ABSTRACT

KEARNEY, DIANN PICKARD. Factors that Influence Effective Veteran Teachers’ Decisions to Remain in High-Poverty Elementary Schools. (Under the direction of Bonnie Fusarelli and Matt Militello, Co-Chairs.)

The purpose of this expository case study is to determine what factors influence the decisions of effective veteran teachers to remain in high-poverty elementary schools in an urban school district. I wanted to explore why, given the high rate of growth and the high attrition rate in this school system, like other urban districts, effective veteran teachers identified stay at these more challenging schools. This study sought to identify the contributing factors and explore these factors as they relate to educational leaders who focus on teacher retention. Data gathered through interviews with the principals and 15 teachers of three high-poverty elementary schools indicate that school systems and principals should implement building- and system-level changes to better retain effective veteran teachers at high-poverty schools.
Factors that Influence Effective Veteran Teachers’ Decisions to Remain in High-Poverty Elementary Schools

by

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

Educational Administration and Supervision

Raleigh, North Carolina

2011

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DEDICATION

The completion of this degree would not have been possible if not for the love and support of my family. My husband, Dennis Kearney, and son, Patrick Kearney, made tremendous sacrifices so that I could devote time and energy to attending classes, completing coursework, and writing this dissertation.
Biography

Diann Pickard Kearney was born in Greensboro, North Carolina and educated in the Greensboro Public School System. After graduating from Ben L. Smith High School, she moved to Raleigh, North Carolina and enrolled at North Carolina State University to study political science and education. Upon graduation from NCSU, Kearney was hired to teach at Myrtle Grove Middle School in Wilmington, North Carolina. Thereafter, she became an assistant principal and principal in Wake County, North Carolina. Kearney is the principal of a high-poverty magnet elementary school in downtown Raleigh. Having been a student, teacher, assistant principal, and principal in high-poverty schools, Kearney maintains an ongoing interest in the topic of teacher retention, especially that of veteran teachers.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The topic of teacher retention in public schools is well documented and researched. Governors, mayors, superintendents, and principals alike acknowledge the challenge of keeping classroom teachers in public-school classrooms and in the profession. Given the increased emphasis on accountability and pressure placed on schools to meet standards of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation, principals need to focus their efforts on teacher retention strategies that have proven effective (Johnson, 2004).

While educational leaders work to keep quality teachers in their schools, directors of recruitment strive to attract applicants to their counties or districts. Their efforts may be hampered by the fact that only 60% of university-prepared education graduates are entering the teaching profession, a significant number of teachers choose to leave after only a few years in the profession, and certain schools are more attractive than others to teacher applicants (Spradlin & Prendergast, 2006).

These recruitment and retention challenges are particularly acute in states experiencing dramatic population growth. North Carolina is one such state. From 2000 to 2008, its public-school population increased by 163,778 or approximately 11% (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2009). North Carolina needs about 11,000 new teachers annually, but its colleges collectively graduate only about 3,000 teachers from their preparation programs each year (Wake Task Force on Teacher Excellence, 2001). The 100 districts in North Carolina compete to attract teachers to their schools. Some areas are more successful than others due to their location and surrounding area’s job market. The pool of applicants
may include recent college graduates and a limited number of more experienced teachers
who have relocated to the area or are re-entering the profession.

In seeking to fill vacancies, school leaders are cognizant of the demographics of their
current staff—age, race, gender, and years of experience. Ideally, new hires will balance the
demographics of the current team and avoid overloading a system or school team with
teachers who are inexperienced or new to the profession. Good leaders are aware of the
challenges newly hired teachers face and the many advantages effective veteran teachers
bring to a team and to their schools. Quality effective veteran teachers have experienced the
isolation of the classroom. They know how to approach parent-teacher conferences, respond
to unruly students, and manage other experiences unique to teaching in public schools. Their
years of experience have prepared them for the unexpected challenging student or angry
parent and have made them aware of the demands of the job, including long weekends of
grading papers and compiling report cards. Effective veteran teachers usually have
established a professional support network and a toolkit of strategies that they can adopt to
student needs.

In addition to meeting the challenges of recruiting new teachers to fill vacancies,
educational leaders need to work to retain effective veteran teachers. Teacher retention is
especially difficult in high-poverty schools (Education Trust, 2006), although scant research
exists on what factors keep effective veteran teachers at such schools. The strategies needed
to retain veteran teachers might well be the same as those to retain teachers new to the
profession. One purpose of this research is to explore why effective veteran teachers in high-
poverty schools stay at their schools. Educational leaders should be able to use the results of this study to craft more targeted, effective strategies to retain effective veteran teachers in high-poverty schools.

**Statement of the Problem**

Many areas of the country are experiencing unprecedented growth in their public schools and are having difficulty hiring enough teachers. This is particularly true in areas experiencing rapid growth. For example, Wake County hired 900 new teachers for the 1998–1999 school year (Wake Task Force on Teacher Excellence, 2001), the majority of whom were classified as beginning teachers with no experience. Administrators recognize the difference between hiring a beginning teacher and hiring a veteran teacher. An investment of time and resources is required to acclimate a beginning teacher, whereas the majority of veteran teachers are familiar with the curriculum, classroom management, and instructional planning.

Within large and diverse school systems, individual schools have varying degrees of success in recruiting and retaining teachers (Chauncey, 2005). Factors such as location, school calendar, and demographics impact a particular school’s hiring trends and turnover rates. Many hard-to-staff schools hire new teachers throughout the year, as vacancies come about because of spouse transfers or a new baby. In an effort to smooth the transition of new teachers, school-based administrators and system leadership may devote considerable time to these inexperienced teachers while assuming that veteran teachers without assistance will at the very least maintain the status quo in terms of their performance.
There is a tacit assumption on the part of administrators that veteran teachers do not need support and that they will stay at their present schools. As a result, administrators do little to retain effective veteran teachers, who may choose to leave high-poverty schools for newly constructed schools or those with lower poverty rates. The more-challenging high-poverty schools struggle to hire new teachers to fill growth positions and to replace the experienced veteran teachers who left. In addition to meeting the challenges of high-poverty students, school leaders must support the many new teachers, fill the leadership positions vacated by veterans, and seek to maintain the culture of the school without those very persons who were responsible for its development.

High-poverty schools tend to have a high percentage of students who lack the foundational skills that prepare them for academic achievement. Since these students, at least initially, require more academic and behavior support to adapt to the school experience, the staff in high-poverty schools are expected to meet a wider range of student needs: from potty-training to seeking community support to securing food and clothing for students. As a result, high-poverty schools are more likely to have inexperienced and under-qualified teachers (Hurwitz & Hurwitz, 2005). The turnover rate at high-poverty schools is higher than in schools with lower rates of free and reduced-price lunches (Ingersoll & Bossi, 1995). As educational leaders seek to improve the academic performance of all students—especially those in high-poverty schools—they need to focus on retaining high-quality effective veteran teachers.
This study examined only elementary schools because the duties, roles, and expectations of their teachers are more comparable than those of teachers of different grade levels. Many veteran teachers in elementary schools hold multiple leadership positions and have had a range of professional experiences, which combine to influence their decisions to stay at their current school or leave.

What can principals and system leaders do to encourage effective veteran teachers to remain at these high-poverty schools? Will financial enticements, leadership opportunities and advancement programs, and incentives prove to be the solution to teacher turnover? What enticements are required to encourage effective veteran teachers to remain in the profession? As veteran teachers return year after year, leaders must seek to understand what brings them back and how to sustain their commitment.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this case study is to identify and describe the factors that influence the decisions of effective veteran teachers to remain in high-poverty elementary schools. This should provide insight into the principal’s role in retaining teachers and could also provide useful information to educational leaders on how to better recruit new teachers who are committed to working in high-poverty schools. This case study will seek to answer the following research questions:

1. What teacher-retention challenges do high-poverty elementary schools face?
2. What challenges do high-poverty elementary schools face in retaining effective veteran teachers?
3. Why do effective veteran teachers stay at high-poverty elementary schools?

4. What are the implications of the findings from the previous questions for educational leaders and school administrators?

**Definition of Terms**

The following terms are used throughout this study.

- **Attrition** – A teacher’s leaving the education profession.

- **Beginning Teacher Support Program (BTSP)** – In North Carolina, a state-wide support program for all first- and second-year teachers that provides a mentor, informal observations, and other support strategies (North Carolina State Improvement Project, 2007).

- **Careered Teacher** – A teacher who has earned tenure with North Carolina. Generally, this means that one school system has employed the teacher for four consecutive years and the teacher has performed at or above standard.

- **Effective Teacher** – A teacher who has earned above-average ratings on teacher evaluations, possesses advanced degrees or National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certification, or holds a leadership position.

- **Free and Reduced-Price Lunch (F and R)** – Federally subsidized meals for students whose family qualifies. Researchers use this indicator as a reflection of the poverty rate (Scafidi, Sjoquist, & Stinebrickner, 2007).

- **High-Poverty School** – A school whose free and reduced-price lunch rate is at least 75%. The National Center for Education Statistics considers a school high...
poverty if 75% or more of its students are eligible for free and reduced-price lunch (National Center for Education Statistics, 2008).

- Highly Qualified Teacher (HQT) – A teacher who meets the criteria established by the No Child Left Behind Act. In North Carolina, being Highly Qualified requires having a teaching license and passing the Praxis I and II tests.

- No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) – The 2001 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Amendment of 1965 that, among other things, mandated that all teachers in Title I schools be designated as Highly Qualified. NCLB puts sanctions in place for schools that do not meet the Adequate Yearly Performance targets.

- Performance Indicators/Teacher Effectiveness – “One or more abilities of a teacher to produce agreed-upon educational effects” (Biddle & Ellena, 1964). For this study, above-standard evaluations, advanced degrees, and leadership positions determine teacher effectiveness.

- North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey (TWC) – A survey administered by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction every other year, measuring teacher satisfaction on topics such as access to resources, support of administrators, empowerment, and leadership opportunities.

- Teacher Migration – A teacher’s moving from one school to another (public or private).

- Teacher Retention – A teacher’s choosing to remain at his/her current school.
• Teacher Turnover – A teacher’s leaving a school or the profession.
• Tenure – Employment status achieved by a teacher after four consecutive, full-time years in a North Carolina school system with at- or above-standard ratings on annual evaluations.
• Title I – A federally subsidized program that provides additional funding to schools based on the percentage of students in poverty. In North Carolina schools, schools qualify for Title I funding based on the number of students who receive free and reduced-price lunch.
• Veteran Teacher – A teacher who has earned tenure in North Carolina and has been teaching at the same school for a minimum of six years.

**Significance of the Study**

Retaining teachers is difficult throughout education but especially for high-poverty schools. Applicants recognize the difficulties of working in high poverty schools—lower-performing students, more challenging classroom discipline, and less parental support than in low-poverty schools. These factors make it harder to recruit teachers and retain beginning teachers. Barnett and Berry estimated that 50% of beginning teachers leave within the first five years (Berry & Hirsch, 2005). As teachers leave, new teachers are hired and a “revolving door” phenomenon begins (Ingersoll, 2001). On average, the teacher turnover rate is 11% for all schools. Since the 1980s, demand for teachers has increased due in part to increased enrollment and an increase in the number of retiring teachers. As more teachers leave high-poverty schools, the challenge of identifying viable candidates becomes even more
important. High-poverty schools have slightly higher turnover rates and attract fewer applicants than do low-poverty schools. Ingersoll noted that high-poverty schools struggle with recruiting teachers for vacancies and subsequently retaining them.

The combination of teacher retention challenges, growth of schools, and increased teacher movement between schools creates a variety of problems for school leadership and student achievement. This case study seeks to identify strategies that improve the retention of effective veteran teachers in high-poverty schools. The results of this study should provide strategies that educational leaders can utilize to retain effective veteran teachers where they are most needed: high-poverty schools. Data from this case study should be used to formulate teacher retention policies for high poverty schools.

Since the implementation of NCLB in 2001, many researchers have noted its impact on teacher recruitment, selection, and retention. Although originally enacted to ensure that all students are provided a quality education by a qualified teacher, NCLB has evolved into much more. Chauncey, in *Recruiting, Retaining and Supporting High Quality Teachers*, recognized the challenges that impact schools’ and school systems’ efforts to retain teachers, especially those designated as High Quality. Hurwitz and Hurwitz questioned the logic of the act because it allows individual states to devise their own standards for what constitutes highly qualified. Berry & Hirsch (2005) argued that NCLB has established a “…cause-and-effect relationship between teacher performance and student achievement when they coupled rigorous school accountability measures with requirements that try to ensure that all children are taught by ‘highly qualified’ teachers.”
Although there is an abundance of research available on the retention of new teachers, there is very little written about the retention of veteran teachers in high-poverty schools. In *Finders and Keepers*, Susan Johnson (2004) outlined several strategies for schools and school systems to retain the newest members of the education profession. Her research has shown that new teachers are retained at a higher rate when they are supported by trained mentors and have supportive principals. The limited research on veteran teachers indicates that these same two factors increase the retention of veteran teachers, but there is more to learn about the pressing problem of veteran teachers leaving the profession.

When an effective veteran teacher leaves a high-poverty school, it impacts the school in several important ways. The vacancy needs to be filled, which requires time and resources to interview new applicants. In most elementary schools in North Carolina, teachers are hired to work as part of a grade-level or subject-area team. These teams have a stake in the interview and hiring process, as they seek to identify someone who will work well with the team members. Although it is difficult to attach a dollar amount to the loss of a veteran teacher, his or her departure may negatively impact their grade level, any committees they served on, and the school community as a whole.

To limit the rate of turnover among effective veteran teachers, principals must learn to recognize the many systemic contributions that effective veteran teachers make and how valuable those contributions are to the entire school. Likewise, principals must understand why effective veteran teachers choose to remain at or leave high-poverty schools and how principals can use this information to improve the working conditions of their schools.
Through in-depth conversations and interviews with effective veteran teachers, this study will expound on teacher retention as it relates to effective veteran teachers in high-poverty schools.

**Overview of Approach**

This case study will utilize a cross-case analysis of effective veteran teachers in three high-poverty elementary schools in the Wake County Public School System (WCPSS). I will collect data through interviews. First, in an effort to gain demographic data on each of the three schools and to identify study participants, I will interview the principal. At each of the three schools, I will ask the principal to identify a minimum of five effective veteran teachers. Ideally, five teachers from each school will participate in this study (Merriam, 1998). I will meet individually with each teacher and, after a brief introduction, will complete an interview (appendix VII). I will transcribe the interviews verbatim, compile them into one study database, and analyze them to identify major themes that impact the retention of effective veteran teachers at high-poverty schools.

**Organization of the Study**

Chapter 1 has provided an introduction to the retention of effective veteran teachers in high-poverty schools. Chapter 2 contains the literature review. Chapter 3 describes methods, data collection, and data analysis. Chapter 4 outlines the results of the research. Chapter 5 includes an analysis of the results from the district and school perspectives.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

The struggles of public schools to retain quality teachers are well documented in the media and by educational leaders at all levels (Chauncey, 2005). It is recognized that teachers choose to leave the profession for a variety of reasons throughout their careers, including low pay, challenging conditions, family needs, or spousal transfers related to work. Early-career teachers leave at high rates—for example, 50% of teachers with three to five years of experience leave the profession (Wake Education Partnership, 2005). The reasons effective veteran teachers leave the profession and the strategies for retaining effective veteran teachers most likely differ from those related to beginning teachers. Likewise, the issue of teacher retention differs depending on the demographics and culture of the individual schools. An examination of the issues concerning teacher retention must recognize the unique challenges of individual schools—size, population served, number of remedial services provided, and location—in order to fully understand the complexity of retention of effective veteran teachers.

The purpose of this study is to identify the factors that encourage effective veteran teachers to remain at high-poverty schools. This study will examine three high-poverty schools and the experiences of three principals and 15 effective veteran teachers. I will explain the factors influencing the retention of effective veteran teachers through a cross-case analysis. This review of literature will explore issues related to the retention of effective veteran teachers in high-poverty elementary schools.
Context of the Study

The United States of America has experienced unprecedented population growth and shifts in the school-age population during the past decade (Ingersoll, 2001). Since 1993, student enrollments have grown to over 54.3 million. This growth directly affects the need for teachers and highlights the importance of teacher retention (Darling-Hammond, 1997). The work of Richard Ingersoll (2001) demonstrated that from 1999 to 2001, more teachers left the profession than were hired, leaving unfilled teaching positions at many schools. In North Carolina, the average teacher turnover rate was 12.3%, based on data from the statewide School Report Card (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2007). North Carolina hires approximately 11,000 new teachers each year (Wake Education Partnership, 2005). The teacher turnover rate in Wake County for the 2006–2007 school year was 10.03% and ranked lower than the state’s turnover rate.

Wake County, one of the fastest-growing counties in the country, hired 900 new teachers for the 1997–1998 school year to accommodate 134,000 new and returning students (Wake Education Partnership, 2005). For the three new schools, principals hired teachers for these new positions and to replace teachers who sought a transfer to a new or existing school. Of these newly hired teachers, 60% were from out of state—lured to Wake County at one of the more than 200 job fairs in 35 states each year. Due to the geographical size of Wake County, the rate of growth, and the addition of new schools, hiring new teachers is the responsibility of the individual schools. The Wake County Human Resources department
coordinates applications and background checks, but individual schools select candidates to interview and hire.

In 2008, the Wake County Board of Education adopted the Healthy Schools Policy (Wake County Public School System [WCPSS], 2004), which stipulates that no more than 40% of a school population qualify for free and reduced-priced lunch. One of the goals of the Healthy Schools Policy was to evenly allocate economically disadvantaged students throughout the county. Although the policy has not been consistently enforced, it has highlighted the drastic differences between schools—especially Title I schools, high-poverty schools, magnet schools, and urban schools. No specific research exists on the teacher turnover rates at these schools, but most administrators agree that this disparity reduces the retention rate of all teachers.

**Challenges of High-Poverty Schools**

The challenges that high-poverty schools face are compounded by their inability to offer incentives. Wake County and the majority of counties in North Carolina provide no incentives for teachers to work in high-poverty schools. Schools nationwide attract teachers to a school with higher-poverty populations through strategies such as bonus pay for staff, hiring incentives, increased planning time, and smaller class sizes. Likewise, teachers earn pay increases for years of service but not for working at a specific school in North Carolina. Teachers earn the same rate of pay working at a low-poverty school as at a high-poverty school.
High-poverty classrooms are often more challenging for teachers due to discipline problems, lack of parental involvement, and racism (Robinson, 2007). He argued that unless teachers possess a “poverty ideology”—a recognition and understanding of the structural causes of poverty—they will not experience success in the high-poverty school. He further suggested that teachers’ pre-service training should better prepare them for teaching in high-poverty schools. In Retaining Teachers in High-Poverty Schools: A Policy Framework, Quartz, Barraza-Lyons, & Thomas (2005) maintained that teachers specifically trained to work with high-poverty students are more likely to stay in the profession.

High-poverty schools face unique challenges in recruiting and retaining teachers of all experience levels (Education Trust, 2006). Research over the last several years has begun to focus on the impact teaching in a high-poverty school has on teachers and how this affects student learning. Ingersoll (2001) estimated the turnover rate at high-poverty schools at 20% or higher. Turnover is especially costly because of the time, resources, and effort required to acclimate a new teacher to the school. Each new teacher is trained and supported throughout the year through unique orientation programs, curriculum and related resources, and specific expectations.

**Teacher Recruitment and Retention**

The existing research highlights several recruitment and retention issues in high-poverty schools. With significant shifts in demographic trends resulting in increased hiring of teachers and in the attrition that occurs because of retirements, the rate of retaining effective veteran teachers is one of the most important considerations for school administrators and
researchers. In the absence of mentoring programs for beginning teachers and special hiring incentives and bonuses, what reasons do effective veteran teachers have for remaining at high-poverty schools? Although research suggests that teach-for-pay incentives are ineffective recruitment strategies, many educators support paying teachers at high-poverty schools more than their counterparts at low-poverty schools. Given the structure of the ABC Accountability program and its incentive schedule, the only way for teachers at high-poverty schools to receive bonuses was for their students to meet the student achievement growth standards outlined by the state.

Stover (2007) acknowledged that teacher recruitment and retention is more difficult in high-poverty schools. He speculated that monetary incentives would possibly influence the number of applicants and encourage teachers to stay at the schools. His research highlighted the transfer policies of high poverty schools—teachers are allowed and sometimes encouraged to transfer to low-poverty schools.

Quartz et al. (2005) identified reasons that teachers in high-poverty schools leave the profession. The most frequently cited include low salaries, opportunity costs, job dissatisfaction, and working conditions. All of these factors are compounded in high-poverty schools (Quartz et al., 2005). High-poverty schools tend to be located in densely populated urban areas or in areas with larger concentrations of minority and low-performing students. Although not all high-poverty students are low performing, low-performing students have different and challenging academic needs (Quartz et al., 2005). Many of these high-poverty schools have Title I, Title II, or magnet programs in place to support student performance
and to supplement the traditional educational program. Likewise, these schools have greater challenges in meeting the High Quality Teacher requirements and goals for students specified in NCLB.

Darling-Hammond and Sykes (2003) maintained that high-poverty schools have significantly higher turnover rates than affluent schools, sometimes as high as 50%. Teachers transfer out of these schools of poor, minority, and low-achieving students to move to schools where students achieve at high academic levels. High-poverty schools present challenges that combine to lower teacher retention. According to Darling-Hammond and Sykes, salary is important but the working conditions at the high-poverty schools have the most significant impact on teacher retention. They noted that the facilities tend to be in worse condition, there are fewer textbooks and supplies, class sizes are larger, and there is less administrative support than is present in low-poverty schools.

