learning communities cited by Michael Fullan (1993) was how well the teachers would handle dissent in their ranks when disagreements arose. He spoke of the “uncritical conformity to the group, unthinking acceptance of the latest solution, suppression of individual dissent” (p. 34).

Professional learning communities became one example of school improvement that recognized that dramatic school improvement must be embedded in the school culture and interactivity of the staff. The actual model for the professional learning communities evolved from Rosenholtz’s (1989) research of the teacher workplace, Senge’s (1990) model of corporate learning organizations, and Sergiovanni’s (1994) work about shared ideals and norms. With the appearance of Peter Senge’s book, The Fifth Discipline, in 1990, organizational reforms took on greater focus in school systems and the school site and organization adopted initiatives to enhance greater student performance. The design for learning communities was elaborate at that time but few schools implemented the design into a sustainable reality (Darling-Hammond, 1996; DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Fullan, 2000). The rationale behind professional learning communities was the belief that when teachers work collaboratively, the quality of learning and teaching in the organization improves (Mitchell & Sackney, 2000; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001).
**Self-efficacy: The teacher as believer**

In 1986 the Stanford psychologist, Albert Bandura, proposed a unique theory of social learning, called self-efficacy. It emerged from social cognition theory which viewed behavior not as a stimulus and response but rather as a collection of cognitive interpretations which placed a central focus on the human’s view of their own capabilities rather than the achievement itself. The key difference between this social learning theory model and traditional behaviorism or reinforcement theory, is that performance in itself does not cause the change in self-efficacy, but rather how the educator processes the experience based on the performance. Cognition becomes a mediating agent of paramount importance in the learning experience.

In an educational world where beginning teachers are required to do so much to comply with both state and local standards and with a high teacher turnover rate, this social learning theory bears significance because Bandura (1997) stated that the critical elements regarding human behavior and motivation are the “beliefs in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments” (Bandura, 1997, p. 3).

Since Bandura’s theoretical framework links behavior and self-influence, the educator becomes an integral part or agent of the performance process. Much research in the area of self-efficacy has already taken place with employee training (Martocchio, 1994; Quinones, 1995; Silver, Mitchell & Gist, 1995). However, Bandura’s theory has seldom been tested in job environments that contain work-related performance outcomes such as school systems.

Self-efficacy theory includes four specific areas:
• Enactive mastery (mastery learning)
• Vicarious experience
• Verbal persuasion
• Affective input

It is important to note that the four areas above do not, of themselves, provide us with valuable information about the learning process. It is only through the cognitive processing of efficacy information and reflective thought, that these experiences become instructive (Bandura 2000). Organizational constraints, largely time and management issues, impede reflective thought on the part of the teachers in any systematic way.

The strongest category for enhancing efficacy beliefs, enactive mastery or mastery learning, is repeated successful performance. Educators could perform a task, receive feedback, and continue to perform the task until mastered (Harrison, Rainer, & Kelly, 1997). Modeling becomes important with mastery learning or enactive mastery since complex skills are broken down into sub skills, and can be utilized on videotape for the beginning teacher. Beginning teachers, in this manner, become familiar with the basic rules and strategies of the learning task. Next, the teachers receive guided practice under simulated conditions to enhance proficiency in skill acquisition. Finally, an incremental transfer of these skills to novel work contexts follows. The reason mastery learning is so effective is because it is the only category of experience that occurs as a direct result of performance accomplishment. Mastery learning is largely absent in the school system, particularly a large school system which finds itself constrained by time and resources stretched thin. The systematic feedback is often lacking. Mentor teachers are sometimes required to administer one formal evaluation while administrators come in for three more during the year (Department of Human
Resources, WCPSS 2005). This is hardly the consistent evaluation needed by beginning teachers who are beset with the same demands of more senior teachers.

A second means of enhancing self-efficacy is vicarious learning, which includes primarily observing other competent individuals perform a similar task and then gaining reinforcement from it. This sort of learning is common for beginning teachers since the district allows them two to three days a year to go in another teacher’s classroom to observe instruction. The closer the modeling of the observed teacher to the beginning teacher’s style, the greater the self-efficacy. Efficacy expectations decline with poor vicarious modeling.

Verbal persuasion is a third way of enhancing self-efficacy. The purpose of verbal persuasion is not necessarily to increase skill or ability levels of the beginning teacher but rather to encourage the teacher to feel confident that they can do the job. Falling back on the teacher’s ability is particularly important during the early years when personal performance efficacy is questioned. Verbal persuasion may take the form of direct feedback from a supervisor or colleague or may even involve other teachers simply talking admirably about a beginning teacher’s performance. The capacity for the feedback to make an enduring difference for the beginning teacher depends on the credibility, trustworthiness, and expertise of the teacher doing the modeling (Bandura, 1986).

Affective and psychological engagement is the fourth source of self-efficacy. This refers to the state of emotional activation or engagement a teacher generates when their attention is task-oriented. Some beginning teachers may view psychological engagement as an “energizing factor, whereas low-efficacy employees tend to view it as a performance debilitator” (Stadjkovic & Luthans, 1998, p.11). A very important premise of this research is that beginning teachers may have a high sense of self-efficacy yet not demonstrate it if the
organizational constructs are weak, inconsistent, or not systematically supportive.

Bandura points to self-efficacy as a “mediating mechanism” (p.140), a bridge between the teacher’s pre-service experience and in-service experience. Beginning teachers’ interpretations and validation of their experiences determine more of their motivation and sense of self-competence than the actual teaching tasks and bureaucratic compliance. If beginning teachers have a low sense of self-efficacy, motivation and performance decline. Over a period of time this may lead to a sense of disenfranchisement and uncertainty about their ability to fit in to the organization successfully. On the other hand, beginning teachers with high self-efficacy set higher goals for themselves and firmly commit to them (Bandura & Wood, 1989).

Beginning teachers find themselves in a dynamic environment that entails three factors (Bandura, 1997):

(1) cognitive, biological and other personal factors
(2) behavior
(3) environmental events

The cognitive features consist of self-efficacy, personal goal setting, and quality of analytic thinking. The behavioral features are the classroom management choices made by the beginning teacher. The environmental features the organizational structure, level of challenge it offers, and its responsiveness in the form of feedback on teachers’ decisions (Bandura, 1992). Although beginning teachers find themselves in an organizational structure that includes cognitive, behavioral, and environmental constructs, much of the focus of teacher growth is on the behavioral component. This includes how the students behave and how the teacher manages the classroom and manages the constant upkeep of certification and state
licensure requirements. The cognitive and environmental features are largely ignored systematically in areas of beginning teachers’ growth and attitudinal development. Bandura (1977a) claims that people (in this case beginning teachers) are both products and producers of their environment. Without equal distribution of the three key areas in teacher performance, teachers are merely products not producers of knowledge within the organization.

As local school districts begin to make strategic changes in a public school’s design and structure (i.e. block schedule, new forms of assessment, flexible schedule models, etc.), the need to properly disseminate those changes with systematic support is imperative. It is not enough for a central office to research, propose, and then mandate structural changes at the site-based level if the teachers themselves are not receptive to the changes. Beginning teachers, especially initially licensed teachers, develop attitudes towards their teaching experiences and their capabilities but also seek direction and support. The appearance of organizational changes proceeds from the theory of the boardroom and state and local offices to the school with a concomitant need to lend skill acquisition to an often skeptical and confused staff.

Bandura’s notion of self-efficacy requires the need to internalize new competencies (Krueger, 1997). Beginning teachers, caught in the path of multiple changes to existing systems, need to internalize new processes but also need greater self-efficacy in order to realize such efforts. In a typical middle school in the Wake County Public School System, Raleigh, N.C., it is common to have sixty to eighty certified teachers. Organizational change does not take place effectively if the change is met with resistance, either overtly or covertly. The initiative and persistence needed for successful change, in attitudes and teacher retention,
is indicative of a higher self efficacy. Performance levels increase at this point in the developmental stage (Eden, 1992).

For beginning teachers to successfully internalize new practices, they must be provided models through mentors. Even more effective are the mastery experiences that truly instill the site-based model at its highest efficiency. These opportunities are essential for enhancing greater self-efficacy (McCall, 1992; Senge, 1992). Bandura’s self-efficacy model implies that the efficacy factor is more pronounced in the earlier stages of teacher induction into education. This asserts that the first years of teaching are “critical to the long-term development of teacher efficacy” (Woolfolk, Hoy, 2000, p.2).

An effective school must have a high level of organizational efficacy. It is not enough to have pockets of excellent teachers if they do not believe in the school’s capabilities to forge ahead. What does it take for teachers to believe themselves part of a high-performing aggregate?

**The results of low self-efficacy: When challenges and obstacles become formidable**

Teachers leaving the field or a particular school reach a point of diminished energy and uncertainty about their ability to maximize their efficacy in a specific situation. If this level of performance declines over a period of time, self efficacy becomes compromised and teachers may experience what is referred to as “burnout.”

Research on the phenomenon of burnout dates back to the mid 1970s, the majority of the research taking place in the human services fields. Burnout is a “prolonged response to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors on the job, and is defined by the three dimensions of exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy” (Maslach, Schaufeli, Leiter 2001 p.397).
Burnout is seen as a psychological syndrome in response to stress on the job. Exhaustion may take on physical characteristics or simply compel the teacher to reduce serious work effort. Feelings of cynicism may also lead to a detachment from the job. Inefficacy implies ineffectiveness and a lack of sustained accomplishment. This research focused on the last of the criteria, the efficacy component which represents the self-evaluation or reflective dimension of burnout. The lack of efficacy stems from a lack of relevant resources, whereas exhaustion and cynicism develop from the presence of work overload and social conflict (Leiter 1993). Burnout may affect beginning teachers’ self-efficacy adversely and subsequently lead to lower organizational efficacy, or a lower performing school. Burnout may, in fact, serve as a contagion, and permeate the school climate in a negative manner via the informal relationships amongst the staff.

One thinks of an overload of job demands when thinking of the concept of burnout, yet in fact, burnout researchers also focus on the absence of job resources. The most extensively studied resource has been social support. Even more important than support from coworkers is the lack of support from supervisors, administrators, in the case of schools (Maslach, Schaufeli, Leiter, 2001).

Initial research into burnout in the 1970s focused on the immediate work environment but now we understand the overlapping dynamics of the individual teacher situated in a larger organizational context. This organizational context includes “hierarchies, operating rules, resources, and space distribution” (Maslack, Schaufeli, Leiter, 2001, p. 402). Thus, it is essential to explore the larger organizational framework of the federal government, state government, and local district to determine their residual effect on beginning teachers’ lives. As more bureaucratic demands are placed on the shoulders of beginning teachers, their self-
efficacy is challenged and the notion of reciprocality, or expectations of fairness and equity, is eroded.

Organizational efficacy: Are the voices of beginning teachers heard?

Organizational or collective efficacy represents the beliefs of group members concerning “the performance capability of a social system as a whole” (Bandura, 1997, p. 469). Among teachers, organizational efficacy refers to a consensus in the school that the faculty can organize and carry out effective action required to have a positive effect on students (Goodard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2004).

In the past twenty years research has found an association between three kinds of efficacy beliefs and student achievement: the self-efficacy judgments of students (Pajares, 1994, 1997), teachers’ beliefs in their own instructional efficacy (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk, Joy, & Hoy, 1998), and teachers’ beliefs about the collective or organizational efficacy of their school (Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2000). Of the three efficacy beliefs, organizational efficacy is the most recently studied and the least studied by educational researchers.

The growing interest in organizational efficacy stems from strong research links between perceived collective efficacy and differences in student achievement among schools (Bandura, 1993; Goddard, 2001; Goddard et al., 2000). Bandura demonstrated that the effect of perceived collective efficacy on student achievement was stronger than the direct link between SES (socioeconomic status) and student achievement. Goddard also showed that, even after controlling for students’ prior achievement, race/ethnicity, SES, and gender, collective efficacy beliefs have stronger effects on student achievement than student race or
SES. The range of a school’s beliefs about the collective capability is wide yet is strongly linked to student achievement.

Pressures on organizations remain constant in an effort to maintain productivity without increasing costs. This is no less in the field of public school education. As more students move into an area, logistical demands become conspicuous and challenging to the local district and site-based school. Standardized testing accountability and No Child Left Behind parameters exert more pressure on today’s public school teachers. Teachers are asked to be more creative, innovative, and proactive with not much more time and with finite resources. Organizational efficacy looks at the aggregate of teachers within the school organization. Both perceptions and self-efficacy help us expand our knowledge of organizational behavior (Stadjkovic & Luthans, 1998).

With state and district requirements for the initially licensed teachers, school constraints only exacerbate the equanimity of beginning teachers. In a study done by Chiles & Zorn in 1995 regarding empowerment in organizations, research found that the more employees felt hindered by the organizational culture, the less likely they were to feel empowered. The two dimensions of empowerment researched, competence and authority, both related to negative perceptions of what the researchers designated macro-level culture or organizational culture. Stated differently, employees were more likely to feel competent, or capable of performing the job, when they did not perceive negative influences from the organization, particularly from management. This supports the statement that self-efficacy may be hampered by external constraints in the organizational support.
Challenges to the effectiveness of organizational efficacy

One of the greatest underminers of organizational efficacy is the increasingly greater bureaucratization of larger school systems. The Wake County Public School System in Raleigh, North Carolina, for example, now has 125,000 students enrolled (www.wcpss.net) (more than 5,000 new students in 2004) and is projected to surpass 150,000 students by 2020. The logistics alone of auxiliary and administrative services is a daunting task. The empowerment of beginning teachers, conferred with the power to fashion their own professional future, stagnates as many “relinquish control to technical specialists and public officials” (Bandura, 1997 p.522).

The biggest challenge for today’s principal is accepting stewardship over diversity that allows both autonomy for subgroups to manage their own affairs and establish unity through shared values and purposes (Esteve, 1992). Voices for special interests are typically much stronger than those for collective responsibility (Bandura, 1997 p.522). If a negative and critical tone is assumed by the more experienced teachers, beginning teachers may follow suit. Peer influences among teachers can be instrumental in determining teachers’ attitudes toward the organization, especially in the case of beginning teachers who are looking for moral support from more experienced educators. This socialization factor needs more study.

Social processes and problems are fluid in this social world, not static or fixed. Most preservice programs do not adequately address the “peer socialization processes in schools” (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). If a school endeavors to foster a truly collaborative organization, it becomes a community and thus should invite preservice teachers into that community (Rosenholtz, 1989). Teachers taught to teach in professional “isolation” find collaborative
practices challenging and often difficult. Two kinds of cultures have been traditionally awaiting teachers’ entry into the school building: cultures of individualization, with relative teaching isolation and occasional sharing with peers (Little, 1990) and balkanized cultures, where teachers work in self-contained groups, often according to content areas (Hargreaves, 1994). Competition generally takes place between the varied groups for resources. The very nature of the two aforementioned cultures serves as an organizational barrier to professional relationships among teachers. Preservice teachers trained for “professional isolation” (Avila de Lima, 2003, p.216), devoid of socialization and collaborative skills, are teachers destined for frustration and teacher migration and possible exodus from the profession itself.

Hargreaves (1997) cites the uncertainty whether teachers will truly be able to work collaboratively in the “post-modern age” or become “deprofessionalized” due to the excessive demands nonexistent twenty years earlier (p.86). The very nature of learning for both students and teachers is changing dramatically so it is not simply a question of more demands but rather more demands and adaptation to new manners of learning (American National Commission on Teaching, 1996). This is in the midst of a high-stakes testing environment.

From Self-Efficacy to Organizational Efficacy: The necessary bridge

It is unquestioned that all schools desire high academic student performance and seek high expectations, but expectations by themselves do not accomplish much and can actually be demoralizing unless “learning activities are structured and conducted in ways that ensure they will be mastered” (Bandura, 1997, p. 244). An example of good intentions and bad results is the Peterson (1989) research that yielded findings of the adverse effects of
remedial academic grouping with low-achieving students. The low-achieving students who were assigned to a program for accelerated students achieved “substantial” (Bandura, 1997, p.245) academic gains, whereas the low-achieving students assigned to a remedial program created disciplinary problems and made “little” (p. 245) academic progress over the course of the year.

Principals and other school leaders at the site level must be careful not to get too excited about suggested organizational changes and hasty implementation. Success of the organization will only occur if ample attention is given to the skills, resources, and structural supports needed to successfully implement the proposed changes (Bandura, 1997). Organizational efficacy has its undergirding features in self-efficacy. Bandura (1993) states that teachers’ beliefs in their organizational efficacy are significant criteria for the school’s academic performance. This is after controlling for the socioeconomic and racial composition of the student bodies, teachers’ experience level, and prior school-level achievement. A group of individual teachers who doubt the capabilities of the organization to perform at higher levels will not display high organizational efficacy. Those schools with a higher organizational efficacy perform at higher levels which undoubtedly has a positive effect on beginning teachers’ attitudes. Schools with a lower organizational efficacy achieve little progress or decline academically.

Sociocognitive theory, whether operating with self or organizational efficacy, centers around enablement (Bandura, 1997). Teachers must be empowered to make key decisions regarding their daily operations whether it involves curriculum, instruction, scheduling, or classroom management. Organizational efficacy is not merely the sum of all teachers’ efficacy levels since interactive dynamics remain fluid not static. Some factors
involved are how the group is structured, types of activities, how the activities are led, how teachers interact with each other, etc. (Bandura, 1997).

An effective means of enhancing organizational efficacy is by borrowing from other school organizations which is a key form of organizational learning. This sense of reaching out to other schools and other educators is almost as effect as firsthand learning (Dutton & Freedman, 1985). The research on organizational learning is not as advanced as that of self-efficacy and more research is recommended. The promising news, though, is that strong links have been established between the effect of organizational efficacy and student achievement, stronger than the link between socioeconomic status and student achievement (Bandura, 1993; Goddard, 2001; Goddard at al., 2000).

GAPS IN EXISTING LITERATURE

I. TEACHER MIGRATION

- No literature found on teacher migration from high-performing schools to high-performing schools.
- Ingersoll (2001) researched teacher migration as part of teacher turnover nationally and collected data on reasons for teacher migration. His studies did not focus on or differentiate between teachers leaving high-performing schools to work in other high-performing schools.

Ingersoll (2003) points out that teacher migration is not primarily due to the “graying” of America and increased enrollment. In fact, he is critical of the traditional approach to teacher turnover and points out that the real problem is the revolving door. Costs for replacing migrating teachers are greater than costs for replacing teachers leaving the profession in many states (see Table 2). What I attempted to do was look at data at the local level in a large urban district, then access state and national databases to corroborate the
prevalence of teacher migration. My research takes the first steps towards trying to understand the migration flow from high-performing schools to other high-performing schools. This is an area untouched by the extant research in the field. Possibly, the reason is because when a teacher leaves a middle school and is rehired in another school in the same district, the system is unaffected from a labor standpoint. The school organization, though, is largely affected and the makeup of personnel changes affects the continuity and coherence of the school.

II. ORGANIZATIONAL EFFICACY

- “Although perceived collective efficacy is widely recognized to be highly important to a full understanding of organizational functioning, it has been the subject of little research” (Bandura, 1997, p. 468).

Of the three primary areas of efficacy study linked to student achievement (self-efficacy of students, self-efficacy of teachers, teachers’ collective or organizational efficacy), organizational efficacy has received the least attention from educational researchers (Goddard, Hoy & Woolfolk Hoy, 2004). What intrigued me about organizational efficacy was that the attainment of it was based on the teachers’ beliefs about group capabilities, not necessarily the talents or capabilities themselves. The implication was that highly qualified teachers, working with strong self-efficacy as individual teachers, could work in a school with low organizational efficacy, and potentially migrate. This could occur even in a school deemed “high-performing.” This apparent dichotomy within the school organization needed to be looked at.

