ABSTRACT

LONG, MARK EDWARD. Moving On: A Qualitative Analysis of Teacher Attrition in Northeastern North Carolina. (Under the direction of Michael E. Ward & Bonnie C. Fusarelli).

The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to explore the relationship between the high rates of teacher attrition and student misconduct in NoCo Schools. The study was aimed at determining the impact of high rates of student misconduct upon teacher attrition within a rural, low-performing school district. At the time of the study, the district at the center of the research, NoCo Schools, had the highest teacher turnover rate in the state of North Carolina. The same district also posted some of the highest short term and long-term suspension rates in the state.

Using archival data from the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey, the research incorporated a semi-quantitative element. Data specific to the NoCo Schools regarding student behavior and teacher self-efficacy were gathered and reported through basic descriptive statistics. To provide context for the data from the NoCo Schools, NCTWCS statistics from the state and a group of similar districts were also examined. The NCTWCS data from all three groups indicated that teachers did not believe that students in their schools followed the rules despite clear expectations set for them by adults.

The qualitative components of the study, which were the primary research design elements, explored teachers' perspectives regarding the impact of working conditions on their decisions to remain in their current professional roles. Two groups of teachers were interviewed, all were from the NoCo Schools. The first group included teachers who had a period of sustained employment within the district and were still employed there. The second

group included were teachers who left the district or the profession. Two separate interview instruments were created and used in dialogues with individuals from the two groups.

In total nine teachers participated in the study. Five teachers left NoCo Schools and four teachers remained in the district. The structured conversations revealed three common themes related to high rates of student misconduct and a teacher's self-efficacy: (a) parent and home support, (b) administrative support, and (c) classroom management and training. Three of the five teachers who left NoCo Schools identified that student misconduct played a role in their decisions to leave. Among the nine teachers, common concerns included a) a lack of administrator support for teachers in managing behaviors and b) ineffective leadership for initiatives that addressed student behavior management. Teacher participants shared that they routinely had to rely heavily on themselves or their peers heavily in dealing with classroom discipline. Seven of the nine teachers mentioned specifically that they relied on their own strategies or called upon the assistance of peers to assist with classroom management. The other two teachers, both of whom remained within the district, stated that they undoubtedly had the support of their school principals.

The quantitative results from the NCTWCS related to the question of the impact of principal support on teachers' sense of self-efficacy in the classroom were not consistent with the interview data. These survey results showed that teachers in all three groups (NoCo schools, the state, and similar district) in large majority were positive about their roles within their respective schools and the support that they received. The different data collection methods showed a difference among teacher participants and their feelings related to self-efficacy and principal support.

The study concludes with implications for further study as well as for policy and

practice. These recommendations are offered to assist policymakers and education practitioners in proactively addressing student behavior concerns, strengthening teacher satisfaction, and combatting high rates of teacher attrition.

Moving On: A Qualitative Analysis of Teacher Attrition in Northeastern North Carolina

by
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BIOGRAPHY

Mark Long was born on September of 1971 in Fredericksburg, Virginia. He graduated from Chancellor High School in 1990. He worked as a forklift operator until the age of 20 when he decided to pursue his dream of playing college football. He was accepted to Chowan University in North Carolina. In 1998 he landed a non-certified position in Northampton County Schools as a program director for the Amer-I-Can program at Conway Middle School. The Amer-I-Can program was a grant initiative founded by the football great, Jim Brown. For three years Mark was the director of this program that mentored at-risk youth at the middle school level. When the grant position ended, Mark was afforded the opportunity to continue in classroom in Northampton County Schools. While serving as a history teacher and football coach, Mark earned his teaching credentials through the lateral entry program. Mark worked in the classroom as a secondary level history teacher for 15 years before being accepted into the inaugural cohort for the Northeast Leadership Academy (NELA). The program afforded Mark a Master's Degree in Education and set him on the path to school administration that he is still currently on. Mark served as an assistant principal and principal in Northampton County Schools. He has been employed as the Human Resources Director and School Safety Coordinator for the last four years. In 2022, Mark signed an extended two-year contract extension to serve as the Executive Director of Human Resources and Special Projects for Northampton County Schools. In total he has 26 years in the education field. Mark enjoys mentoring at-risk youth as well as working with young educators in the field. He is an avid sportsman and prefers casting lines and sitting in tree stands in the pursuit of the perfect buck or the citation fish.

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Completing this dissertation has been the most difficult task in my adult life to date. At several junctures, I have wanted to throw in the proverbial towel and move on in the field without this terminal degree. However, through the support of my wife, Meredith, and my advisor, Dr. Mike Ward, I persevered.