Several recent studies, including one by the Center for Teaching Quality (CTQ), have recognized teacher preparation as an issue and outlined strategies for hard-to-staff schools to retain teachers and meet the academic goals of NCLB (Center for Teaching Quality [CTQ], 2008a). In an analysis of a variety of state-level teacher-retention programs, the CTQ argued that high-poverty schools have difficulties with recruitment and that these challenges are compounded by the turnover of effective veteran teachers. The authors noted, “Teachers are almost twice as likely to leave high-poverty schools as low-poverty schools” (CTQ, 2008a). Further, teachers who begin their careers in high-poverty schools are more likely to change schools either within or across districts (Scafidi et al., 2007). If veteran teachers are leaving
and it is difficult to secure replacements, “Schools suffer repeated disruption as new teachers come and go, and low-income schools are further undermined by their inability to attract and retain strong teachers” (Johnson, 2004, p. 15). This creates a type of teacher revolving door. Existing teachers leave as soon as they can secure employment elsewhere, and new teachers come only as a last chance for employment.

Recognizing the validity of the findings by Berry (2008) and the CTQ (2008), school systems like the WCPSS have established policies that address the role of the teacher and teacher recruitment in student achievement gaps between schools with higher percentages of students who receive free and reduced-priced lunch. The Healthy Schools Task Force Report of Recommendations and Procedures (WCPSS, 2004) outlined a series of characteristics and recommendations which, if enacted, will provide additional support to schools and students who have more significant academic, social, and personal needs. In addition to recognizing the need for increased staffing and training in how to best support students from high-poverty homes, the report encouraged county leadership to monitor the free and reduced-priced lunch percentages at all schools within designated attendance areas so that no one school is significantly higher than those around it. Task Force members noted that students who receive free and reduced-priced lunch often need additional academic support to achieve at a level comparable to their non-free and reduced-priced lunch classmates.

The issue of teacher turnover is complex. Teachers, like many other professionals, experience life-changing situations that result in their changing schools, leaving the profession, or stopping work altogether. Teacher turnover does not necessarily indicate there
is a problem with teacher retention—sometimes these life-changing situations leave a teacher no choice but to change schools. Over the last two decades, school systems have become more aware of the impact of teacher turnover and have begun to collect data to determine what factors influence a teacher’s decision to leave. In addition, many school systems have procedures in place to measure the number of teachers who leave and their reasons for leaving. North Carolina requires that Local Education Agencies, or school districts, complete an annual report on why their teachers left. The state compiles these surveys and generates a report on the turnover rates and reasons for leaving and including an analysis of turnover by county. In 2006, 22% of the teachers resigned to teach elsewhere and 16% retired. Less than 4% of the teachers resigned due to concerns about performance, non-renewal, or dismissal (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2007).

Although the causes of teacher turnover are always a concern, educators must acknowledge that not all turnover is bad. Of the 12,776 teachers in NC who left their school systems in 2006–2007, 678 left because of dissatisfaction with the profession or because they were terminated. It is quite likely that these teachers undermined student achievement and the school culture or that they did not recognize the level of their own contributions. The costs and potential impacts are the same, but the ultimate outcome may differ greatly from other types of turnover. Research on teacher retention focuses on the strategies that have proven effective with new teachers, with very little research on the retention of effective veteran teachers.
Wake County asks teachers to complete an exit survey. This survey is used to compile data on teacher licensure, reason for leaving, and factors that affected the teacher’s decision to leave (WCPSS, 2006). Although these data provide information about the number of departures each year, they do not explore teacher dissatisfaction with the profession, school, or system. The state’s analysis tool organizes these reasons into categories such as reasons that might be reduced or initiated by the individual counties. Teachers noted working conditions, benefits and salary, and school leadership as specific areas of concern that might be addressed. Wake Education Partnership conducts regular reviews of these issues and outlines specific strategies that school systems and schools can take to address teacher turnover.

Cochran-Smith (2004) noted that teacher shortages are not new but that the real problem is retention, especially in hard-to-staff schools. Instead of focusing on how to attract new professionals to the classrooms, policy-makers need to address retention as a multi-dimensional problem. Solutions will come from policies and from the school site. Teachers must be provided with leadership opportunities within the classroom and profession. Whether moving into administration or teacher-leader positions, high-poverty schools must accommodate teachers’ career paths. David (2008) observed that it is more difficult for high-poverty schools to retain veteran teachers than to recruit them. Teachers new to the profession may well be satisfied with any job upon graduation from college, whereas experienced teachers recognize the difference between working at a high-poverty school and at a low-poverty school.
Guarino, Santibanez, and Daley (2006) found that teachers who remain in the profession tend to be female, minority, and with lower measured ability on standardized tests than those who leave the profession. Teachers in high-poverty schools are more likely to leave than those in medium-poverty schools. School systems that best retained teachers were similar in size, location, wealth, student composition, student accomplishment, and school type.

In her study of the 1990–91 Schools and Staffing Survey and Teacher Follow-up Survey, Shen (1997) found that teacher retention is a result of the social learning that new teachers experience. Teachers who stay in the profession do so partly because of their salary and the tangible and intangible investments they have made in their profession. Because the salary may not compete with that of other college graduates, teachers are conservative in their finances and are more likely to stay as they advance in the profession. This is especially true of those teachers who pursue advanced degrees, leadership roles, and National Board certification. Shen determined that personal variables like marital status and number of children in the household directly influence teacher retention.

Snipes and Horwitz (2007) offered that human resources departments must review and revise their hiring practices and consider staffing patterns that complicate teacher retention for high-poverty schools. Snipes and Horwitz argued that since high-poverty schools have more difficulty retaining staff, the human resources department should revise their practices to recruit applicants that demonstrate desired characteristics and to limit the opportunities and incentives for teachers to transfer out of high-poverty schools.
In Johnson, Berg, and Donaldson’s review of literature on teacher retention (2005), they asserted that intrinsic and extrinsic awards influence teacher retention. The intrinsic rewards are the pleasure teachers gain in working with students, the satisfaction they derive from contributing to learning, the enthusiasm they have for the subject matter, and the influence they have over students. The extrinsic factors included salary and bonuses, benefits, public recognition, and special responsibilities associated with the teaching profession.

Grissom (2009) suggested that the most effective teacher retention strategy is to appoint principals who are experienced and have demonstrated a high level of leadership as reflected on their professional evaluations. Strategies such as providing specific opportunities for teacher growth through leadership positions and training, shared decision making about how the school operates, and providing feedback and encouragement to teachers will increase retention rates.

**Teacher Turnover Costs**

In their annual report on why teachers leave the profession, the North Carolina State Board of Education outlined turnover rates, reasons teachers leave the profession, and how much this turnover costs the school system and state. Schools incur significant expenses from having to replace teachers. When teachers leave, they take with them the cost of cumulative staff development and training that was provided by the county and school, the costs associated with the recruitment of new teachers, and the related costs of processing and
training new hires. One estimate put the cost of teacher turnover in the United States at more than $7 billion per year (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2007).

Since 1998, Wake County Human Resources administrators have maintained records on the number of teachers who leave the profession, why they leave, and other important information. In “All for All,” the Wake Task Force on Teacher Excellence (2001) noted that turnover influences the county in significant ways. They determined that each teacher resignation resulted in a cost of $11,570 to the county. Since that report, economic conditions have changed and the county now calculates this cost to be $16,861 (J. Kister, personal communication, June 6, 2007). This cost does not factor in the impact of teacher turnover on student achievement. Recent reports from the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (2007) noted that a failure to recognize the cost of turnover will have a cumulative negative effect on the school, school system, and teacher workforce. When an experienced teacher leaves, there are also intangible costs such as losing the experience and knowledge that this teacher gained during his or her tenure at the school. A new teacher requires training and becoming familiar with the curriculum, unique programs, and culture of the school.

In addition to the costs associated with replacing a teacher, teacher turnover creates a knowledge vacuum that can be damaging to students, other staff, and the school community. When teachers leave—regardless of their background and experience—they take with them the knowledge and preparation required for teachers in that school and system. In addition to
having to train the new hires, grade levels and grade level teams lose the specific contributions of that team member.

Students are more affected by a teacher’s departure than by other aspects of school (Darling-Hammond, 2000b). Experienced teachers are able to devote more time to teaching specific content than are inexperienced teachers because they already have a level of familiarity with the content and methodology. This knowledge directly affects the level at which students perform and compounds the severity of remediation and intervention for struggling students.

**Teacher Working Conditions**

In 2001, Governor Mike Easley established the Teacher Working Conditions (TWC) survey, widely recognized as a national model, to better understand the challenges faced by public-school teachers and how to reduce teacher turnover. Issued every two years, the TWC survey focuses on five broad categories: time, empowerment, professional development, leadership, and facilities and resources (Center for Teaching Quality [CTQ], 2004a, 2004b). The survey data are compiled by individual schools, school systems, and statewide to determine general findings and to be used in making recommendations.

In their 2004 report, the Center for Teaching Quality found that four out of the five working conditions have a significant effect on teacher retention. Even after a separate analysis of the correlations between working conditions and teacher retention, several definitive conclusions could be drawn. While survey results outlined “…many issues and concerns that contribute to teachers’ decisions to leave schools” (CTQ, 2004a, 2004b), the
report concluded that improved working conditions increase teacher retention. Because of their age, their location, and needs of their students who lack parental involvement, high-poverty schools are more likely to have inferior working conditions and fewer monetary resources. Even subtle changes in the five critical areas would require resources that high-poverty schools lack. Facilities, resources, and professional development are budget items and cannot be provided without additional funding. Teachers having adequate time for planning and time for non-essential duties requires the hiring of additional staff to supervise students. These working conditions are hallmarks of high-poverty schools and negatively impact teacher retention. To address each of these critical areas would require schools to increase their staff and budget.

Writing for the National Governors’ Association for Best Practices, Berry and Hirsch (2005) outlined four recommendations for governors who want to improve recruitment and retention of teachers in hard-to-staff schools. Data gathered through the Teacher Working Conditions surveys indicated that working conditions in schools is of the greatest concern to all teachers, new and veteran. “The data are clear: teachers leave schools when they do not have adequate administrative support and limited influence in decision making and when they face large classes…”

**Teacher Quality**

Unlike other professions, teaching does not have a uniform set of standards. Efforts at establishing national standards—like National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certification—have been effective at establishing a common set of standards in recent years.
Within schools and systems, effective teachers are identified through the evaluation process and licensure standards.

With the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2001 came an increased emphasis on teacher preparation programs and licensure. NCLB requires school systems to demonstrate that teachers meet their state’s Highly Qualified Teacher (HQT) requirements. The intention of the HQT requirements was to ensure that any teacher of a core subject was fully licensed in that subject. When the legislation first took effect, many veteran teachers were required to take and pass Praxis tests if they lacked licensure in the subject area in which they taught. Beginning teachers must also pass the Praxis test to earn a teaching license.

School-of-education graduates and out-of-state transfers preparing to teach in North Carolina must meet the State Department of Public Instruction’s HQT requirements. First, all applicants must prove they are eligible for a North Carolina license by submitting the application and degree-verification paperwork. Next, applicants must provide scores from the Praxis I and II tests or the equivalent tests from their home states, although passing their home state’s tests does not necessarily exempt them from taking the NC Praxis tests. The combination of an appropriate degree, applications for employment and licensure, and proof of eligibility for licensure must be in place before the state of North Carolina will grant a professional educator license.

NCLB is the most recent attempt to improve and standardize measures of teacher quality. However, it lacks a nuanced understanding of issues related to teacher quality. Over
40 years ago, Biddle and Ellena wrote *Contemporary Research on Teacher Effectiveness*, a
document considered by many to be the authority on the topic of teacher effectiveness.
Biddle and Ellena (1964) recognized that defining teacher effectiveness is both complex and
confusing. They sought to quantify teacher effectiveness by reviewing thousands of studies
and evaluation instruments. They found a relationship between teacher behavior and teacher
effectiveness and established a list of unrelated abilities, or teacher effectiveness variables
(Biddle & Ellena, 1964). The numerous studies conducted since the 1960s disagree on how
to best determine a teacher’s effectiveness. Nevertheless, teachers who demonstrate certain
identified behaviors, such as knowledge of curriculum and appropriate supporting resources,
an understanding and application of behavior-management strategies, and the ability to
establish productive relationships with students, are more likely to demonstrate effectiveness
as measured by student achievement and other standardized outcomes (Biddle & Ellena,
1964). Since the relationship between teacher behaviors and teacher effectiveness is
dependent on knowledge of the subject/grade level curricula, an understanding of behavior-
management strategies, and other indicators, the likelihood of a teacher’s achieving a high
level of effectiveness increases as his or her years of experience increases (Darling-
Hammond, 2000a).

In the early 1900s, during the scientific management movement, employers sought to
determine if their workers were productive. School systems implemented a variety of
evaluation instruments, including checklists and ratings forms. As student achievement has
become more objective and measurable, discussions about teacher effectiveness now address the extent to which teachers positively affect student performance on standardized tests.

In addition to focusing on teaching results, evaluation instruments have included categories such as technique of instruction, classroom management, professional attitude, and daily preparation. While some of the vocabulary has changed, these instruments continue to focus on the same teacher behaviors and measures of effectiveness. The Teacher Performance Appraisal System, the evaluation instrument used by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction for all public-school teachers, is comprised of eight functions: management of instructional time, management of student behavior, instructional presentation, instructional monitoring, instructional feedback, facilitating instruction, communicating within the educational environment, and performing non-instructional duties (Appendix VIII). The instrument is used in the evaluation process in an effort to provide feedback to teachers and to maintain performance standards for probationary and tenured teachers.

In North Carolina, the teacher evaluation instrument is the same for all teachers regardless of years of experience and performance. The only difference between the evaluation process for new and veteran teachers is the process that is used. Probationary teachers are observed a minimum of four times per year, and ratings are completed at the end of the year. Teachers with tenure are observed a minimum of two times per year, with ratings completed during their license-renewal year. The state of North Carolina prohibits schools from assigning new teachers extra duty—coaching, committee membership, etc., without
their approval and the completion of a form outlining the specific extra duty. Because of this state-mandated limitation, schools call on veteran teachers disproportionately to serve on clubs, committees, and other extra-duty assignments.

Borman and Kimball (2005) noted that teacher effectiveness directly impacts student achievement and is a result of skills, beliefs, and other characteristics that teachers apply in their classrooms. This skill set varies from elementary to middle to high school and between schools with different demographics, sizes, and academic programs. The challenge for researchers is to identify the skills, beliefs, and characteristics that foster student achievement and to establish these as expectations at all schools regardless of school differences.

Campbell, Kyriakides, Muijs, and Robinson (2004) defined teacher effectiveness as the manner in which teaching methods, teacher experience, classroom organization, and the use of classroom resources combine to foster student performance. Although evaluation instruments attempt to measure teacher effectiveness, the instruments do not gauge a teacher’s sense of self-efficacy.

Nieto (2003) outlined a list of traits of teachers who are successful in teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students. Teachers who excel in low-poverty schools might not necessarily be effective in high-poverty schools. Characteristics of teachers who are successful with high-poverty students include an ability to connect learning with students’ lives, maintaining high expectations for all students, and demonstrating resiliency (Nieto, 2003).
Given the higher turnover rates at high-poverty schools, strict requirements of HQT, observation and evaluation standards, and the burden of extra duties that fall upon veteran teachers, greater demands are placed on those who choose to remain at high-poverty elementary schools. When the increased challenges of high-poverty schools are considered, the significance of this study becomes both apparent and timely.

**Veteran Teachers**

Researchers and policy makers understand how effective teachers foster student achievement and contribute to the overall culture of a school (Darling-Hammond, 2000b). Turnover is acceptable and even desirable if it involves few or none of the most effective teachers. Likewise, a balance of beginning and veteran teachers adds to the energy level of teacher teams and school staffs. Available research reveals there is no established body of literature on the subject of retention of veteran teachers (Johnson et al., 2005).

A teacher’s having achieved tenure with a particular school system does not mean this teacher is effective. The current teacher evaluation process consists of one instrument for both probationary and career-status teachers. Tenure is granted to a teacher after four consecutive years of full-time service and satisfactory evaluations. In some counties, a slight salary increase occurs after the fourth year. Although the current evaluation process specifies multiple classroom observations and the completion of a Professional Development Plan, there is no structure in place to ensure that teachers have achieved a designated level of performance. Tenure is primarily determined by years of service rather than by performance evaluations.
The impact of veteran teachers on student achievement has been closely examined (Darling-Hammond, 2000b). High-poverty schools are more likely to have inexperienced teachers and quite possibly less-qualified teachers (Education Trust, 2006). Less experience and qualification impede student achievement. Because of hiring practices and the absence of pay incentives for working at high-poverty schools, poor students are more likely than non-poor students to have a new, inexperienced teacher. Some researchers have argued that the achievement gap exists because of the disparities in hiring practices between high-poverty and low-poverty elementary schools.

Additionally, funding inequities between schools may result in high-poverty schools. In most systems, schools are given the same per-pupil allotment regardless of demographics or the percentage of free and reduced-price lunches. In an effort to increase the school’s operating budget, many schools supplement their budgets with fundraisers and PTA endowments. These additional funds can go towards hiring another teacher, which in turn reduces overall class size. Lacking the parental support and benefits of a wealthy population, high-poverty schools allocate their budgets within the given constraints. Some systems control their budgets by limiting the number of veteran teachers hired, which can make the difference between a $33,000 hire and a $60,000 hire.

Veteran teachers draw on their experience in the classroom, their familiarity with the educational system, and their reputation in working with students. “The evidence is incontrovertible that experience makes teachers more effective. Most research suggests that teachers are considerably more effective after completing two years on the job” (Education
As teachers gain experience with a particular curricula, knowledge of grading practices, collaboration, and school and system culture, they can devote less conscious effort to remembering these facets and focus on how best to teach.

**Professional Needs of Veteran Teachers**

Darling-Hammond (1997, 2003) and Johnson (2004) have brought light to the issues surrounding the retention of new teachers, but research on retention of veteran teachers is lacking. Although it is widely recognized that teacher retention at high-poverty schools is more challenging than at low-poverty schools, research on strategies for retaining veteran teachers at high-poverty elementary schools is limited. Teachers have professional needs that should be met in order for them to remain in the classroom. Salaries, working conditions, planning and preparation, mentoring and leadership opportunities, participation in the decision-making process, and the support of the administration are important to their overall satisfaction.

In “Target Time for Teachers,” Darling-Hammond (1999) emphasized the importance of providing time for teachers to participate in professional development and collaboration with their teammates during the school day. Darling-Hammond noted that teacher retention and student achievement will improve if teachers are given time to extend their own professional knowledge on relevant subjects without having to sacrifice personal time and resources. Teachers also need to have a designated time during which they can plan and discuss student learning with their colleagues.
As identified in the North Carolina TWC, professional development of teachers should be an area of focus for principals and central office staff. Veteran teachers are looking for opportunities to grow professionally through workshops, conferences, leadership positions, graduate degrees, and additional areas of licensure. North Carolina supports several programs that attempt to meet the professional needs of veteran teachers, including Teacher Academy, the North Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching, and providing incentives to encourage teachers to apply and receive National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certification. Each of these three programs has specific application requirements, including a minimum years-of-experience.

Johnson et al. (2005) studied the reasons teachers leave the profession and identified a link involving in-service professional development, student achievement, and teacher retention. They noted that approximately 99% of public-school teachers participate in professional development designed to update teachers’ skills and knowledge base. They found that if teachers believe that the professional development is targeting their specific situation and personal-development needs, it fosters their desire to remain in the profession. Although there is disagreement about the most effective model for professional development, Johnson et al. agreed that any model must focus on improving teacher practice by providing the opportunity to learn and apply new methods and to observe results of their efforts. The most logical approach is that of job-embedded professional development that weaves teacher training into the daily work of school. This training is ongoing, targets teachers’ needs, and focuses on instructional practices (Johnson et al., 2005). The work of Barnett Berry and
others from CTQ (2008) underscored the importance of ongoing professional development and training for teachers and the impact such preparation and training has on teacher retention (Berry & Montgomery, 2008).

Kelly (2004) extended this finding by establishing a connection involving teacher salaries, the behavioral climate of the school, professional development, and the opportunities for teacher leadership within the school. When each of these factors is present, teachers are more likely to remain at the school and in the profession. Although teachers may not cite any one of these factors as the reason for their retention, they do recognize the impact of each.

In their study of North Carolina teachers who qualified for the N.C. Bonus Program, Clotfelter, Glennie, Ladd, and Vigdor (2006) determined that salary does influence a teacher’s decision to remain in the profession. Their research revealed numerous problems with the payment of bonuses that might have skewed the overall results of the study, but they did determine that bonuses and salary increases should be considered when trying to retain veteran teachers in high-poverty schools.

Johnson (2004) recognized that veteran teachers may want to advance to the next level—administration—while other teachers prefer to remain in the classroom serving as mentors and teacher leaders. Ingersoll and Bossi (1995) recommended providing opportunity to pursue leadership roles outside of the classroom and in addition to teachers’ routine duties. If high-poverty schools want veteran teachers to remain, they must identify prospects for vertical and lateral movement within the school.
Goldhaber, Gross, and Player (2007) found that the most effective teachers remain in the classroom longer than the least effective teachers. These effective teachers tend to be those professionals who have participated in training, school-based support programs, and staff-development opportunities. The combined effect of experience, training, and support influenced teachers’ decisions to stay in the profession. The authors noted that salary and school climate contribute to teacher retention, but the relationship is not as direct.