III. SCHOOL CLIMATE AND TEACHER ATTITUDES

- “While research in the field of organizational communication has flourished for several decades, little inquiry has been devoted to
organizational communication in schools or, more specifically, to the upward communication between teacher and principal” (Rafferty, 2003, p. 50).

High-performing schools exhibit high levels of collaboration along with openness and trust. Understanding how these high levels of collaboration take root and set the tone for school performance is complex since it involves relationship-building between teachers and administrators. Healthy and open school climates need to walk the fine line between supporting teacher autonomy and teacher interdependence. Since research is limited in the area of organizational communication in schools, the research attempted to explore that gap through the eyes of a 6th grade teacher.

Birk & Burk (2000) point out that organizational communication does not consist merely of people sending oral and written messages back and forth but rather consists of a “continual process of creating and/or reaffirming the social reality that makes the organization” (p. 53). It was that attempt to capture that “social reality” in the school building that prompted me to conduct the case study.


Chapter Three

Methodology

Conspicuous by their absence from the literature of research on teaching are the voices of teachers, the questions and problems they pose, the frameworks they use to interpret and improve their practice, and the ways they define and understand their work lives.

Lytle & Cochran-Smith (1990, p. 83)

Understanding that all teachers work in unique school climates, I interviewed and listened to the voices of fellow educators who are identified by pseudonyms. All of the staff members interviewed work at a high-performing middle school designated as PLC Middle School except for one female teacher (six years experience). Barbara migrated from the same high-performing middle school as several other teachers interviewed and she left to teach in an inner city school. Her perceptions proved insightful. Pseudonyms will be used to respect the confidentiality of these teachers. PLC Middle School, located in the southeast United States, is a traditional middle school on a ten month calendar with a 6-8 grade configuration and slightly fewer than 900 students in enrollment. PLC Middle School is in the middle of its second year and is a Professional Learning Community school (DuFour, 1998). Thirteen interviews were conducted along with fieldnotes compiled for more than thirty meetings and extensive Blackboard discussions and list forums. The range of teacher experience extended from first year teachers to teachers with twenty-seven years of experience. I interviewed teachers from all three grade levels, two principals, two assistant principals, an academically gifted program supervisor, and the president of the Parent Teacher Association, a former mathematics teacher. All interviews were recorded and the
participants were provided with a CD of each interview along with a written transcription of the original text.

An emergent theme from the interviews was that many teachers, both new and experienced, are departing from their settings to establish roots in new ones. They are stifled by the complacency of administrators zealously following district mandates or lacking a clear vision. Issues of poor communication and limited teacher input into major decisionmaking also surfaced. These teachers could have stayed in a “good” or “high-performing” school, only to teach in an isolated classroom, or depart to another school. The decision to migrate is problematic for school systems who must replace, train, and acculturate new educators to their existing school “climates.”

Site Selection

Choosing a site involved two key issues. One was the kind of public school to be selected and the other was what school in particular. I believed that my awareness of middle school organization and procedures would be an asset in understanding the research environment. Therefore, selecting a middle school seemed a clear choice for me. When I disaggregated the data, I noticed that the percentage of middle schools that had higher turnover rates increased from 2002 to 2005. By turnover, I include all teachers not working at the same school one year later, either due to attrition or migration:
Table 4. Increase of teacher turnover rates among middle schools from 2003-2005
Wake County Public School System, N.C.
(increase in percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>29</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


It was evident after looking at the data that regardless of school performance, teacher turnover rates were on the increase and the 2004-2005 increase level was approaching two thirds of all middle schools in the district. Understanding the turnover issue, specifically the migration component, was an important link to some of the research questions.

Having worked in a part of the district that is a more affluent one, I chose a school in that area but one that was new and in the early stages of significant organizational change with a staff of migrated teachers. I chose the particular middle school, an Honor School of Excellence (PLC Middle School), in the western area of Wake County, North Carolina. The school, operational in 2004, is located in a more affluent socioeconomic area, reflected by lower proportions of free and reduced lunch students (8%) and fewer African American students (8%) (Department of Public Instruction, N.C., 2005). The school is on a traditional ten month calendar. The school was designated an Honor School of Excellence in 2005 (more than 90% of the student population performing at grade level or above) and passed all categories of AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress). PLC Middle School was also awarded the
state distinction of being one of the most twenty-five most improved schools in the state in 2004-2005.

**Research Design**

My research design consisted of a single case study, a 6th grade language arts/social studies teacher, Anthony, who recently migrated from another high-performing school. The choice of Anthony as a single case rather than multiple cases was to maintain a focus on a bounded subject, one teacher in one specific setting over a set period of time, a middle school semester of four months. Interviewing other 6th and 7th grade teachers provided me with valuable information and the input of the participants were used primarily as subcases. The issue of teacher migration was studied and in order to do that qualitatively, I needed to explore and live within a particular school climate at a high-performing school. The case focus was on the issue of migration more than the case as teacher (Stake, 1995; Yin, 1989). I set out to develop a greater understanding of the school climate in which the teachers find themselves. I chose a seven year teacher and not a first year one because the first year teacher is often in a survival mode and does not have the benefit of understanding the organization as well.

My choice of the case study was due to exploratory questions not causal ones. I collected data through direct observations, multiple interviews, and documentation retrieval that allowed me to better understand the role of school climate and its effect on beginning teachers’ perceptions. My questions were of a “how” and “why” nature, not a “what” nature (Yin, 2003). Because I conducted a single case study using subcases, the research did not consist of a statistical analysis or generalization (Kipset, Trow, & Coleman, 1956). I
endeavored to broaden and further understand the theoretical framework of social cognitive theory, specifically self and collective efficacy, and its relationship to school climate.

Observing and assessing the experiences of a specific teacher in a setting bound by place and time, invited an inductive strategy where, through semi-structured interviews, direct observation, and document retrieval, I collected data that added to the general knowledge of how school climate affects perceptions of a teacher new to a school. The gathering of data from other staff members also provided me with other perspectives whose roles were quite different regarding their interaction with students, teachers, and administrators within the school building (Cresswell, 1998). Observing and studying the staff members in their “natural” settings (their work environments) provided a naturalistic scope to the study (Bogdan & Biklin, 1998).

The study does not assert that the research findings will be applicable to every school that somehow fits the profile of the one researched. However, the findings at the school provided greater understanding of those organizational and social dynamics that do affect teachers’ outlooks on their career and possible retention in the field. The Wake County Public School System, along with many other systems in the country, are investing time and labor into recruiting promising candidates to the field. They all do not stay and it is of great significance for us to find out why. My research provided a snapshot of some of those reasons within a district that is the 23rd largest school district in the country (NCES 2005).

Selection Sampling

My selection of samples was purposeful (Patton, 1990) because I chose particular subjects to “discover, understand, and gain insight” (Merriam, 1998) into those school
climate dynamics that may influence the phenomenon of teacher migration. I was seeking to study Anthony, his perceptions, and transition to a new school, in depth, to further strengthen the purpose of the research (Patton, 1990). I decided to choose one teacher as my primary research participant and interviewed other migrated teachers designating them as subcases. The teachers provided multiple and varied perspectives on teacher migration and other key issues that helped enhance the robustness of the data collected. The decision to conduct a single case study using subcases was based on readings and conversations which argued that the study of multiple cases reduces the total attention that can be given to any one of them, and thus serves to weaken rather than to strengthen the study (Wolcott, 1992). Wolcott (1992) suggests that only one case be studied in depth if the researcher is not experienced in formal fieldwork. More than one teacher would serve no other purpose than to increase data findings and diminish the depth of understanding.

The selection criteria for the purposeful sampling focused on the following attributes:

- A teacher who had national board certification.
- A teacher recently migrated.
- A teacher who worked previously in another high-performing school.

Some added features of Anthony’s teaching career attracted me. These were that he was nationally board certified and a confident teacher; very willing to participate in the research; we had worked together before in a previous middle school and had mutual respect for each other; he was taking on a new content area so his confidence would be tested in a new learning mode.
Interviews

I conducted thirteen interviews with eleven different educators in PLC Middle School. The following is the breakdown for the interviews:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educator</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th># of Interviews</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anthony</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8/24/2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11/03/2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12/08/2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbara</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10/14/2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carol</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10/04/2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danielle</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10/13/2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellen</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9/29/2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9/14/2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arthur</td>
<td>Assistant Principal</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10/12/2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beverly</td>
<td>Assistant Principal</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10/13/2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carl</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10/25/2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dana</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10/27/2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alyssa (Parent)</td>
<td>PTA President</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11/02/2005</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The interviews took place during the second semester of the traditional Wake County school calendar (August 2005 through December 2005). Three interviews with Anthony took place at the beginning of the semester, one in mid-semester, and the final interview towards the end of the semester. Interviewing at intervals allowed me to monitor Anthony during distinctly marked periods in his transition to a new school. These three phases present different challenges for a middle school teacher. Preparation, organization, and anticipation were primary features of the first phase through August. By mid-semester, in October,
Anthony had made adjustments to his teaching and knowledge base of the school expectations and organization. At the time of our final interview in December, Anthony had a sound idea of how PLC Middle School operated and he was preparing for curriculum and instructional goals for the second semester. His transitional progress was evident in the three interviews and through direct observations of the many meetings he attended. My visits to PLC Middle School were ongoing, on a weekly basis.

Interviews with six teachers, two principals, two assistant principals, and the PTA president, provided me with rich data regarding the school climate. The interviews were conducted individually and questions were structured in August. As Anthony provided me with insightful feedback on teacher migration and school climate, other issues such as collaborative practices and socialization began to emerge. The emergence of these themes shaped the structure of questions asked of the teachers and other educators in later interviews and the interview design took on more semi-structured, open-ended formats. For instance, I became interested in how new teachers “fit into” the weekly grade level and content area meetings, their sense of validation as a group member. The definition of a high-performing school loomed larger and was reflected in the interview questions and responses.

Environmental observations regarding the “feel” of the school (friendliness of front office staff, other staff members, cleanliness of school, behavior of students, displays of recognition, etc.) were important snapshots. These observations were maintained in a reflective journal. One advantage for me as the researcher is that I worked in three different middle schools (one particular school twice) and was familiar with the middle school atmospheres and climates. For instance, middle school students are exuberant and exploratory when in groups and also quite vocal and energetic. While waiting for an
interview or meeting, it was not uncommon for children to be dispersed in four or five different groups at different learning stations, including students on couches and the floor. An inexperienced observer might have construed this scene as disorderly and chaotic, not necessarily the case since high-performing classrooms often look like this in a dynamic middle school.

The teacher interviews were comprised of questions relating to the professional experiences of teachers during their teaching and previous university experiences. The research did not approach the teachers as passive agents in the learning process but rather as socially cognitive and active co-participants in their growth. The concept of particular “events” taking place in the school-based lives of the teachers was examined also. An “event” was not viewed as an external occurrence, something outside of or apart from the teachers’ lives. An event was not perceived in this research as something that happens but rather as something that was “made to happen” (Atkinson & Coffey, 2003).

Biases

The choice of a single case study does not represent a sample, generalizable to a larger population. My goal was to gather information, understand, and add more essential knowledge to the basic research and by doing so, take closer steps to possibly expanding and developing theories regarding teacher migration. I looked at Anthony as instrumental to a greater understanding of how teachers acclimate themselves to school climates and their sense of belonging. Anthony served as a vehicle for “accomplishing something other than understanding” (Stake, 1995, p. 3) him as a teacher.

The threat of biases affected me as the primary researcher. Since I was
conducting a single case study, it was essential that I explore and understand the case from multiple perspectives. Therefore I interviewed several key members with different jobs and responsibilities on the staff to capture multiple lenses and strengthen the rigor and trustworthiness of the data. The combination of several observer interviews, direct observation, and school documentation collection attempted to “overcome the intrinsic bias” that is potentially linked to single case studies (Denzin, 1989c p.307). What followed was a series of means to ensure stronger triangulation for the fieldwork (Patton, 2002). I wanted to make sure that I got the story ‘right’ (Stake, 1995). Never truly being able to escape the subjectivity of my own lens, it was imperative that I acquire as much knowledge as possible to understand teacher migration. The door I opened could enlighten other researchers who would invite even more questions. In fact, the research was never meant to be conclusive (Wolcott, 2001).

The multiple interviews conducted provided a comparison of viewpoints on teacher expectations and support within the same building. For example, the principal and teacher may have had completely different expectations on what a “well-organized” and “well-conducted” class looks like. Or the assistant principal and teacher may have differed on the assessment of the classroom observations. Exploring the findings of differing perspectives allowed me to gather teachers’ perceptions and seek patterns or inconsistencies to ensure reliability of the findings.

Teachers may have stated an opinion in a faculty meeting that was inconsistent with what they espoused in private. This was important to discern since political statements made in public are often treated with more caution in front of one’s peers. My continued presence on campus increased the familiarity element and provided greater
confidence in the trust factor with the teacher and other staff members.

Conducting the interviews at different times of the year allowed me to gauge the consistency of teacher and staff viewpoints and their evolution. The teacher may have held a certain position in August that changed in October or December. That information in itself was important since it manifested a fluidity of perspectives within a shifting sociostructural setting, not a fixed attitude or perception. Documents (principal memos, PTA documents, state and county written guidelines, hospitality notices, testing information, etc.) were used to compare and contrast the veracity of the information that came from the teacher and other staff members.

**Data Analysis**

The three areas of inquiry that comprise fieldwork are: description, analysis, and interpretation (Wolcott, 1994). Description undergirded the interviews conducted on three levels (teachers, administrators, and community), and lent shape and form to my research question, how school climate affects teachers’ perceptions. Direct observations of PLC Middle School’s many meetings and procedures added to and supplemented the research retrieval. Analysis sought patterns or trends existing within the data aggregate. These existed in several forms: for example, the degree of confidence between initially licensed teachers with one versus two or three years, how mentors viewed their role as support, principal’s leadership style and type of class being taught (both content, level, and makeup of students). The third phase of data analysis, interpretation, involves “extending the analysis, using theory to provide structure, connecting with personal experience, and exploring alternative means of presenting data” (Glesne, 1999, 150). Using Albert Bandura’s social cognitive
theory as my theoretical framework, the questions stemming from the analysis of the data attempted to provide greater understanding of teachers’ roles in the school climate as active agents. This may lead to a further study looking at the effect that a beginning teacher has on a particular school climate, rather than the school climate influencing the teacher.

The data gleaned from the multiple interviews with key staff members in various job roles was compared and contrasted using a constant comparative method in an effort to form categories of information. I then attempted to link these categories of information by looking for patterns to help develop a viable theory (Merriam, 1998).

**Role as Researcher**

External validity was a factor since my findings did not support a larger more generalizable theoretical framework and I used a single case study. I chose depth over coverage. However, the findings did not establish a theory in itself but rather supported a greater understanding of the teacher migration issue. Perhaps subsequent research would further support expanding the findings to larger sample bases, referred to by Yin (2003) as “replication logic” (p. 37).

My first concern was playing the role of researcher apart from my known identity as a former Wake County middle school administrator. Principals display particular behaviors that are “principal-like” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998 p.35) and it was important for me to be aware of my previous status as a school administrator before meeting the participants. By dressing casually and sharing the goal of my research up front with the teachers, they were less wary and hesitant to reveal all details relevant to my questions and observations. Perhaps during the research they felt more comfortable with my frequent presence and familiarity and
therefore became more candid and forthcoming. During the research, I was no longer a Wake County Public School employee. Anthony mentioned to me towards the end of the semester that he and others felt more comfortable with me as a former educator doing the research. They believed that I would understand their situation better.

One of my roles as administrator was to observe and provide instructional and moral support to all teachers. I viewed that as an advantage in my research since I was quite familiar with what the teachers were required to do and having been a new teacher myself, the challenges during the first few years were not foreign to me. I sublimated my increased interest in empowering beginning teachers since it would have been an obvious bias and that was not the purpose of my research. I wanted to access and collect all the data and aggregate it to find any relationships or patterns and draw connections from the inductive process.

I was aware that, having been a middle school principal and assistant principal, I was trained in clinical supervision. Therefore, things that the teachers told me or events that I observed during the course of my school climate observations may have proved disconcerting to me. Noting for instance, an inappropriate remark made by a mentor to a mentee, inappropriate student behavior not addressed by a faculty member, or a misstatement by a teacher in the content area during an informal observation, would “normally” alert me to addressing the educative process with proper supervisory interventions. However in this case, that was not my role and the precedence of objectivity was of paramount importance to the research collection and findings. Nonetheless, there are advantages to a disciplined, well organized subjectivity. As the primary researcher I brought unique qualities, perceptions, and experiences to the data which filtered it and created a richer description and understanding. In fact, Peshkin (1988) makes reference to this subjectivity as “virtuous,” referring to this
union of personal characteristics and collected data as a “distinctive contribution” to the research itself. This insight stemmed from his studying a fundamentalist Christian PLC Middle Schools a Jewish scholar. I constantly attempted to use my experience as a former teacher and administrator as a research strength.

A major impetus for my research was not merely to examine the existing school climate and determine its effect on teachers’ perceptions, but also to further understand the synergy of complex organizations of educators. The classroom is where formal learning takes place but classrooms are not necessarily linked ideologically or politically. Teachers form groups, have varied interests and agendas, not always in the best interest of the students’ benefit.

Validity

The trustworthiness of the research findings ultimately depended on “prolonged engagement” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 151), spending sufficient time at my research site and “persistent observation” (p. 151), focusing in detail on those elements that were most relevant to my study. The research was not intended to be causal or explanatory, seeking specific reasons for teacher migration. Such a simplistic approach would question the veracity and reliability of the fieldwork since school climate encompasses a complex assortment of organizational components that could affect a teacher migrating to another school. I tried to extract a keener understanding of how high-performing schools operate at the middle school level. This was done by ultimately creating inferences for any phenomena not directly observed (Yin, 2003).

The question of generalizability, while not strongly embedded in a qualitative case
study, needed to be addressed. While not working with ample statistical data, the depth of analysis throughout the research helped provide further insight and understanding of the teacher migration problem through examining school climate. Further research may enable the question to take on broader implications in the form of a theory, that, if reliable and valid, can address the question of generalizability (Yin, 2003. The fieldwork on site encompassed a school semester of four months and I looked at teacher efficacy in three stages over the course of the semester although I was present every week at meetings and conferences. Every snapshot of a teacher via interviews or observations represented a particular point in time which resulted in different responses. My use of data triangulation allowed me to see if the observed development in Anthony’s perceptions was consistent under different circumstances (Stake, 1995). This multiple perspective of Anthony’s experiences and attitude throughout the semester allowed me to compare direct observations from varied viewpoints.

Another form of data collection used which helped me triangulate was member checking. In fairness to the research participants, I provided them with the interview transcripts to ensure accuracy and acceptability. It was possible that certain words or passages in the literature cast the teachers in a particular light which was displeasing or awkward. Rapport with the beginning teachers determined how “in depth” the findings were to become. This sensitive balance between my role as a former middle school administrator during the day and an objective researcher outside of those hours presented a challenge.