My family deserves the credit in aiding in the completion of this research. This is for my wife, Meredith Long, who has continuously ensured I stayed on task and kept moving forward on days that I wanted to quit. My daughters, Dallas and Dakota, have lost time with their father and I have missed many of their extracurricular events because I was working on this paper. They have also dealt with me at lowest points in completing this research.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Chapter Introduction

This study explored high teacher attrition rates in a rural school district in northeastern North Carolina. The study examined the relationship between teacher attrition and student behavior. Nationwide, public-school teachers resign from their positions or leave districts for a number of reasons. Teachers who rated factors that impacted their decisions to leave the teaching profession ranked personal life considerations and school factors as two of the primary components that influenced decisions to leave a school (Goldring et al., 2014). Borman and Dowling (2008) completed a meta-analysis of 34 previous studies that addressed teacher attrition. Their findings suggested that the characteristics of the environment in which a teacher works impact attrition. The researchers indicated that teacher attrition is linked to school infrastructure. In addition, the study showed that teacher attrition rates were also influenced by salaries, resources, and the characteristics of the student body, (Borman & Dowling, 2008).

Teacher working conditions have been a frequent news headline across the state of North Carolina and around the nation. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, teachers leave the profession or move to other school districts because of low salaries, student discipline problems, and poor administrative support (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). North Carolina educators have cited inadequate pay, lack of state government support, and poor teaching working conditions as some of the reasons that they become disenchanted with education (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2018b). As a part of the Governor's Teacher Working Conditions Initiative that began in 2002, North Carolina's top government leaders set forth to understand the environmental factors affecting teaching through the

implementation of a survey entitled the *Teacher Working Conditions Survey* (NCTWCS), which is administered biennially. The survey topics covered a multitude of working conditions that educators and policymakers used to gauge whether licensed educators in the state have the supports necessary for effective teaching (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2018b). North Carolina's implementation of the survey shed light on the important role that teacher working conditions play in educational issues like teacher attrition.

While teacher working conditions are multi-dimensional and often contradictory, this research study explored links between student misbehavior and teacher attrition in the NoCo public school district. This research study focused on certified teachers who were currently employed in the district and those who resigned or retired within two years of completion of the 2017-2018 academic year.

NoCo Schools are located in rural northeastern North Carolina. The district is comprised of six schools at various locations countywide. NoCo Schools served as a pseudonym to protect the anonymity of the district in the study. NoCo County is considered a low-income county and receives special funding for initiatives through the U.S. Department of Education's Title I grant program. To be eligible for Title I funding, schools must have a high population of low-income families.

Statement of the Problem

Data support that teacher turnover rates are higher in areas of the country with high concentrations of poverty. High-poverty communities with schools that produce large numbers of low-achieving students often see higher teacher turnover rates (Loeb et al., 2013). This is a nationwide problem that often leaves school districts scrambling to fill open positions in preparation for each academic year. In fact, teacher turnover rates are 50%

higher in high-poverty school districts in comparison to affluent school districts (Ingersoll, 2001). As noted earlier in the chapter, teacher working conditions play a significant role in the decisions of teachers regarding whether to leave or to persist in the profession. Of particular interest in this study were issues related to the impact of student misconduct on teacher attrition. Teacher attrition is often based on a multitude of stressors that include student behavior, working conditions, and lack of emotional support (Horner et al., 2011). These stressors often lead to burnout and eventually turnover in the education field (Ingersoll, 2011).

Attrition among North Carolina's teachers is consistent with a problem that is national in scope. According to Crosby (2002), nationwide, one-fifth of new teachers quit within three years. That number increases to half in five years, (Crosby, 2002). Crosby and other researchers in the area of teacher attrition recognize the tremendous strain which teacher attrition places on districts each year. Across the country, teachers are leaving the profession at an increased rate. In 2014, The Alliance for Excellent Education reported that teachers left the profession or moved from their current schools at a 20% rate nationwide, an increase of over 10% since 2009 (Haynes, 2014). Past research indicates that teachers with less than seven years of teaching experience opt out of the profession at a rate of 50% (Ingersoll, 2002). Ingersoll (2001), in another research article, contended that teacher working conditions, including student misbehavior, present obstacles to teacher retention from year-to-year. O'Brien and Benham-Tye (2002) conducted a nationwide study on teacher attrition that yielded three main explanations for why teachers leave the profession: increased focus on testing, student misbehavior, and lack of administrative/parental support.

Data for North Carolina teacher attrition are similar to data seen in national averages. In 2014-2015, the Public Schools of North Carolina reported that public schools employed 77,137 teachers statewide (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2015a). Over 10,000 of those teachers left North Carolina's public school system or the profession at the end of the academic year; this constituted a nearly 15% loss (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2015a). Mentioned in the same report, was the fact that the percentage of beginning teachers leaving North Carolina public schools or the field was 21% at the end of the academic year.