**Personal Needs of Veteran Teachers**

Working professionals receive more than just a paycheck for the performance of their work. They receive extrinsic, ancillary rewards and psychic or intrinsic rewards (Lortie, 1975, p. 101). The profession of teaching focuses primarily on the psychic rewards: influencing students, reaching students, respect from others, and the service they are performing for society. In his exhaustive studies of Servant Leadership and related topics, Sergiovanni (1990) discussed the differences between teachers who seek more than the standard return for their time and effort and those who do not seek additional opportunities outside of the classroom. These teachers, veteran and novice, provide more than “a fair day’s work” for “a fair day’s pay” (Sergiovanni, 1990, p. 4). They are motivated by the intrinsic rewards they receive for working with children, watching them learn and develop, and the impact their work has on their school and community as a whole. Although pay and working conditions influence their perceptions about their job and have some impact on their decision to remain in the profession, teachers with this level of personal commitment view their commitment to public education differently from others.
Cooper and Alvarado (2005) argued that teachers enter the profession because of the intrinsic rewards that the profession offers but stay because of extrinsic factors such as salary, working conditions, the support of the administration, student discipline, and motivation. If schools want to retain new and veteran teachers, they must focus on all of these extrinsic factors, not just one in isolation. This focus is more pronounced in high-poverty schools, where the buildings may be older and ill equipped and a majority of students enter kindergarten without the requisite skills to facilitate their own learning. Cooper and Alvarado maintained that teachers leave high-poverty schools because of the lower levels of student achievement. They can pursue teaching positions at other schools within the system for the same rate of pay and not be confronted with low student achievement and poor working conditions.

In his seminal work, *Schoolteacher: A Sociological Study*, Lortie acknowledged that some teachers enter the profession seeking long-term rewards and will “…concentrate their energies at points where effort may make a difference” (Lortie, 1975, p. 101). These teachers describe their work as educators as a calling, service, or personal commitment. As schools seek to determine how to retain effective veteran teachers in high-poverty schools, administrators need to better understand the motivation that keeps these “givers” in the classroom long beyond the average tenure (Lortie, 1975). Although it is important to recognize the different ways employees are motivated, “…the goal is to uncover rewards which cut across the preferences of individuals” (Lortie, 1975, p. 101). Focused efforts on retaining veteran teachers will inevitably foster the retention of novice teachers as well.
Conceptual Framework Model

The literature referenced in this chapter indicates that three primary factors combine to hinder the retention of effective veteran teachers in high-poverty elementary schools. To foster retaining those teachers, school administrators and educational leaders must identify and work to implement the following three factors: recognize and support the personal and professional needs of teachers, maintain positive working conditions within the school, and understand the way recruitment and retention strategies impact high-poverty schools.

This literature review has provided an overview of the challenges that confront high-poverty schools. Each of the studies referenced the complexity of teacher retention in high-poverty schools and identified one or more factors that raise retention rates. Many of the authors noted that a focus on only one or two of the primary factors is not enough to outweigh the negative effects of the high-poverty school. The retention of effective veteran teachers will continue to be a problem for high-poverty schools until school administrators implement strategies to address all three primary factors.

The following is a visual representation of the three primary factors.
As noted throughout the literature reviews - high-poverty schools must recognize that the current recruitment and retention strategies do not support the retention of effective veteran teachers. The first of the three factors, recruitment and retention strategies is often the most complicated and frustrating for educational leaders. Principals do not have direct control over recruitment and are left to select from a pool of candidates recruited by someone else. Supports in the form of additional staffing and increased access to materials and
supplies must be in place to target the academic and behavioral needs that high-poverty students have when they enter elementary school. Providing teachers with additional training in how to work with high-poverty students, remedial reading and math instruction, and knowledge of how to work with students from diverse backgrounds is vital to the success of these schools. High-poverty schools should have a different salary schedule that includes a signing and student achievement bonus for teachers.

The second primary factor is that high-poverty schools must meet the working conditions needs of teachers in ways that allow them to advance within the profession. As noted in results summaries, the Center for Teaching Quality has identified planning time, condition of the building, working relationships among the staff, and other factors as important in providing a supportive and productive working environment. Teachers from schools with diverse student populations routinely identify the importance of having planning time, appropriate facilities, resources, a feeling of empowerment, leadership opportunities, and professional development, which compensate for the challenges of working at high-poverty schools. These conditions are essential in a school where the facilities are outdated and may lack technology accessibility. Teachers need to have common planning time to develop lessons and collaborate to best meet the needs of their students, especially the struggling learners.

The third primary factor is the importance of recognizing and supporting the personal and professional needs of effective veteran teachers. Studies indicate that these teachers have unique needs, which when met, will result in their satisfaction and longevity in the
profession. Effective veteran teachers are often interested in expanding their skill set without moving outside of the classroom. School administrators need to work with these teachers to identify leadership opportunities like grade-level chair, lead teacher, and mentoring. Given the many leadership roles that effective veteran teachers assume—whether by choice or necessity—these teachers require additional planning time within the school day. This protected planning time allows them to meet with their mentors, observe classes, and support student learning while students are present.

Effective veteran teachers also require differentiated professional development that meets their professional needs. They may need more in-depth workshops on instructional technology than their younger colleagues. Likewise, they do not require as much time to learn about standards, objectives, and curricular changes.

Although it is important to recognize and support effective veteran teachers’ professional needs, it is also important to focus on their personal needs. Effective veteran teachers report satisfaction from being educators. Although many studies recommend financial incentives to remain in the profession, effective veteran teachers express a need for increased recognition of their efforts and commitment. Pay increases are attractive to all teachers regardless of their years of service, but tiered benefits and opportunities are noted as important by effective veteran teachers.

Summary

This chapter has reviewed research on the topic of the retention of effective veteran teachers in high-poverty schools. High-poverty schools present unique challenges that impact
teacher turnover. Acknowledging that teacher turnover affects students, staffs, schools, and systems, there are different reasons for the turnover of beginning teachers and veteran teachers. Likewise, there are different strategies for influencing the retention of effective veteran teachers. Although we know a lot about the retention of new teachers, we know very little about the retention of effective veteran teachers. Appendix I is a comprehensive summary of the literature review by specific category and includes key research questions, the type of study, and the key findings.

This study seeks to inform policy makers and building-level administrators on how to retain effective veteran teachers in high-poverty schools. The following research questions will be the focus of the principal and teacher interviews.

1. What teacher-retention challenges do high-poverty elementary schools face?
2. What challenges do high-poverty elementary schools face in retaining effective veteran teachers?
3. Why do effective veteran teachers stay at high-poverty elementary schools?
4. What are the implications of the findings from the previous questions for educational leaders and school administrators?

The next chapter will outline the qualitative methodology used in this study.
CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the research methods, sample selection, data collection and analysis techniques, and the overall research process used in this study. The purpose of this study was to identify the factors that influence the retention of effective veteran teachers at high-poverty elementary schools. Qualitative research is the best methodological approach because as Creswell noted, “…the focus of all qualitative research needs to be on understanding the phenomenon” (Creswell, 2007). The phenomenon of retaining effective veteran teachers in high-poverty schools can be best examined by interviewing effective veteran teachers, which provides insight into the reasons they have chosen to remain at high-poverty schools instead of transferring to low-poverty schools.

Introduction to Research Methods

Phase I: Research

As part of my coursework at North Carolina State University, several colleagues and I completed “A Study of Perceptions of Teacher Retention in the Wake County Public School System (WCPSS) from the Human Resources Perspective.” This study consisted of interviews and document reviews in an effort to better understand the structures in place to support and retain new teachers and effective veteran teachers. This research considered the perspectives of key administrators on the issue of teacher retention. The results indicated that although there are concerted efforts to retain new teachers, no strategies exist to retain effective veteran teachers. Transfer practices permit teachers to move from school to school, and there are no incentives for teachers to remain in high-poverty schools.
Pilot Study

As I developed the interview questions for my research study, I conducted a pilot study to determine the appropriateness of my interview questions and the overall interview structure. Two effective veteran teachers who met the pre-established criteria were selected and interviewed. Each participant, in that person’s interview, emphasized the importance of school climate and the role of the administration in high-poverty schools. This prompted me to expand my list of questions to include questions which focus on the factors that influence why effective veteran teachers stay at high-poverty schools. Question three was amended to determine the primary reason the effective veteran teacher stayed, and not just why he or she believes other teachers stay. Overall, the pilot study provided an opportunity to preview the research questions and to make appropriate adjustments before I started my research study.

Site Selection and Sample

In an effort to better understand the reasons that effective veteran teachers choose to remain at high-poverty schools, I conducted a case study of effective veteran teachers at three high-poverty elementary schools. Using data from the WCPSS, I selected the schools. For the purposes of this research, I considered schools who had a free and reduced-price lunch population of 35% or higher as the threshold. In an effort to ensure that all three schools were demographically similar and to limit my study to urban schools, I chose magnet elementary schools in the downtown Raleigh area.
Phase II: Research Data Collection

After receiving permission from WCPSS and approval from the NCSU IRB, I contacted the principal of each school. During the principal interview (Appendix IV), I posed eleven questions to better understand the principal’s perceptions on teacher retention. We discussed the principal’s professional background and experiences at the current school. Each principal shared demographic data about his/her school and what makes that school unique within the school system. I reviewed WCPSS data on school and system demographics to confirm the preliminary information and before finalizing my choice of three schools (Wake County Public School System, 2010).

Next, we discussed the process by which the principal would designate the teacher-interview participants: five effective veteran teachers who met my criteria of “effective.” I defined an effective veteran teacher (see Definition of Terms section) as one who has earned above-average ratings on teacher evaluations, holds advanced degrees or National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certification, and holds various leadership positions within the school. Although no principal revealed specific information regarding the teachers’ evaluation results, each of the three principals did acknowledge that the five teachers they recommended met my criteria as effective veteran teachers. The principals noted specific contributions that the teachers had made and the leadership positions they held.

Several questions focused on the principal’s previous professional experiences, including any at low-poverty schools. Additionally, we discussed the factors that each principal believes impact the retention of effective veteran teachers. This combination of
questions enabled me to see the school, principal, and participating effective veteran teachers as a community and to gain insight into the reasons they believe teachers leave or remain at their school.

Next, I contacted the 15 teachers identified by the three principals. I anticipated that some of them might be unable to complete the research process due to personal scheduling difficulties, illness, or other reasons. Nonetheless, I was able to establish communication with and interview all 15 teachers. My written communication with the effective veteran teachers outlined my purpose for completing this study and why I sought their involvement. The letter explained the study and their participation. I communicated with each teacher by email to further detail the purpose of my study and to establish personal contact. I scheduled a meeting during which time I conducted the in-depth interview using the interview guide (Appendix V). The interviews lasted approximately one hour and were held at the school site in a semi-private setting. I took notes but also audio-taped the interviews. After the interviews, I transcribed the audio tapes.

Upon completion of the initial meetings and interviews, I scheduled a focus group to include as many of the 15 teacher-participants as were available. Three teachers attended, and a fourth followed up by email the following day. The fourth teacher expressed regret in her email noting that a parent came to her room after school and they met to discuss concerns. As a result of the forecast for snow and previously scheduled meetings, several teachers advised that they would be unable to attend the focus group meeting. The purpose of the focus group was to generate discussion on the topic of retention of effective veteran
teachers. I utilized the focus group protocol guide (Appendix VI), which I created, to facilitate discussion and to guide our conversation. Using these multiple sources of information, I wrote a description and case-based themes for all three of the school-specific case studies. The three case-based themes follow. This collective case study approach allowed me to highlight issues that are of concern at each of the three schools but still allow for generalizations based on characteristics of the individual participants. Table 1 is a summary of participants, who are identified by pseudonyms, by school, race, gender, position, years of teaching in the WCPSS, and leadership positions.

Table 1

Participant Summary by School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Principal</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Years of Teaching Experience—Total/WCPSS</th>
<th>Advanced Degree/NBPTS</th>
<th>Leadership Positions*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Mr. Muscle</td>
<td>Jill</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>5th grade</td>
<td>31/15</td>
<td></td>
<td>SIT, PTA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Mr. Muscle</td>
<td>Shirley</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3rd grade</td>
<td>35/13</td>
<td></td>
<td>SIT, Committees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Mr. Muscle</td>
<td>Felecia</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2nd grade</td>
<td>31/15</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mentor, SIT, LT, GLC, Committees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Mr. Muscle</td>
<td>Alice</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3rd grade</td>
<td>8/7</td>
<td></td>
<td>SIT, GLC, NCAE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Mr. Muscle</td>
<td>Dawn</td>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1st grade</td>
<td>11/11</td>
<td></td>
<td>SIT, SST, PBS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>Ms. Heart</td>
<td>Bill</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Specialist</td>
<td>18/12</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>Ms. Heart</td>
<td>Margaret</td>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2nd grade</td>
<td>12/12</td>
<td></td>
<td>Committees</td>
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<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>Ms. Heart</td>
<td>Laura</td>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Specialist</td>
<td>37/20</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mentor, Committees, SIT, GLC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Principal</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Years of Teaching Experience—Total/WCPSS</th>
<th>Advanced Degree/NBPTS</th>
<th>Leadership Positions*</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>Ms. Heart</td>
<td>Jennifer</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>5th grade</td>
<td>26/17</td>
<td></td>
<td>SIT, Committees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>Ms. Heart</td>
<td>Renee</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Specialist</td>
<td>31/21</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>SST, LT, Committees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern</td>
<td>Ms. Passion</td>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>11/5</td>
<td></td>
<td>Helping Hands, Committees, Summer School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern</td>
<td>Ms. Passion</td>
<td>Sara</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3rd grade</td>
<td>7/7</td>
<td></td>
<td>SIT Chair, Committees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern</td>
<td>Ms. Passion</td>
<td>Tammy</td>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>5th grade</td>
<td>14/9</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mentor, SIT Chair, Tutor, Club Sponsor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern</td>
<td>Ms. Passion</td>
<td>Connie</td>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Specialist</td>
<td>17/6</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>SIT, LT, PTA, Committees LT, SST, Committees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern</td>
<td>Ms. Passion</td>
<td>Peggy</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Specialist</td>
<td>19/11</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. SIT = School Improvement Team; PTA = Parent Teacher Association; LT = Leadership Team; GLC = Grade Level Chairperson; NCAE = North Carolina Association of Educators; SST = Student Support Team; PBS = Positive Behavior Support; Helping Hands = Mentor program for minority males; Committees = School Improvement Sub-Committees, which support specific improvement goals.

*The specialist position includes Title I teachers and those who teach dance, drama, art, music, and physical education.

Research Questions

This case study analysis sought to determine the following:

1. What teacher-retention challenges do high-poverty elementary schools face?

2. What challenges do high-poverty elementary schools face in retaining effective veteran teachers?
3. Why do effective veteran teachers stay at high-poverty elementary schools?

4. What are the implications of the findings from the previous questions to educational leaders and school administrators?

Data Analysis

After I completed the principal interviews, the teacher interviews, and the teacher focus group, I transcribed the audio tapes and written notes and created one electronic document for each participant. In my research binder, I created three sections—one for each of the three schools. I included the principal interview, the teacher interviews, the focus group session, the informed consent forms, and copies of email correspondence. This allowed me to review each school and make comparisons within and between schools. Using the constant comparative method, I analyzed the interviews by school and by teacher by reviewing responses for each interview question. Each school, principal, and teacher was assigned a pseudonym to preserve anonymity. As I collected the data, I reviewed the data for “…key issues, recurrent events, or activities in the data that become categories of focus” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). My review of responses focused on the issues, events, and activities, with the purpose of creating categories of focus for further review. This required reflection and in-depth writing during the research process and after I concluded my on-site interviews.

As the categories were being identified, I wrote about each to describe the observations that I made and how these observations related to the information revealed in the interviews and the documents. As I completed this writing, I sought to identify themes,
social processes, and relationships that exist within and between the principals and effective veteran teachers and how these dynamics influence teacher retention. I color-coded each of the four research questions and transferred this coding system to my notes from each of the 18 interviews. I created a chart to allow me to more easily visualize the responses and how these responses corresponded with my research questions. Additionally, I cross-referenced the principal interview questions, teacher interview questions, and focus group interview questions to simplify and support my analysis (Table 2).

Table 2

Research Questions Cross-Referenced with Interview Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Pertinent Principal Interview Question(s)</th>
<th>Pertinent Teacher Interview Question(s)</th>
<th>Pertinent Focus Group Interview Question(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What teacher-retention challenges do high poverty elementary schools face?</td>
<td>2, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10</td>
<td>2, 3, 4, 5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What challenges do high-poverty elementary schools face in retaining effective veteran teachers?</td>
<td>2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10</td>
<td>5, 6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Why do effective veteran teachers stay at high-poverty elementary schools?</td>
<td>6, 7, 8, 9, 10</td>
<td>5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. What are the implications of the findings from the previous questions to educational leaders and school administrators?</td>
<td>1, 2, 11</td>
<td>1, 7, 10</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After rereading my transcriptions and listening to the audio tapes again, I identified three themes that emerged from the principal and teacher interviews. These three themes—the importance of administrator support, the personal and professional rewards gained from working in high-poverty schools, and the opportunities these three high-poverty schools
offered to students and teachers—form the basis of my research findings and recommendations for future study.

**Research Validity and Reliability**

As a result of being a principal in a high-poverty elementary school, I have a vested interest in the retention of effective veteran teachers. For the majority of my administrative career, I have focused my time and energies on interviewing, hiring, and retaining teachers. Although these experiences have provided much insight and knowledge about the issue of teacher retention, I believe there is much more to learn. As I sought to fully understand the experiences of effective veteran teachers in high-poverty schools, it was imperative that research validity and reliability be maintained.

In an effort to ensure the validity of this research, I devoted extended periods of time to the interview and observation portions of the study. I talked with the principals by phone and then met with them to complete the interview protocol form. During these interviews, I sought to establish myself as trustworthy credible, and authentic to maximize the quality and amount of information shared. In an effort to “…make sure that the findings are transferable between the researcher and those being studied, thick description is necessary” (Creswell, 2007, p. 204). I audio-taped the interviews and scripted notes. This provided me with more information and specific details referred to and expounded on during the analysis portion of my research. Furthermore, I sought to remain open and objective during these interviews and observations so as not to allow my own prejudices about teacher retention to impact the research.
To ensure reliability, I used two high-quality tape recorders during the interviews. In the event that one tape recorder did not work or produce a quality recording, I had a backup tape for transcription purposes. Additionally, I had multiple copies of the interview forms and documents to prevent any delays or having to reschedule. I completed the transcriptions, which allowed me to further familiarize myself with the data collected and to guarantee the quality. Before beginning the transcriptions, I established a set of codes to make sure themes were consistently identified. Records were organized through a pre-determined system using school, principal, and teacher names.

In an effort to fully research the topic of retention of effective veteran teachers, I met with Amy Vanscoy, research librarian, to further consider the range of research strategies available. In reviewing the most reliable research strategies, we determined that I had exhausted relevant sources.

**Safeguards against Researcher Bias**

In an effort to safeguard against researcher bias, I shared details of my professional work history with all participants. It was important that they recognize my personal experiences with the issue of veteran teacher retention and the commitment I have for this topic. It was important that throughout the interviews, I adhere to the interview protocol forms and employ effective questioning strategies to gain further insights and information. Throughout the data analysis, it was imperative that I allow the developing themes to drive the analysis and not interject my own biases or opinions. After the data were transcribed and
I began analyzing the data, I reviewed my scripted notes and the audio tapes to ensure that I did not omit important details or other information that might impact the results of this study.

Subjectivity Statement for Diann Kearney

The nature of qualitative research dictates that the researcher will serve as the data-collection instrument. Given my experiences as a public-school teacher and administrator in high-poverty schools, I approached this topic with preconceived notions influenced by the manner in which teacher retention has affected my role as principal and by how the school community as a whole has influenced my perspective.

In September of 2003, I was named principal of Conn Elementary. Since joining the Conn staff, I have focused the majority of my time and energy on teacher retention. Although the turnover rate has dropped from over 25% to less than 3% at one point, I still must address teacher retention on a daily basis. As a result, the topic of teacher retention is of great interest and relevance to me.

I have been directly involved in the hiring, termination, and retention of several hundred staff members in the WCPSS. I have first-hand knowledge of what is involved in all aspects of the hiring, observation, evaluation, probationary status, and termination of employees. For these reasons, I have formed opinions of how the issue of teacher retention influences our county and what changes would benefit the system.

In an effort to limit the potential impact of my personal biases, I solicited the names of effective veteran teachers from the principals of three high-poverty schools. These participants were identified based on three criteria: above-standard ratings on the Teacher
Performance Appraisal Instrument, having achieved National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certification or some other form of recognition for outstanding performance, and having taught for more than four years at the school. By focusing on participants’ choice of words, body language, and enthusiasm or hesitancies when speaking, I sought to objectively reveal how effective veteran teachers related their experiences in a high-poverty school. I also attempted to limit the impact of the following as I conducted the interviews:

- My experiences as the principal of a high-poverty school
- My sensitivity to the topic of teacher retention— as both a principal and a teacher who left the classroom to move into administration
- My work with Human Resources staff members in all aspects of recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers
- My assumptions and impressions formed during the principal, teacher, and focus-group interviews.

Subjectivity and bias are realities in qualitative research, especially in one’s own field of study. Given the struggles that I have encountered in trying to retain experienced teachers in the high-poverty school where I am principal, I recognize the heightened level of sensitivity and perspective that I possess. I tried to reduce the potential impact of any bias I may have by utilizing a focus group and by triangulating using multiple sources of data.
During the initial interviews and focus group, I sought to learn more about the participants’ experiences and beliefs regarding teacher retention. By putting the emphasis on their responses, I avoided allowing my personal opinions to impact the results of this study.

**Ethical Issues**

In any qualitative study that involves volunteer participants, two considerations can negatively affect the results. One is the belief that the subjects fully understand the nature of the study and how they will contribute. I sought to inform the subjects during the introductory letters, preliminary email conversations, and interviews. The second consideration was being able to ensure that participation in the study would not negatively impact the participants. It was important that I have well-developed method for organizing the data before beginning the interviews and observations, so that participants felt comfortable with how I would use their information. Each subject was provided with the Institutional Review Board documentation and the Informed Consent paperwork that contained a full explanation of the implications of participating in a research study.