Reliability

By engaging in multiple forms of data collection over the school semester and weighing them carefully, I enhanced the reliability of the study. Should another researcher
conducted the same case over again, I feel confident that the findings involving Anthony and other staff members would parallel my findings. The teachers studied, except for the two first-year teachers, had enough experience in previous schools over an extended period of time to formulate sound opinions on school climate and its varying degrees of effectiveness. These opinions came forth in the interviews, e-mails, and conversations that I had with them. My frequent presence on campus in varied settings created familiarity and a comfort level for the teachers. Early on in the fieldwork, I was very explicit about my purpose and role as a researcher so that staff members would understand that I was not “checking up on them.” Since I already was known by several experienced teachers in the school, and my reputation was noteworthy, potential emotional barriers never materialized. I did not have a negative encounter in the four months of fieldwork.

I am quite aware of the limitations of my data (Glesne, 1999). Perhaps I could have studied the school for an entire year which could have altered perspectives, especially with end of grade testing of significant importance in May. In retrospect, upon completion of a school year, the teachers’ vista of the Professional Learning Community and its efficiency may have been broader. I could have devoted more time to the three individual teams in the 6th grade instead of Anthony and his immediate working companions. However, four months of in-depth study provided me with sufficient data to address the essential research questions and generate inferences for future research.
Summary of Emergent Themes

First, this research approached teacher migration up front. Teacher migration was the central research issue and I had to ask the teachers and other staff members questions about their feedback on the migration issue. Second, understanding that beginning teachers already come in with preconceived notions, experiences, and perceptions, the research then looked at the self-efficacy model of Albert Bandura (1986). Self-efficacy placed the teacher in an active relationship, as an active agent in attitude formation based on cognition, not merely behavioral responses. These teacher observations of their surrounding climate created cognitive models and held predictive value for future behaviors and organizational efficiency. Third, I looked at retention from an organizational viewpoint to determine if the support base (within PLC Middle School) was systematically strong and viable.

My premise was not to look at the new teacher as a static entity largely affected by external forces (i.e. mentors, accountability, parents, principal, fellow teachers, students, etc.) but rather as an interactive transformative agent with inherent skills to bear, bringing them already to the school. A teacher, if trusted and granted autonomy and opportunity, can be a successful leader and lead by example (Bennis, 1989).

Each school is unique in its particular school climate, the sense of order, leadership, expectations, and involvement (Bulach, 2001). Each interpretation on my part as the researcher shed light on how teachers’ perceptions are experienced and formed in a high-performing school. No one interpretation was definitive but multiple viewpoints from teachers who had migrated may have changed over time (Flick, 1992). It was my intention to capture one point in time and understand teacher migration more comprehensively.

Some unexpected responses from the first year teachers opened up another door of
inquiry for me and that was the preservice element. Listening to the insight of these
beginning teachers helped me further question the student teaching requirement better, both
in structure and function. This insight could lead to more effective programs for beginning
teachers in order to prepare them for the waiting realities of the middle school. In essence,
the beginning teachers would become more empowered at the entry point of middle school,
not in several years. The democratization of good teaching needs no boundaries. Zeichner
(1990) cited the importance of effective teacher socialization by beginning “to explore and
practice ways of democratizing the research process if the empowering potential of the
research is to be realized” (Zeichner, 1990, p. 28).
Chapter Four

Findings

My research came at an opportune time since I was able to gain entry into a new middle school, only in its second year of inception. Therefore, all one hundred staff members, except for several new teachers, had migrated, many from high-performing schools. Another advantage for the research pursuit was the innovative organizational design of the school which was uniquely different than any I had experienced as an educator. The school was self-designated a Professional Learning Community, a relatively recent designation and model fashioned after Richard DuFour’s model (1998). The district had researched the model for years and decided that the collaborative and collective inquiry features of the model fit the middle school model well and fostered its use. PLC Middle School was the first of twenty-seven schools in the district to actually make the necessary organizational and leadership changes to move forward with the new design. In an effort to improve school improvement and enhance student achievement, a professional learning community “provides a process for stakeholders to engage collaboratively in dialogue” (Huffman & Jacobson, 2003). Due to the inherent weaknesses of the top-down administrative leadership, one of which is a “lack of commitment by the faculty” (DuFour and Eaker, 1998, p.240), the facilitative style becomes more effective for educational leadership. DuFour (1998) states that “what separates a learning community from an ordinary school is its collective commitment to guiding principles that articulate what the people in the school believe and what they seek to create” (p.25). The faculty of PLC Middle School were challenged to not only employ an unprecedented school model in their careers, but also to be integral parts of its creation. Carl’s task was to lead them through the transition.
The teachers in PLC Middle School revealed their thoughts in this chapter on working in the Professional Learning Community model and compared it to working with previous models. As I went through the thirteen interviews, culled the fieldnotes from the thirty different meetings, and gleaned the documentation collected, I was able to categorize the data and place it in fifteen different lists. From these lists I searched for common themes and contrasts, eventually reducing the categories into three: teacher migration, school climate, and self and organizational efficacy. Certain recurrent themes such as collaboration and the issue of what a high-performing school is were subsumed into the three categories cited. The subthemes are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Teacher migration</strong></th>
<th><strong>Self-efficacy/Organizational-efficacy</strong></th>
<th><strong>School climate</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>High-performing schools</td>
<td>Stress/Conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching influences</td>
<td>Self-assessment</td>
<td>Professional/Personal changes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student demographics</td>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>Curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)</td>
<td>Mentoring networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School vision</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Anthony and I discussed all the above themes during the semester. Employing a constant comparative analysis, I was able to understand how Anthony fit in to the new group and school organization. He was extremely cooperative and volunteered to lend insight to many of my questions, particularly regarding the construction of teacher relationships, motivation, and adherence to school goals. Even though Anthony was not a beginning teacher, he was new to the school, the Professional Learning Community model, and the
language arts’ content area. Therefore, in many respects, notwithstanding his previous seven years of experience, he underwent the trials and challenges of a beginning teacher.

Although Anthony was the primary focus of the fieldwork and data collection, multiple staff members were interviewed to explore the various perceptions of school climate. The other interviews provided information about the context which is the middle school itself. Pseudonyms were also used with all other participants interviewed. PLC Middle School and its surrounding climate served as the backdrop for my single case study of Anthony and his transition through the fall semester. My participant observations of the Professional Learning Community meetings and after school staff meetings allowed me to observe the interactions and networking of all staff members from all content areas. However, since my case study was a 6th grade teacher and I wanted to shadow him as much as possible, I ended up focusing on the 6th grade. Notwithstanding the focus on the middle school gateway, 6th grade, I did interview 7th grade and 8th grade teachers to ensure a more holistic view of the research. I interviewed Anthony three different times during the semester:

- at the beginning of the semester before school officially started
- in the middle of the semester after Anthony was acclimated to the new school
- at the end of the semester after teaching had taken place for four months

I was particularly interested in following Anthony’s transition from one high-performing school to another for several reasons:

- He had seven years of experience as a teacher so he was familiar with the processes and guidelines of Initially Licensed Teachers (ILTs).
- He was taking on another major content area, language arts, along with his primary area, social studies. His experiences at PLC Middle School would provide a unique look at an
experienced teacher adjusting to a new middle school curriculum. In certain respects, he was looked on as a new teacher.

- He was Nationally Board Certified so he understood rigorous curricular and instructional standards and practiced them in the classroom.
- He worked on various teams for seven years.
- He recently migrated from a high-performing middle school with the same student demographics.

Anthony was representative of a highly qualified teacher who decided to migrate from one high-performing school to another due to dissatisfaction with the school organization and sense of direction. By observing and studying Anthony over the course of a school semester, I understood the social and psychological transition made by him and others in a wider school context better. Studying Anthony allowed me to understand the phenomena of school climate and organizational efficacy, two factors central to teacher migration. This case study was “instrumental to accomplishing something other than understanding this particular teacher” (Stake, 1995).

I also conducted ten other interviews with the following school personnel:

- two assistant principals
- two principals
- two ILTs (Initially Licensed Teachers-first year)
- two teachers (7 years experience)
- two experienced teachers (12+ years)
- PTA president

The research participants agreed voluntarily to provide interviews and help out in any
way possible. Once the interviews were conducted, further communication took place via e-
mail correspondence regarding further questions and clarifications. The e-mail 
correspondence was extremely helpful since it allowed me to hone in on specific subthemes 
and highlighted areas that surfaced from the emergent data. The interviews took place in the 
school building in quiet offices or private rooms during planning periods or on teacher 
workdays. No direct interaction took with between middle school students. I arranged all the 
interviews via e-mail since the principal had provided me with full access to the school’s 
Blackboard website that contained a plethora of key information, including staff e-mails and 
home phone numbers. The principal had introduced me to the staff at a beginning of the year 
orientation gathering at a nearby lake a week before the students arrived at school. He 
informed the staff that I was a doctoral student at North Carolina State University and that I 
would be conducting research on school climate for the first half of the year. All of the 
interviews were taped and transcribed by me. I provided the written transcription and CD of 
the interview to each participant in a sealed envelope.

My documentation collection was ample since I had access to the school’s 
Blackboard website which served as the central technology forum for all events, 
announcements, minutes, postings, and discussion forums online. The site contains a wealth 
of information about the school’s infrastructure, operations, and teacher viewpoints on 
pertinent educational issues. I was able to read and analyze Professional Learning 
Community and Professional Reading Forum discussion forums that have taken place for a 
year and a half, since the school’s inception. Since the school organization is modeled on 
Richard DuFour’s *Professional Learning Community* model which is largely collaborative, it 
was essential that staff members utilized Blackboard to share and exchange thoughts and
beliefs on the evolving organization.

Beside the interviews and documentation collection, I attended most of the mandatory afternoon meetings broken down as follows:

- First Monday of month- Staff meeting
- Second Monday of month- Department meetings
- Third Monday of month- Leadership Team meeting
- Fourth Monday of month- Initially Licensed Teacher meeting

I took copious fieldnotes during the meetings that were conducted largely in the media center after school hours and took approximately one to one and a half hours in duration. I did not sit at the same table as the participants but rather placed myself inconspicuously away to observe the exchanges. In some instances it was not always possible to sit apart due to the overcrowded conditions in the media center. Since I had been introduced to the staff by the principal and I was present frequently at major meetings, the staff became used to my presence and appeared very cordial and polite. I did not feel awkward or slighted in any manner. In fact, once the participants began the meetings, my presence was hardly noticed to any significant degree as the participants freely engaged in dialogue.

Anthony, the case study, was required to meet with all the grade level teachers once a week for approximately a half hour. The meeting went over the time limit in the earlier days of the semester which resulted in some tension between various teachers. However, a consensus was met and it was agreed on by all eleven teachers that the agenda would be prewritten with time allocations and strict observance to time management would be complied with. Besides the group meeting, Anthony had to attend a weekly language arts/social studies meeting with the six language arts and social studies’ teachers. This was a
smaller group and seemed more informal and genial in nature. These meetings generally took place on Tuesday afternoons from 1:20pm to 2:10pm. It took place in one teacher’s room all the time and he recorded the minutes on a laptop. I attended either the group meeting or smaller meeting while still being present to conduct the interviews during the week. The meetings were referred to as Professional Learning Community meetings often called PLC meetings.

**Case Study Participants**

To further support the case study, Anthony, and his transition to a new school throughout the semester, I accessed more information from other staff members via interviews, conversations, e-mails, observations, and documentation. The collection of those additional data supported the robustness and triangulation of the research by providing supporting background information. These subcases helped provide information about the context of PLC Middle School.

The participants in the case study helped shape the description of the school climate. Eight educators working in the same building, one principal from a nearby high-performing middle school, a parent PTA president (former teacher for 7 years), and a teacher off campus with seven years experience who had recently migrated from a high-performing school in the same area as PLC Middle School, were all directly involved in the research. They lent their personal and professional input to a collection of questions regarding school climate, teacher migration, and organizational efficacy. Although the primary case study subject was Anthony, the varied feedback from staff members represented an balanced look at the phenomena of school climate based on diverse backgrounds. The sample of eleven
participants represented a range of twenty-seven years of experience, more than twenty previous schools, and age ranges from twenty-two to fifty-five.

Anthony, the case study, was a Nationally Board Certified 6th grade language arts and social studies teacher in his 8th year of public school teaching. He worked for seven years in a high-performing school (95% of the student population, grades 6-8, performed at grade level and above according to end of year standardized test scores) located in an affluent area in North Carolina. Anthony was strictly a social studies teacher at his previous school and due to organizational changes in design and schedule structure, decided to migrate to another high-performing school nearby that was modeled on the Professional Learning Community model of Richard DuFour. The idea of a more collaborative setting appealed to him.

Barbara is a social studies and language arts teacher in a magnet school in North Carolina. She worked for six years at a high-performing middle school in the area after she graduated from college. She taught 7th grade social studies during that time and was on a four teacher team. Barbara was very involved in the activities of the school, both academic and extracurricular, and expressed a future desire to seriously look into politics as a career. After six years at her first school, Barbara decided to migrate to another traditional middle school closer to the center of the capital of the state.

Carol is a recent graduate of a nearby state university and was double certified in math and social studies. She was teaching in her first year at the PLC Middle School and was referred to as an ILT-1, an Initially Licensed Teacher-1st year. She was expected to attend monthly ILT meetings with her mentor and comply with all state and county guidelines for beginning teachers. She interviewed for the 7th grade math position at a district
job fair and immediately took a liking to the assistant principal doing the interviewing. Carol felt very comfortable with all those administrators and other staff members who attempted to hire her. She decided in her junior year of high school that she wanted to go into teaching.

Danielle is a first year teacher (ILT-1), also a graduate from a nearby state university. She teaches 6th grade language arts and social studies and is the cheerleading coach. She grew up wanting to become a teacher since her grandmother was a teacher and had much influence on her as a child.

Ellen is a twenty-seven year veteran teacher who worked in nine previous schools at all levels, elementary, middle, and high school. She primarily taught language arts throughout her career in three different states. Last year she was teaching 8th grade language arts and decided to leave the classroom to take on the Academically Gifted Coordinator position. She has a strong middle school background with teaming and is eager to work with all teachers in the classroom with differentiated instruction and teaching assignments. She also left a high-performing school in the area after seven years on a four teacher team in the 8th grade. She is Nationally Board Certified.

Frank has twelve years of experience and is Nationally Board Certified. He taught in five previous schools, at both elementary and middle grades levels. He was recently selected as his district’s Teacher of the Year and he presently teaches language arts, social studies, and science. Frank is very active both politically and organizationally in the middle school community and has an extensive coaching background. He also is very active in serving as the liaison between the teachers and administration involving technology and online websites and forums.

Arthur is a veteran administrator with twenty-four years experience in public
school education. He spent ten of those years in a large urban city as a teacher and the past fourteen years in the present district serving as assistant principal at both middle and high school levels. Arthur previously worked for the present principal at a traditional middle school and is now reunited with him after a short hiatus in high school. He did not like the high school experience.

Beverly is a full-time assistant principal for the first time. She served an internship as an administrator at PLC Middle School last year. Previously she was the Instructional Resource Teacher at a magnet program in middle school. Beverly has been in public schools for eight years and came to PLC Middle School after completing her Master of School Administration degree. She worked in four previous schools, two in another district.

Carl, the present principal of PLC Middle School, migrated from two previous schools in the same district. Before that he worked as a principal in his hometown, some 150 miles away from the present district. He is in his eighth year as a principal and taught language arts and social studies in middle school and high school for thirteen years. Carl has been followed by several teachers who worked with him successfully in the past and he had the unique opportunity to open up a brand new middle school and do all the hiring. Based on the extant literature and existing research, Carl decided to set up the new school employing the Professional Learning Community model of Richard DuFour consisting of Professional Learning Community teams involving common planning time, collaborative planning and enquiry, along with collective accountability, all driven by measurable data.

Dana is a veteran teacher and administrator. She has worked at one PLC Middle Schools principal for seven years and served eleven years as an assistant principal
and eleven years as a physical education instructor before that in another district in the same state. Dana has twenty-nine years of experience in the public school system. She has expressed a love for athletic training, working with athletes, and working in the rehabilitative area of sports.

Alyssa is the president of the PTA (Parent Teacher Association) and spent seven years as a public school math teacher. She has children in the system. This is her second year as the PTA president. Alyssa is very active in the community.

**Study Participant Demography**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Years experience</th>
<th>Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anthony</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbara</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carol</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danielle</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellen</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Administrator</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Years experience</th>
<th>Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arthur</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beverly</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carl</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dana</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Years experience</th>
<th>Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alyssa</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>7 (teacher)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The driving force of every middle school is its mission statement. It states clearly the reason for the school’s existence and all curricular, instructional, and organizational designs must point towards and converge upon the school’s mission statement. The most essential document in PLC Middle School is the School Improvement Plan, an ongoing organizational assessment tool required by the district and submitted every year. Every teacher receives a copy of the School Improvement Plan. The document is broken down as follows (Wake County Public School System, N.C. 2005):

- **Board Goal:** By 2008, 95% of students in grades 3 through 12 will be at or above grade level as measured by standardized testing, and all student groups will demonstrate high growth.

- **PLC Middle School Goal:** There are five school goals in the plan.
  1. By 2008, 95% of students in grades 6 through 8 will be at or grade level in reading as measured by standardized testing, and all student groups will demonstrate high growth.
  2. By 2008, 95% of students in grades 6 through 8 will demonstrate competency in writing as measured by State A and local writing assessments.
  3. By 2008, 95% of students in grades 6 through 8 will be at or grade level in mathematics as measured by State A standardized tests, and all student groups will demonstrate high growth.
  4. Provide a safe, orderly, and caring environment to promote healthy students and staff.
  5. Involve family, community, and business as active participants in promoting student achievement at PLC Middle School.

During my research I was able to collect a continuous stream of
documentation, most generally disseminated by the administrative team, with less coming from the central office. It seemed that the teachers’ mailboxes were filled with some documents continually. Documentation collection proved important to the research since it was an indication of the teachers’ workload broken down into instructional and noninstructional elements. Middle school bureaucratization was visible to a large degree by the types of documentation distributed. The concerns were largely regarding standards, accountability measures, community concerns, deadlines, and management or supervisory tasks. The routine of the teachers included a substantial amount of noninstructional duties and obligations that had to be adhered to. These noninstructional duties were of concern on the part of the teachers from a time management approach. The following is a list of duties observed:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional</th>
<th>Non-instructional</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academically Gifted assessments</td>
<td>Fundraiser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report cards</td>
<td>Athletic event coverage (two events)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interim progress reports</td>
<td>Autism training (planning periods)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>Monday meetings (generally after school)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer Skills testing preparation</td>
<td>Student Support team recommendations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entering grades online</td>
<td>Field trip documentation/planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson planning</td>
<td>Dance coverage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly PLC meetings</td>
<td>Hepatitis B administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pictures for yearbook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Awards ceremony</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Bloodborne pathogen training
OSHA (Occupational Services Health Association) training
IEP meetings (Individualized Education Plans)
Lunch and assembly coverage

Fieldnotes from meetings

I attended meetings over the course of four months. The meetings were of various sizes and purposes. PLC Middle School held monthly meetings on Mondays for different groups in the organization. The four groups who met monthly were the entire faculty, leadership team, department chairs, and the initially licensed teachers with their mentors. Aside from these larger group meetings, I attended the 6th grade core teacher meetings (eleven teachers) every week and the smaller content area meetings (seven teachers) in language arts and social studies every week also. Fieldnotes were taken for every meeting and integrated and analyzed with school documentation and interviews using a constant comparative method.