The district of interest in this study offered a compelling, if not alarming, contrast to national and state averages for teacher attrition. According to the Public Schools of North Carolina (2018b), the teacher attrition rate for NoCo Schools was the highest attrition rate in the state, with 34% of the teachers having left the district in 2018. In 2018 the national average for teacher attrition was 14%. Overall, in the state of North Carolina, the teacher attrition rate was 15% (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2018b).

While some cited low pay or lack of support as a reason for leaving schools in North Carolina, there is little research published on the degree to which student misbehavior impacts decisions to leave the profession. Researchers have found that variables associated with teacher burnout and eventual turnover are multidimensional (Bibou-Nakou et al., 1999). Since teacher working conditions and dealing with student misbehavior are associated with job satisfaction, it is difficult to gauge the degree to which student misbehavior, in isolation, is among the reasons that teachers leave the profession. Teacher stress caused by poor teacher working conditions, including high rates of student misconduct, can accelerate teacher attrition (Bowman & Dowling, 2008).

While NoCo Schools has the highest teacher turnover among local education agencies in the state, it also has some of the highest short-term student suspension rates. In the span of four academic years, 2015-2018, the school system suspended students at the elementary and high school levels at rates more than double that of the state average; middle school rates of suspension were also above state averages. According to the Public Schools of North Carolina's annual report, *North Carolina Public School Safety*, NoCo Schools reported that the short-term suspension rate at the high school level was 48% in 2018, compared to the average statewide rate of 14%. At the elementary school level in NoCo Schools, the short-term suspension rate (30%) was nearly double that of the state (13.8%). At 66%, the middle school suspension rate for NoCo Schools during the four-year span of 2015-2018 was of particular concern (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2018b).

Kukla-Acevedo (2009) found that teachers were more apt to leave a district or the profession if there were problems with classroom control and a school's behavioral climate; this factor appeared to be more significant than many other working conditions. There is limited research available that directly connects teacher attrition rates and student misbehavior rates. Ingersoll is one of the leading researchers on topics of teacher shortage, teacher turnover, and educational workplace conditions. In a lecture series posted by the University of Pennsylvania (2012), Ingersoll stated, "The largest occupation in the country (education) is becoming more and more unstable." Ingersoll has been interviewed by media outlets nationwide, given numerous lectures, and written over 100 articles in the last ten years in an attempt to shed light on the growing trend of teacher workplace conditions and its relationship to teacher turnover. In PBS's *NewsHour* with Gwen Ifill in 2015, Ingersoll completed an interview with PBS correspondent John Merrow regarding teacher turnover in

the United States. “It’s the amount of support. It’s the amount of student discipline and behavioral problems in the building. It’s how much input teachers have in the decisions in the building that affect their jobs. Do they have input and voice?” (Ingersoll, 2015). Ingersoll broaches the subject of teacher working conditions in his interview with Ifill as a major contributor to the rise in teacher attrition rates. Research data in recent years disclose teacher attrition as a national problem and one of particular concern in the state of North Carolina. Ingersoll and other pertinent research data in recent years has begun to shed light on teacher attrition based on teacher dissatisfaction.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to address the phenomena of high teacher attrition and student misbehavior rates in a low-income, rural school district. Using archival data from the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey, the research incorporated a semi-quantitative element. Data specific to the NoCo Schools regarding selected teacher working conditions were gathered and reported through basic descriptive statistics.

The qualitative components of the study, which were the primary research design elements, explored teachers’ perspectives regarding the impact of working conditions on their decisions to remain in their current professional roles. The study focused particularly on the perspectives of teachers regarding the degree to which the phenomena of teacher attrition and student misconduct are related. This study examined high teacher turnover and high student misbehavior rates in this low-income, rural school district in northeastern North Carolina. As was mentioned previously, NoCo Schools has the highest teacher turnover rate in the state. In addition to the high teacher turnover rates, NoCo Schools also reported high

student suspension rates.

Two groups of teachers were interviewed, all were from NoCo Schools. The first group of teachers included teachers who had a period of sustained employment rate within the district and who were still employed there. The second group included were teachers who left the district or the profession. The study participants had a comprehensive reference form to complete that included educational levels and previous public-school experiences. Personal structured interviews were conducted with each study participant in order to secure data that were pertinent to the study. There were two different interview protocols, one for each of the aforementioned groups. The interview protocols were biographical in nature but also addressed the role in which teacher working conditions, specifically student behavior and administrative support, play a teacher's decision to stay or to leave. The analysis of data included an examination of common and emerging themes, as well as unique individual perspectives or narratives in relation to teacher attrition and teacher dissatisfaction.