**Limitations of the Study**

As I approached the start of my research, I recognized many potential limitations of this study. In selecting high-poverty urban schools to study, I narrowed the scope of my research to schools that share similar demographics and geographical locations. While these similarities may result in the repetition of information, the themes and insights may be applicable only to schools that share these characteristics. Likewise, by studying only high-poverty urban schools, I may be limiting my study to teachers who were initially drawn to
work at this type of school and who have not seriously considered leaving to teach at a low-poverty school.

Summary

In this chapter, I have identified the methods that will be utilized during my study of effective veteran teachers at high-poverty schools. I have outlined and discussed the research questions, data-collection and analysis strategies, and limitations. Chapter 4 will outline the findings of the research.
CHAPTER 4
FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to identify the factors that influence the retention of effective veteran teachers at high-poverty elementary schools. In the spring of 2010, I used several reports generated by the WCPSS to identify three elementary schools that have free-and-reduced-lunch percentages higher than 35%, are located in downtown Raleigh, and are designated as Title I and magnet schools. Schools are eligible to receive federal funds as part of the Title I program if more than 35% of their population qualifies for free and reduced-price lunch. The Title I program funds are used to hire teachers to work directly with students who meet the established eligibility criteria. The WCPSS implemented the magnet program in 1983 in an effort to maximize the use of schools in areas of the county where the student population was dwindling. Although each of the three schools in this study is identified as a magnet, their magnet programs differ greatly. This chapter provides an analysis of the data gathered during the principal and teacher interviews.

After identifying each school, I phoned each of their principals and scheduled a meeting at their school or another central location. I explained the purpose of my research and the process I would take to gather valuable insights from them and at least five of their effective veteran teachers. We discussed the time frame and what I anticipated to be their time commitment. We then scheduled a follow-up meeting during which time we signed the Informed Consent Form for Research and completed the principal interview (Appendix IV). The principal interview was intended to gain insight into the principal’s perceptions on
teacher retention. We discussed the principal’s professional background and experiences at the current school. Each principal shared demographic data about his/her school and what makes that school unique within the school system.

Using a handheld recorder and scripting, I conducted the interview. Several days later, I confirmed their continued participation and solicited the names of five effective veteran teachers. Each principal provided me with the names and contact information for five teachers. I emailed each teacher, explaining my research and the interview process, and asked if they would participate in the study. As each teacher responded, I confirmed a meeting date and time at their respective school sites. The teacher interviews (Appendix V) were conducted according to the agreed-upon schedule using the questions I had developed.

After the interviews, the audiotapes and written notes were transcribed. Each school and teacher was assigned a pseudonym. After the 15 interviews were completed, I scheduled focus-group interviews (Appendix VI) at two of the three school sites for the purposes of triangulating the data through follow-up discussion on key themes and further insights into teacher retention. Three teachers attended the first focus-group interview. Three focus group participants contacted me by email to advise that they would be unable to attend. On the day of the second focus group interview, weather forecasters called for snow and ice during rush hour—the time we had scheduled the interview. After consulting with my committee co-chair, I determined it was appropriate to cancel the second focus-group interview. Since it was the week prior to winter break, we agreed not to reschedule.
Wake County Public School System—Demographic Data, 2009–2010

As of the 2009–2010 school year, the WCPSS was composed of 159 schools with a total of 139,599 students ranging from pre-kindergarten through grade 12. A fast-growing school system, Wake County hired 1000 new teachers for the start of the 2009–2010 school year. Of the 159 schools, 86 had a free-and-reduced-price-lunch population higher than 30%. Of the 139,599 students, 51.1% were white, 25.9% were African-American, 11.8% were Hispanic, 6.1% were Asian, 4.8% were Multiracial, and 0.3% identified themselves as American Indian.

The WCPSS is the largest school system in the state of North Carolina and the 18th largest in the United States. Wake County covers 864 square miles and consists of Raleigh, the state’s capital, and several small towns and communities. At the beginning of the 2009–2010 school year, Wake County enrolled 2,000 new students and opened three new schools.

The WCPSS offers parents a choice of magnet schools or year round, modified, or traditional calendar options. There are 32 elementary, middle, and high-school magnet schools with unique programs such as Gifted and Talented, Creative Arts and Sciences, and International Baccalaureate. Magnet programs seek to attract students to the magnet schools, most of which are housed in older downtown facilities situated in neighborhoods whose residents are beyond child-bearing years. Parents may apply for a seat at the magnet school or calendar-option school based on their home address and are notified of acceptance in the spring preceding the start of the requested school year. Both the magnet program and the calendar-option program evolved to meet the needs of a growing county.
In an effort to support each individual school, the WCPSS implemented the Healthy Schools Act in 2004, which outlined the system’s goal of maintaining the percentage of students who receive free and reduced-price lunch at or around 40% in each school. Authors of the Healthy Schools Act outlined the negative impact that high free-and-reduced-price-lunch populations have on a school’s overall performance and on individual student achievement. Likewise, high percentages of free-and-reduced-price-lunch students have been linked to higher rates of teacher turnover.

Selected Schools—Demographic Data

I selected three elementary schools for my study: Strong Elementary, Central Elementary, and Southern Elementary. These three schools have characteristics in common. All three are magnet schools, offering a unique program of study beyond the traditional standard course of study required in all North Carolina public schools. The three schools are located in or just adjacent to downtown Raleigh and are housed in buildings at least 50 years old. Additionally, Strong, Central, and Southern qualify for Title I services because more than 35% of their students were eligible to receive free and reduced-price lunch.

On average, 33.7% of WCPSS students receive free and reduced-price lunch. During the 2009–2010 school year, Strong Elementary had a free-and-reduced-price-lunch percentage of 53.9%, while Central’s was 37.5% and Southern’s was 54.7%.

During the 2009–2010 school year, 12% of teachers left Strong Elementary, 10% left Central Elementary, and 20% left Southern Elementary. The average turnover rate for the WCPSS was 10% (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2009). There was some variation in the
performance composite scores among the three schools. The WCPSS uses a variety of indicators in reporting a school’s performance. The performance composite reflects the percentage of all third, fourth, and fifth graders who passed the reading, math, and science End-of-Grade tests. (All North Carolina public schools use the End-of-Grade tests to measure student achievement.) Strong Elementary had approximately 75% of their students pass the End-of-Grade tests at the end of the 2009–2010 school year, while Central Elementary achieved an 80% passing rate and Southern Elementary achieved a 67% passing rate. The average performance composite for all Wake County elementary schools was 71.9% (WCPSS, 2009).

Table 3

_Free-and-Reduced-Price Lunch Percentages, Turnover Percentages, and School Composites for Schools Interviewed_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Free &amp; Reduced-Price Lunch %</th>
<th>Teacher Turnover % (# Veteran)</th>
<th>Performance Composite 2009–2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strong Elementary</td>
<td>53.9%</td>
<td>12% (0)</td>
<td>74.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Elementary</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>10% (1)</td>
<td>80.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Elementary</td>
<td>54.7%</td>
<td>20% (2)</td>
<td>67.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wake County average</td>
<td>33.7%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>71.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Principals and Teachers Interviewed—Demographic Data**

The three principals I interviewed have a combined total of 71 years in public education and 46 years with the WCPSS. One of the three principals is male, and the other two are female. One of the three principals is African-American, and the other two are
Caucasian. Each of the three principals has served as a classroom teacher and assistant principal prior to becoming a principal. All three have undergraduate degrees in education and master’s degrees in school administration.

When asked if they would be willing to participate in this research study, each of the three principals responded enthusiastically. All three have extensive experience in high-poverty schools and recognize the challenges facing teachers in working with students whose needs are more complex than those of students in low-poverty schools. Since each principal has worked in both high- and low-poverty schools, they are familiar with the differences and indicated their preference for high-poverty schools.

Although I provided information about my topic prior to our interview, it was clear that each principal required time and thought before responding to my interview questions. I noted that each principal is aware of his or her school’s turnover rate and the measures being taken to improve it. Likewise, all three principals had high regard for the teachers they recommended and made reference to the contributions they make to the entire school community.

Principal Muscle recommended five teachers based on the criteria I had established which focus on teachers who have been identified as excellent and who have advanced degrees. He shared that they have sought out professional development on current topics. Principal Muscle noted that providing time—for professional development and other requirements—positively impacts teacher retention. Principal Passion shared that maintaining a balance between students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch and those
ineligible will positively impact a school’s ability to attract teachers. She noted that free and reduced-price lunch populations over 50% result in the burnout of teachers which has a negative effect on retention and staff morale. Principal Heart shared concerns that teachers new to her staff may not be equipped to deal with challenging students, which impacts all aspects of the classroom experience and may lead to turnover if not addressed. Principals Passion and Heart noted that the effective veteran teachers they recommended have demonstrated strength in working in high-poverty schools and continue to work there despite challenges.

*Strong Elementary*

The principal of Strong Elementary, Mr. Muscle, is the youngest of the three principals interviewed. A career educator, Mr. Muscle began his career as an elementary teacher before moving into school administration. He has served as an assistant principal and principal of two different schools since completing his degree in School Administration. Mr. Muscle noted that he prefers to work at a high-poverty school because he feels he is “making a difference and serving a purpose” beyond what might be the case in a lower-poverty school.

It is clear that Mr. Muscle has strong ties with the staff of Strong Elementary and recognizes the role of principals in retaining teachers. When Mr. Muscle moved to North Carolina in 2000, he was first hired to teach at Strong Elementary. In responding to question number two on the principal interview guide, “What led you to become the principal of this
school instead of another school with fewer free-and-reduced-price-lunch students?” he shared the following:

I taught with them and have worked alongside them as a teacher and administrator. I feel like I know them well and that I have established credibility with them since I have experience and am aware of what they do on a daily basis. I have maintained a high level of visibility at meetings, Professional Learning Teams, parent conferences, and Individual Education Plan meetings.

He described the Strong community as “Walton Mountain—a school that endears itself to the community, and the community endears itself to the school despite the needs and the lack of resources.”

Strong Elementary is on the eastern side of downtown Raleigh. It was built in 1963 and has recently undergone significant renovations throughout the campus to update the heating and air-conditioning systems and to modernize the classrooms and common areas. Although tucked away in a well-established neighborhood, Strong is easily accessible from major thoroughfares. Upon entering Strong, one of the first things you notice is the colorful art and décor. Student art is displayed inside the main lobby, and the office and media center beckon visitors. The main office is well-appointed, clean, and neat. Each time I visited, the staff was friendly and professional. I was routinely asked to sign in on the electronic visitor registration system and given directions to the teacher’s classrooms.

Of the five female teachers I interviewed at Strong Elementary, four are Caucasian and one is African American. Each of the five teaches in a regular education, grade-level
classroom. The average number of years’ experience is 23, with two of the five teachers having more than 31 years. The five teachers are all members of the school’s School Improvement Team and other committees including the Leadership Team, Student Support Team, and Positive Behavior Support Team.

Principal Strong noted that he views the identified teachers as effective partly “…because they are someone who has adapted, not cemented into teaching. They have adopted the 21st Century Skills and are not doing things they way they learned, but the way students need to learn today.” Throughout my interviews and visits, I witnessed teachers using technology, incorporating manipulatives and resources into lessons, and adhering to daily schedules that involved small group and individual instruction. Strong Elementary is a vibrant school where the administration and teachers work together to support student achievement through the magnet theme and with the use of research-based instructional strategies.

Central Elementary

Ms. Heart, principal of Central Elementary, has experience at all levels of public education, having taught high school and served as an assistant principal and principal of elementary, middle, and high schools. Throughout her tenure as an educator, Principal Heart has worked in traditional and magnet programs both in Wake County and in other urban districts. When asked what led her to become the principal of Central Elementary, Ms. Heart responded as follows:
I have had a lot of success at attracting magnet students to the schools where I’ve worked; it is easier to overcome problems at a magnet school than at other schools with high free-and-reduced-price-lunch populations. I think it is important to have a balance between the magnet and base populations—there is a tipping point after 50%. We need to keep the free-and-reduced-lunch-price rate to a minimum or it will be harder to draw people to the school—teachers and students.

Ms. Heart believes that her success is the result of her ability to “attract students and teachers to the magnet program because of the unique programs and the opportunities they provide all students.” She shared that teachers at Central Elementary are proud to be able to represent their school and community, and part of this pride stems from the variety of educational opportunities made available to students through the magnet program. Teachers enjoy the challenge of teaching at a magnet school, and students benefit from being able to take electives in a variety of specialty areas.

The teachers Principal Heart identified represent a cross section of the teaching staff at Central Elementary—classroom teachers, specialists, and Title I reading teachers. In total, the five veteran teachers selected to participate in the interviews have taught at Central for 84 years, averaging almost 17 years each. On each of my visits to Central Elementary, I was struck by high energy teachers demonstrated for their program and students. Although the teacher participants were older and may not have been as enthusiastic as the rest of the staff, they shared details of their involvement in the overall school program, which indicates high involvement and personal commitment. Principal Heart reiterated this observation when she
said, “As the leadership of the staff, they establish clubs and volunteer to do other things. We have a family-like attitude—we’re all in it together.”

Central Elementary is one of the oldest schools in Wake County. Although it stands adjacent to a recently vacated housing project just south of the urban center of Raleigh, Ms. Heart does not feel abandoned or isolated. Built in 1963, Central has undergone renovations to modernize the entrances, hallways, classrooms, and common areas. High ceilings and dozens of black-and-white photos of past students and staff combine to create a sense of pride and rich history. Due to the site layout, parking is located on the far side of the building and the main office is at the front. Upon entering, one notices that the main office is around the corner and consequently, visitors often require directions. Like the hallways, the main office is decorated with historical artifacts and trinkets that reflect the school’s mascot and theme.

One of the five effective veteran teachers I interviewed at Central Elementary is male, and the other four are female. Of the five teachers, two are Caucasian, two are African-American, and one is Asian. Three of the five teachers are specialists—they teach either an elective or a specialized subject area such as dance, drama, physical education, music, or art. Two of the five teachers are regular-education-classroom teachers. These five teachers have been teaching an average of 24 years. Their involvement in committees ranges from serving as a mentor to Student Support Team to School Improvement Team.
Southern Elementary

The principal of Southern Elementary, Ms. Passion, taught at the elementary level prior to becoming an administrator. She has served as an assistant principal and principal of elementary schools in North Carolina and another state. Ms. Passion shared that she likes the magnet program and all that it offers the students at Southern Elementary. She shared that the Southern staff “really love the kids and through our magnet program we show them we’re special.”

One of the first comments Principal Passion made about her school was the following:

Free-and-reduced-price-lunch rates are not a factor for me—I prefer to be at a school with a high free-and-reduced-price-lunch rate. I like this program, and I can relate to the students and staff. Free-and-reduced-price-lunch rates will make some people leave. You can tell once they get in here that they have problems. They don’t call parents or they don’t monitor students closely. It might be that they don’t know how to monitor and how to work with these kids. They see it as being hard, and they reason they have difficulties. Those who stay have worked hard and pushed each other. There is pride in their accomplishments.

Throughout the teacher-participant interviews, this theme resurfaced. Teachers noted that Southern’s free-and-reduced-price-lunch rate is higher and shared comments that indicate their sense of responsibility and obligation in working with these students. There were more references to the need to diversify instructional strategies to meet student needs.
and support individual learners at the appropriate academic level. As one teacher noted, “Teachers need to stay abreast of research. We may have to do something different for a student based on his needs.” Although located very close to the demographic center of Wake County, Southern Elementary was built in 1963 and is accessible from several major thoroughfares just south of downtown. Having undergone a major renovation in 2009, Southern looks much like a new school on an old site. Everything from the parking lot layout to the landscaping to the common areas is fresh and well-kept. The entrance is clearly marked with directions, welcome signs, and announcements. Staff in the main office is friendly and helpful.

One of the five teachers I interviewed at Southern Elementary is male, and the other four teachers are female. Two are Caucasian, and three are African-American. Three of the teachers have regular education classroom assignments, whereas the other two are specialists in Title I and the arts. Their years-of-experience ranges from 7 to 19, with an average of 13. These teachers participate in a range of committees and special leadership opportunities including the Leadership Team, the School Improvement Team, club sponsorships, and serving as a mentor.

Like their principals, the effective veteran teachers from Strong, Central, and Southern Elementary schools shared details about their schools that indicate the level of emotional attachment they possess for the students and the community. The majority of these teachers have spent their entire teaching careers with the WCPSS. The 15 teachers have worked in WCPSS for a total of 171 years, with a range of 7 to 37 years of teaching
experience. Of the teachers interviewed, 13 were female and 2 were male. Nine of the 15 teachers were Caucasian, 5 were African American, and 1 was Asian. Each of the 15 teachers is involved in his/her school outside of the classroom. The majority of the teachers serve in leadership positions such as chairperson of the School Improvement Team, grade-level teams, or Leadership Team. Appendix VII outlines the specifics of each participant by school.

**Research Questions**

Teachers and principals were eager to share their thoughts and opinions about the retention of effective veteran teachers at high-poverty schools. They recognized that teacher retention is a challenge for most schools and that retention at high-poverty schools is especially challenging. The teachers expressed satisfaction at being given the opportunity to share their perspectives on the topic of retention of effective veteran teachers. Several from each school shared that they enjoyed participating in the research and that doing so was personally rewarding. Jennifer, a fifth-grade teacher at Central Elementary, shared that she was excited to have the chance to meet and discuss her work as a veteran educator. Peggy, a reading specialist at Southern Elementary with 19 years’ experience, stated that principals support new teachers and that “programs are in place to assist new teachers, but there is nothing in place to support and encourage experienced teachers.”

The focus of the 3 principal interviews, 15 teacher interviews, and focus group meeting was to elicit insights and perspectives from each participant about what schools, school leaders, and school systems can do to improve the retention of effective veteran
teachers. Although no specific mention was made of the variety of reasons that effective veteran teachers are terminated, the researcher recognizes that termination is appropriate for those not performing at the “at standard” or above levels on the teacher evaluation instrument. Teacher responses to each of the first three research questions follow.

Research Question 1

What teacher-retention challenges do high-poverty elementary schools face? Each teacher and principal responded in detail to the questions about the challenges that high-poverty schools face. They noted that the population of students has more needs: academic, behavioral, physical, emotional, and social. According to these teachers and principals, the combination of these needs puts a greater burden on the school and the teacher. Eleven of the fifteen teachers interviewed identified the combination of student needs as being the greatest challenge they face. Jill, a 15-year veteran at Strong Elementary, said the following:

Sometimes students’ home needs aren’t met: they need food and their health care needs aren’t met. We make sure they eat breakfast. We’ll feed and hug them and before long, we get past that and they learn. We make sure they eat breakfast. Although there’s not always parental support—some of them will get here for meetings but not always. They don’t give their time to help or support at home, and this makes it difficult for the students when they get to school.

The teachers noted that many of their students enter school lacking foundational skills and require additional support to bridge the academic gaps. Peggy noted, “These students are often behind, and it is harder to show growth.” Several of the teachers who were interviewed
felt an additional level of pressure, knowing that some students will not achieve proficiency on the EOGs or demonstrate enough improvement from the previous year to reflect adequate growth, which reflects negatively on that individual teacher. Renee, a Central Elementary specialist, shared that “the challenges are bringing students up to grade level. They are 2 or 3 years behind, and we have to make them feel good in the process.” The challenge of high academic performance is one that not all teachers can bear and is a reason some teachers leave high-poverty schools. As Southern Elementary third-grade teacher Sara noted, “Teachers have to enjoy the students, not just the job. You can’t retain teachers who don’t want or need to be in the classroom with these students.”

Additionally, parents are not available to support students with the completion of homework or other assignments. Teachers often assume this responsibility in an effort to boost the performance of the student. Paul, who has taught at Southern Elementary for 11 years, agreed that parent support is a challenge but maintained that “…it is up to me to keep the communication lines open with them.” He believes that teachers have to work with parents to outline the expectations and that teachers must do things like provide opportunities for students to complete their homework before leaving school and purchase supplies to take the burden off students and parents. Ms. Passion shared that teachers at high-poverty schools must know “how to work with these kids.” The teachers sometimes see the students as being the problem, when in fact it is the teacher’s inability to properly support the student that ends up being the problem.
“The kids come to school—it’s a refuge—we are teacher, nurse, care giver,” shared Shirley, a 35-year veteran at Strong Elementary. Such work takes more time and resources on the part of the school, teacher, and community. Six of the teachers interviewed shared that teachers in high-poverty schools often spend their own money buying supplies and materials for their classrooms. They noted that teachers also routinely purchase items for their students, like clothing, school supplies, and snacks. Ms. Heart, who has experience at both high- and low-poverty schools, shared that the “lack of resources negatively impacts teacher retention at this school.” Although the schools have budgets for instructional resources and textbooks, students still come to school without the supplies they were issued, and it falls upon the teacher to secure the extra resources students might need for projects or special activities. Laura, a 37-year veteran at Central Elementary, summarized the challenge by saying, “We need support with the budget. We need money to build programs and to support teachers who can’t spend their money like the veterans do.”

Tammy, a fifth-grade teacher at Southern Elementary, maintains that despite the school’s efforts to get parents involved, transportation and the lack of gas money prevent them from being involved. Parents’ finances can often be the biggest obstacle to their involvement. Jennifer noted that students come to school but haven’t had anyone at home help them complete their homework or tend to their basic needs. “I try to work with the child and give them shampoo, soap, and teach them to take care of themselves,” so that they can focus on the responsibilities of school. Paul, who has worked at higher-percentagе free-and-reduced-price-lunch schools in North Carolina and Maryland, noted, “We don’t have the
level of parental involvement, but it is not due to parents not wanting to be involved. They have to make ends meet.” Clearly communicating the challenges faced by high-poverty schools to applicants and current staff would increase the level of understanding teachers have about their parents and students. Sara said, “We need to let them know—here are our students, these are our scores, inform them from the beginning.”