At the new employee orientation meeting in August, Carl assembled the staff off campus at a scenic lake in a rural setting. He believed that the setting would provide a more relaxed one for the staff. His enthusiasm for the school and its mission was evident by comments such as the “bar is set high” and PLC Middle School was a “great place to be.” I often heard teachers echoing those words during my research. Carl and his fellow administrators exhorted the teachers to analyze, criticize, and take risks when working with all students. Beverly, an assistant principal, even announced at one point that PLC Middle School “does not follow the Wake County pacing guide and rather follows the North
Carolina Standard Course of Study.” She added that PLC Middle School teachers should teach according to the needs of their students. The message was clear to all teachers to constantly ask, “What are we teaching this quarter? For what reason?” While instilling a message of teacher autonomy, the collaborative means of carrying this out as a group opened the door for organizational efficacy questions.

Carl was attentive to keeping the learning community attuned to their mission as a collaborative group and upheld high expectations at all times. He mentioned at one meeting that the mission statement “ensures” high achievement and how important that word is. He also cited the importance of reading, receiving much attention in the district, when he told the staff that “Everyone in here is a reading teacher.” The growth of each student was of a primary focus, not the standardized test scores in themselves. Questions regarding organization such as “Where are we?” and “Where are we going” challenged the staff to view the change process as a fluid one, inviting direct reflection and input from the teachers.

Perhaps Carl’s most important message to the staff early in the year was referring to the previous inaugural year as one of “experimentation,” followed by this year of “definition” of the organization and its purposes. Carl told the staff on September 6 that “We’ve done the easy part. The easy part is the collaboration, compared to the next step----the data part.” Based on the research findings, the collaboration did not seem to be “the easy part.” The collaboration component and socialization issues it raised, seemed to be more complicated than expected. Teachers often split into smaller and smaller units socially which made the collaborative efforts seem contrived at times. Carl and his three fellow administrators had a constant challenge to monitor this potential breakdown of organizational coherence.
Initially licensed teachers (ILTs) met monthly on a Monday afternoon with their mentors to go over district and school guidelines to maintain proper licensure performance requirements. This was a good time to network with peers new to the school and to the profession. The teachers were largely quiet during the early meetings, probably due to the overwhelming nature of the teaching demands expressed by the ILT coordinator. She informed the group that the PLC was “easier at the beginning of the year, then gets harder later on.” She encouraged them to work closely with their mentors and told them they needed to “have a life,” referring to dividing their work and personal priorities accordingly. Her references to organizing skills being “very important,” and cautioning them not to be “overwhelmed by the data. No one knows anything about data” appeared to inhibit the group in the early days. After talking to some of the ILTs later in the semester, I learned that they drew their support from fellow teachers, including more experienced ones. Due to the small groupings working together by content area, the ILTs depended mostly on their self-contained family unit, perhaps two to four accessible peers. Their self-efficacy grew with time but individuals progressed at varying rates.

The smaller group meetings, that of grade level and content area exhibited a more personal aura, with teachers more willing to state their feelings or beliefs. This was even more evident in the content area sessions of language arts and social studies. Some teachers who seemed more comfortable with their content area peers in a smaller setting did not open up much at the larger grade level meetings. The larger meetings seemed to be dominated by two or three teachers who freely expressed their views consistently although the forum was intended to be an open one. Some teachers expressed more assertive means of working through problems such as “We’ll make it happen” while others took a more
conciliatory and expectant attitude, “We’ll see how it goes.” The teachers had as much of a challenge collaborating with the different personalities and showed caution for the most part in remarks that were said at the meetings. After an early year exchange that became heated over time management, the teachers displayed more caution and courtesy towards one another. As a researcher, I believed this was a significant juncture since withdrawing and becoming more reserved did not necessarily imply stronger consensus building and enhanced organizational efficacy.

A significant staff meeting took place on November 10, past the halfway mark of the semester. Apparently Carl was concerned about the direction of the professional learning community model based on feedback he was receiving from different teachers and administrators. He expressed quite clearly what his intentions were for the school, “We want to be a leader as a PLC model for all the schools and the community.” The staff had been given several PLC articles that they were required to read and deliver feedback. Carl opened up the discussion by inviting staff feedback from the articles, “What jumped out at you?” The teachers were responsive but one 6th grade language arts teacher brought up a relevant point. She said that PLC Middle School still lacked uniformity regarding remediation or addressing the early stages of student failure. Carl agreed and admitted honestly that the school was “not there yet.” One teacher mentioned that “This is really going to look different from traditional schools.” The implication from her remark was that PLC Middle School was still in the process or transforming the values and beliefs of a traditional middle school to a professional learning community model. Several teachers nodded their heads with affirmation upon hearing her remark.

Some frustration was voiced at the sense of helplessness and futility regarding
the collection and application of data on an ongoing basis. One experienced teacher stated, “I’m worried about getting buried under a mountain of data that I can’t manipulate.” His implication was that time was an essential factor for teachers. Carl acknowledged the comment and assured the staff that adequate and timely assistance would be provided for the data collection and assessment areas of instruction. My follow-up talks with some of the teachers still detected some doubt regarding the ability of the staff to successfully work with all the data and integrate it into instruction. This will prove to be a challenge for the learning community model.

**Electronic collaboration: Blackboard 6.1**

Not all documentation or correspondence was distributed via hand or paper. PLC Middle School had a well maintained software program called Blackboard 6.1 that served as an electronic informational conduit for all key information channeled in and out of the school. Every staff member had a logon and password that would allow them access to the site. The site was rich in information and included postings, discussion forums, and curriculum and instructional guidelines. Staff members had an opportunity to keep abreast of the latest announcements and developments, in an effort to reduce the sheer paperwork of documentation distribution.

Some of the excellent means of information distributed and set up on Blackboard follow:

- Daily announcements
- Celebration forums (recognition of staff members)
- Teacher non-instructional duties
Regardless of the potential wealth of information posted on Blackboard, I noticed that the majority of users who accessed it and contributed to the postings were from a central core. Most of the staff did not participate in forums in the content areas of language arts, science, social studies, and math. It seemed that the same half dozen people or so took advantage of what Carl intended to become an essential communication conduit. Carl is aware of this and has brought this concern up at previous staff meetings.

The daily announcements involving operations appeared every day online using Blackboard. A typical posting would look like this:

Good morning:

-We will meet this afternoon in the Media Center at 2:30.

-The rep from Colonial Life will be in the Media Center on Nov. 14 at 2:30 to discuss the supplemental insurance plan.

-We will have a fire drill soon.

-The PTA is sponsoring a spirit night on Tuesday at _____ from 5:00-8:00.

-We have home soccer/volleyball on Tuesday vs. ______.

-Thursday is an early release day. We will meet at 12:30 in the Media Center.
(a quote to motivate and inspire).

Have a great day?

It was in this manner that Carl and his administrative staff kept the staff informed and any direct memos placed in mailboxes or intercom announcements were reserved for matters of higher importance needing more immediate attention.

The use of Blackboard was rich with potential for strong interactive networking among the staff. Teachers felt free to post written feedback on discussion forums. Some interesting exchanges involved duty coverage (who should sign up for it, whether it should be mandatory or not, how to compensate teachers for their time, etc.), and End of Grade preparation (if a “preparation” was really needed since teachers were preparing the students all year anyway, amount of formal attention on standardized testing, whether the students should have a pep rally to focus on the importance of the tests, etc.).

The other forums were for Schools Attuned, Professional Learning Committees, Professional Reading and specific department sites. The Media Center was also actively involved in postings and had their own website. Blackboard was an essential part of communication attempts to disseminate school information and interact with peers in the building. The research findings online pointed to a disproportionate use of Blackboard by a small collection of teachers. It seemed like the same teachers were using Blackboard and were more present on the sites. This issue proved to be an ongoing one and Carl was aware of it. He reminded the staff of the importance of its use and consistent use.

An increasingly more prevalent form of communication at PLC Middle School was correspondence by e-mail. Each staff member had a public school e-mail address and it was
quite easy for me to communicate with them even when I was at home regarding isolated questions or concerns. Anthony and I maintained a steady e-mail correspondence throughout the semester and I would follow up the interviews with a question or two for further clarification. The technology teacher on the 6th grade hall put me on the group mailing list so I received full minutes of all the meetings and any key information regarding curriculum and instruction that went back and forth between the teachers. The 6th grade teachers were used to me being at the meetings and felt comfortable with me asking them questions about school climate. Several openly volunteered their input.

**Emergent themes: Teacher migration, Efficacy, School Climate:**

**Anthony speaks**

The research findings revealed three overarching themes that encompassed the multiple observations, interviews, and data collection: teacher migration, self and organizational efficacy, and school climate. The three themes were grouped collectively but the distinction between them is important for understanding the logic of the research findings. Teacher migration is an organizational problem, an exodus of teachers from one school to other, often high-performing schools. Self and organizational efficacy are cognitive behaviors that teachers develop based on their experiences in the schools. School climate is the organizational setting in which teachers perform their responsibilities and is the background for self and organizational efficacy.

The three interviews conducted with the case study, Anthony, were carried out at the beginning, middle, and end of the school semester. The questions asked reflected the relative time period of Anthony’s transition so that the questions asked in August, at the
beginning of the school year, pertained to Anthony’s previous middle school experiences. The middle interview focused on Anthony’s transition to PLC Middle School and his challenges in the Professional Learning Community model. The final interview in December was reflective more of Anthony’s broader understanding of how he “fit into” the organizational setting and elicited his broader views on teacher migration, efficacy, and school climate in general. What follows are Anthony’s thoughts in the three key areas of concern.

By the time we met for our third interview, it was clear that Anthony felt much more relaxed in his new school setting. For that matter, I did, too, as the researcher. My continued presence and familiarity with the other 6th grade teachers made me feel welcome. The three interviews with Anthony ranged from personal questions to team and operations questions to organizational questions. The three areas of questioning formed the triad of factors that Bandura (1992) stated would surround the world of beginning teachers, the cognitive (personal), behavioral (team and operations), and environmental (organization).

**Teacher migration**

Anthony left his high-performing middle school after teaching for seven years as a social studies teacher. He had a good friend who also migrated a year earlier to PLC Middle School and praised the organization’s Professional Learning Community model. Anthony explains how he had a “seven year itch” and was looking for new challenges. He felt that a change “would be a good time” and that “listening to more of what was being said” would help him make his decision (August 24).

Anthony displayed a desire to maintain an open attitude concerning possible teacher
migration. Apparently, his strong ties with another teacher and the excitement of working in a new school with a unique organizational design, combined to lure Anthony from his previous school. Carl, the principal of PLC Middle School, was also a significant factor in Anthony’s decision to migrate. His implementation of the Professional Learning Community was very important to him, particularly due to its novelty of collaborative teaming, collective enquiry, and group accountability. Several staff members pointed to Carl’s enthusiasm as a key factor in both recruiting them and retaining them. Anthony explained that Carl was “very influential because I really got a lot of respect from the meetings I had with him” (August 24). Anthony seemingly had been impressed by his initial meeting with an enthusiastic principal who made him feel “comfortable with the move” (August 24).

Anthony’s receptivity to the warmness and enthusiasm of Carl pointed out the significance of a principal with a clear vision of a school’s future. Anthony lacked that at his previous school even though the school repeatedly performed at the highest levels from a state and district assessment. This incongruity between the teacher perception of a motivated and engaged middle school and the administrative perception, reappeared in other interviews with Anthony’s fellow teachers. Several teachers expounded on the lack of direction and vision of the administration in their previous schools. Carl had generated excitement towards the novelty of a Professional Learning Community school, in only its second year.

Anthony talked about migrating from his previous middle school and cited the organizational design and accelerated changes that took place, much to his dissatisfaction. He disagreed with the decision that all sixth grade students would take semester classes in social studies and science yet continue year round in language arts and mathematics. He believed that undue attention was being given by the school and school district to language arts and
mathematics at the expense of other content area subjects. He stated that he had voiced his concerns to his former principal who was cordial and polite but unwilling to change the curriculum focus. Also, Anthony, who had been on a traditional four teacher team for several years, was asked to work on a three teacher team, adjust to block schedule, and condense his year round social studies curriculum into two semesters. The changes seemed abrupt and he had many questions. Thus the question of hasty organizational change both threatened and challenged him. Why he was going to a three person team “wasn’t explained very well” and that the decision “was just coming to me from on high” (August 24).

I was curious to ascertain what kinds of teachers generally migrate if a generalization could be made at all. After all, if teachers leaving high-performing schools are being hired by principals to enter other high-performing schools, a modicum of expertise must be displayed during the hiring process. Anthony shared his thoughts and notwithstanding the case of the mediocre teacher moving from school to school, most of the teachers he knew were highly qualified.

Anthony pointed out the importance of the principal in a high-performing school. He said that one of the reasons many teachers wanted to come to PLC Middle School was “because it’s run by the guy that it’s run by” (December 3).

While talking about teacher turnover, we addressed teacher migration and I asked Anthony how he would retain quality teachers if he had his own school. He responded that quality teachers had “to be paid as professionals at this point. You have to give teachers incentives to stay and one of the easiest incentives is pay. More teachers would be interested in staying. I think, treating them more like professionals would bring more quality teachers
around” (December 8). He pointed out that teachers are “very locked into what you are, a teacher. You are in this classroom, have lunch duty, you have to do this and this and this. You don’t have time to sit down or go to the bathroom. A lot of teachers look at this and say it’s too much…” “I could do other things and make more money” (December 8). Despite the many demands made upon his as a teacher, Anthony saw himself “as an accomplished teacher that doesn’t want to leave the classroom. Now that’s coming from an 8th year teacher who still has a lot of vinegar in him. Maybe in ten years, maybe my view will be different. I don’t want to leave” (December 8).

When addressing the teacher migration, I asked him what it would have taken to keep him at his previous high-performing school. It was clear from the interviews with Anthony and other staff members that teachers do not generally leave a school hastily or for poorly thought out reasons. They leave after a series of experiences and behaviors affect them in a way that sets up either a personal or philosophical conflict with either the administration or other educators. I was not sure how Anthony would answer this question since he was excited about the novelty of the Professional Learning Community model and a good friend working in PLC Middle School, yet he had a good situation overall in his previous school. He went on to point out that it was essential to have “an administrator that you believe in…someone who has quality, has intelligence, who believes in you as a teacher…someone who exudes this administrative role. That would’ve kept me where I was…someone who didn’t change midstream with structures. I felt like I was being bounced around the past few years at School ______” (December 8). His questioning of the previous principal’s organizational decisions “didn’t have good reasons or if they did, it didn’t filter down to me. You have to have quality administrators who know what they’re doing and can talk to
teachers about their vision, get them to buy into it. They didn’t have a lot of buy into it at School _______. I think I do here” (December 8).

Finally, when asked if he had any second thoughts about his migration to PLC Middle School, Anthony responded that when he first migrated to PLC Middle School he “questioned” himself but did not act on his decision. He was adamant that he was determined to stay where he was:

I absolutely like where I am and I would not change. I have had another feeling that this language arts isn’t easy. Am I sure I want to be this language arts teacher? I could just back to being a social studies teacher and being a rock star and being entirely happy. But I knew that this would make me a better teacher, better in the long run. I’d have more experience and moving to another school, I’ve have on my resume that I’m both a language arts and a social studies teacher. I always thought that I pigeonholed myself as a social studies teacher. I love the curriculum and have always loved the curriculum but it’s a small hole I put myself in. (November 3).

Anthony was an example of a teacher with high self-efficacy who had left a school with low organizational efficacy. Yet his previous school was designated as a School of Honor Excellence, one that was certainly known as a high-performing school by the state and community. The question surfaced, “How can a high-performing school have low organizational efficacy?” This apparent contradiction was to resurface in later interviews with other teachers also. They had high degrees of self-efficacy but had left schools of low
organizational efficacy. Throughout my experience at PLC Middle School, the research supported high organizational efficacy. It was that gap between what PLC Middle School offered organizationally and what other schools lacked that compelled me to talk to others.

**Efficacy**

**Self efficacy**

Self-efficacy is the belief in one’s capability to carry out a specific task. It is often confused with self-esteem but the two are entirely different. Bandura (1997, p. 11) explains: “Perceived self-efficacy is concerned with judgments of personal capability, whereas self-esteem is concerned with judgments of self-worth.” Bandura follows with the example of a person who acknowledges “complete inefficacy in ballroom dancing” but does not suffer from degrees of “recurrent bouts of self-devaluation” (p. 11). Extending the given example to Anthony, we could say that Anthony has low self-efficacy as a language arts teacher (since it is the first time he is teaching it) but has high self-esteem as a teacher in general.

The importance of self-efficacy was revealed in the interviews because without strong self-efficacy, teachers feel detached and cut off not only from other teachers, but also from students. Anthony explained that as he acquired more experience in the classroom, he developed into a more efficient teacher and his level of self-efficacy became enhanced. He took on a greater role teaching the curriculum and had the confidence to do it. When Anthony first arrived at his previous middle school as a first year teacher, he was told that the school, although high-performing, was a “country club school.” Due to its affluence, the student population was generally one that had opportunities at home and the resources to make them successful. Their parents were involved in their education and generated high
levels of support. Anthony believed that this level of affluence helped him avoid some of the major issues of low-performing schools such as classroom discipline, nonsupportive parents, and poor moral.

Anthony talked about his biggest challenges in the first few years standing in front of a large group of young students and feeling nervous and have “little kind of panic attacks” (August 24). With increased confidence and self-efficacy in his abilities as a teacher, he “got more comfortable speaking in front of the people, the kids, and staff members. I got more adaptable with how a 6th grader’s mind works, and I think that was the important thing for me, understanding how the 6th graders think and work and interact with you” (August 24). From Anthony’s remarks, his concern about standing in front of a large group was not strictly confined to students but also staff members.

When he began his teaching career, Anthony was predictably apprehensive in front of large groups of middle school students, preadolescent in most cases. His self-efficacy gradually rose until he felt comfortable talking to the students and understood the curriculum as well. He mentioned to me that he had interacted very little with other social studies teachers on his own grade level and was left much on his own. What assistance he received was either outside the building in the form of professional workshops and conferences or inside the building in casual conversation with peers. This lack of collaboration contrasted with his present situation at PLC Middle School.

Due to the nature of the collaborative features of the Professional Learning Community, I was able to attend the weekly grade level meetings (eleven teachers) and weekly content area meetings (six teachers). These meetings enabled me to survey the teachers working and collaborating. Issues arose along with some dissension. Anthony, as a
new teacher to the school, was a keen observer and gradually became more familiar and comfortable providing input and insight to the weekly dialogue taking place among the 6th grade teachers. His previous seven years of experience in a high-performing school was potentially valuable to the social coherence and group organizational insight. Collaboration and team-building at the middle school level is very important in the district and the central office ambitiously advocates its use.

Anthony talked about collaboration and the distinction between academic collaboration and non-academic collaboration at his previous school. He said that on his four person team

There was not a lot of collaboration academically. You taught your subject independently from the others and you did not necessarily cross curriculum. The collaboration when I first started teaching was all about outside the classroom activities. If we’re going on a field trip, you had to collaborate. If you’re going to an award ceremony or if you’re going to do a parent night or something like that, that’s the collaboration that you had to do (August 24).

The collaboration that Anthony was seeking was one of enhanced curriculum and instructional strategies. He wanted to know the most effective teaching methods, the most productive classroom management techniques, how to become a dynamic teacher by listening to and sharing his peers’ experiences. Unfortunately, due to his lack of contact with other content area instructors and lack of sufficient time, Anthony found opportunities outside the school in professional workshops and discussions. He was also very self-
motivated and brought many original ideas into the classroom.