Along the same line, Bill, a specialist at Central Elementary, shared, “Some teachers in high-poverty schools don’t know how to work with parents who are consumed with supporting their families.” Teachers find working with high-poverty families very stressful, and over time this stress contributes to teacher turnover. Ms. Heart noted, “Teachers like to think of themselves as saving the world, but they need support to do that.” In addition to administrators, mentors and team members play an important role in outlining reasonable expectations with new and younger staff members. Ms. Heart added, “PBS (Positive Behavior Support) made a big difference for some of our staff. The program explains what teachers need to do when students misbehave.” Ongoing communication and support through the mentor/mentee program and PBS program are vital to the retention of staff at high-poverty schools.

Due to the disproportionate number of students with academic and non-academic needs in their classrooms, teachers require the support of other professionals—Title I teachers, Special Programs teachers, nurses, psychologists, and tutors—to meet the needs of these students. Laura noted that one of the greatest challenges she faces is teaching students with disabilities. She shared that some of these students come from dysfunctional homes and
that their families, in turn, have needs as well. The itinerant staff is assigned to multiple schools, and it may take several days before they can respond to a family in need. When human and material resources are limited, teachers rely on parent volunteers to purchase materials, work with small groups of students, and chaperone on field trips. Tammy said, “We get counselors involved, but there’s not much support for the students. It would be good if we had more mentors.”

The 18 interview participants responded almost identically to the first research question when asked about the teacher-retention challenges faced by high-poverty elementary schools. Fourteen of the 18 participants have worked at other schools and shared personal experiences about the differences between their current high-poverty school and other schools. Asked to summarize the challenges faced by teachers at Strong Elementary, Principal Muscle said, “The lack of resources and occasionally the sense of futility negatively impacts teacher retention. Sometimes our teachers feel like they don’t have enough to do the job—resources, energy, support.” The second research question addresses the specific challenges that high-poverty elementary schools face in retaining these effective veteran teachers.

Research Question 2

What challenges do high-poverty elementary schools face in retaining effective veteran teachers? Although none of the teachers or principals indicated that they would like to leave their high-poverty school, they did recognize that some staff chose to leave because of the increased level of involvement required of teachers. Effective veteran teachers are
called upon to assume leadership positions, update their professional repertoire, and facilitate training sessions because, according to Principal Heart, “they have experience at their grade level and with trainings, staff development.” Even though the veterans may not have specific experience with a particular instructional approach, they are called upon to learn more and share those findings with their less-experienced colleagues. Principal Muscle shared the following:

[Strong’s teachers have] adopted the 21st Century Skills, not the way they learned things but the way the students need to learn today. They use technology, and they are open to change. They implement interactive group work in their classes and help students learn how to problem solve. Our teachers are big into science, and they are able to weave in inquiry-based teaching into the school day.

These veteran teachers are willing to try something new—like integrating technology—even though they have not received formal training on it and were not taught that way during their high-school and college years. “As the leadership of the staff, they establish clubs and volunteer to do other things,” noted Principal Heart. All 15 teachers interviewed maintained at least two additional leadership roles outside of their classroom-teaching responsibilities. Nine of the 15 held three or more leadership roles, ranging from grade-level chairperson to Student Support Team member to School Improvement Team member. “We need fewer committees. We are a smaller school and have more work for the few,” suggested Peggy.
One of the biggest challenges in retaining effective veteran teachers, as noted by Renee, is the lack of time teachers have to perform expected tasks like grading papers, contacting parents, and attending professional development. As evidenced by their performance data, almost half of students do not perform at grade level and need additional assistance and support. Renee continued, “New kindergarteners need more services, and we have to determine how to meet all the students’ needs. The amount of time spent on paperwork and doing assessments is overwhelming. We need more time.” Teachers spend time before and after school working with needy students to tutor, assist with projects, and advise.

Principal Passion noted, “Teachers get frustrated with the amount of work they have, and it seems we are piling on more—nothing is taken away.” The requirement of time outside the school day is not always as high at lower-poverty schools where these teachers have previously worked. “The pace would be slower,” said Margaret, a second-grade teacher at Central Elementary. Teachers noted that lower-poverty schools would be easier to work at because teachers there would not face the challenge of so many needy students. Peggy shared the following:

At a lower free-and-reduced-price-lunch school, there would be a different environment. There are more affluent students, and the PTA has more money. There are fewer discipline problems and more parent support. That (difference between schools) is not always good. At the more traditional schools—the community schools—it feels different, but that is not possible here.
Of the 15 teachers interviewed, 9 noted they have had the opportunity to transfer to another school and have considered the option because the demands would be fewer.

One of the most frequently mentioned themes, formal and informal networks of support that exist at their school, serves to benefit the entire school staff. Four of the 15 teachers specifically referenced their involvement in the mentor program as an effective way to retain new and veteran teachers. The mentor/mentee program requires mentors to take additional training and to spend time beyond the school day to complete observations, post-observation conferences, and meetings. In years past, mentors have received extra-duty pay based in part on their years of service. Bill, the mentor coordinator at Central Elementary School, shared, “Formally, we have a good, active mentor program. We have a 1:1 ratio of mentors at each grade level.” The mentors are often sought for advice and leadership outside of their role as mentors. Tammy added, “We have a good mentoring program here—we build relationships with each other and then do that with students.” Alice, a third-grade teacher at Strong Elementary School, added, “This school could increase retention by giving people the chance to be here for a week and see how we ‘do’ the program.” Paul shared that they “collaborate to interview prospective teachers but should go further by bringing applicants into the classrooms to see the school and the students.” Five of the other 15 interviewees suggested providing applicants with more information about the school before making a hiring decision. Sara said, “We could recruit and retain if we find out ahead of time if teachers want to work with these students…need to let them know here are our students, these are our scores…” Tammy extended that point by saying, “Applicants need to see the
diverse population of the school.” Jill added that retention would increase if “we gave them an opportunity to visit the neighborhood…they think this neighborhood is unsafe.” The responses of the participants indicate that the key to retaining teachers is having a strong interview-and-selection process in place.

Principal Heart summarized the participants’ thoughts when she said, “The teachers I have identified have the heart for being here and to work in hard times. If the free-and-reduced-price percentage was higher, they would get burned out.” Time is the theme in all of the responses to research question two. Teachers and principals recognize that more time is needed to meet the needs of students in high-poverty schools. Whether working directly with students, meeting with other teachers, or completing tasks outside of the school day, all teachers could benefit from having more unrestricted time. In spite of the challenges faced by teachers at high-poverty schools, many veterans choose to remain despite the limitations of time, resources, and student demands.

Research Question 3

Why do effective veteran teachers stay at high-poverty elementary schools? Teachers in this study reported a variety of reasons for staying at high-poverty schools—ranging from a sense of purpose to the specific leadership roles they hold. Although the majority indicated they have had the opportunity to transfer, they have chosen not to because they feel a sense of responsibility for their students. They recognize that students at high-poverty schools have greater needs and that teachers there have the opportunity to continue supporting these students. Connie, a specialist at Southern Elementary, stated as follows:
I love this school and the parents’ support. Parents are eager to get students back on track. There is no disconnect between school and home, here. I try to be part of what is positive to help teachers and students do their best. We have a great team of specialists—we collaborate on performances and are part of a community here.

This comment summarizes the dedication shared by many of the teacher participants. Teachers said they enjoy working with the students, have a connection with the students and school, and are happy to be at their school. The depth of this emotional attachment is further demonstrated by the following comment by Laura: “I believe that as a black educator, I should work with minority students—I want to be there for them.” Felecia, from Strong Elementary School, noted, “I have had a blessed life—I am a Christian and I am called to give back.”

Jennifer shared, “Veteran teachers are not in it for the money; they are in it for something else. The rush you get as a reward for showing student growth—that is not something you can give someone.” Several other teachers, like Bill, noted that money is not a motivator. “Teachers aren’t doing this for the money. I still feel energized to be doing this, and I have a calling to be a teacher.” Ms. Heart noted, “Teachers are making a difference for students,” and that is why they stay. Peggy added, “Working with these kids—it makes me feel so good. It is harder, but it is rewarding.” Other teachers echoed that sentiment with statements like that of Jill, who said, “I am here because of the children…here I feel needed.”

Eleven of the 15 teachers interviewed said they remain at their high-poverty school because of the administrative support they receive. Bill said, “We have an administration that
we can trust." The administration provides resources and is welcoming and encouraging to teachers. Sara said, “I would leave if I didn’t have a great principal who has respect for teachers.” Paul added, “The administration supports teachers. They provide positive encouragement.” The key, according to Shirley is the following:

…letting teachers know how valuable they are—similar to how we treat students in the classroom—make them feel valued and let them know how important they are to the school. This is home. There is not a lot of turnover. Principal Muscle—he’s a good administrator. There is a strong support system in place at Strong. The teams, the magnet coordinator, the administration.

Felecia added, “The administration gets teachers to stay. They are supportive and understanding, and that is the biggest reason teachers stay.”

Of the teacher participants, 10 are members of their school’s School Improvement Team, 4 are grade level chairpersons, and 4 serve on the Leadership Team. Each of the 15 teachers is a member of more than one school-wide committee, and 14 are members of at least three committees. Connie explained her involvement outside of the classroom by saying, “I try to be a part of what is positive—to help teachers and students do their best.” She extended the discussion of her involvement by sharing details of her work in curriculum development for the county and state and her pursuit of National Board for Professional Teaching Standards licensure. Shirley described herself as a leader, stating, “People come to me and ask questions. I am a morale builder. Teachers can trust me and talk to me in confidence about anything.” This statement summarizes the role that effective veteran
teachers play at Strong, Central, and Southern Elementary Schools. These effective veteran
teachers have accumulated wisdom, experience, and expertise and are called upon to share
their skills within their school communities.

Principal Strong shared, “Teachers are making a difference, and I see that more here
than at other schools. Our students have greater needs, and teachers find that rewarding.”
Despite having opportunities to leave their high-poverty schools, these 15 teachers have
remained committed to the work they do with their students, other teachers, and school
communities. They remain because of the intangibles—a sense of calling, personal rewards,
and strong relationships with the administration and other staff members. Although such
commitment requires that they invest time beyond the school day, these effective veteran
teachers recognize the value of their commitment.

Table 4

**Summary of Research Findings from Questions 1-3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Summary of Responses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What teacher-retention challenges do high poverty elementary schools face?</td>
<td>Student academic and non-academic needs, lack of parental support, lack of resources to meet student needs, behavior problems, limited parental resources and support, higher percentage of students with needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What challenges do high-poverty elementary schools face in retaining effective veteran teachers?</td>
<td>Teacher investment of time and resources, lack of time to meet student needs, formal and informal support networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Why do effective veteran teachers stay at high-poverty elementary schools?</td>
<td>Teacher sense of calling, purpose, and challenge; intrinsic rewards; strong leadership from administration; leadership opportunities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary

Chapter 4 outlined the research findings related to the first three research questions posed to 15 effective veteran teachers and 3 principals from high-poverty elementary schools during the one-on-one interviews and focus group discussions. The final chapter, chapter 5, will focus on the fourth research question by outlining the themes that evolved from participant responses, addressing the implications for future study and how educational leaders and school administrators can improve the retention of effective veteran teachers in high-poverty schools.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Teacher retention continues to be of great concern to school administrators, superintendents, school boards, governors, and parents throughout our country. As turnover continues to be a problem and the competition for securing new hires increases, understanding how best to retain effective veteran teachers has become especially important. But little has been written about why effective veteran teachers stay at high-poverty schools.

The purpose of this study was to identify factors that impact the retention of effective veteran teachers at high-poverty schools. The study highlighted three high-poverty elementary schools located in downtown Raleigh—Strong Elementary, Central Elementary, and Southern Elementary—and the experiences of the three principals and 15 effective veteran teachers who have chosen to remain at these schools. Through a cross-case analysis, the factors impacting the retention of these 15 effective veteran teachers were discovered.

Problem Restatement

As a result of the unprecedented growth of our county and high turnover rates of teachers at some of our schools, many WCPSS schools find it difficult to recruit and retain teachers. High-poverty schools have an especially difficult time retaining effective veteran teachers. Much has been written about strategies to retain beginning teachers, but there is limited research on strategies to retain effective veteran teachers. With all of the emphasis being placed on student achievement and professional accountability, it is imperative that
educational leaders gain in their understanding of how to encourage effective teachers to remain at high-poverty schools.

**Themes**

The three principals and 15 teachers provided comprehensive responses to the first three research questions during our one-on-one interviews. After I transcribed the data and reviewed their responses, three themes emerged. During our focus group interviews, I referenced these three themes to generate further discussion and insight on each. The three themes—the importance of administrator support, the personal and professional rewards gained from working in high-poverty schools, and the opportunities these three high-poverty schools offered to students and teachers—were referenced directly or indirectly by each of the principals and teachers.

*Administrator Support*

“They’ll back me up with decisions and parent relationships…they trust us.” During the focus group interview, I posed the question “What does administrator support look like?” One teacher replied that administrator support means that the principal or assistant principal will “back me up with decisions and parent relationships” regardless of the topic or level of potential for conflict. Another teacher shared that the administrator “will take care of the physical environment and teaching materials.” The ability of administrators to respond to challenges, problems, and requests for equipment is important to these effective veteran teachers. They emphasized how important it is for them to know that “…administrators will run the school so that teachers can focus on running their classrooms.”
Both teachers and principals referenced administrator support as the most important factor in retaining effective veteran teachers. Teachers shared that they need to feel the support of the administrative team in making decisions—whether those decisions be about the use of resources, a new program, or a special activity. The teachers in the focus group described a supportive administrator as one who will take care of the details related to running a school, so that teachers can focus on teaching students. Participant three, Felecia, noted that she approaches the principal when she believes it is time to add a new program, the principal works with her to decide how to make it happen, and then “…she will get other staff to support it, and they will get excited.”

The topic of teachers working with administrators to handle student discipline came up frequently during the interviews and focus group. Teachers noted that addressing inappropriate or disruptive class behaviors with high-poverty students and parents requires a different approach and that it is important that the administrator back up the teacher on decisions related to consequences for these behaviors. “The administrator can’t just view the staff as babysitters, we must feel valued,” noted participant three, Laura, during the focus group.

More than half of the teacher participants noted they remain at their high-poverty school because of the high administrative support. Bill said, “We have an administration that we can trust.” He emphasized that the administration provides resources and is welcoming and encouraging to teachers. Sara said, “I would leave if I didn’t have a great principal who has respect for teachers.” Paul added, “The administration supports teachers. They provide
positive encouragement.” The key, according to Shirley, is “letting teachers know how valuable they are—similar to how we treat students in the classroom—make them feel valued and let them know how important they are to the school.” Felecia added, “The administration gets teachers to stay. They are supportive and understanding, and that is the biggest reason teachers stay.”

Additionally, the teachers noted that it is important that the administration be able to secure instructional resources and facilitate improvements or changes to the classrooms and school. Participant one, Paul, added, “They have to be able to take care of the physical environment and tracking down materials.” He emphasized how important it is that administrators be able to get these resources in place so that the teacher can focus on student learning. During the interviews, principals acknowledged that they believe their support is instrumental in retaining effective veteran teachers. Principals Strong and Heart shared that effective veteran teachers want the approval of the administration when planning events, making decisions about scheduling and planning, and implementing changes and new programs. Principal Heart noted, “…a lack of support equates to turnover. Teachers appreciate the support of an administrator.”

The focus group participants shared personal experiences in which they approached their current principal to request funding or resources for a new project. Because they have worked with the principal for at least eight years, they felt comfortable making a request and believed the principal would honor their request. Each of the participants agreed when one teacher summed up administrator support by saying, “They support the ideas and programs
you want to put in place.” They shared examples ranging from a grant for an afterschool program to a new elective for fifth-graders. On each occasion, the principal responded enthusiastically to the requests and provided support through securing resources, coordinating schedules, and building buy-in from the rest of the school community. The members of the focus group agreed that administrator support is key to retaining effective veteran teachers because such support allows veterans to exercise their talents to “better support students.”

Although there are other aspects of administrator support that positively impact the retention of effective veteran teachers, the focus group noted that it is imperative to have a balance of leadership styles on the administrative team. There must be “experts—people who know how to do things—people who can schedule, have knowledge of programs and a variety of personalities and strengths.” The participants noted that a good administrative team is made up of different personalities, which can better respond to the myriad of personalities within a school staff. This combination of administrative skills and personalities allows the administrative team to establish a vision and focus on the implementation of the vision while all the details of running a school are in place. It is clear that effective veteran teachers view administrator support as transcending the classroom walls and affecting all aspects of the school community.

**Personal and Professional Rewards**

“I feel good about the work I am doing.” The majority of the teachers interviewed indicated that they have chosen to remain at their high-poverty school because of the sense of
personal and professional fulfillment they have gained. Many of the teachers said they have had the opportunity to work at a low-poverty elementary school but prefer to stay because they feel needed and valued by their students, parents, and fellow staff members. This sense of being needed and valued outweighs the many challenges they face in working with disadvantaged students.

During the interviews, teachers shared numerous experiences in working with students from high-poverty backgrounds. As they talked, they referenced students and families by name and shared details of these students’ personal successes. Whether working with the family to secure resources or supporting a student in a challenging situation, the teachers spoke passionately about how they positively affected the student’s life. These teachers noted that despite having the opportunity to work at another school with a less challenging population, they choose to stay at their school because of the personal satisfaction they gain. One teacher noted, “I want to teach these kids,” and another shared, “They need me more.” Working at a high-poverty school satisfies the teacher’s sense of being needed while supporting the entire school as a mentor, club sponsor, and leader.

One of the participants in the focus group, Bill, summarized the impact of working with high-poverty students by noting, “When I see students gain skills, I feel good.” This represents the thoughts shared by other focus-group participants. Each relayed a story of working with a family who lacked resources to support their student but conveyed their appreciation of the role of the teacher in imparting new ideas and opportunities. Participant one, Laura, shared the experience of working with a particularly challenging female student
who was two years behind in reading. She struggled to participate in the regular classroom but excelled in this particular special. Over the years, she grew in confidence with the academic subjects as a result of her participation and efforts in this performance-based special. By the end of her elementary schooling, the student was recognized as a talented performer and had earned the respect of her teachers and fellow students. The focus-group participants shared other stories of how years after students leave the school, they return to share news of their high-school graduation, earned recognition, and awards. One focus-group participant, Margaret, noted that such news “makes you feel good, and money can’t buy that.”

The sentiments of Jennifer reflect those of other research participants. “Veteran teachers are not in it for the money—they are in it for something else. The rush you get as a reward for showing student growth—that is not something you can give someone.” Several other teachers, like Bill, noted that money is not a motivator. “Teachers aren’t doing this for the money. I still feel energized to be doing this, and I have a calling to do be a teacher.” Ms. Heart noted, “Teachers are making a difference for students,” and that is why they stay. Peggy added, “Working with these kids—it makes me feel so good. It is harder, but it is rewarding.” Other teachers echoed that sentiment with statements like that of Jill, who said, “I am here because of the children…here I feel needed.”

Principals recognized that teachers must feel needed and that satisfying their personal needs fosters teacher retention. An equally important part of this complex challenge is the role of system-wide support of effective veteran teachers. Although they acknowledged their
own role in providing the support necessary to retain effective veteran teachers, all three principals emphasized the value of system-wide staff development, curriculum support, and resource acquisition in keeping effective veteran teachers in their schools. Given significant changes in staff-development funding, principals expressed concern at being able to provide the training required to meet the needs of teachers of all experience levels. As a result, effective veteran teachers likely will be called upon to facilitate staff development, which will add even more to their already busy schedules. Principal Passion cautioned against this practice, noting, “Teachers get frustrated with the amount of work they have, and it seems we are piling on more.” She encouraged the system leadership to take on this responsibility instead of placing the burden on effective veteran teachers, despite their willingness to take on more work. Principal Heart summarized the type of teachers who work in high-poverty schools—“the teachers I have identified have the heart for being here and to work in hard times.”

Opportunities for Students and Teachers

“What we are doing, they would never have the opportunity to do at home.” As a result of their high-poverty status, Strong, Central, and Southern Elementary schools receive additional funding through their participation in the magnet program and from being Title I schools. Throughout the teacher and principal interviews, over half of the participants referenced the benefit that these additional resources provide for the entire school. All three schools are able to offer a unique magnet program that affords all students—magnet or base—the opportunity to learn new skills and be exposed to programs not offered at
traditional elementary schools. These programs are staffed by teachers who are allotted through the magnet and Title I programs. In addition, each school is provided funding to support the purchase of materials for running the specific programs.

During the focus-group discussion, participant two, Bill, shared his experience with students whose families cannot afford private instrument lessons but are able to learn to play as a result of the school’s elective offerings. Participant three, Laura, shared that she initiated a ballroom dancing program to broaden her students’ knowledge of dance styles and techniques. Such programs make “parents want to stay and teachers want to stay.” The majority of the interview participants and all of the focus-group participants have taught at other schools and recognized the impact of additional funding on their school’s ability to meet student needs. Participant one, Margaret, noted, “Our students know more about the content area as a result of our magnet program.”

The focus-group participants emphasized the increased resources and resulting opportunities as contributing to the retention of effective veteran teachers. In addition to exposing students to band, chorus, and dance programs, these high-poverty schools have the resources to provide their teachers with professional opportunities that might not be available at other schools. Participant three, Laura, shared her experience with a nationally recognized literacy expert who trained the entire staff during a one-day on-site training. She noted that she was able to speak directly with the expert and exchange ideas for literacy resources. This experience, she said, would not be available at low-poverty schools. Additionally, teachers at all three schools have participated in national conferences both as presenters and award
recipients. Participant two, Bill, noted that such professional development opportunities “distinguish us from others and make us feel good about our jobs.”

With additional resources, comes more flexibility with scheduling and staffing. All three focus-group participants referenced their ability to work collaboratively with other teachers as being important in their decision to remain at the high-poverty school. Participant three, Laura, shared an experience where she and the orchestra teacher collaborated to create an afterschool dance club. She noted that such efforts would not have been possible were she not at her current school. Because high-poverty schools typically receive additional teacher allotments beyond that of low-poverty schools, they have lower staff-student ratios.

With more staff, schools can organize professional-learning teams that meet for extended periods, or supervision schedules that increase the amount of time teachers can meet with each other. Effective veteran teachers have a wealth of experience to draw upon and to share with their teammates about curriculum, student behavior, handling difficult parents, and the completion of report cards and assessments. Many of the interview participants are trained mentors and have developed communication skills that enable them to share their wisdom and experience for the express purpose of improving the future experiences of beginning teachers. Dawn, an 11-year veteran, noted that the Professional Learning Team (PLT) structure keeps her in the profession because it allows her to “talk with fellow teachers and the administration, and they are able to help us out with students’ needs.” This increased collaboration has strengthened communication about specific programs and the coordination of school-wide events. Staff at Central Elementary report that parents are
aware that teachers communicate with each other about their students, that the school’s overall program is very strong, and that “parents want their students to stay, and teachers want to stay.”

Teachers who participated in this research study shared their belief that teaching at a high-poverty school has provided them professional opportunities that are lacking at low-poverty schools. All three focus-group participants referenced their creation of original electives and after-school programs and how the opportunity to establish something new has tapped into their own personal talents and extended their professional experiences. Participant one, Margaret, said, “We are constantly challenged to come up with ideas and programs and to try new and different things.” As a result, “We all know more about different subjects because of the exposure and the collaboration.”

**Conceptual Framework Revisited**

After a thorough and exhaustive review of the literature on the retention of effective veteran teachers in high-poverty schools, a revised conceptual framework evolved. This framework reflects the emphasis placed on two system-wide foundational factors: supportive working conditions and targeted recruitment and retention policies, and how both of these factors contribute to the retention of effective veteran teachers. Additionally, three school-based factors—administrator support, personal and professional rewards, and opportunities for students and teachers—combine to foster the retention of effective veteran teachers at high-poverty schools.
The original framework was configured as three equal-sized interlocking circles that identified personal and professional needs of teachers, working conditions within the school, and school and system recruitment and retention strategies as factors that affect the retention of effective veteran teachers. The implication of this conceptual framework was that when each of these three factors was in place at the high-poverty school in question, teachers would be more likely to stay.

In the literature review, it was noted that high-poverty schools must recognize that the current recruitment and retention strategies do not support the retention of effective veteran teachers. The literature revealed that a variety of supports—including additional staffing and increased access to materials and supplies—must be in place to target the academic and behavioral needs that high-poverty students have when they enter elementary school.

Additionally, high-poverty schools must provide the proper working conditions for teachers, which include adequate planning time, appropriate resources, a feeling of empowerment, and professional development, which compensate for the challenges of working at high-poverty schools. Effective veteran teachers also need differentiated personal and professional support based on their experience, strengths and weaknesses, and future goals. The referenced studies indicate that effective veteran teachers have unique needs, which when met, will result in their satisfaction and longevity in the profession.

The research conducted during this study of 15 effective veteran teachers and three principals from high-poverty schools has revealed a slightly different framework. Throughout the interviews and focus-group discussion, teachers and principals referenced the
importance of administrator support, the personal and professional rewards gained from working in high-poverty schools, and the opportunities these three high-poverty schools offered to students and teachers, as contributing to the retention of effective veteran teachers. The revised conceptual framework appears below. This diagram better reflects the importance of each of the three factors and their interconnectedness. Administrator support appears as a larger circle than the other two factors. The diagram rests on the foundation of supportive working conditions and targeted recruitment and retention policies.

*Figure 2. Revised Conceptual Framework—Factors that Impact Retention of Effective Veteran Teachers.*
The revised conceptual framework represents the importance of each factor and the manner in which all of the factors are related. The literature recognizes the importance of supportive working conditions in all schools, regardless of demographics, in leveling the playing field between old and new schools. Since high-poverty schools are most often housed in outdated facilities, maintenance, cleaning, and support are crucial. When given the choice of teaching at a newly constructed school or a 60-year-old structure, teachers should not have to consider the relative condition of the facilities. Although recruitment and retention policies are recognized as important to the stability of school systems, a more focused and better articulated set of policies is vital to the health of high-poverty schools. These policies must be implemented at the county level and supported at the individual school site as principals of high-poverty schools hire new teachers.

Discussion

After entering the Ed.D. program, I took every opportunity to read and research topics related to the retention of effective veteran teachers. Because there was much more research available on the less-specific topic of teacher retention, I began to question colleagues and effective veteran teachers on my staff about the reasons they remain at high-poverty schools. I engaged Human Resources staff about the challenges faced at other high-poverty schools. One of my first conclusions was that there needs to be data collection that allows principals to track their turnover, in an effort to better understand why teachers leave and who is leaving.
A second realization I made was that the primary reason teachers were leaving my school was for a shorter commute. I reviewed a map of the county and pinpointed where many of our teachers lived. Most of them lived in suburban areas of the county—far from the downtown location of our school and other high-poverty schools. In discussing this observation with teachers, many shared that they could not afford to live close to our school because there are very few desirable apartment complexes in the general area and because the homes in our neighborhoods, while attractive and convenient, are too expensive. Additionally, due to housing patterns in the immediate area, there is limited new construction. Three new houses were built in 2009, but all three cost around $300,000—unaffordable for most teachers.

Implications

Teachers and principals alike identified meeting the needs of high-poverty students as the greatest challenge that high-poverty schools face. Teachers shared that students come to school without having their basic needs met and ill prepared to learn. They noted that many of their students do not have school supplies, appropriate clothing, or adequate nutritional and health care, which hinders their ability to focus on instruction. Principals affirmed this observation and added that working with high-poverty students takes a toll on teachers. Although both groups acknowledged the benefits of teaching these students, they recognized that the above factors undermine teacher retention. Most teachers are not prepared for the challenges of teaching students who are behind academically and lack parental support.
Teachers and administrators agreed that the administration is key to keeping these teachers in the classrooms.

Nieto (2003) found that not all teachers identified as excellent are effective in working with students in high-poverty schools. Teachers who are successful are able to connect student learning with the students’ lives and be resilient when facing a lack of resources, poor performance, or other difficult situations. Robinson (2007) found that high-poverty schools are more challenging places to work because of the lack of parental support and discipline. He maintained that teachers must possess a “poverty ideology,” which is a framework for understanding poverty and the impact it has on student learners.

North Carolina has led the way throughout the nation in identifying factors that encourage teacher retention, through its administration of the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey, which began in 2001. Survey data indicate that teachers report a need for more time outside of the school day to complete tasks indirectly associated with teaching, such as grading papers and meeting with parents. Administrator support is also reported as critical in fostering teacher retention. Research has found that high-poverty schools are funded inequitably. The Education Trust (2006) outlined the impact of veteran teachers in high-poverty classrooms. Veteran teachers are more effective in all aspects of the teaching profession because they are able to devote more time to working with students and less time on familiarizing themselves with the nuances of the profession.

Another way that North Carolina has led the nation is the emphasis given to teacher retention in the Educator Evaluation System (NCEES) (Appendix VIII). The NCEES is
based on nationally researched literature that supports the full professional development of all teachers—beginning and veteran. It consists of five standards and specific elements within each that stress the importance of using student achievement data to design and implement lessons, participating as a leader within the classroom and school, and engaging in ongoing reflection for the purposes of personal improvement and professional growth.

The NCEES was piloted in many counties around the state in 2009–2010 and was implemented in Wake County at the beginning of the 2010–2011 school year. One of the most significant differences between the NCEES and the previous evaluation instrument is the former’s emphasis on teacher leadership. Under the NCEES, teachers are expected to lead within their classrooms, grade levels, departments, and school. Gone are the days when teachers listed hall duty as one of their professional accomplishments. Motivated by the NCEES, teachers are looking for more significant ways they can be involved at their schools. Prior to the start of the school year, I was approached by a group of teachers who wanted to start an afterschool program for female students who have had difficulty with academics and behavior. Each of the teachers took a different role in the creation of the group and attended the various student activities and performances throughout the year. As evidenced by the parental support for the program, the enthusiasm and participation of the students, and that their office-referral rates decreased, this program was a huge success. During my yearend meetings with the individual teachers, each referenced their specific involvement with the program and how it affected their professional growth and contributed to the success of our students. The new Educator Evaluation System sparked this interest and motivated the
teachers to take on leadership challenges outside of their classroom. Likewise, administrator support allowed the idea to flourish and gain the necessary traction for success.

As Cochran-Smith concluded in the 2004 work entitled *Stayers, Leavers, Lovers, and Dreamers: Insights about Teacher Retention*, teacher retention is a multidimensional problem that must be addressed at all stages—teacher preparation, entry into the profession, and system and school support after hiring. Cochran-Smith cited administrator support as one of the most important factors in teacher retention. Johnson, in her book *Finders and Keepers: Helping New Teachers Thrive and Survive in Our Schools*, focused on the role of the school system and school leadership in teacher retention.

**Limitations of the Study**

Having spent 15 years as an administrator in the Wake County Public School System has afforded me the opportunity to work with hundreds of current teachers, principals, and central-office staff. This extensive network enables me to establish professional relationships with a wide range of persons in a variety of roles. During this research, I encountered several teachers and staff members with whom I have worked in my role as administrator. Although I do not believe that these relationships undermined the results of my research, I do believe I had to be extremely diligent in my interviews to seek the most valid and honest responses. Several of the teachers I interviewed referenced common experiences or professional colleagues during our interviews, which required that I maintain my focus on the research questions and content.
Prior to scheduling the interviews, I considered how I could maximize the quality of the interviews and accommodate the busy schedules of the teacher participants. Since most of them have classroom-supervision duties from 8:30 until 4:30, finding a time for the interview during the school day was difficult. Likewise, many teachers have before- and after-school obligations like parent conferences and professional development. On average, I exchanged three emails with each teacher to identify a time that worked for both of us. In retrospect, I believe this time and effort paid off because we were able to meet in the teacher’s classroom, which made them comfortable and maximized their use of time.

Although the participation rate for the focus group was low, with only 3 participants of the original 15, I believe that the richness of the participants’ responses is representative of their commitment to this project. On the evening of the focus-group meeting, weather forecasters were calling for snow and ice. Nonetheless, participants attended the focus-group meeting and talked at length about their experiences as effective veteran teachers in high-poverty schools.

Although I recognized that the selection of three downtown magnet elementary schools would result in overlap of participant responses, I believe that the value of including schools with very similar demographics outweighed the potential drawbacks. Principals and teachers at all three schools have faced the challenges of working with high-poverty students, implementing demanding magnet programs, and meeting the requirements of the Title I programs. The fact that we all worked in situations similar to my own enabled me to devote the majority of the interview time to the participants’ experiences and perspectives.
Prior to the start of the research, I determined that the focus of my research questions would be on what factors affect the retention of effective veteran teachers instead of why effective veteran teachers leave high-poverty schools. This distinction allowed for a more thorough discussion of the issue of teacher retention and what effective veteran teachers deem important to ongoing retention. Likewise, although I recognize that not all veteran teachers should be retained, I chose not to pursue this topic as part of my research on the retention of effective veteran teachers.

**Recommendations for Teacher Recruitment and Retention**

In light of the many challenges faced by high-poverty schools, it is imperative that changes be made both to schools and to systems to foster the retention of effective veteran teachers. Although new teachers receive a variety of supports through the formal mentor/mentee program, no specific programs target veteran teachers. As noted by several teachers I interviewed, the interview process used at schools should be restructured to ensure that demographic information is shared with applicants. Jill said, “We could retain them if we interviewed them and gave them an opportunity to visit the neighborhood and the magnet classes so they could see the good things that are going on.” In his 2008 article entitled, *What Research Says about Teacher Recruitment Incentives*, David argued that high-poverty schools must develop a specific recruitment plan and operate on a tight interviewing and hiring timeline in order to hire quality teachers.

At the system level, processes should be established to support strategic hiring practices at high-poverty schools. Human Resources staff at the county level should recruit
teachers who want to be at high-poverty schools and should then funnel their resumes to
principals with vacancies. Before the interview ever occurs, applicants should be familiar
with the high-poverty school, its student population, and their academic performance. At the
interview, principals and interview teams must try to honestly portray their school and
student population. A tour of the school and observation time in a classroom should be
standard practice for all prospective hires.

Additionally, Human Resources staff should maintain records on the turnover at high-
poverty schools to include specific details about who transferred, where they transferred, and
why they transferred. This data could be used to identify and support schools having a
higher-than-average turnover rate. Human Resources staff could recommend changes and the
implementation of additional practices that have proven valuable at other schools.

These suggestions are echoed in Snipes and Horwitz (2007) in their qualitative study
of the various strategies used by urban schools to recruit teachers. Likewise, Hurwitz and
Hurwitz (2005) recognized the role of the federal, state, and local school systems in
recruiting teachers. The responsibility for identifying and hiring teachers for high-poverty
schools must begin with the Human Resources department.

Although turnover rates were not mentioned by any of the 18 research participants, it
is not uncommon for high-poverty schools to have higher-than-average turnover rates. The
state of North Carolina maintains data on teacher turnover rates and reports this information
on the annual North Carolina Report Card. If a high-poverty school is having difficulty with
teacher retention, the Human Resources staff should provide additional assistance with the
hiring process. Likewise, other system officials should identify other strategies for fostering teacher retention. Most school systems allow teachers to transfer after they have secured their professional educator’s level-two license. In North Carolina, a professional educator’s license is issued after a teacher has completed two years of service. This practice may indeed serve to allow and encourage veteran teachers to seek transfers to low-poverty schools. Although transfers should not be eliminated, policies and practices should support teacher retention at all schools and especially high-poverty schools. Because teacher turnover negatively impacts the entire school system, not just the individual schools, the entire system would benefit from implementing changes. The Wake Education Partnership (2005) outlined specific recommendations for state and local officials for hiring and recruiting teachers. Its report is especially relevant for Human Resources staff and principals of high-poverty schools.

Much research exists on the topic of higher pay for teachers in high-poverty schools, but these studies are not conclusive. Stover (2007) found that climate, pay, and support are important but acknowledged that these factors alone will not result in higher retention. Kelly’s (2004) article, An Event History Analysis of Teacher Attrition: Salary, Teacher Tracking, and Socially Disadvantaged Students, documented higher retention rates of veteran teachers at schools that have higher salaries. Laura, a veteran with experience in North Carolina and New York, stated, “We need to keep salaries appealing. Expenses are rising, but salaries are not. I am worried that new graduates won’t consider the profession.” Shirley advocated “some financial support for teachers who stay in magnet schools—like high-poverty schools—because some leave because of the stress.” Although salary increases are
not likely under the current economic circumstances, differentiated salary schedules for teachers at high-poverty schools is worthy of consideration by school system leadership.

This research highlights the need for a specific plan of action to be facilitated by the Human Resources department. I recommend the following strategies that, when implemented consistently and collectively, will foster the retention of effective veteran teachers. These are shown in Table 5.

Table 5

_Human Resources Plan of Action_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Resources Needed</th>
<th>Who Responsible</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Differentiated application that categorizes schools by region, magnet status, etc.</td>
<td>Revised WCPSS application</td>
<td>HR Recruitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Support Group</td>
<td>Facilitator, agenda with guest speakers, topics relevant to veterans (mentoring, advanced degrees, NBPTS, leadership training, etc.)</td>
<td>HR Recruitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplement</td>
<td>Salary schedule based on experience, roles, advanced degrees, NBPTS</td>
<td>Finance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition Structure</td>
<td>Communication within county and with public to recognize veterans and years of experience, etc.</td>
<td>Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Track data on number of BTs, veterans, NBPTS, mentors, transfers, etc.</td>
<td>Survey of current staff</td>
<td>HR Retention</td>
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</table>

**Recommendations for Further Study**

Based on the findings from this study, one topic that warrants further investigation is how to keep effective veteran teachers in the classroom. Much has been written about the value of providing leadership opportunities to teachers who possess the requisite skills and initiative. One of the challenges that face administrators and teachers is how to support
effective veteran teachers as they seek to expand their professional skills, without removing them from their classrooms. Roles like grade-level chairperson, mentor coordinator, and School Improvement chairperson require additional investments of time but allow teachers to maintain their classroom teaching. Many teachers pursue master’s degrees in reading or teaching, which reward them financially without greatly affecting their professional responsibilities. A study that correlates the years of experience, teacher evaluation performance data, student achievement data, and pay should be conducted in order to better understand how these four factors are linked in the retention of effective veteran teachers. Current and existing research support the consideration of each of these factors, but there is no research available on their combined impact.

My experience as the principal of a high-poverty school has led me to conclude that teacher retention will continue to be a challenge unless school systems reward teachers for working in and remaining at high-poverty schools. Research has established that working in high-poverty schools is more challenging than working in low-poverty schools. When teachers are permitted to transfer to a low-poverty school, they are very likely to consider it. The chance is increased if the low-poverty school is closer to the teacher’s home. If school systems offered a bonus—either based on performance or for signing—prospective teachers would more strongly consider interviewing and working at high-poverty schools. The bonus may barely offset travel expenses, but even this would make the teacher less constrained from choosing a school based on professional preference and not proximity. As Felecia shared, “What about veterans? A few years ago, they offered a pay increase to young
teachers but not veterans. That is very unfair.” Reinstating the salary step schedule and further differentiating the salary schedule for effective veteran teachers will address these concerns. Veterans will be paid increases each year and will continue to receive supplements for extra duties and add-on licensure.

As teachers retire from positions like Title I reading and math, Intervention, and Literacy Coach, these roles may attract many effective veteran teachers. They represent a chance to try one’s hand at something different while still working directly with students, although they will not affect pay, tenure, or licensure status. When effective veteran teachers leave the classroom to take these positions, this constrains their ability to mentor other classroom teachers because the mentor’s perspective as a classroom teacher becomes dated. Beginning teachers and others who still benefit from the wisdom and insights of the veteran classroom teacher recognize that the mentors no longer face the challenges of large class size, behavior management, and parent conferences. This absence of a focused program of support for veteran teachers is felt among all members of the teaching staff but most noticeably among mid-career professionals who will one day become the veteran teachers. As Sara noted, “Our Beginning Teacher program is important, but our mentors are mostly Special Programs or Intervention teachers—not classroom teachers.”

As teachers gain experience and meet the requirements for participating in the mentor program, they may simultaneously move from the classroom to specialist positions having less direct student contact. They then provide support to other classroom teachers, despite the former’s not having many more years of experience. The absence of effective veteran
teachers in classroom teaching positions is a system-wide problem, and strategies must be implemented to keep effective veteran teachers in the classroom. Studies on the effectiveness of mentors should be conducted to determine whether there is a difference between the quality of mentor support provided by classroom teachers and that provided by teachers who are no longer in classrooms.

A review of educational research reveals that the retention of beginning teachers has long been the focus of school systems and states. Mentor/mentee programs and other types of support exist to encourage beginning teachers to remain in the profession. On the other hand, the retention of effective veteran teachers has not been studied in great depth and has received scant attention among educators. Although studies have acknowledged the value of veteran teachers in fostering student achievement, hiring and retention practices have hardly changed. Many of the teachers I interviewed commented on this problem and shared enthusiasm and excitement that their perspectives were being solicited. I hope that school-based administrators and Human Resources staff will recognize the value of retaining effective veteran teachers and will work together to keep them in the classrooms of high-poverty schools, where they make a difference for hundreds of students each day. In my role as principal, I have seen many teachers leave our high-poverty school for low-poverty schools for a variety of reasons. The data currently collected through exit surveys are not effectively utilized to assist school-based leaders in making improvements in our approach to retaining veteran teachers. Likewise, I would find it invaluable to learn what other principals and school systems are doing to support their effective veteran teachers. Further review of
programs that acknowledge the roles and contributions of effective veteran teachers will prove valuable to Human Resources staff and to principals who seek to provide the most support to all teachers.