Stepping into PLC Middle School after seven years of experience as a social studies teacher, Anthony was asked to self-assess himself as a teacher. I wanted to focus on his preconceived sense of self-efficacy entering a new and challenging school environment. He said that he felt like “a master teacher at this point. I’m very confident in my curriculum and I understand the content of my curriculum. I feel like I have a good rapport with my students and what they get out of my class is good quality information at least from the social studies point of view” (August 24). His entry into the language arts arena was going to take time and would probably take two years before he was to really understand the content. Despite his doubts about language art, he felt “successful as a teacher and that’s something I’m proud of and not burned out after seven years. I look forward to tomorrow, the first day of school. I look forward to the next year. I look forward to my next batch of 6\textsuperscript{th} graders that come in here to start all over again” (August 24).

It is clear that Anthony’s seven years of experience prepared him well for the upcoming challenges in a new school setting. His sense of self-confidence and self-efficacy seemed high although he was predictably nervous about the language arts component, particularly at the middle school level and its integral part of the standardized testing assessment at the end of the year. He wanted to be accepted by his peers as a “quality instructor” (August 24). He notes that,

There is always that raw end of the surface that I want to prove that I’m good. I want to prove that I’m doing this right. And I had some feelings coming over here that were nervous. I was nervous that I wasn’t going to prove myself. That I was going to stumble or block or
they were going to see that I wasn’t as good as maybe I thought I was. So hopefully I’ll be okay. I feel pretty good about myself right now (August 24).

In a district featuring middle school turnover rates routinely at 20%, Anthony’s self-efficacy was also buoyed by the fact that other, less experienced teachers, came up to him to ask him for advice. This was a new role for him since it was not far removed when he was one of those teachers. He welcomed his new status gladly and he welcomed their coming to him for ideas and guidance. Anthony remarks,

This is something that is an interesting transition for me because I was always the guy needing to know and asking people and I never felt that I was the advanced teacher, the experienced teacher. But now that’s what I am. And even on the staff here, I’m coming in as my first year at PLC Middle School but I’m coming in 3rd highest with longevity. Everybody else on the staff is young and so I found that I’ve been able to help more and more teachers with ideas about students, classroom management, how to deal with stress, and deal with teaching. If you feel passionate about teaching, you will get better in time (August 24).

When asked if he received support from the other language arts teachers, he commented that the support is was receiving was “adequate.” The teachers were giving him the lesson plans and basic structure of the lesson but after that Anthony noted that he was “on my own.” He had to “figure out how to teach the lesson. I’m fine with that and it’s something I should know how to do” (November 3). It is not certain that one of the initially licensed teachers
would have felt so comfortable being left to take on so much. Anthony had seven years of experience working with lesson plans and working with students. His confidence level was high but guarded due to the new content area, language arts.

One of Anthony’s biggest fears at the beginning of the semester was learning and adjusting to his new subject area, language arts. Two months later, he shared thoughts regarding his transition and how he had “adjusted to language arts pretty well but I feel I have a learning curve. I don’t feel like I’m an accomplished language arts teacher at this point but rather that I’m competent. I’m doing what I need to do to make sure these kids are getting what they need but I don’t feel like I’m so advanced like I am in social studies” (November 3).

When asked if his confidence was based on his ability as a social studies teacher or a teacher in general he replied that the latter was an advantage. He said that,

Language arts and social studies are so interconnected and so easy to transition into. I know how the school works, where to go for resources, how to ask for things, and where I need to go to find things. That comes from being the district for seven years. I know how to use the internet, the intranet, what the district is looking for. I think that it is, mainly, I’ve been a teacher for seven years and that has made it easier to go from one subject to two subjects (November 3).

Familiarity with public school procedures and operations enhanced Anthony’s self-efficacy. The move to language arts from social studies seemed to be more of a latitudinal move, since his belief in his capabilities to perform had a successful history and he
understood where to turn to in the middle school environment. Anthony’s degree of self-efficacy seemed high but I wanted to determine how he was being accepted by the other teachers and if he felt that he was “fitting in” with the larger grade level. These insights helped me explore the organizational efficacy needed for successful group performance. Anthony felt that he had been accepted by his fellow 6th grade teacher but noticed a difference with his behavior in the smaller group, the language arts/social studies group,

It’s different when I’m with the smaller group, the language arts/social studies. I feel like I have a little more of a voice. I can talk a little bit more and I feel like more of an expert. But when I get to the bigger group, I revert back to a newer teacher position and that’s mainly because I’m new to this building and most of the decisions made are based on what they did last year. I wasn’t here last year so in that sense, I’m kind of along for the ride and they don’t necessarily look to me for the answers. I don’t necessarily have new thoughts on things like award ceremonies. They want to do it like last year and that’s fine with me. I think they’ve accepted me as a competent teacher and they’re excited about that. They’ve laughed with me, talked with me on lunch duty so I don’t feel excluded in any way (November 3).

I found Anthony’s dilemma intriguing since he still was a seven year teacher in both groups, yet felt less comfortable in voicing his opinion in the larger group. This issue of group size and socialization adaptability surfaced at several times during the study with several of the teachers. It is an area that needed more time and research.

The initial doubts that Anthony had at the beginning of the semester regarding
his contribution to the team diminished considerably over the two months when he felt himself “head and shoulders above the other 6th grade social studies teachers in my content knowledge.” Having taught it for seven years with a sound knowledge of the curriculum, he was more willing as time went on to contribute to the smaller content area meetings. Regardless of whether he was teaching language arts or social studies, his sense of self-efficacy had increased. He said that he was “not a first year teacher with no ideas” (November 3).

Organizational efficacy

Organizational efficacy, the collective belief that an organization is capable of carrying out specific goals capably and at high levels, is crucial to a high-performing school. It was not enough that Anthony felt that he was capable of performing at a high level in the classroom. After all, he left such an environment at his previous school. He needed to believe that he was part of a larger group who had the same mission, goals, and collaborative work ethics:

Organizational efficacy appeared quite high at PLC Middle School, in only its second year. As I walked around the building, sat in on meetings, and talked to the various staff members, a general confidence and enthusiasm was generated. The staff believed themselves capable of setting high goals and finding the motivation to pursue them effectively. Collaboration and empowerment of teachers were essential components to pursue this level of efficacy but openness and trust would underscore any serious movement forward in the Professional Learning Community. Anthony pointed out the importance of instructional uniformity on the grade level,
We’re doing the lessons exactly the same so I don’t feel like I’m in this isolated bubble anymore. And I’ve got six other teachers who are teaching the same things and there’s some strength in numbers. If a parent comes in and asks why you are doing this lesson, I’ve got five other teachers who are saying that they think this is a good lesson…look who’s on our team…look at the teachers. They say that this lesson is a quality lesson and important for each student to know. That excites me and that’s something that I didn’t think about as much until this interview started to bring it out (August 24).

In fact, the support that he acquired was largely drawn from his previous seven years of experience. He believed that his general experience was more of an aid to a new middle school content area than his seven years as a social studies teacher:

After having worked with the other ten teachers on the 6th grade hall for several months, I wanted to know what Anthony’s assessment was of the overall group confidence level and organizational efficacy. Outside of his references to two beginning teachers, his assessment was very positive and affirming. It also came to my attention that at least six of the eleven grade level teachers were working a second job after school. Clearly, the demands on their time were high. Notwithstanding the demands of time and high expectations, Anthony perceived that the entire grade level, except for two new teachers, projected a high level of confidence. The level of organizational efficacy was high. Anthony recognized that the teachers on the floor were high quality and he had not seen that level of efficacy in his previous seven years as a teacher. He hinted that the high confidence levels
“might even come from Carl, the principal. He’s a very confident person. He’s surrounded himself with a relatively confident staff and he’s picked people who have the confidence.” Anthony went on to speculate that that advantage of having quality teachers “might be an advantage that a new school has, especially a new school opening in the western area (an area known for high-performing schools), in a more affluent area” (December 8). This last statement led me to ask how much of teacher migration was due to a new school versus dissatisfaction with previous school organizations. Possibly both factors were intertwined yet teachers stated in the interviews that they were ready to leave their previous school anyway.

One of the questions that I posed to Anthony was if he would be a different type of teacher if he taught in an area that was not so affluent. This would give me an indication if his philosophy and pedagogical skills had become broad enough to view teaching in varied learning settings. He stated that it was difficult for him to say how his teaching would be different but he speculated that it would be more, “Look at all the things you can do” instead of “Look what’s out there” (November 3). I found these perceptions enlightening since the former focuses on possibility for the learner while the latter engages reality. This thematic duality beckons more reflection and research.

The concept of organizational efficacy or collective efficacy is an important indicator of how well an organization believes it can develop as a whole. The teachers I spoke with seemed quite confident of their teacher efficacy and competence in the classroom but perceptions of organizational and group competence determine how high-performing a school truly is (Bandura, 1986). For instance, several of the teachers interviewed migrated from a “high-performing school” and believed themselves to be strong teachers in the classroom. However, their belief that the organization as a whole was efficiently run or
directed towards addressing student and teacher needs was put in question. In fact, the very
definition of what constitutes a high-performing school was redefined.

Towards the end of the semester, Carl, the principal, held a staff meeting in the media
center after PLC Middle Schoolnd at one point, discussed the status of the Professional
Learning Community from an administrative viewpoint. Carl and his administrative staff
were experiencing some concerns about the organizational efficacy of the school. Some
groups were adhering closely to Carl’s guidelines regarding the PLC model while others
were reinterpreting them according to their own needs. This situation intrigued me as a
researcher since this disparity in the operations of the PLC model would surface as an
ongoing challenge. It is my understanding that significant fallout occurred on the 6th grade
class hall among the teams. Carl had said at the meeting, “This is how a PLC should look. We’re
not there.” Apparently this remark upset several of the 6th grade teachers afterwards because
they felt that they were “there.” One 6th grade teacher approached administration with their
concern and was told that the comment was intended for everyone in the school, as a learning
community. This meeting was a crucial one in the semester because of the implications of
such different perspectives on the part of Carl and many of the teachers. Anthony elaborated,

So we were really taken aback because we felt we were well on our way to what we
thought a PLC should look like. It threw some of our members for an absolute tailspin
and caused a pretty massive meltdown on how our PLC worked. Because we work in
this PLC, we couldn’t just break and say we didn’t want to work anymore with you.
So one of the things we came up with…if the administration really thinks we’re not
doing this, we want some feedback on what they’re seeing. We got some feedback
from the administration which was not all that significant…” Go back and look at your norms. Go back and try to make it simpler. Take some of the things out that are not as important. Simplify everything.” They didn’t really tell us what we were doing well or not doing. So the feedback, I don’t feel, was very meaningful but in the process of time, and our willingness to see this PLC idea through, our group worked out new norms, new objectives, and the assignment we had to do each week for administration. I think our group is on track. Understanding the dynamics, there will be more conflict. I fully expect there will be another meltdown, maybe before the semester break (December 8).

Apparently the teachers’ personal perceptions of performance were not aligned with Carl’s sense of organizational performance and this disparity created discord. The interviews revealed that certain teams were exemplifying, in practice, the tenets and specific guidelines of the Professional Learning Community, while others needed more direction. This temporary obstacle proved to be predictable of what a new organization endures, the redefining of its mission and goals constantly. Here was a classic example of a high-performing school where self-efficacy remained high with most teachers, but organizational efficacy was being challenged. Carl recognized this and brought it to the attention of the faculty at the staff meeting.

**School Climate**

The school climate is often thought of as the “personality” (Roach & Kratochwill, 2004) of the school. This “personality” has as its central feature, “the quality
and consistency of interpersonal interactions” (Haynes, Emmons, and Ben-Avie, 1997, p. 322). Understanding that the definition of school climate constitutes a constant interplay between staff members and students, we can surmise that any school, even a school in a more affluent area, is still a fluid organization, subject to varying levels of performance. The organizational health of the school would ultimately depend on this interplay of factors, a barometer of its organizational efficacy.

Anthony’s previous teaching experience reveals some of the preconceptions that are formed among teachers when working in an affluent, high-performing school. Teacher had already informed him that working in his previous school was like working in a “country club” (August 24). Many of the students studying Europe in social studies had been to Europe and had currency from their visits. They were willing and ready to learn. Discipline problems were rare.

The issue of beginning teachers emerged in the interviews and Anthony expressed concern about the school climate that they step into. His recent entry into a professional learning community instilled in him the importance of giving full support to a brand new teacher. He said that “giving them a mentor who is on the other side of the building, teaching another content area, having no clue what you’re teaching” were formidable obstacles to the effectiveness of new teachers. He thought that a well-run mentor program was “beneficial if it’s done right.” He went on to say, “Having a group of new teachers getting together is a good thing. If you just give them the PLC, just give them other 6th grade teachers, they’re going to be in this bubble. They do need to break out to other schools, have relationships with other first year teachers” (December 8). Anthony stressed the need for first year teachers to network successfully with other teachers and schools on different campuses. He supported
the more expansive role of mentoring and richer experiences outside the school.

Anthony moved on to issues involving the community of peers he interacted with at his previous school. These issues brought up fundamental concerns regarding different forms of collaboration. Collaboration may be of a noninstructional nature, one involving management versus instructional, one involving direct involvement in the curriculum and instructional components. The cellular nature of teaching, with each teacher in their own room, delivering their own form of instruction was dominant. Eventually, Anthony migrated to PLC Middle School which rigorously implemented the collaborative design he was seeking. He found himself immersed in where collaboration was dominant. In fact, he was surprised and concerned about the frequency of meetings,

It’s been an interesting transition because we have to meet about everything. There’s a 6th grade meeting…there’s a language arts/social studies meeting where we have to talk about things…there’s a schoolwide meeting and then we break into language arts and then into social studies meetings. There are a lot and I don’t think I was quite ready for that. I wasn’t prepared for all the other kind of stresses that those meetings caused because the collaboration is difficult. I found it’s not as easy as I thought it was going to be. Some people have strong ideas and it’s hard for them to get together on the same page. This is all me watching at this point. I’ve just been watching these other people have these skirmishes, these debates and the interesting thing about the debates. They got heated. They get almost to the point where they’re shouting. But for some reason they get to the point where they wind down. It’s very interesting to me that they have these almost attacking arguments but then they manage to put it
Anthony brought up some major research concerns about the issue of teacher collaboration versus teacher autonomy and how to strike a balance between the two. His comments touched on the differences between true collaboration (leadership) and managed collaboration (management). Also, the issue of time management in a fully collaborative setting arose along with socialization dynamics such as the question of power, control, and dominant personalities in the meetings. Although Anthony mentioned that PLC Middle School is collaborative by design and that the PLC teams meet weekly to design and coordinate timelines and unit ideas, he noticed some digression from this practice later in the semester. Even though the collaborative model of PLC Middle School was more evident than a traditional middle school, the more Anthony got involved in the PLC groups, the less he was seeing full collaboration in practice. He explains,

I think we come to these meetings with these units and lessons and then go back and do completely different things, not sharing with the rest of us. One example is, one person says we’re doing poetry now with the assignments and then they come back to the meeting and say here’s something I added to it. In a certain sense, there’s a certain amount of collaboration but once someone changes something, those things are not being shared very well. Some of the best practices are coming out after we’ve had our planning meetings and a lot of times that’s after you’ve done the assignments or after the units so you miss the best practice. We might get it next year but we’ve missed it for this year. We realize that we’re not sharing our best practices (December 8).
Anthony found himself slightly concerned that what was being supported and espoused in public was getting done in practice. Anthony was initially very excited upon entering a true community of learning, a fraternity of qualified and enthusiastic teachers striving towards high student achievement. A month after our first interview, he shared some thoughts with me that revealed a slight sense of letdown,

This staff is energetic and motivated. I really thought that coming into this environment with the commonality, we would be more connected. I am finding that the entire 6th grade staff is rarely together and often very segregate. I don’t feel unwelcome. But I don’t fully feel part of the school yet either (September 28, e-mail correspondence).

At the one month mark, Anthony was expressing questions about the degree of collaboration with the larger 6th grade group. He did not feel that he was an integral part of the learning community at this point. The notion of collaboration seemed appealing to him during his early days in the school but collaboration in practice was a different matter. During the research I discovered that getting groups of teachers together to work in harmony on curricular, instructional, and organizational goals, was far more difficult for them than they had anticipated. Frustration set in earlier in the semester when some tempers flared and a temporary impasse occurred. Fortunately, as the situation calmed down, administrators became involved and the teachers proposed rational alternatives to meeting schedules and collaborative ideas.
Anthony was still considered a new teacher in PLC Middle School even though by this point in the semester, he felt more comfortable voicing his opinions discreetly. Sensing that the major shakeup with the team resulting from the meeting was stressful, I asked him if he noticed higher levels of stress throughout the semester. In an earlier interview, in November, he mentioned that stress was diminishing and he was starting to get used to the system. By the third interview in December, his comments bore interest, particularly in relation to collaboration and teaming dynamics:

Yeah, I do feel like there’s a little more stress than other years and it might be because of the closer relationship we have, the collaboration. It leads to…It’s almost like we’re family now and often family members have this blowup from time to time. I’ve felt more stress this year because of those types of things…working in a group, trying to do two plans instead of one plan. Learning a new school environment can be stressful too. That’s one of the things I’m dealing with. There are other people on the 6th grade hallway who are dealing with stress. We take on a lot. We have people in charge of student council, newspaper, coaching, science fairs. The 6th grade is a relatively involved group of people. Because we’re so involved, we’re almost burning the candles on both ends. That spills over into our planning meetings. We feel like we don’t have enough time to do what we want to do (December 8).

He cited specific challenges to him that involved becoming more familiar with the Professional Learning Community procedures, something he did not have to do at his previous school. Even though he was a seven year teacher, he was treated as a beginning
teacher until he had proved himself. I immediately reflected on the emotional and psychological transitions that new teachers and beginning teachers had to encounter, wondering if they were different. He said that the professional learning community model had a “this new way of planning.” The strict adherence to sitting down and writing out full lesson plans was less prevalent in his practice until coming to PLC Middle School. Another hurdle was the perception that he was a “beginning” teacher rather than a “new” teacher. He explains,

I felt and still feel that I am seen as a new teacher, not the new staff that I am.

Breaking in to this PLC (Professional Learning Community) is proving somewhat difficult. I have felt a bit overwhelmed with procedures and the like, but I feel that I am now getting the hang of things and life is smoother. My students act as the constant reminder of why I do this. They stress me out at times, but surprise and delight me most of the time (September 28, e-mail correspondence).

Carl, the principal of PLC Middle School, elaborated on providing support for teachers with the Professional Learning Community model, particularly beginning teachers. He noted that “any instructional change is going to take place with the teachers.” The “sharing of ideas” was an integral part of the DuFour PLC model. DuFour calls it the “intellectual capital.” Carl went on to say,

You can pull on all the experiences of teachers, the best of everybody to draw from and that should directly impact the students. That’s the key component. I think the
team is important, for example, when you bring new people into the organization, especially if you bring in novice teachers. To be able to bring novice teachers into a team, the support they are provided, the expertise they have sitting across the desk from them, is invaluable. I know that in the county there are mentor programs but I would wager that the type of support the novice teacher gets here because of the collaborative culture, far exceeds anything you’d get with the county. So the team is where the greatest changes take place.

Carl’s “teaming” is not the traditional middle school team of four teachers with a team leader. The teams in PLC Middle School are larger groups of teachers placed by grade level and smaller groups within the one large group, by content area. When asked if a team leader was necessary in the Professional Learning Community model, he replied that the traditional middle school team leader was kind of a position that was very “ambiguous because it’s always difficult to determine what their role is, how much power do they have. The one key component to a team leader is communication.” Carl believed that the traditional team leader was a position that could turn into a political one even though the leaders “don’t have any more power than anyone else.” He went on to say that at PLC Middle School, “We don’t really recognize team leaders. We have a grade level representative who is a conduit for communication but as far as having any more power or influence, I don’t see it.”

The results of collaboration with other teachers was a change for Anthony also and after two and a half months, he became an active part of the process. He became excited at meetings when teachers would offer to integrate curriculum components by taking some of
the language arts objectives and some of the social studies content lessons. At one point Anthony collaborated on his own with an ILT on the hallway. He said he found that “interesting because I didn’t think that would happen. It’s how I’ve gelled into this system which is kind of cool” (November 3).

Anthony seemed to have fit into his small group surroundings well, receiving support and advice, while keeping a reserved distance with the larger group at the grade level. His relationships became stronger with specific individuals on the 6th grade hall and he worked closely with that group. When looking to the future of the group goals, Anthony said that he felt that “the kids are doing pretty good at this point and I would like to see us do more reflecting and assessing. As a PLC, we have talked about doing more reflection and assessment. Are we being successful? Yeah, this is a fairly successful situation but I don’t know if I really know the answer to that at this point” (December 8). It was clear to him and others that the reflective and assessment parts of instruction needed more attention.

Anthony appeared more confident in his abilities, his self-efficacy at a much higher level than his entry point. When asked about his general stress level having increased, diminished, or stayed the same, Anthony responded that stress levels had diminished. His initial doubts had subsided and his self-efficacy was considerably higher. Some areas such as grading and its time-intensive nature were still evident but he had had the same issues at his previous school. Time did not appear to be an impediment to his instructional efforts but he did get stressed “because there’s a pretty high bar set on our 6th grade PLC, and I want the lessons that I bring to that PLC equal to what is given me. So I feel like I have to shine a bit, not impossible stress that’s keeping me up at night…more of a professional stress. And from where we were in August to where we are now, I feel my stress level has decreased”
Two months had passed and Anthony had made major adjustments to both the curriculum, planning, and personnel. He talked about how the new model of the Professional Learning Community, with total collaboration, affected him compared to his previous school. Getting together was common in his previous school but “but you’d never really talk about what’s going on in your class”. In PLC Middle School there were visible efforts to “bridge the gap between the two PLC’s (there are three PLCs on the 6th grade hall)”. For instance, at one of the meetings the language arts teacher talked about inferencing and asked the science and math teachers to help with a common language. The day before teachers had been working on decimals and fractions and asked other content area teachers if they could employ these math components in their classes. Early in the year the 6th grade teachers would get together and then break out into two groups but gradually the groups became successful at bridging the gap between language arts/social studies and math/science.

Another area I was interested in regarding school climate was how new teachers assimilated and adapted to larger groups from a socialization point of view. Anthony had already made references to his feeling more comfortable with six other content area teachers than eleven grade level teachers. His behavior with the two groups was entirely different, self-efficacy being greater with the small group and lower with the large group. Anthony’s self-efficacy was reflected in his increased participation. He spoke about the different personalities in the groups and broke them down into three dominant personalities along with three peripheral personalities or as he described them, “on the edges.” He said that the three dominant personalities were “really focused on themselves and the other three people are more casual about their comments before they say something” (December 8).
He continued talking about the level of participatory challenges in the two groups:

There are still the dominant people in the group and you add the dominant people in the math/science to our group and there are people in the large group who don’t say anything, ever. But you take those people who don’t talk and they come to the small group setting and they say things. They’ll feel more comfortable to be themselves or say something that, maybe they wouldn’t say in the larger group (December 8).

Anthony’s comments shed light on teacher behaviors in varied professional settings. The teachers’ voices, in some cases, seemed stifled and inhibited by the greater numbers and more dominant personalities while in the smaller groups, a greater sense of intimacy and acceptance prevailed.

Finally, we returned to the concept of teacher reflection, a concept stated several times during our previous interviews and throughout our e-mail correspondence. Anthony believed that reflection was very important. He referred to his daily classroom reflection as “informal reflection.” He said, “Everything I do in class, I’m reflecting on it…what did my words mean, my activity, how I presented it…how did it affect the class?” One of the ways Anthony reflected was looking at data that was collected from assessments that he and other teachers had administered already. He did not believe that this was a common practice in a traditional middle school, especially comparing assessments with other teachers’. He added that “There has been a fair amount of reflection in our group and it’s refreshing to go back and think about those things” (December 8).
In conclusion, I asked Anthony why he became a teacher,

When people ask me that question, I say it’s my family profession. I teach because I love the curriculum. I love literature and I love reading and I love sharing those kinds of things with students. There are very stressful days in my life when I say to myself, “What am I doing?” Then, there are days like today when I run with it. I love giving the kids the tools to come up with new things, show them new things about the world they didn’t know, seeing their eyes light up when we talk about things. That’s why I teach. It’s for me, a joy (December 8).

**Emergent themes: Teacher migration, Efficacy, School Climate:**

**Other Educators Speak**

The emergent themes that surfaced from the interviews with ten other educators in PLC Middle School paralleled those from Anthony’s interviews. All of the teachers had migrated; all of the teachers spoke of efficacy issues; all of the teachers were working in a particular school climate. Other than the two first year teachers, the remaining teachers had experience with various school climates and leadership styles.

**Teacher migration**

Anthony left his previous school because of what he perceived as a series of organizational changes made swiftly and his questioning the direction of the school. Barbara (6 years) also migrated from the same middle school and elaborated that “initiatives” were important in her previous school. She praised the sense of innovation but pointed out the
disadvantages of it “wearing out a staff” particularly when “the staff never has a vote in the decision-making.”

Ellen, a veteran teacher of twenty-seven years, explained that she left her previous school due to frustration. She felt that “tiny procedures were most important there. I thought the kids were not considered first. And I saw a lot of inequities and I saw poor leadership.”

These three teachers have one common theme involving their migration; leadership and the structure of decision-making that that leadership took. The absence of teacher empowerment to make major organizational and curriculum decisions set up migration conditions that resulted in the loss of three highly qualified teachers. Two of these teachers are nationally board certified.

Frank (13 years) reinforced the importance of having a strong administrative team with vision, open to facilitative decision-making. He said that the “key to keeping teachers in the classroom is the administration. As unconquerable as it may seem, administration is the key to any success in any middle school and is the key to teacher retention.” He went on to say that by the time teachers put in three or four years, “they’re ready to spread their wings and assert themselves in a professional environment. If they’re in a building and the administration doesn’t teach people to work with dissent and value it, those teachers are going to leave out of frustration.” Frank believed that administrators have the “single, greatest influence on teacher retention and on teacher satisfaction. The teachers’ working conditions are completely in the hands of administration.”

The statement is a powerful assertion and confers an inordinate amount of power and control in the hands of the administrative team. Carl, who opened up PLC Middle School two years ago, elaborated on how to create a high-performing school collectively. He
said that it becomes a matter of “shared beliefs and an agreement about what your mission is with the school so everybody is pulling in the same direction.” His explanation pointed out the difference between a new school and an existing school,

At an existing school, when you try to get people to agree on certain things, it’s hard because you have lots of people who have been there a long time. Trying to get people to form a consensus, I found that pretty difficult. I found that at the new school, it was relatively easy because I asked the teachers if they wanted to come into the system. If they said, “Yes,” they were agreeing with that belief and with that vision.

Anthony was a prime example of a migrating teacher who did agree with that belief and vision along with the rest of the staff. Since the Professional Learning Community teams have no designated team leaders, the responsibility falls upon all the teachers equally even though some more dominant personalities maintain a higher profile.

The teacher migration question was asked of Dana, a principal of another high-performing school in the area. She had lost close to eighty teachers in six years mostly due to migration, some to retirement. Her belief was that a new school opening would be an attraction, especially “the smallness of the school.” She cited the example of her school increasing from 800 students to 1200 and how the increase translated to a greater workload. It meant “more kids, more parents, a lot more work on the horizon and I think work scares people away sometimes. So I think they’re looking for a new way out or looking for the newness of the opportunity.”
It was still not clear to me what exactly compelled teachers to seek “newness” or as Anthony mentioned, the “seven year itch.” This is still an area that needs further research. When I asked Beverly, an assistant principal, why a teacher would leave a high-performing school to teach in another high-performing school, she responded that “administration and boredom” were primary reasons. I asked her to be more specific and she said that if teachers hear about a particularly well-respected principal, they will often migrate, especially if they are not satisfied at their existing school. Beverly went on to cite the need for teachers to be constantly challenged in a stimulating environment.

Self and Organizational Efficacy

The first year teachers in PLC Middle School did not have the benefit of a previous school to compare with and it was interesting to interview them to determine their receptivity to the Professional Learning Community model. Carol, a first year teacher, explained that the PLC model was “totally new to me during the interview. I had never heard of it before in student teaching or education classes. I think if it works, it’s a great concept.” It was her understanding from having spoken to other teachers in PLC Middle School that “some grades in this school have been forced to make it work and personalities and teaching differentiation are making it a struggle.” The differences of perception and practice of the professional learning community were a major concern of Carl and his administrators. Carol knew of “other grade levels having a lot of trouble and they don’t want to meet. They feel that ‘I teach it this way’ and they want it that way but people who’ve been here for fifteen years (Carol is referring to fifteen years of experience), it would be difficult to say that my strategy is not working and some other teacher’s lessons are better.” Carol alluded to a form of silent
resistance on the part of some of the teachers.

This will be a challenge for administration since Carl stated to the staff and in his interview that the “honeymoon period is over.” He had previously informed the staff early in the year that the first year was one of working together, more of a collegial collaboration than a true collaboration. The second year, the present one, was going to be more difficult because the staff would now be required to teach objective-based instruction and break down data in an effort to share assessment and target students’ academic needs better. Few teachers have this skill and a data team, working closely with the central office, is responsible for serving as liaisons to teach and train the remaining teachers.

The implementation of the Professional Learning Community proved to be highly attractive to many of the teachers at PLC Middle School. It seemed to give them a freedom to work with others and work cooperative ventures both in and out of the classroom. The school is only in its second year. Carl, the principal, provides some background on the organizational idea:

I think that the PLC idea is the most powerful. I’d hate to say reform because it’s more reculturing than reform, but it’s the greatest initiative I’ve seen since I’ve been in schools. I don’t think it’s new. It’s been around for awhile. In fact, when I was teaching in public school in my previous town, our principal had us doing common assessments. We didn’t call it a PLC. We didn’t develop into the teacher empowerment…we didn’t do that but that part about working collaboratively…common assessments, comparing results, and best practices…that wasn’t new. I think that the powerful thing about DuFour, it’s not just the
collaborative planning. It’s much bigger. The idea about shared values has been around a long time. He talks about a learning community. Another reason for us to refocus our teachers because a lot of them think they’re “got it”….they have it all figured out but DuFour says you have to constantly try to improve and work on your practices and constantly examine so you’re learning every year and I think if we fall into that trap that, “Hey, we’ve got it figured out,” then you end up right where you started. That’s one of the most important things. It should be results-driven, kind of like in a baseball game. You’re only as good as your latest results.

School Climate

Danielle, a first year teacher in PLC Middle School, supported Anthony’s statement regarding the importance of reflection and its need in an existing school climate. She realized that her reflecting on the research questions was very helpful “as a professional.” I noted the free use of the term “professional” since the teaching occupation seems to be struggling incessantly with the validation of professionalism in the public sector.

Ellen was a 27 year veteran teacher, having worked in nine previous schools. She left the classroom last year to assume the Academically Gifted Coordinator position. Her input regarding school climate was potentially very valuable since she had experienced many organizational designs and assorted administrative leadership styles. She immediately cited her frustration at a previous school that brought her to PLC Middle School. Her doubts regarding the previous leadership centered on a lack of “any type of vision of what a school should be.” Her perception was that “tiny procedures were most important there. I thought the kids were not considered first. Teaching the kids was not the first consideration there.
And I just saw a lot of inequities and I saw poor leadership. Morale had gone down, down, down.” Consequently, Ellen decided to migrate to escape what she termed “this negative atmosphere.” Once she spoke to the leaders of PLC Middle School, she “knew it was cut out for me.”

Ellen demonstrated the willingness of an experienced teacher to leave later in her career to pursue preestablished ideals and goals. She said that the difference between the two schools was like “night and day” and that the morale was “incredible” at PLC Middle School. Organizational efficacy was especially high during the first year as a school. The second year presented more organizational hurdles for the staff and the research took place in the middle of that setting.

An interesting point that Ellen brought up was when she was asked if it was possible to have a high-performing school with weak leadership. Anthony had replied that the school could be deemed high-performing but not a truly collaborative school. Ellen replied that it “depends on what you mean by high-performing schools. If you have a middle school that draws on a population with highly educated parents and highly motivated students and that’s your basic population…you’re going to look good on paper. But if you mean that everyone is high-performing…all students, teachers, administrators, janitorial staff, etc., I would say, “No,” and eventually that would be reflected in the paper’s scores.”

This comment opened up the issue of how a high-performing school is truly defined. Ellen’s response was germane to the ongoing debate among local educators about the definition of a high-performing school with the federal government, state government, and site-based school possibly having three different perspectives. Further research into this phenomenon is recommended.
Another potential obstacle within a school climate, particularly one that is a Professional Learning Community, is the degree of collaboration by teachers. Teachers are not taught to be collaborative in teacher education programs. It generally is included in instructional designs, how to provide collaborative learning settings for the students but not for the teachers. Frank, a thirteen year teacher, addressed this point by saying that,

Most teachers don’t know how to collaborate. Most teachers are uncomfortable working with other teachers. It’s probably the most difficult part about our work here because we’ve never done it before…learning to make concessions, to listen to other peoples’ viewpoints, being willing to question things that we’ve never done. A teacher’s work is very personal to them, close to their hearts, invested completely. And when you can close your door and do that completely, do that by yourself, you’re like the master hero of the universe and to open that up to other people for scrutiny is incredibly difficult. And in most middle schools there’s no opportunity, no time, and no instruction on how to do it. Even if you wanted to do it, it would be so uncomfortable that you would back away from it real quick.”

The issue of collaboration as an instructional impetus versus collaboration as collegiality or focused on management issues, emerged as another significant theme.

**Summary of Emergent Themes**

The data collection in chapter four attempted to reveal the teachers’ voices towards the three overarching themes of teacher migration, school climate, and organizational
efficacy. Listening to the teachers’ voices regarding how their schools are designed and operationalized in a particular setting was paramount to probing the teacher migration conundrum. A recurrent theme in the interviews was the priorities set by the administrative leadership in their previous schools. The idea of change did not daunt them but the type of change was questioned. Swift, ill-explained change by administration proved invasive and threatening to school stability. The lack of teacher empowerment in making any major organizational decisions proved demoralizing. Lack of vision on the part of the principal also surfaced in the teacher interviews. It was apparent to me that the role of principal was a crucial one since the principal set the vision, garnered the resources, “sold the package,” and did the hiring. Carl, the principal of PLC Middle School, was a warm, enthusiastic visionary who was moving slowly with the PLC. He knew exactly what he wanted the organization to look like, was reading the latest literature frequently, and monitoring the school’s progress. The teachers supported Carl and praised these qualities in the interviews. Chapter four is very personal and close to my heart since teachers have been crying out without voice for years and in the chapter, I tried to hear the voices clearly, as I tried to do in person as a fellow educator throughout the years.
Chapter Five

Discussion and Future Implications

At the beginning of the research I contemplated doing a case study of a first or second year teacher but decided against it after due reflection. My reasoning was that I needed a teacher who would provide me with a comprehensive perspective of teaming, organization, and school practices yet who was not so far removed from initial licensed status. Anthony, with seven years of experience, and nationally board certified, was an appropriate choice based on my needs. A beginning teacher would not have the overall perspective or experience in the school organization to satisfy my all my research questions. I saw the potential limitations and chose a more experienced teacher.

By following and observing Anthony through a semester of teaching, I was able to explore the makeup of a school climate of a high-performing school from inside the building, through multiple interviews, four months of meetings, e-mails, and poring through school documents and websites. I attempted to determine how a school climate positively or negatively affected the perceptions of the case study, Anthony, regarding his adjusting to a new school. These perceptions of adjustment, along with those of other migrating teachers, were instrumental in allowing me to understand the on-site dynamics that go into operating a successful school.

Focusing on one teacher, Anthony, allowed me to live the semester through his eyes and words. We communicated via e-mail when I was not interviewing him or present with him at his weekly meetings. Questions led to further questions and issues of concern began to broaden. The supplementary teacher interviews provided a wealth of information as I
searched for possible patterns and links for ongoing questions that I had over the years in the public school system. It troubled me initially, that schools were being recognized by the state with labels such as Honor School of Excellence, School of Excellence, School of Distinction, and others as schools with no recognition, yet teacher migration rates were almost uniformly high even in the higher-performing schools. I believed that schools often ride the coattails of success, or what is deemed success by outside sources, and miss crucial opportunities to enhance the learning curve of thousands of our students throughout the district, state, and nation. I distinctly remember a staff meeting I conducted in a high-performing school, and the proposed changes to the school schedule were brought forth as an agenda. One of the veteran teachers raised her hand and asked, “Why do we need to change when we are already a School of Excellence? Why do we need to invent the wheel?” After reflecting for a few seconds, with the entire staff waiting in silence, I asked the teacher, “Yes, but who has labeled us a School of Excellence? And when was the last time that a state official was in one of our classes?” Several teachers nodded their heads in approbation. The message was clear and that message has driven much of my research on teacher migration.

Throughout the semester, some themes emerged from the data collection. These themes were collaboration and organizational efficacy. Collaboration was prevalent throughout the organizational framework of PLC Middle School. Organizational efficacy was the larger group’s belief in their group capabilities which I believed was crucial for the attainment of a high-performing school. The teachers’ abilities and beliefs in each other as a collective agency were necessary to carry this out. Because PLC Middle School was essentially a pilot program for a Professional Learning Community school (DuFour, 1998), the entire organization and structure of the school were based on collaboration and the
successful attainment of organizational efficacy. Since many of the teachers observed and interviewed came from schools where their voices were not heard often and decisionmaking was based on hierarchical needs, the display of eagerness and even passion was evident throughout the semester. I observed heightened tension and conflict along with satisfaction and euphoria among the grade level. The teachers truly were navigating a collaborative forum and voicing their opinions freely in most cases. I learned that true collaboration, as an organizational reform, is difficult to implement and sustain.

The struggle to balance grade level and content area collaboration with individual autonomy challenged all eleven teachers on the 6th grade hall. The issue was not simply germane to Anthony as a new member of the Professional Learning Community (PLC) but also a hurdle for his fellow educators. The issue created clear tension and conflict earlier in the semester, then seemed to diminish somewhat later on but it will not go away. The question of how to balance the two seemed fundamental to the organization’s future. The empowerment issue that surfaced was not the stereotypical one of teachers not being heard by the administrative team but rather the more subtle silence of teachers within teams and groups being silent when imminent conflict appeared. The reasons why these teachers remain silent cause speculation and these questions surfaced in the interview comments in chapter four.

Collaboration and organizational efficacy are central themes that resulted from the research. I will proceed to state some recommendations for administrators, policy makers, legislators, and yes, other teachers who may underestimate the importance of hearing new voices in the group. The teachers who participated in the research displayed an irrepressible eagerness to contribute and lend their voices to the data. They appeared somewhat surprised
that anyone would care what they thought outside the building since their voices have been ignored for so long. What follows is more a reflection of their dreams and insights rather than my interpretive intervention. I had the distinct advantage of understanding their condition and speaking teacher language, the parlance of educators. Hopefully, I have come close to legitimizing their pleas.