**Conclusion**

As the level of scrutiny of student achievement and teacher performance increases, educational leaders must work more diligently to retain effective veteran teachers in the classrooms of our high-poverty schools. These effective veteran teachers understand how to best support the needs of high-poverty students, as a result of their years of experience in the classroom. Additionally, they possess institutional memory that is vital to maintaining continuity and focus as schools plan for the coming years. Their commitment to remain in the classroom and to take on additional responsibilities, like serving as grade-level chair or mentoring new teachers, has established these effective veteran teachers as the backbone of our high-poverty schools. Education leaders must do everything within our power to keep effective veteran teachers at high-poverty schools.
REFERENCES


# APPENDIX I
## Summary of Literature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Key Research Question</th>
<th>Type of Study</th>
<th>Key Findings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>High-Poverty Schools</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Berry (2008)</td>
<td>How can highly accomplished teachers be recruited to high-poverty schools?</td>
<td>Quantitative study of NBPTS teachers and where they are teaching</td>
<td>States and systems should change their recruitment policies and practices to secure more NBCTs for high-poverty schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center for Teaching Quality (2008a)</td>
<td>What can NC do to improve teacher recruitment and retention?</td>
<td>Qualitative study of NC public schools and data on recruitment and retention</td>
<td>Schools that put an emphasis on retaining teachers through administrative support, involvement in leadership, etc., improve retention.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Trust (2006)</td>
<td>How can schools avoid teacher inequalities for poor and minority students?</td>
<td>Quantitative national study of teacher distribution based on level of preparation and experience</td>
<td>School systems must overhaul their hiring practices and demand more from preparation programs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ingersoll (2001)</td>
<td>What are the organizational sources of teacher retention?</td>
<td>Quantitative national study of 6,700 teachers who left or moved</td>
<td>Job dissatisfaction is most prominent cause of turnover.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johnson (2004)</td>
<td>How can schools and school systems recruit and retain teachers?</td>
<td>Quantitative review of most effective retention strategies</td>
<td>Teacher retention is affected by a variety of factors at school and system level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Center for Education Statistics (2008)</td>
<td>Why is teacher turnover higher in high-poverty schools?</td>
<td>Quantitative study of teacher turnover between 1987 and 2004</td>
<td>Several factors lead to a higher rate of teacher turnover at high-poverty schools across the country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nieto (2003)</td>
<td>Why do teachers remain in teaching?</td>
<td>Qualitative study of reasons teachers stay in the profession despite many hardships, low pay, and challenges</td>
<td>Build on teachers’ strengths—their love of subject matter and students—to improve teacher retention.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quartz, Barraza-Lyons, &amp; Thomas (2005)</td>
<td>How can schools retain teachers in high-poverty schools?</td>
<td>Review of research on what factors contribute to teacher turnover at high-poverty schools</td>
<td>Teachers who are trained to work with high-poverty students are retained at a higher rate; policy implications.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Key Research Question</td>
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<tr>
<td>Robinson (2007)</td>
<td>What is the “poverty ideology,” and how does it influence teacher retention at high-poverty schools?</td>
<td>Quantitative study of causal relationships between teacher ideology and retention rate</td>
<td>Teachers who are retained at high-poverty schools share two characteristics: service orientation and a belief that poverty is a structural condition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scafidi, Sjoquist, &amp; Stinebricker (2007)</td>
<td>Why are teachers more likely to leave certain high-poverty schools at higher rates than other high-poverty schools?</td>
<td>Quantitative study of teacher turnover in high-poverty schools</td>
<td>Schools that have higher percentages of African-American students have higher rates of teacher turnover.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stover (2007)</td>
<td>What strategies aid teacher recruitment and retention at hard-to-staff schools?</td>
<td>Review of current research on teacher retention in urban school districts</td>
<td>Climate, pay, and support are important, but educators must recognize that the current generation of professionals changes jobs more frequently.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Teacher Retention**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Key Research Question</th>
<th>Type of Study</th>
<th>Key Findings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cochran-Smith (2004)</td>
<td>How can schools retain teachers?</td>
<td>Review of significant research on teacher retention</td>
<td>Retention is a multidimensional problem that must be addressed at preparation, entry, and service levels.</td>
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<tr>
<td>David (2008)</td>
<td>How effective are teacher recruitment incentives?</td>
<td>Qualitative review of national research on the hiring, support, and retention of teachers</td>
<td>High-poverty schools must recruit and hire in a more timely manner and must support teachers at all experience levels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guarino, Santibanez, &amp; Daley (2006)</td>
<td>What are the characteristics of teachers who remain in the profession?</td>
<td>Quantitative national study from 1980 to 2003</td>
<td>Teachers who stay are female, are minority, and have lower measured ability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Key Research Question</td>
<td>Type of Study</td>
<td>Key Findings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Johnson, Berg, &amp; Donaldson (2005)</td>
<td>What factors influence teacher retention, and how can schools and systems affect teacher retention?</td>
<td>Qualitative review of literature on teacher retention</td>
<td>Teacher retention strategies vary in level of effectiveness depending on the sub-group of teachers being targeted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NC State Improvement Project (2007)</td>
<td>What factors impact teacher retention in the state of NC?</td>
<td>Report on programs designed to support teachers and foster their retention in the profession</td>
<td>Teacher retention is a result of a combination of factors: public awareness of role, community support, and on-line teacher and parental support provided by the NC State Department of Public Instruction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shen (1997)</td>
<td>What is the social learning process that teachers experience upon entering the profession?</td>
<td>Quantitative, multivariate, national study of 3,600 teachers based on Schools and Staffing Survey of 1990–1991</td>
<td>Teachers who remain are married with children, have higher salary, and work in low-poverty schools.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Teacher Effectiveness**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Key Research Question</th>
<th>Type of Study</th>
<th>Key Findings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Biddle &amp; Ellena (1964)</td>
<td>How is teacher effectiveness defined?</td>
<td>Compilation of chapters by experts on topic of teacher effectiveness—studies, comparisons, interviews</td>
<td>The study of teacher behavior is far too complex to limit to one study; researchers must consider teacher behavior and the effects of these behaviors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Borman &amp; Kimball (2005)</td>
<td>How accurate are teacher evaluation systems in determining teacher quality?</td>
<td>Qualitative, mixed-case study of 400 teachers in Nevada</td>
<td>Teacher preparation and education programs are key in determining teacher quality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campbell, Kyriakides, Muijs, &amp; Robinson (2004)</td>
<td>How is teacher effectiveness defined?</td>
<td>Qualitative study of which teacher behaviors affect student achievement and performance</td>
<td>Teacher effectiveness is combination of teacher beliefs, subject-knowledge, and self-efficacy beliefs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darling-Hammond (2000a)</td>
<td>What can be done to solve the teacher supply and demand issues?</td>
<td>Qualitative report based on several reports on America’s teachers</td>
<td>Investments in teacher knowledge and performance standards will lead to teacher retention and improved student achievement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Key Research Question</td>
<td>Type of Study</td>
<td>Key Findings</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berry &amp; Hirsch (2005)</td>
<td>What can governors do to improve retention in hard-to-staff schools?</td>
<td>Quantitative study of Teacher Working Conditions surveys</td>
<td>Teachers respond to solid working conditions, especially support and empowerment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center for Teaching Quality (2008b)</td>
<td>What is the impact of teacher retention?</td>
<td>Quantitative study of teacher-retention strategies</td>
<td>School leaders can positively affect the rate of teacher retention.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clotfelter, Glennie, Ladd, &amp; Vigdor (2006)</td>
<td>Do salaries help retain teachers in high-poverty schools?</td>
<td>Quantitative study of the effect bonuses had on teacher retention</td>
<td>The bonus program did have a slight effect on the retention of the teachers in the study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooper &amp; Alvarado (2005)</td>
<td>What do other countries do to prepare, recruit, and retain teachers?</td>
<td>International, quantitative study of developed countries’ practices and how policies impact teacher retention</td>
<td>The culture of the school is the most important factor in determining whether teachers stay in the profession.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darling-Hammond (1997)</td>
<td>What is the relationship between teacher quality and student achievement?</td>
<td>Qualitative report based on National Commission on Teaching in America</td>
<td>The current structure of school makes it unlikely that schools and teachers can focus on what it takes to foster student achievement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darling-Hammond (2003)</td>
<td>What can schools do to keep teachers?</td>
<td>Quantitative study of strategies used that resulted in higher teacher retention</td>
<td>Solid teacher preparation programs, hiring experienced teachers, and ensuring good working conditions combine to retain teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Key Research Question</td>
<td>Type of Study</td>
<td>Key Findings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grissom (2009)</td>
<td>What is the role of the principal in keeping good teachers in high-poverty schools?</td>
<td>Quantitative, multivariate study of principal characteristics</td>
<td>Using a combination of strategies, principals can be effective in retaining teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ingersoll &amp; Bossi (1995)</td>
<td>Which types of schools have the highest teacher turnover and why?</td>
<td>Qualitative national study of retention rates of private and public schools and causes of turnover</td>
<td>Teacher turnover rates are high in schools with more than 50% of students receiving free and reduced-price lunch.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johnson, Berg &amp; Donaldson (2005)</td>
<td>What factors influence teacher retention, and how can schools and systems affect teacher retention?</td>
<td>Qualitative review of literature on teacher retention</td>
<td>Teacher retention strategies vary in their level of effectiveness depending on the sub-group of teachers being targeted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelly (2004)</td>
<td>What impact do salary and professional development have on teacher retention?</td>
<td>Quantitative, event history analysis of 7,200 teachers</td>
<td>Schools that pay veteran teachers more and offer job-embedded professional development have higher teacher retention rates.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sergiovanni (1990)</td>
<td>What characteristics do effective leaders possess that positively impact their schools?</td>
<td>Qualitative review of leadership styles and effective leader characteristics</td>
<td>Leaders who demonstrate consistent values and behaviors are more effective.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Teacher Turnover Costs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Key Research Question</th>
<th>Type of Study</th>
<th>Key Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lortie (1975)</td>
<td>What makes teachers enter the profession, and what are their experiences unique to the profession?</td>
<td>Qualitative study of teachers, their motivation for entering profession, and why they remain in the profession</td>
<td>School teachers report unique motivations for entering the profession and for remaining in the profession.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Key Research Question</td>
<td>Type of Study</td>
<td>Key Findings</td>
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<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Commission on Teaching (2007)</td>
<td>What is the cost of teacher turnover, and how does turnover affect schools and systems?</td>
<td>Quantitative national study of five districts and the costs associated with teacher turnover</td>
<td>Teacher turnover affects schools and systems in significant ways: replacement costs and student achievement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Schools of NC (2007)</td>
<td>Why do NC teachers leave the profession?</td>
<td>Annual report compiles results of teachers who left the profession in NC school systems during the 2006–2007 school year</td>
<td>12,776 or 12.31% of teachers reported leaving during the 2006–2007 school year; most resigned to teach elsewhere.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher Recruitment</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Center for Teaching Quality (2004a)</td>
<td>What did the results of the 2004 TWC reveal about teacher retention in the state of NC?</td>
<td>Quantitative report on results of 2004 TWC survey administered to NC teachers</td>
<td>Federal, state, and local leaders should focus on working conditions within schools, use of time, and professional development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center for Teaching Quality (2004b)</td>
<td>How can school leaders use TWC results to positively affect their schools?</td>
<td>Report on research-based strategies to reform schools</td>
<td>Teachers’ working conditions affect student achievement and are influenced by school leadership.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chauncey (2005)</td>
<td>What programs effectively recruit, retain, and support high-quality teachers?</td>
<td>Qualitative study of programs that foster teacher retention</td>
<td>Mentor programs, pre-service preparation, working conditions, leadership opportunities, and administration combine to affect teacher retention.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darling-Hammond (2003b)</td>
<td>How do teacher supply and preparation influence student performance and teacher retention?</td>
<td>Quantitative national study of factors that influence teacher recruitment and retention</td>
<td>National policies are needed to ensure the availability of adequately prepared teachers for all schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hurwitz &amp; Hurwitz (2005)</td>
<td>What can the federal government do to support school systems in finding and supporting quality teachers?</td>
<td>Qualitative study of national policies, hiring practices, and retention practices</td>
<td>Teacher retention is a problem that must be addressed by the federal government, states, and individual schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Key Research Question</td>
<td>Type of Study</td>
<td>Key Findings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Schools of North Carolina (2009)</td>
<td>What did it cost to fund the public schools of NC for the 2006–2007 school year?</td>
<td>Quantitative study of expenses and costs</td>
<td>Comparison of different counties in terms of costs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rockefeller, Williams, Kearney, &amp; Rich (2006)</td>
<td>What are administrators’ perceptions of teacher retention within a large, urban county?</td>
<td>Qualitative, mixed case study consisting of interviews of Human Resources administrators in large, urban county</td>
<td>Retention is impacted by a variety of factors—most of which administrators have little or no control over.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snipes &amp; Horwitz (2007)</td>
<td>How do urban schools effectively recruit teachers?</td>
<td>Qualitative study of recruitment strategies of urban school districts</td>
<td>Recruiters must be aware of what characteristics combine to make teachers effective in urban schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spradlin &amp; Prendergast (2006)</td>
<td>What are the trends in teacher recruitment and retention since the implementation of NCLB?</td>
<td>Quantitative study of teacher profile data and the reasons they leave the profession</td>
<td>Compensation systems should be diversified to encourage teachers to remain in the profession.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wake County Public School System (2004)</td>
<td>What is a “healthy school,” and how can the system contribute to school success?</td>
<td>Report compiled by Board of Education and school-system leaders</td>
<td>Twenty recommendations for school leaders were made.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wake Education Partnership (2005)</td>
<td>What factors foster teacher retention in WCPSS?</td>
<td>County-wide quantitative report on teacher retention in WCPSS</td>
<td>Six specific recommendations for state and local officials were made.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wake Task Force on Teacher Excellence (2001)</td>
<td>How can the WCPSS ensure quality teachers for all students?</td>
<td>Mixed study of a variety of data and the input of teachers, parents, and civic leaders</td>
<td>Six recommendations for improving the quality of all WCPSS teachers were made.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX II
Letter to Principals

April 25, 2010

Dear (Name of Principal):

I am writing to request your assistance with the research I am conducting for my doctoral dissertation at North Carolina State University. As part of the requirements for completion of my degree, I am conducting research on the topic of teacher retention in high poverty elementary schools in the Wake County Public School System. After reviewing county data, I identified your school as a possible participant in my research.

I am very interested in interviewing you to learn more about your school and veteran teachers on your staff. Additionally, I am interested in talking with at least five veteran teachers from your school about the topic of teacher retention of veteran teachers in high poverty schools. Specifically, I would like to talk with veteran teachers whom you have identified as effective. A veteran teacher is one who has tenure with the county. A teacher might be identified as effective for receiving above average ratings on evaluations, advanced degrees and/or National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certification, and holding various leadership positions within your school (Grade Level Chair, Mentor Coordinator, Mentor, Leadership Team Chair, Student Support Team Chair, etc.).

I will contact you by phone the week of May 25, 2010. If you grant me permission, we will schedule an interview during the week of June 1, 2010. After our interview, I will then contact the teachers directly and explain that you recommended them. I will designate possible meeting times that will not conflict with their responsibilities and will outline these commitments in advance. You will find attached a copy of the letter that I will send to them.

I have obtained permission from the Wake County Public School System and North Carolina State University to conduct this research.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Diann Kearney
August 25, 2010

Dear (Name of Teacher):

I am writing to request your assistance with the research I am conducting for my doctoral dissertation at North Carolina State University. As part of the requirements for completion of my degree, I am conducting research on the topic of retention of effective veteran teachers in high poverty elementary schools in the Wake County Public School System. For the purposes of my study, veteran has been defined as having tenure with the county. After reviewing county data and talking with your principal, I understand that you are an effective veteran teacher who holds a leadership position at your school. Thank you for your contributions to our system!

I am very interested in interviewing and talking with you about the topic of teacher retention of veteran teachers in high poverty schools. Specifically, I would like to talk with you about your experience as a veteran teacher who has chosen to remain at your current school despite opportunities to consider employment at new schools or in other professions. I am also interested in what you believe contributes to retention of veteran teachers and what schools and our school system can do to positively impact this issue.

I will contact you by email the week of September 8, 2010. If you agree to participate in this study, I will explain the details of the survey and interviews and we will schedule our first meeting. During our first meeting, I will also review the purpose of the attached consent form and ask that you complete it at that time. Please review the consent form prior to our first meeting. University standards require me to inform you that there will be no adverse consequences if you decide not to participate in this survey or interview. I have obtained permission from the Wake County Public School System and North Carolina State University to conduct this research.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this request and for your willingness to talk with me about the important issue of retention of veteran teachers.

Sincerely,

Diann Kearney
APPENDIX IV
Principal Interview Guide

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Interviewee:</th>
<th>School Name:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date:</td>
<td>School Address:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time of Interview:</td>
<td>Free and Reduced Lunch Percentage:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Principal Interview Questions:

1. How many years have you been a principal? How many years as principal of this school?

2. What led you to become the principal of this school instead of another school with fewer free and reduced lunch students?

3. How long have you known the veteran teachers that I will be interviewing?

4. In what capacity or capacities have you known the veteran teachers that I will be interviewing?

5. Why did you identify these veteran teachers as effective?

6. Why do you believe these teachers have stayed at this school instead of transferring to another school or leaving the teaching profession?

7. What factors do you believe contribute to teacher retention at this school?

8. What factors do you believe negatively impact teacher retention at this school?

9. What factors do you believe contribute to teacher retention in Wake County?

10. What factors do you believe negatively impact teacher retention in Wake County?

11. Is there anything else that I have not asked about that you would like to share?
APPENDIX V
Teacher Interview Guide

Name of Interviewee: | School Name:
---|---
Date: | Time:
Years at this School/Years in Education: | Location of Interview:

Teacher Interview Questions:

1. Why are you still here?

2. Does a school like this have challenges?

3. Have you had the opportunity to leave this school? If so, what would come into your decision-making to make you stay?

4. What would make you leave?

5. How could a school like this recruit and retain high quality teachers?

6. Are there things in place in this school, formal and informal, that get high quality teachers to stay?

7. What do you think it would be like to teach at another school?

8. Besides your classroom, how are you involved in this school?

9. How long is your commute from home to school?

10. The average turnover rate in Wake County is ___. The rate at your school is _____.

   What do you believe contributes to teachers leaving this school?

11. Is there anything that I have not asked about that you would like to share?
APPENDIX VI
Focus Group Protocol Guide

Names of Interviewees: 

Location: 

Date: 

Schools Represented: 

Time: 

Average Years Experience at Respective Schools: 

Focus Group Purpose:

1. To generate new data

2. To triangulate data already collected during initial interviews

Focus Group Interview Questions:

1. Each of you has at least five years of experience teaching at your respective schools. What factors have positively impacted your decision to remain at your school?

2. What factors have negatively impacted your decision to remain at your school?

3. What can educational leaders do to retain veteran teachers?

4. During the initial interviews, several themes emerged that appear to be consistent across the three schools.

   a. One of the factors that many of you noted is “administrative support.” What exactly does that mean? What does “administrative support” look like in your school? Paint a picture of what that can look like. What can an administrator do or fail to do that can impact your decision to remain at your respective schools? Can you tell me a story about an experience you have had that is representative of “administrative support”? Do you agree or disagree that
administrative support is an important factor in the retention of veteran teachers? Is there anything else about administrative support that I should know?

b. The second factor that emerged as a key theme in teacher retention is that of the personal and professional rewards gained from working in high poverty schools. How have you benefitted personally or professionally from your work at this school? What about your work at this high poverty school keeps you coming back year after year?

c. The third factor is the opportunities students and teachers have at your respective schools that they might not have at a traditional school. What specific opportunities do you believe exist at your school for students? What opportunities exist for teachers? How do these opportunities impact your decision to remain at this school? How do your experiences at this magnet school influence your perspective on teaching?
APPENDIX VII
Participant Description

Strong Elementary School

Jill, a fifth-grade teacher at Strong Elementary, is a Caucasian career educator with 31 years of experience as a classroom teacher. Of those 31 years, Jill has spent 15 years teaching at Strong Elementary School. Prior to joining Strong, she taught in very rural and culturally diverse schools in two neighboring counties. Throughout her interview, Jill referenced her love of the magnet theme and the academic advantages it provides the Strong students. Jill is a member of the School Improvement Team and the Parent Teacher Association.

Shirley, a third-grade teacher with 35 years of experience, is married to a teacher at a suburban high school. Shirley has been teaching at Strong for 13 years. A Caucasian, Shirley came to Strong because she felt she needed the experience of a more diverse student population. Shirley referenced her belief that the students at Strong need her and the experience she offers. Shirley is a member of the School Improvement Team and several related committees.

Felecia, a second-grade teacher with 31 years of experience, drives 30 minutes to get to Strong Elementary. Of those 31 years, Felecia, a Caucasian, has been teaching at Strong for 15 years. She referenced her love of the school and her Christian beliefs as the reasons for remaining at Strong. In addition to serving as a mentor to Beginning Teachers, Felecia also serves on the School Improvement Team, Leadership Team, and various committees and is the second-grade chairperson.
Alice, another third-grade teacher, has eight years of teaching experience. A transfer from a heavily recruited northern state, Alice, a Caucasian, taught for one year in another county before moving to Strong. Alice believes that the students at Strong get a wonderful education—one they would not get at other schools, and she remains fully committed to teaching at this high-poverty school. A member of Strong’s School Improvement Team and the third-grade chairperson, Alice is also a member of the North Carolina Association of Educators.

Dawn, the only African-American participant from Strong Elementary, is a first-grade teacher with 11 years of teaching experience. Upon college graduation, she interviewed and was hired to teach at Strong and has not considered moving to another school. She believes that she is meeting the needs of the Strong students, and she enjoys collaborating with her team to meet students’ needs. Dawn is a member of the School Improvement Team, Student Support Team, and Positive Behavior Support Team and is the first-grade chairperson.

Central Elementary School

Bill, one of only two male participants in this study, is a Caucasian specialist with 18 years of teaching experience. Prior to moving to Wake County from a rural North Carolina county, Bill taught in schools that were less diverse and had fewer resources. He is committed to teaching at a magnet school because of the emphasis on the arts and the support that he feels for his program. Bill serves as a mentor for Beginning Teachers and is a member of several committees.
Margaret, the only Asian in the study, joined the staff at Central as a teacher assistant before completing her degree and securing her teaching license. For the past 12 years, she has taught second grade. She shared that she remains at Central because that is where her roots are—she started her career there and has bonded with the students, parents, and staff. Margaret is the grade-level chairperson, a mentor, and a member of the Student Support Team.

Laura, an African-American female who teaches specials, has been teaching for 37 years. During the first years of her teaching career, Laura taught at high-poverty urban schools. She has spent the last 20 years teaching at Central Elementary and enjoys being able to introduce students to a variety of experiences through the magnet program. She is a member of several committees and works with local universities to host student interns and student teachers.

Jennifer, a Caucasian with 26 years of experience, has been teaching at Central for 17 years. She previously taught at a non-magnet school in another large North Carolina district. Jennifer recognizes the value of diverse populations and the benefits of Central’s magnet program for all students. She serves on the School Improvement Team and on the math curriculum committee.

Renee is a career educator with 31 years of teaching experience. Prior to moving into a reading-specialist role, Renee had been a primary-grades classroom teacher. She has previously taught in another Wake County school but wanted the challenge of working in a
magnet program and sought a position at Central Elementary. Renee serves on the School Improvement Team and the Leadership Team and is a member of several committees.

Southern Elementary School

Paul, an African-American primary-grades teacher, has been teaching for 11 years. After beginning his career up north, Paul moved his family to the Triangle area because of the excellent educational opportunities. He has taught kindergarten at Southern for five years. Paul serves as a mentor with the Helping Hands program, teaches Summer School, and is a member of several committees.