The Research Questions

Teacher migration is more than an issue. It is a clear problem for schools from a hiring, staffing, budgeting, and organizational viewpoint. Simply recruiting, creating alternate pathways, adjusting hiring requirements, and changing certification guidelines may bring in a sufficient amount of teachers but the revolving door concept impedes the system's ability to move forward successfully. All of the teachers interviewed (except for the two beginning teachers) stated or implied that they would have remained in their previous schools had the administration provided more vision, teacher empowerment, and sustained moral support. The prevailing school climates were deficient in their eyes and that deficiency led to a devitalized faculty with teachers questioning their sense of belonging in that particular system. This factor led to teacher migration. With a middle school teacher turnover rate at almost 20%, even in high-performing schools in the district, these sets of debilitating organizational elements are a factor in teacher migration decisions. To what degree requires more research.
Research question 1.

Why do teachers leave high-performing schools to teach in other high-performing schools?

During the interviews and in conversations with the teachers, I tried to find links between why they had left previous schools, in some cases high-performing schools, to teach in PLC Middle School. At times, words like “newness” and “novelty” emerged. Since PLC Middle School was a new school in only its second year, I was curious to know if the “newness” or “novelty” of working in a new school enticed the incoming teachers enough to have them leave their previous positions. While the idea of working in a new school was a factor, the interviews did not support it as a central factor. The teachers would have stayed at their previous schools had the administration and organizational elements been different, perhaps more accommodating to teachers’ input. It was not so they left.

While no one can claim with definitive evidence that there is any one specific reason why teachers leave high-performing schools to work in other high-performing schools, the lack of strong leadership, especially a strong instructional leader, along with a hierarchy devoid of collaboration, are significant factors in migration decisions. Further research involving more concentrated time inside existing school organizations will likely shed more light on how to retain teachers better in high-performing organizations.

Research question 2.

What role does organizational design of a school play in its performance level?

All the middle schools in the local district are required by the district to establish school mission statements and create school improvement plans over five year periods.
Generally the work is delegated to a committee established by the principal and the committee gradually works out the mission statement along with the specific guidelines and objectives for school improvement. Information regarding the details of the collaborative work are disseminated between the committee and school faculty who then vote on the finished work. All schools, whether high-performing or low-performing, support high expectations and standards for student achievement. Not all of the schools, though, function efficiently and many lose teachers constantly through teacher migration. My interest were the organizational differences between different high-performing schools.

Bandura (1997) found that efficacious schools or high-performing schools supporting high standards will “not accomplish much” (p. 244) and can “actually be demoralizing, unless learning activities are structured and conducted in ways that ensure they will be mastered” (p. 244). A feature of an efficacious school was its ability for teachers to exhibit high self-efficacy but also share in group responsibility and group accountability. This includes sharing best practices and learning from one another. The practice of tracking students by placing them in separate remedial classes were representative of low-performing schools. Efficacious schools who target students with deficits in their learning, place these students in accelerated learning settings with proper instructional support (Bandura, 1997). Also, monitoring and identifying student progress is indicative of efficacious schools. Any students encountering learning difficulties receive timely corrective feedback and reinstruction until mastery of the material is reached. This involves integrating assessment into instruction constantly, not just at the end of a unit with traditional quizzes and tests.

PLC Middle School had an organizational structure and design that was addressing all of the above concerns. Teachers talked about getting together regularly to discuss student
achievement and organizational practices. E-mail correspondence was an effective means of keeping the teachers’ communicative network strong and well informed. An important conclusion from the data was that merely placing organizational features such as flexible or bloc scheduling models in place, or eliminating bells, or redesigning traditional team structures, were only first steps towards efficacious schools. The practices and operations of the teachers on a daily basis created the conditions needed for high-performing learning communities.

Research question 3.

How may beginning teachers (to the profession as well as to a new school) receive more sustained organizational support to ensure their growth and increase teacher retention?

Anthony was a seven year teacher but a new teacher to PLC Middle School. He was also a new teacher to language arts. Although he had a high self-efficacy as a social studies teacher and high self-esteem as a successful teacher, he was apprehensive and uncertain about his abilities to “fit in” with PLC Middle School when he first came to the school. In the interviews with him, especially the beginning ones, he talked about how he wanted to be successful and be perceived as a highly competent teacher by his teaching peers in 6th grade. He had never taught language arts so he was taking on a new content area, one that is of immense significance in the district with standardized tests assessing performance at the end of the year.

The support base for him as a seven year migrating teacher was less than the first year teachers who were assigned mentors, had monthly ILT (Initially Licensed Teacher) meetings, and had extensive professional growth plans. This lack of organizational support made it
difficult for Anthony to navigate through the proper avenues of communication to seek support. Many times he was on his own with written curricular guides and predesigned lesson plans. This sense of isolation, even in a highly collaborative learning community, challenged him. Due to his proactive nature and strong personality, he sought support from a close friend who was also an experienced teacher in the building, Frank. Frank helped Anthony often, giving him key advice and suggestions. He also provided strong moral support. Anthony’s self-efficacy in the language arts setting gradually increased even though he acknowledged that it would probably take a few years to truly master the content area.

An obvious concern that I had for Anthony’s situation was that even as an experienced teacher, he needed support from his peers in specific areas of curriculum and instruction. This support was not always available. Future research needs to seek how to structure the organization to accommodate new (but experienced) teachers to the school, especially if crossing over into another content area. The system tends to rush towards and embrace the essential needs of new teachers to the profession but neglect the professional development and ongoing needs of teachers new to organizations.

**Research question 4.**

How does self-efficacy relate to organizational efficacy? Can teachers with strong self-efficacy be productive if organizational efficacy is weak?

One of the areas of most interest for me during the research was finding out from the teachers and other staff members how a school of individual teachers became a high-performing school collectively. After looking over the research findings and setting up inferences, I knew that high-performing schools could exhibit low organizational efficacy.
This discrepancy shed light on what the nature of “high performing” truly is. After all, schools reach levels of 90% or more of their student population at grade level and above and are designated Schools of Excellence or Honor Schools of Excellence. All the teachers in these schools receive monetary rewards, banners are presented to the schools by local superintendents (and at times politicians), and the community reads about the outstanding test results in the paper. All of these external inputs create a positive image of the school, a sense of merit attributing success with high test scores. The research findings told another story.

Migrating teachers answered the question how individual teachers can become a high-performing collectivity. They spoke of “excellent communication” and a “clear mission statement that the staff buys into” (Barbara). They spoke of “truly high-performing schools” that are “collaborating” and using the best practices from a “wide variety of teachers” (Anthony). They spoke of “high-performing schools that met all of the learning needs of children, not just their reading and math goals” (Frank). They spoke about never imagining a successful school having people “going off on their own” (Ellen). They spoke of getting to know other teachers’ “strengths to get everybody involved” (Arthur). They spoke about having a “structure in place to put teachers working together” (Beverly). The teachers agreed that if the organizational constructs were in place along with the organizational leadership, a group of qualified and enthusiastic teachers could become a high-performing school collectively.

As to the research question whether a teacher with high self-efficacy can be productive if the organizational efficacy is weak, the research supports that they can but in limited fashion. Teachers can be productive in their own classes and establish high levels of
standards and goals. They can even be excellent at imparting instruction and fostering commendable student achievement but they cannot move beyond that personal space which is their classroom if the school organization is not supporting of them and their growth. As future research delves more into organizational efficacy which is a less researched construct than self-efficacy, educational researchers should learn more about how self-efficacy and organizational efficacy are related from performance standards.

**Recommendations and future research**

**Collaboration and Socialization Needs**

Traditional middle school team structures set up uneven power constructs that can intimidate new teachers. The structure becomes a hierarchy with top-down information flow instead of a facilitative infrastructure where all voices are heard. In traditional middle schools, a more senior teacher will be designated as the team leader and beginning teachers defer, at first out of respect, then to possibly avoid confrontation. This psychological posturing diminishes the opportunity for beginning teachers to lend a voice and subsequent input to strengthen the team and business runs as status quo. Valuable opportunities are lost to collaborate and create dynamic learning environments for students. Teachers not heard end up to some degree, in isolation. This sense of isolation and pretense of professional contact may lead to teacher attrition or turnover (Collins, 1999; Luft, 1992/1993). PLC Middle School, working with the Professional Learning Community model, eliminated team leaders, substituting a rotating system of all teachers in the group. The idea seemed to be working effectively and all teachers had a voice, albeit some more than others.

I noticed that in the larger weekly grade level groups, there was opportunity for all the
teachers to step in and feel comfortable enough to voice their opinions. Two beginning teachers were reluctant to do so and exhibited lower self-efficacy. In fact, well into December, these two teachers remained largely silent during the larger meetings. These teachers were more active, though, with the smaller group settings of five or six people. The larger group seemed to become more political (Blase and Blasé, 1999) and the socialization of its members vied for control which is ultimately power. The more dominant personalities prevailed during the larger meetings. Problems surfaced when the dominant teachers did not truly listen to or afford other teachers the time to listen and internalize their experiences (Rogers & Babinski, 1999). To avoid confrontation later on in the semester, several teachers deferred to the wishes of others rather than increase the risk for confrontation. However, in the smaller content area groups, notwithstanding some minor disagreements over policy and procedures, the atmosphere was more genial and close knit.

The teachers at PLC Middle School, engaging in PLC Middle School’s collaborative ventures, required expertise in socialization and strong interpersonal skills. These are attributes that we sometimes take for granted as educators. Teachers generally do not receive formal training in teacher education programs in how to engage in practical skills in social interactions. What skills in collaborative work are passed on are mostly of an instructional nature, such as cooperative learning, and intended for students, not teachers. Socialization is an ongoing and dynamic process (Waugaman, 1994), not a one-time training program. Since teaching is an “inherently social activity” (Sternberg et al, 2005, p. 6), the need for socialization skills involving different social situations including dilemmas, became evident during the many meetings I attended in PLC Middle School. At times teachers chose to speak their minds but withdrew from further input if they encountered strong resistance. The need
for situated learning training was discernible.

**Recommendations for future collaboration and socialization**

One of the biggest challenges for collaborative ventures such as the Professional Learning Community models in the future will be how to balance the autonomy and creative nature of the teacher as individual with the openness and collaborative nature of working with peers. My observations of teachers in PLC Middle School were promising, observing productive and enthusiastic dialogues regarding planning and lesson plans. The following recommendations emerged from the research:

- Recent research supports that teachers reacting to different social situations are not solely attributed to personality, background, style, or other personal characteristics (Mills, 2003). Social-competence development (Elias, Wang, Weissberg, Zins, & Walberg, 2002) and its focus on social intelligence versus analytical intelligence (Barnes & Sternberg, 1989) is receiving more attention in the research field. The skills acquisition of learning an array of social strategies in specific situations would help prepare teachers for the many social encounters taking place on a daily basis. Developing a team from within the school to help acquire the expertise and eventually train the faculty throughout the school year would prove beneficial to all teachers. This program would be mandatory and extend to all teachers in the PLC Middle School at the outset of every school year. The program would be assessed formatively throughout the year for further improvements and teacher feedback.

- Integrate and extend dialogues and discussion groups into weekly reflective practices regarding curricular choices and educational philosophy. The teachers should not look at these practices as skill based or extra activities but rather as essential components of
their constant growth as reflective practitioners. At times the groups, particularly the smaller groups marked off their progress in the classroom and cited timelines, to the exclusion of more reflective practices. Teachers, subsequently, become prisoners of time and practice without exploring the underlying rationale for their curricular and instructional choices. Further research on the effectiveness of collaborative grouping and its evolution of the school over the next three years would reveal more about the Professional Learning Community and its longterm effectiveness.

- Take advantage of the size and variation of teachers’ interests and suggest to principals that they consider implementing a pilot program where certain groups work on planning and assessment of learning objectives throughout the year while other groups focus exclusively on reflection and longterm planning. Have the groups interact with each other in discussion groups once a month to share their practices and feedback. It is unrealistic to always expect groups of teachers to uniformly take on organizational tasks at the same time. Planning units together, varying forms of assessment, setting short term and long term project goals, exchanging classes, disaggregating data, disseminating best practices, working with technology, etc. are all potentially dynamic organizational constructs. However, teachers as a staff will not take on all these features without incurring the risk of burnout and work overload. Find out what the particular interests of each teacher is and have them focus on those strengths while other groups of teachers maintain other tasks. During the year, informal assessments and evaluative feedback may be set up. At the end of the year, a summative assessment among the teachers will provide valuable feedback and help target specific areas needed to foster professional growth.
Administrators must make sure that leadership collaboration (leadership focus) underlies the focus of all collaborative meetings involving curriculum and instruction. Some groups were feeling comfortable with the status quo and exhibited managed collaboration (management focus). By leadership collaboration, I refer to discussing how others’ agenda and teaching benefits teachers in the classroom, not solely students. Managed collaboration becomes a listing of learning tasks and simple exchange of ideas without real follow-through. Grade level teachers must be introduced to and familiar with these differences in collaboration and set up their planning and group efforts based on these differences. How much time will be allotted to leadership collaboration versus managed collaboration?

Organizational efficacy

Working with more people towards a common goal makes it “more difficult to raise collective performance through goal setting” (Wood, Bandura, & Bailey, 1990, p.452). This effort towards organizational efficacy ran into obstacles early in the semester in PLC Middle School when teachers argued about when and how to schedule and conduct their weekly Professional Learning Community meetings. The argument spilled over and created significant fallout to warrant the appearance of an assistant principal at a reconciliation conference with the larger group. The issue primarily focused on the teachers’ use of time for meetings. Serious disagreements ensued. Eventually, more adept monitoring of the meetings through controlled and well-prepared agendas, with a rotating facilitator, helped resolve the dilemma. This was one example of a collaborative effort that would affect the organizational efficacy of the entire group, the ability of the teachers collectively, to carry out specific
organizational tasks.

Anthony and fellow teachers came from previous schools willingly. No one was compelled to move due to downsizing or personnel problems. These teachers were highly qualified and experienced. I knew from experience in the public schools that teachers can be very good in their individual classrooms yet feel disenfranchised or excluded from the major organizational decisions made. This source of dissatisfaction surfaced over and over in the interviews. Schools were lauded for being Schools of Excellence with long banners unfurled and displayed over the school’s entrance but inside the building, teachers were generally not happy with administration. This dichotomy was not lost on me as a researcher and the pursuit of understanding organizational efficacy, or the school’s collective belief in accomplishment, beckoned me throughout the fieldwork.

**Recommendations for organizational efficacy**

- Several highly qualified teachers left their previous schools to work in PLC Middle School due to wide variations in administrative leadership style. Several groups at the 7th grade level struggled with delegating a group leader although leadership potential was available. Facilitative leadership is essential at the school level, particularly with collaborative groupings that form the foundation of Professional Learning Communities. The teachers need more on-site, locally designed, and implemented workshops in facilitative leadership. Then teachers will rotate and assume these roles for designated periods of time. Feedback and evaluative assessment will be provided by fellow teachers and an administrator. Conferring leadership roles on teachers, regardless of experience, with appropriate feedback from peers, enhances organizational efficacy.
• A need for the school to organize and design its own mentor program for all teachers, not just new ones. This sends the message that teachers are continually growing professionally yet allows the teachers autonomy to fashion their own mentoring themes. This locally designed program will augment and add to the district mentor program which only addresses the needs of initially licensed teachers. For instance, asking the small mentoring groups to set up a program to provide a consistent exchange of classroom practices is essential. It is also imperative for members of the administrative team to be involved in this endeavor beyond mere attendance. Administrators need to be actively involved in the interactive strategies and interventions of mentoring. Rotating the administrative team to assist in the meeting agenda will strengthen bridges between the teachers and administrators. This liaison also allows the two groups to further understand the challenges and insights of one another. Organizational efficacy is enhanced at this level.

Final Reflections

In looking back on twelve years of public school life, I feel that I was not able to capture all the richness of the experiences, the countless discussions, seminars, cafeteria and hallway banter, classroom observations, student, teacher, administrative, and parental interactions that form the life of an educator. I tried to capture Anthony’s experiences and thoughts through an important first semester, in an effort to bring to light the life of a teacher in a high-performing school. When teachers decide to leave the field or transfer to other schools, it is often because the system is not working to its maximum efficiency. It is through that tiny opening of the door of opportunity that researchers attempt to pass to get closer
looks at how we can try to make school life more meaningful for both teachers and students. I attempted to open that door of perception a little wider.

This is my initial attempt at taking a glimpse at the life of a fellow educator, Anthony, and all his 6th grade peers, passing through many of the same moments that I did. As a teacher, I was totally consumed by the classroom experience and did not participate much in the larger organizational life of the school. Now, the organizational life of the school forms the existence of the PLC Middle School practices such as collaboration and efficacy that once took place after school, now take place as the very lifeline of a school’s daily routine. Times have changed and so has the way we look at successful school organizations. Schools are not businesses and not playgrounds. They are very serious and unique institutions that sustain our intellectual buoyancy in a sea of change. Teachers’ beliefs of their capability to work with others successfully form the basis of organizational efficacy and school success. When teacher migration rates decrease because educators understand these concepts and act on them, we will witness marked improvement in the public school system. In fact, the success of student achievement is based on quality teachers in the classroom. While No Child Left Behind legislation focuses on the educational support of all students, we must never forget to make sure that no teachers get left behind either.

The very nature of teaching in our present society beckons change because the very nature of learning is also changing dramatically. Teachers are asked to collaborate more in learning community schools and socialization at high levels is required. Many professional development opportunities remove the teachers from the school campus and are one time hit or miss courses. They also have a limited effect since not all teachers are benefiting from them. The successful schools of the future will embrace organizational learning at the
broadest level by making more decisions on site. Teachers must become learners of new
skills just as students are asked to pursue content and internalize it. Learning is becoming
more critical both cognitively and socially.

More research is required towards understanding organizational climates, particularly
schooling. How teachers fit into existing organizations successfully or poorly will rely more
on a greater understanding of how sound their relationship-building and socialization skills
allow them to create professional learning communities. The new leaders of schools must
stay current with the research and understand the dynamics of organizational efficacy. It is
not enough to have many good teachers on a campus. Bridges must be formed to connect all
these teachers to reach high organizational goals and keep teachers in schools. Teachers who
love to teach will most likely not leave the profession but they will leave schools to share
their skills in other schools if educational leaders become complacent. Educational leaders
can never become complacent if any serious change is to take place within the system. We
must reach out to others and sometimes reach within ourselves to understand change, not
merely embrace it.
References


and experimenting, and initiating organizations.


National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES, 2003). Department of Education. Washington
D.C.

Washington D.C.


North Carolina Standard Course of Study (2005). Department of Public Instruction, N.C.


Sternberg, R., Stemler, S., Grigorenko, E., Jarvin, L., Merry, K. (2005). There is More to Teaching Than Instruction: Seven Strategies for Dealing With the Social Side of Teaching. *Temple University Center for Research in Human Development and Education. Publication Series No. 1.*


[http://www.sbec.state.tx.us/txbess/turnoverrpt.pdf](http://www.sbec.state.tx.us/txbess/turnoverrpt.pdf)


7 July 2005

Dear PLC Middle School Staff Member:

I hope this letter finds you having a relaxing and rejuvenating summer. The excitement and euphoria of our first year at PLC Middle School are fading and the anticipation of coming back for year two is growing every day.

We have been busy enrolling students, working on schedules, and most importantly, hiring staff for the coming year. Thanks to all of you who have helped in this critical endeavor. I am very excited about bringing some outstanding new teachers into the collaborative culture that we worked so hard to put in place.

I want to make you aware of several important dates as we prepare for the 2005-06 school year:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday 8/16</td>
<td>8:00-3:00</td>
<td>PLC Middle School</td>
<td>New staff orientation</td>
<td>Protected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday 8/17</td>
<td>8:00-3:00</td>
<td>Lake Wheeler</td>
<td>Opening faculty meeting/ Team Building</td>
<td>Protected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday 8/18</td>
<td>8:30-4:15</td>
<td>McKimmon Center</td>
<td>Continuous Improvement Conference/ Work day</td>
<td>Protected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday 8/19</td>
<td>8:00-3:00</td>
<td>PLC Middle School</td>
<td>Work day</td>
<td>Protected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday 8/19</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Staff social</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday 8/22</td>
<td>8:00-3:00</td>
<td>PLC Middle School</td>
<td>Work day</td>
<td>Protected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday 8/22</td>
<td>6:00-8:00</td>
<td>PLC Middle School</td>
<td>6th grade “Meet the Teacher” Night</td>
<td>Protected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday 8/23</td>
<td>8:00-3:30</td>
<td>PLC Middle School</td>
<td>Work day</td>
<td>Protected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Event</td>
<td>Protection Level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday 8/23</td>
<td>6:00-8:00</td>
<td>PLC Middle School</td>
<td>7th/8th grade “Meet the Teacher” Night</td>
<td>Protected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday 8/24</td>
<td>8:30-11:30</td>
<td>PLC Middle School</td>
<td>6th grade orientation</td>
<td>Unprotected</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- The new staff orientation is for new staff (duh)
- You should wear comfortable (active wear) clothing for the Lake Wheeler day.
- Staff wanting to attend courses at the Continuous Improvement Conference must register through E-Schools.
- We are planning a staff social for Friday evening (the 19th), details tbd.
- We have a meeting scheduled for 10:00am on Monday the 22nd; otherwise, you may flex your schedule on “Meet the Teacher” nights.
- Elective teachers should plan to attend both “Meet the Teacher” nights.

Please call if you have questions or comments. See you on the 17th.

Carl
Appendix B
Fieldwork Guidelines

From: Rich Conley
Date: July 25, 2005
Dissertation Title: Teacher Migration: The Effect of School Climate on Teachers’ Perceptions

Why do teachers leave high-performing schools to work in other high-performing schools? In order to explore this phenomenon, I will observe and study the school climate and organizational design of the teacher’s ‘new school’ by conducting interviews and collecting data and fieldnotes at meetings and conferences. I will interview both principals regarding their educational philosophy and leadership style. All research will be anonymous and no names will be used. For instance, I will make reference to a high-performing middle school in a large urban school district in the southeast of the United States. All interviews and information will be voluntary and any research subject may choose to discontinue the work at any time. Following are the highlighted parameters of the qualitative case study guidelines:

Duration of study: 4 months (fall semester, 2005)
Case study subject: 6 year Social Studies’ teacher (Nationally Board Certified)
Research procedures:

- 2 to 3 interviews (45-60 minutes) with the teacher
- 1 interview with the new principal
- 1 interview with the old principal
- 1 interview with an assistant principal
- 1 interview with the mentor supervisor
- 1 interview with a veteran teacher
- On site visits to the present school twice a week, preferably Mondays and Wednesdays. The visits will not involve any classroom observations nor will there be any direct contact with the students or staff members. I will attend team meetings on occasion with permission and advance notice.
- Attendance at staff and department meetings after school.
- Attendance at athletic events.
- Documentation collection will consist of front office memos, calendar, school newspaper, school yearbook information, etc.
Appendix C
Informed Consent Letter

August 8, 2005

Dear Interviewee:

My name is Rich Conley and I am a doctoral student from the Department of Educational Leadership at North Carolina State University. I would like to include you in my dissertation research as an interviewee. I would conduct one interview for 45-60 minutes in a private setting and it would be recorded. The research topic is teacher migration (teachers transferring to other schools/districts) and the effect of school climate on teachers’ perceptions. Confidentiality will be maintained at all times. The research has been officially approved by both North Carolina State University and the Wake County Public School System.

Your participation is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from the research at any time by notifying me. The interview tape and all other information regarding your participation and role in the school will be kept strictly secure and kept in a locked file cabinet off campus.

The duration of the study will be from August to December, 2005 on site at PLC Middle School. I will be in attendance for several hours on campus every Monday and Wednesday until the fieldwork is completed in December. The results of this dissertation may be used for a scholarly report, journal article, book, or conference presentation. The results may help us understand the organization of a high-performing middle school better from inside the building and those dynamics that may lead a teacher to leave one high-performing school for another. You will have complete access to the dissertation when it is completed in January, 2006. No names of school or personnel will be revealed in the final publication.

In the space at the bottom of this letter, please indicate whether you are willing to participate in the research. If you have any questions about the details of the research, please feel free to contact me either by e-mail, telephone, or in person. The second copy of the form is yours to keep.

Sincerely,

Rich Conley, PhD candidate
North Carolina State University
(919) 365-6867
Rconley2@nc.rr.com

I am/am not (circle one) willing to participate as an interviewee in the research project described above.

------------------- Date ----------------------------- Participant’s signature
Personal Questions

1. Would you tell me what your present position is at PLC Middle School and how many years you have been teaching?

2. How many schools have you taught in and at what levels?

3. Tell me about how you came to PLC Middle School? Describe both professional and personal passages.

4. Who, if anyone, influenced your actions? Tell me about he/she or they influenced you.

5. How would you describe the person you were earlier in your teaching career? How have you’ve grown professionally and personally?

6. What negative changes, if any, have occurred in your life during teaching?

7. What helps you to manage stress? Who has been the most helpful to you during times of stress? How has he/she been helpful?

8. How would you describe how you viewed teaching in your early years of teaching and has that view changed since then?

9. Where do you see yourself in five or ten years? Describe the person you hope to be then.

Team and Operations Questions

10. Share your thoughts on the middle school team concept. Is it effective? Should there be a team leader or co-leaders, etc.?

11. What are the advantages and disadvantages of the middle school team?

12. Tell me about how you handle team collaboration and/or dissent.

13. Could you describe the most important lessons you learned about teaching through experiencing conflict?
14. After having these experiences, what advice would you give to someone who has just discovered that he or she doubts their ability or longevity as a teacher?

15. What role should administrators play in middle school education?

16. What are the most difficult challenges for middle school teachers today?

**Organizational Questions**

17. What is your definition of a “high-performing” school?

18. How does a school of individuals become a high-performing school collectively?

19. PLC Middle School is based on the Professional Learning Communities’ model of Richard DuFour. In your estimation, is it working and where are you at with the model from an organizational point of view?

20. The term “teacher migration” is often used to refer to teachers who transfer to other schools or districts. The teacher migration rate for middle schools is rather high, averaging about 20% compared to the county’s overall rate of 11.3%. What can you attribute that higher middle school rate to?

21. Is there anything that occurred to you during this interview that you would like to share with me?

22. Is there anything you would like to ask me?
Appendix E
Second Interview Questions for Anthony
6TH grade Language Arts/Social Studies
PLC Middle School
November 5, 2005

1. Please describe your adjustment to the language arts position over the past two months.

2. Have your seven years experience as a social studies teacher prepared you for the transition to another content area? Please explain.

3. Have you noticed any significant changes in the student demographics compared to your previous school? Please explain.

4. Have you had opportunities to integrate the language arts and social studies content areas? If so, please provide one example.

5. What is your relationship like with the other language arts/social studies teachers?

6. Do you feel accepted as a new member of the 6th grade team? Please elaborate.

7. Describe if you feel you have changed as a teacher since August and in what way?

8. Is the Professional Learning Community working as successfully as you imagined before transferring to PLC Middle School? Please explain.

9. What changes and/or input have you brought to the 6th grade teachers?

10. Have you personally experienced conflict with any staff member? Please explain how the issue was resolved or not resolved.

11. You mentioned in the first interview that you were frequently interrupted as a social studies teacher at your previous school. Is that still the case? Please elaborate.

12. Has the stress level with the new teaching position in a new school increased, diminished, or stayed the same since beginning in August? Please share your thoughts.

13. Which staff members have been the most helpful to you since coming to PLC Middle School?

14. What challenges at PLC Middle School have you personally overcome since joining the new staff?

15. Describe your relationship with the present administrators.
16. Earlier in the semester some grade level concerns surfaced regarding the effective use of time for meetings. Please update me on any progress in that area.

17. Michael Fullan writes about the difference between teachers being “collegial” versus teachers being “collaborative” in learning communities. Please relate this to your situation in PLC Middle School if there is such a distinction.

18. Have you had any second thoughts about your migration to PLC Middle School? Why or why not?

19. How could PLC Middle School become more of a true professional learning community?

20. Would you like to ask me any questions regarding the interview or general research?
Appendix F
Third Interview Questions for Anthony
6th grade Language Arts/Social Studies
PLC Middle School
December 8, 2005

1. What challenges as a teacher have you overcome by teaching two content areas?

2. Describe what professional growth you have made since joining the PLC Middle School staff.

3. How much do student demographics affect how you teach?

4. Share the degree of interdisciplinary integration you have experienced on the 6th grade hall this semester.

5. Describe the level of personal relationships among teachers you have seen on the 6th grade hall this semester. Are some stronger than others?

6. Have you met your personal goals for being accepted by the other teachers? Please elaborate.

7. Has the ninety minute planning period given you enough time to perform your teacher duties on a daily basis? Please elaborate.

8. What have been the advantages and disadvantages of the Professional Learning Community this semester?

9. What personal goals do you have for the second semester?

10. It came to my understanding the PLC recently struggled with their group goals and identity and sought assistance from administration. Please elaborate on what lead up to that and if it was resolved.

11. What distractions hindered you as a teacher?

12. Have you noticed higher than usual stress levels among the grade level teachers during the semester? Please elaborate.

13. What level of confidence do you perceive the 6th grade teachers project as a group when you interact with them? Or do you perceive any confidence?

14. How has the PLC model benefited the new teachers on the hall?

15. If you could change anything about the PLC model, what would it be?
16. If you could change anything about the teaching profession, what would it be?

17. In an earlier interview we discussed Michael Fullan’s distinction between teachers being “collegial” versus teachers being “collaborative” in learning communities. Would you say that the model you have been part of this past semester is more collegial or collaborative?

18. How would you retain quality teachers if you had your own school?

19. How can we support beginning teachers better from preservice to the classroom?

20. You mentioned the word, “reflect” in an earlier interview. How important is teacher and/or teachers reflection towards professional goals? Do teachers actually reflect on their lessons and curricular choices from your personal experience?

21. Why do you teach?

22. As we complete the interview, would you share your thoughts on the three interviews conducted this past semester and the research carried out?
Appendix G
Interview Questions for Teachers
PLC Middle School

Personal Questions

1. Would you tell me what your present position is at PLC Middle School and how many years you have been teaching?

2. How many schools have you taught in and at what levels?

3. Tell me about how you came to PLC Middle School? Describe both professional and personal passages.

4. Who, if anyone, influenced your actions? Tell me about he/she or they influenced you.

5. How would you describe the person you were earlier in your teaching career? How have you've grown professionally and personally?

6. What negative changes, if any, have occurred in your life during teaching?

7. What helps you to manage stress? Who has been the most helpful to you during times of stress? How has he/she been helpful?

8. How would you describe how you viewed teaching in your early years of teaching and has that view changed since then?

9. Where do you see yourself in five or ten years? Describe the person you hope to be then.

Team and Operations Questions

10. Share your thoughts on the middle school team concept. Is it effective? Should there be a team leader or co-leaders, etc.?

11. What are the advantages and disadvantages of the middle school team?

12. Tell me about how you handle team collaboration and/or dissent.

13. Could you describe the most important lessons you learned about teaching through experiencing conflict?
14. After having these experiences, what advice would you give to someone who has just discovered that he or she doubts their ability or longevity as a teacher?

15. What role should administrators play in middle school education?

16. What are the most difficult challenges for middle school teachers today?

Organizational Questions

17. What is your definition of a “high-performing” school?

18. How does a school of individuals become a high-performing school collectively?

19. PLC Middle School is based on the Professional Learning Communities’ model of Richard DuFour. In your estimation, is it working and where are you at with the model from an organizational point of view?

20. The term “teacher migration” is often used to refer to teachers who transfer to other schools or districts. The teacher migration rate for middle schools is rather high, averaging about 20% compared to the county’s overall rate of 11.3%. What can you attribute that higher middle school rate to?

21. Is there anything that occurred to you during this interview that you would like to share with me?

22. Is there anything you would like to ask me?
Appendix H
Interview Questions for Principals

1. Tell me about how you came to PLC Middle School?

2. When did you seriously consider transferring from your previous school?

3. Who, if anyone, influenced your actions? Tell me about he/she or they influenced you.

4. Could you describe the events in your administrative career that led up to your transfer?

5. What contributed to your decision to leave your previous school?

6. What was going on in your life then? How would you describe how you viewed administration in your early years of and has that view changed since then?

7. How would you describe the person you were then?

8. What, if anything, did you know about a high performing school organization in your early years?

9. Tell me about your thoughts and feelings when you learned more about professional learning communities and organizational efficiency.

10. Tell me about how you learned to handle team collaboration and/or dissent.

11. How, if at all, have your thoughts and feelings about team collaboration and organizational efficiency changed since the first few years?

12. What negative changes, if any, have occurred in your life during the principalship?

13. Tell me how you go about confronting a personal difference of opinion either with teachers or other staff members. What do you do?

14. Could you describe a typical day for you upon arrival at school? Do you encounter interruptions to that routine often?

15. Tell me how you would describe the person you are now. What most contributed to this change (or continuity)?

16. As you look back on the previous years in administration, are there any other events that stand out in your mind? Could you describe them? How did you respond to the event or resulting situation?
17. Could you describe the most important lessons you learned about administration and leadership through experiencing conflict?

18. Where do you see yourself in five or ten years? Describe the person you hope to be then. How would you compare the person you hope to be and the person you see yourself as now?

19. What helps you to manage stress?

20. Who has been the most helpful to you during this time? How has he/she been helpful?

21. What do you think are the most important ways to handle team differences of opinion or philosophies?

22. Tell me about how your views on team collaboration and efficiency may have changed since you started as a principal.

23. How have you grown as a person since opening your own school? Tell me about your strengths that you discovered or developed through greater reflection as an educator. What do you most value about yourself now? What do others most value in you?

24. After having these experiences, what advice would you give to someone who has just discovered that he or she doubts their ability or longevity as a teacher or an administrator?

25. Is there anything that you might not thought about before that occurred to you during this interview?

26. Is there anything you would like to ask me?
Appendix I
Interview Questions for Assistant Principals

1. Tell me about how you came to PLC Middle School?

2. When did you seriously consider transferring from your previous school?

3. Who, if anyone, influenced your actions? Tell me about he/she or they influenced you.

4. Could you describe the events in your administrative career that led up to your transfer?

5. What contributed to your decision to leave your previous school?

6. What was going on in your life then? How would you describe how you viewed administration in your early years of and has that view changed since then?

7. How would you describe the person you were then?

8. What, if anything, did you know about a high performing school organization in your early years?

9. Tell me about your thoughts and feelings when you learned more about professional learning communities and organizational efficiency.

10. Tell me about how you learned to handle team collaboration and/or dissent.

11. How, if at all, have your thoughts and feelings about team collaboration and organizational efficiency changed since the first few years?

12. What negative changes, if any, have occurred in your life during the assistant principalship?

13. Tell me how you go about confronting a personal difference of opinion either with teachers or other staff members. What do you do?

14. Could you describe a typical day for you upon arrival at school? Do you encounter interruptions to that routine often?

15. Tell me how you would describe the person you are now. What most contributed to this change (or continuity)?

16. As you look back on the previous years in administration, are there any other events that stand out in your mind? Could you describe them? How did you respond to the
event or resulting situation?

17. Could you describe the most important lessons you learned about administration and leadership through experiencing conflict?

18. Where do you see yourself in five or ten years? Describe the person you hope to be then. How would you compare the person you hope to be and the person you see yourself as now?

19. What helps you to manage stress?

20. Who has been the most helpful to you during this time? How has he/she been helpful?

21. What do you think are the most important ways to handle team differences of opinion or philosophies?

22. Tell me about how your views on team collaboration and efficiency may have changed since you started as an assistant principal.

23. How have you grown as a person since working in Salem Middle School? Tell me about your strengths that you discovered or developed through greater reflection as an educator.

24. What do you most value about yourself now? What do others most value in you?

25. After having these experiences, what advice would you give to someone who has just discovered that he or she doubts their ability or longevity as a teacher or an administrator?

26. Is there anything that you might not thought about before that occurred to you during this interview?

27. Is there anything you would like to ask me?
Appendix J
Interview Questions for PTA president
PLC Middle School
November 2, 2005

1. How many years have you been the PTA president at PLC Middle School?
2. My understanding is that you were a teacher in the public school system. How many years did you teach and in what content area?
3. Describe your job role as the PTA president at PLC Middle School.
4. What does your relationship with the PLC Middle School staff members entail?
5. Compare teacher and parent perceptions of a high-performing school.
6. What role should parents play in middle school education?
7. How do you personally handle stress?
8. Could you describe the most important lessons you have learned through experiencing conflict as the PTA president and provide an example?
9. How does a school of individual teachers become a high-performing school collectively?
10. Would you share your thoughts on anything you would like to see changed in PLC Middle School?
11. PLC Middle School is based on Richard DuFour’s Professional Learning Community model. Do you think that the majority of parents understand the concept? Please elaborate.
12. What is the role of the parents in the Professional Learning Community?
13. The term “teacher migration” is often referred to teachers who have transferred to other schools or districts. The teacher migration rate for middle schools in Wake County is high at about 20% compared to the overall county rate of 11.3%. What can you attribute that high rate to?
14. Why would a teacher leave a high-performing school in the county to work in another high-performing school?
15. What kind of expectations do you think the parents have for PLC Middle School in the future?
16. Do you think that teachers and parents have the same expectations for middle school students? If not, please point out the differences.
17. What are the biggest challenges for parents in middle school education presently?
18. How can parents and teachers create stronger relationships?
19. Is there any question you would like to ask me as we conclude the interview?
Appendix K
Institutional Review Board (IRB) Consent

From: Debra A. Paxton, IRB Administrator
North Carolina State University
Institutional Review Board

Date: May 9, 2005

Project Title: Teacher Migration: The Effect of School Climate on Teachers’ Perceptions

IRB#: 100-05-5

Dear Mr. Conkly,

The project listed above has been reviewed in accordance with expedited review procedures under Addendum 46 FR8392 of 45 CFR 46 and is approved for one year. This protocol expires on May 9, 2006, and will need continuing review before that date.

NOTE:
1. This board complies with requirements found in Title 45 part 46 of The Code of Federal Regulations. For NCSU the Assurance Number is: FWA00003429; the IRB Number is: IRB00000338.

2. The IRB must be notified of any changes that are made to this study.

3. Your approval for this study lasts for one year from the review date. If your study extends beyond that time, including data analysis, you must obtain continuing review from the IRB.

Please provide your faculty sponsor with a copy of this letter. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Debra Paxton
NCSU IRB
Appendix L
Wake County Public School System Consent

April 7, 2005

Mr. Richard Conley
281 S. Lakewood Drive
Wendell, NC 27591

RE: Project No. 544—Teacher Migration: The Effect of School Climate on Teacher’s Perceptions

Dear Mr. Conley:

Your request to conduct research entitled “Teacher Migration: The Effect of School Climate on Teacher’s Perceptions” in Wake County Schools has been approved.

Remember that participation by teachers and other school staff must be voluntary. If there are questions about this, please call our office at 850-1863.

Please remember to send a summary of your findings once your study is completed.

Sincerely yours,

Karen Banks