Sara, a Caucasian female with seven years of experience, is the youngest participant in terms of age and experience in this study. Seven years ago, she began her career teaching third grade at Southern and notes the relationships she has with her team as one of the reasons she remains at Southern. Sara is the chairperson of the School Improvement Team and serves on several committees.

Tammy, an African American, teaches fifth grade and has been at Southern Elementary for 14 years. Tammy loves the school and the atmosphere but is concerned about the lack of diversity within her classroom. She shared that 99% of her students are African American and that she believes more diversity would better prepare her students. Tammy is a mentor, tutor, and club sponsor and serves on the School Improvement Team.

Connie, a specialist with 17 years’ experience, is an African American who has taught at the high-school level and in more rural counties. Connie believes she can do more at Southern within the magnet program to develop a love of the arts in her students. She uses
her subject matter to extend and develop understanding of math and literacy while coordinating public performances for her students. Connie is a member of the School Improvement Team, Leadership Team, and Parent Teacher Association and serves on several committees.

Peggy, a 19-year veteran with experience as a specialist and a classroom teacher, has taught at Southern Elementary for the last 11 years. A Caucasian with several years of experience at other Wake County schools, Peggy noted the challenges of teaching at a school with higher concentrations of free-and-reduced-price-lunch recipients. Having spent her last several years as a reading specialist, Peggy has no desire to return to the classroom, given the increased accountability and paperwork. Peggy is a member of the Leadership Team and the School Improvement Team.
APPENDIX VIII
North Carolina Educator Evaluation System

The Teacher Performance Appraisal System, the evaluation instrument used by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction for all public-school teachers, is comprised of eight functions: management of instructional time, management of student behavior, instructional presentation, instructional monitoring, instructional feedback, facilitating instruction, communicating within the educational environment, and performing non-instructional duties. The specifics are presented in the remainder of this appendix.
Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers (Required)

This form should be used for the teacher self-assessment, classroom observation, and the summary evaluation.

Name: ___________________________ Date: ___________________________

School: __________________________ District: __________________________

Evaluator: __________________________ Title: __________________________

Start Time: __________________________ End Time: __________________________

Standard I: Teachers demonstrate leadership

| a. Teachers lead in their classrooms. Teachers demonstrate leadership by taking responsibility for the progress of all students to ensure that they graduate from high school and are adequately prepared for work and postsecondary education, and are prepared for work in the 21st century. Teachers communicate the vision to their students. Using a variety of data sources, they organize, plan, and set goals that meet the needs of the individual student and the class. Teachers use various types of assessment data during the school year to evaluate student progress and to make adjustments to the teaching and learning process. They establish a safe, orderly environment, and create a culture that empowers students to collaborate and become lifelong learners. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Observing | Developing | Proficient | Accomplished | Distinguished | Not Demonstrated/Comment Required |
| □ Understands how they contribute to students graduating from high school. | □ Takes responsibility for the progress of students to ensure that they graduate from high school. | □ Communicates to students the vision of being prepared for life in the 21st century. | □ Encourages students to take responsibility for their own learning. | | |
| □ Uses data to understand the skills and abilities of students. | □ Uses data to drive instruction throughout all classroom activities. | □ Evaluates student progress using a variety of assessment data. | □ Uses classroom assessment data to inform program planning. | | |
| | □ Establishes a safe and orderly classroom. | □ Creates a classroom culture that empowers students to collaborate. | □ Empowers and encourages students to create and maintain a safe and supportive school and community environment. | | |

b. Teachers demonstrate leadership in the school. Teachers work collaboratively with school personnel to create a professional learning community. They analyze and use local, state, and national data to develop goals and strategies in the school improvement plan that enhance student learning and teacher working conditions. Teachers provide input in determining the school budget and in the selection of professional development that meets the needs of students and their own professional growth. They participate in the hiring process and collaborate with their colleagues to mentor and support teachers to improve the effectiveness of their departments and grade levels.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observing</th>
<th>Developing</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
<th>Accomplished</th>
<th>Distinguished</th>
<th>Not Demonstrated/Comment Required</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>□ Attends professional learning community meetings.</td>
<td>□ Participates in professional learning community.</td>
<td>□ Assumes a leadership role in professional learning community.</td>
<td>□ Collaborates with colleagues to improve the quality of learning in the school.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Displays awareness of the goals of the school improvement plan.</td>
<td>□ Retracts in developing and implementing the school improvement plan.</td>
<td>□ Collaborates with colleagues on school improvement activities.</td>
<td>□ Assumes a leadership role in implementing a school improvement plan throughout the building.</td>
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Approval as of August 2008  20
### Observation

#### 6. Teachers lead the teaching profession

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Developing</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
<th>Accomplished</th>
<th>Distinguished</th>
<th>Not Demonstrated (Comment Required)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Has knowledge of opportunities and the need for professional growth and begins to establish relationships with colleagues.</td>
<td>and contributes to the</td>
<td>and promotes positive working relationships and student decision-making processes as required</td>
<td>and promotes positive working relationships and professional growth activities and collaboration.</td>
<td>and seeks opportunities to lead professional growth activities and decision-making processes.</td>
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#### 7. Teachers advocate for schools and students

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<td>Knows about policies and practices affecting student learning.</td>
<td>and supports positive change in policies and practices affecting student learning.</td>
<td>and participates in developing policies and practices to improve student learning.</td>
<td>and actively participates, promotes, and provides strong supporting evidence for implementation of initiatives to improve education.</td>
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#### 8. Teachers demonstrate high ethical standards

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<tr>
<td>Understands the importance of ethical behavior as outlined in the Code of Ethics for North Carolina Educators and the Standards for Professional Conduct.</td>
<td>and demonstrates ethical behavior through adherence to the Code of Ethics for North Carolina Educators and the Standards for Professional Conduct.</td>
<td>and knows and upholds the Code of Ethics for North Carolina Educators and the Standards for Professional Conduct.</td>
<td>and models the tenets of the Code of Ethics for North Carolina Educators and the Standards for Professional Conduct and encourages others to do the same.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Comments

### Examples of Artifacts:

- Lesson plans
- Journals
- Student handbooks
- Student work
- School improvement planning
- Service on committees
- Relevant data
- Class rules and procedures
- Participation in the Teacher Worker Conditions Survey
- Professional Learning Communities
- Membership in professional organizations
- Formal and informal mentoring
- Surveys
- National Board Certification
- Discipline records
Standard II: Teachers establish a respectful environment for a diverse population of students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observation</th>
<th>Developing</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
<th>Accomplished</th>
<th>Distinguished</th>
<th>Not Demonstrated (Comment Required)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Teachers provide an environment in which each child has a positive, nurturing relationship with caring adults. Teachers encourage an environment that is inviting, respectful, supportive, inclusive, and flexible.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Appreciates and understands the need to establish nurturing relationships.</td>
<td>✓ Establishes an inviting, respectful, inclusive, flexible, and supportive learning environment.</td>
<td>✓ Maintains a positive and nurturing learning environment.</td>
<td>✓ and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Teachers embrace diversity in the school community and in the world. Teachers demonstrate their knowledge of the history of diverse cultures and their roles in shaping global issues. They actively select materials and develop lessons that counteract stereotypes and incorporate histories and contributions of all cultures. Teachers recognize the influence of race, ethnicity, gender, religion, and other aspects of culture on a student’s development and personality. Teachers strive to understand how a student’s culture and background may influence his or her school performance. Teachers consider and incorporate different points of view in their instruction.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Acknowledges that diverse cultures impact the world.</td>
<td>✓ And</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Demonstrates awareness of the diversity of students in the classroom.</td>
<td>✓ And</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Teachers treat students as individuals. Teachers maintain high expectations, including graduation from high school, for students of all backgrounds. Teachers appreciate the differences and value the contributions of each student in the learning environment by building positive, appropriate relationships.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Holds high expectations of students.</td>
<td>✓ And</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Objective d: Teachers adapt their teaching for the benefit of students with special needs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Developing</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
<th>Accomplished</th>
<th>Distinguished</th>
<th>Not Demonstrated (Comment Required)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recognizes that students have a variety of learning needs.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .</td>
<td>. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .</td>
<td>. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is knowledgeable of effective practices for students with special needs.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .</td>
<td>. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .</td>
<td>. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Objective e: Teachers work collaboratively with the families and significant adults in the lives of their students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
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<th>Accomplished</th>
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<th>Not Demonstrated (Comment Required)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responds to family and community concerns.</td>
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<tr>
<td>. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .</td>
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<td>. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .</td>
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<td>. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .</td>
<td>. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Comments

### Examples of Artifacts:
- Student profiles
- Student surveys
- Cooperation with ESL teachers
- Lessons that integrate international content
- Documentation of referral data and use of IEPs
- Communications with parents/community
- Professional development on cultural attitudes and awareness
- Use of technology to incorporate cultural awareness into lessons
### Standard III: Teachers know the content they teach

#### a. Teachers align their instruction with the North Carolina Standard Course of Study. In order to enhance the North Carolina Standard Course of Study, teachers investigate the content standards developed by professional organizations in their specialty area. They develop and apply strategies to make the curriculum rigorous and relevant for all students and provide a balanced curriculum that enhances literacy skills. Elementary teachers have explicit and thorough preparation in literacy instruction. Middle and high school teachers incorporate literacy instruction within the content area or discipline.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observation</th>
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<th>Not Demonstrated (Comment Required)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✓</td>
<td>❑ Demonstrates an awareness of the North Carolina Standard Course of Study and integrates it in the preparation of lesson plans.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>❑ Assists colleagues in applying such strategies in their classrooms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓</td>
<td>❑ Elementary: Begins to integrate literacy instruction in selected lessons.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>❑ Secondary: Makes necessary changes to instructional practice to improve student learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓</td>
<td>❑ Secondary: Recognizes the importance of integrating literacy strategies within the content areas.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>❑ Secondary: Makes necessary changes to instructional practice to improve student learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>❑ ❑ Understands the North Carolina Standard Course of Study, is it in preparation of lesson plans, and applies strategies to make the curriculum rigorous and relevant.</td>
<td>❑ ❑ Develops and applies strategies based on the North Carolina Standard Course of Study, and standard as developed by professional organizations to make the curriculum balanced, rigorous and relevant.</td>
<td>❑ Elementary: Evaluates and reflects upon the effectiveness of literacy instruction.</td>
<td>❑ Secondary: Evaluates and reflects upon the effectiveness of literacy instruction within content areas.</td>
<td>❑ Secondary: Makes necessary changes to instructional practice to improve student learning.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### b. Teachers know the content appropriate to their teaching specialty. Teachers bring a richness and depth of understanding to their classroom by knowing their subjects beyond the content they are expected to teach and by directing students' natural curiosity into an interest in learning. Elementary teachers have broad knowledge across disciplines. Middle school and high school teachers have depth in one or more specific content areas or disciplines.

<table>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✓</td>
<td>❑ Demonstrates a basic level of content knowledge in the teaching specialty to which assigned.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>❑ Extends knowledge of subject beyond content in their teaching specialty and sparks students' curiosity for learning beyond the required course work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>❑ Demonstrates an appropriate level of content knowledge in the teaching specialty to which assigned.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>❑ Applies knowledge of subject beyond the content in assigned teaching specialty. Motivates students to investigate the content area to expand their knowledge and satisfy their natural curiosity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>❑</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### c. Teachers recognize the interconnectedness of content areas/disciplines. Teachers know the links and vertical alignment of the grade or subject they teach and the North Carolina Standard Course of Study. Teachers understand how the content they teach relates to other disciplines in order to develop understanding and connect learning for students. Teachers promote global awareness and its relevance to subjects they teach.

<table>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✓ Understand the links between grade/subject and the North Carolina Standard Course of Study.</td>
<td>. . . and demonstrates knowledge of links between grade subject and the North Carolina Standard Course of Study.</td>
<td>. . . and demonstrates knowledge of the links and vertical alignment of the grade or subject area and the North Carolina Standard Course of Study. Relates content to other disciplines.</td>
<td>. . . and integrates global awareness activities throughout lesson plans and classroom instructional practices.</td>
<td>. . . and collaborates with teachers from other grades or subject areas to establish links between disciplines and influence schoolwide curriculum and teaching practices.</td>
<td>Promotes global awareness and its relevance to all faculty members, influencing curriculum and teaching practices throughout the school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Displays global awareness.</td>
<td>Promotes global awareness and its relevance to the subjects.</td>
<td>Integrates a global awareness activities throughout lesson plans and classroom instructional practices.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### d. Teachers make instruction relevant to students. Teachers incorporate 21st century life skills into their teaching deliberately. Strategically, at all levels and at all ages. These skills include leadership, ethics, accountability, adaptability, personal productivity, personal responsibility, people skills, self-direction, and social responsibility. Teachers help their students understand the relationship between the North Carolina Standard Course of Study and 21st century content, which includes global awareness, financial, economic, business and entrepreneurial literacy, civic literacy, and health awareness.

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✓ Identifies relationships between the North Carolina Standard Course of Study and life in the 21st century.</td>
<td>. . . and identifies relationships between the core content and 21st century content.</td>
<td>. . . and integrates core content and 21st century content throughout lesson plans and classroom instructional practices.</td>
<td>. . . and deepens students’ understandings of 21st century skills and helps them make their own connections and develop new skills.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Comments

### Examples of Artifacts:

- Display of creative student work
- Use of NC Standard Course of Study
- Lesson plans
- Content standards
**Standard IV: Teachers facilitate learning for their students**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observation</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✅ Understands developmental levels of students and recognizes the need to differentiate instruction.</td>
<td>... and</td>
<td>... and</td>
<td>... and</td>
<td>... and</td>
<td>Encourages and guides colleagues to adapt instruction to align with students' developmental levels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✅ Assesses resources needed to address strengths and weaknesses of students.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Stays abreast of current research about student learning and emerging resources and encourages the school to adopt or adapt them for the benefit of all students.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**b. Teachers plan instruction appropriate for their students.** Teachers collaborate with their colleagues and use a variety of data sources for short-and long-range planning based on the North Carolina Standard Course of Study. These plans reflect an understanding of how students learn. Teachers engage students in the learning process. They understand that instructional plans must be consistently monitored and modified to enhance learning. Teachers make the curriculum responsive to cultural differences and individual learning needs.

<table>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✅ Recognizes data sources important to planning instruction.</td>
<td>... and</td>
<td>... and</td>
<td>... and</td>
<td>... and</td>
<td>Monitors student performance and responds to cultural diversity and learning needs through the school improvement process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Monitors student performance and responds to cultural diversity and learning needs through the school improvement process.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**c. Teachers use a variety of instructional methods.** Teachers choose the methods and techniques that are most effective in meeting the needs of their students as they strive to eliminate achievement gaps. Teachers employ a wide range of techniques, including information and communication technology, learning styles, and differentiated instruction.

<table>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✅ Demonstrates awareness of the variety of methods and materials necessary to meet the needs of all students.</td>
<td>... and</td>
<td>... and</td>
<td>... and</td>
<td>... and</td>
<td>Stays abreast of emerging research areas and new and innovative materials and incorporates them into lesson plans and instructional strategies.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Observations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observation</th>
<th>Developing</th>
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<th>Not Demonstrated (Comment Required)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>d. Teachers integrate and utilize technology in their instruction.</strong> Teachers know when and how to use technology to maximize student learning. Teachers help students use technology to learn content, think critically, solve problems, discern reliability, use information, communicate, innovate, and collaborate.</td>
<td>. . . and</td>
<td>. . . and</td>
<td>. . . and</td>
<td>. . . and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✔ Assess effective types of technology to use for instruction.</td>
<td>✔ Demonstrates knowledge of how to utilize technology in instruction.</td>
<td>✔ Integrates technology with instruction to maximize student learning.</td>
<td>✔ Provides evidence of student engagement in higher level thinking skills through the integration of technology.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>e. Teachers help students develop critical-thinking and problem-solving skills.</strong> Teachers encourage students to ask questions, think creatively, develop and test innovative ideas, synthesize knowledge, and draw conclusions. They help students exercise and communicate sound reasoning, understand connections, make complex choices, and frame, analyze, and solve problems.</td>
<td>. . . and</td>
<td>. . . and</td>
<td>. . . and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✔ Understands the importance of developing students' critical-thinking and problem solving skills.</td>
<td>✔ Demonstrates knowledge of processes needed to support students in acquiring critical thinking skills and problem solving skills.</td>
<td>✔ Teaches students the processes needed to think creatively and critically.</td>
<td>✔ Encourages and assists teachers throughout the school to integrate critical thinking and problem-solving skills into their instructional practices.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>f. Teachers help students work in teams and develop leadership qualities.</strong> Teachers build the importance of cooperation and collaboration. They organize learning teams in order to help students define roles, strengthen social ties, improve communication, and collaborative skills, interact with people from different cultures and backgrounds, and develop leadership qualities.</td>
<td>. . . and</td>
<td>. . . and</td>
<td>. . . and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✔ Provides opportunities for cooperation, collaboration, and leadership through student learning teams.</td>
<td>✔ Organizes student learning teams for the purpose of developing cooperation, collaboration, and student leadership.</td>
<td>✔ Encourages students to create and manage learning teams.</td>
<td>✔ Fosters the development of student leadership and teamwork skills to be used beyond the classroom.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### g. Teachers communicate effectively

Teachers communicate in ways that are clearly understood by their students. They are perceptive listeners and are able to communicate with students in a variety of ways even when language is a barrier. Teachers help students articulate thoughts and ideas clearly and effectively.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Checklist</td>
<td>QQ Demonstrates the ability to effectively communicate with students.</td>
<td>QQ Uses a variety of methods for communication with all students.</td>
<td>QQ Creates a variety of methods to communicate with all students.</td>
<td>QQ Anticipates possible student misunderstandings and proactively develops teaching techniques to mitigate concerns.</td>
<td>QQ Establishes school-wide and grade-appropriate vehicles to encourage students throughout the school to develop effective communication skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QQ Provides opportunities for students to articulate thoughts and ideas</td>
<td>QQ Consistently encourages and supports students to articulate thoughts and ideas clearly and effectively.</td>
<td>QQ Establishes classroom practices, which encourage all students to develop effective communication skills</td>
<td>QQ Provides opportunities for students to assess themselves and others.</td>
<td>QQ Encourages and guides colleagues to assess 21st century skills, knowledge, and dispositions and to use the assessment information to adapt their instructional practice.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### h. Teachers use a variety of methods to assess what each student has learned

Teachers use multiple indicators, including formative and summative assessments, to evaluate student progress and growth as they strive to eliminate achievement gaps. Teachers provide opportunities, methods, feedback, and tools for students to assess themselves and each other. Teachers use 21st century assessment systems to inform instruction and demonstrate evidence of students’ 21st century knowledge, skills, performance, and dispositions.

| Checklist                                                                   | QQ Uses indicators to monitor and evaluate student progress. | QQ Uses multiple indicators, both formative and summative, to monitor and evaluate student progress and to inform instruction. | QQ Uses the information gained from the assessment activities to improve teaching practice and student learning. | QQ Teaches students and encourages them to use peer and self-assessment feedback to assess their own learning. | QQ Encourages and guides colleagues to assess 21st century skills, knowledge, and dispositions and to use the assessment information to adapt their instructional practice. |
| QQ Assesses students in the attainment of 21st century knowledge, skills, and dispositions. | QQ Provides opportunities for students to assess themselves and others. | QQ Provides opportunities for students to assess themselves and others. | QQ Provides opportunities for students to assess themselves and others. | QQ Provides opportunities for students to assess themselves and others. | QQ Provides opportunities for students to assess themselves and others. |

### Comments

#### Examples of Artifacts:
- Lesson plans
- Display of technology used
- Professional development
- Use of student learning teams
- Documentation of differentiated instruction
- Materials used to promote critical thinking and problem solving
- Collaborative lesson planning

Approved as of August 2008
### Standard V: Teachers reflect on their practice

#### a. Teachers analyze student learning

- **Developing**
  - Recognizes the need to improve student learning in the classroom.
- **Proficient**
  - ... and
  - Provides ideas about what can be done to improve student learning in their classroom.
- **Accomplished**
  - ... and
  - Thinks systematically and critically about learning in their classroom. Why learning happens and what can be done to improve student achievement.
- **Distinguished**
  - ... and
  - Provides a detailed analysis about what can be done to improve student learning and uses such analyses to adapt instructional practices and materials within the classroom and at the school level.

#### b. Teachers link professional growth to their professional goals

- **Developing**
  - Understands the importance of professional development.
- **Proficient**
  - ... and
  - Participates in professional development aligned with professional goals.
- **Accomplished**
  - ... and
  - Participates in professional development activities aligned with goals and student needs.
- **Distinguished**
  - ... and
  - Applies and implements knowledge and skills attained from professional development consistent with research and professional development.

#### c. Teachers function effectively in a complex, dynamic environment

- **Developing**
  - Is knowledgeable of current research-based approaches to teaching and learning.
- **Proficient**
  - ... and
  - Considers and uses a variety of research-based approaches to improve teaching and learning.
- **Accomplished**
  - ... and
  - Actively investigates and contextualizes research-based approaches to improve teaching and learning and uses such approaches as appropriate.
- **Distinguished**
  - ... and
  - Adapts professional practice based on data and evaluates impact on student learning.

### Comments

### Examples of Artifacts:

- Lesson plan
- Formative assessments
- Student work
- Professional growth plan
- Completion of professional development
- Participation in professional learning
- Community
- Formative and summative assessment data
## Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers

### Signature Page

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Signature</th>
<th>Date</th>
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</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principal/Evaluator Signature</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Comments Attached: ___Yes ___No

---

### Principal/Evaluator Signature (Signature indicates question

*Note: The teacher's signature on this form represents neither acceptance nor approval of the report. It does, however, indicate that the teacher has reviewed the report with the evaluator and may reply in writing. The signature of the principal or evaluator attests that the report has been reviewed and that the proper process has been followed according to North Carolina State Board of Education Policy for the Teacher Evaluation Process.*