Reference has been made to the limited extant literature addressing the relationship between teacher attrition and student behavior. In light of this, the study should provide both timely and relevant expansions to the body of knowledge related to the study constructs. In addition, the study yielded findings that should be of interest to policymakers and future researchers. It was my particular intent at the start of the study that this research would be of value to practitioners—teachers and administrators alike—in NoCo Schools and other school districts.

Research Questions

This study explored archival data on teacher working conditions. It further examined the impact of student misconduct on teacher attrition. In order to address the research aims

associated with this study, the following research questions were posed:

1. What are the perceptions of teachers regarding working conditions related to student misconduct in the NoCo Schools?
2. How do teachers describe the impact of student misconduct on their decisions to persist in the current position, move to another school district, or to leave the profession?
3. What is the impact of the development of specific behavior management skills on teachers' sense of self-efficacy in the classroom?
4. What is the impact of principal support on teachers' sense of self-efficacy in the classroom?

Definitions of Key Terms

The following terms are used in the study. The terms include the variables in the research questions. The section also includes terms that are commonly understood, but have a specific, unique meaning within the context of this study.

Attrition – for the purposes of this study, attrition was related to teacher turnover in public schools nationwide, North Carolina, and specifically NoCo Schools. Attrition is a teacher's act of leaving the district or the profession.

Attrition Rate – in this study, the attrition rate refers to the rate at which teachers leave a district or the profession.

Behavior Management – a teacher's ability to maintain appropriate student behavior in the classroom and school setting

Hard-to-Staff-Schools – the U.S. Department of Education (2001) defines hard-to-staff schools as schools that have high turnover rates and high poverty rates. A majority of

hard-to-staff schools are located in urban or rural settings where resources are low and the region in which the schools are located are economically depressed.

Principal Support – the term support, in this context, deals with measures that school principals take to aid teachers in managing student behavior. For example, they may host classroom management sessions and professional development geared towards positive classroom management techniques. Supportive principals also provide proper guidance in dealing with student misbehavior in a timely, fair, and appropriate manner.

Retention – teachers are retained in the school/district when they choose to remain in the school/district. They are retained in the teaching profession when they choose to remain in the profession. The retention rate is the rate at which teachers remain in teaching positions.

Self-Efficacy – self-efficacy is the belief in one's ability to influence events that affect one's life and control over the way these events are experienced (Bandura, 1977). Self-efficacy, according to Bandura, controls one's efforts to cope in adverse situations and whether or not he or she will persist in those efforts in adverse situations. For the purposes of this study, self-efficacy related to a teacher's ability to deal with adverse teacher working conditions such as student misbehavior and the degree to which he or she is able to maintain a behavioral climate conducive to learning.

Student Misconduct – behavior and/or actions by enrolled students that directly violates the student code of conduct or behavior that adversely affects the teaching and learning process, school and/or district mission and vision, and school and/or district policies and codes.

Student Misconduct Consequences – student misconduct is defined in the Code of Student Conduct released by NoCo Schools at the beginning of each academic year. Each

student and parent must sign a copy of Code of Student Conduct. Any violations of the Student Code of Conduct can result in the following:

- In-School Suspension-short term in-school suspension from the regular classroom setting to a designated classroom with a behavioral specialist
- Short-Term Suspension – a student may be suspended for 1 to 10 days for a violation of the Code of Student Conduct. Examples of violations that merit short-term suspension include but are not limited to fighting, disruptive behavior, smoking, possession of illegal substances, insubordination, tardiness.
- Long-Term Suspension – a student may be suspended for more than 11 days for a violation of the Code of Student Conduct. All long-term suspensions must be approved by the LEA Superintendent according to the North Carolina Compilation of School Discipline Laws and Regulations (2017). Examples of violations that merit long-term suspension include but are not limited to affray, assault on a staff member or student, gang activity, inciting violence, possession of illegal substances.
- Expulsion – any student age 14 or older may be recommended by school administrators to the LEA Superintendent for expulsion, or termination of the school year from the point of student infraction. All students recommended for expulsion are entitled to a hearing. Examples of violations that could lead to expulsion include but are not limited to possession of a firearm, bomb, or explosive device, persistent threat to the safety to students and staff (North Carolina Compilation of School Discipline Laws and Regulations, 2017).

Suspension Rate – the percentage of the school population that is suspended from school in two categories: (1) long term suspension (more than six consecutive days), (2) short term suspension (five days or less). Each year the Public Schools of North Carolina collect and release school report card data submitted by state local education agencies (LEA). The rates of suspension reported by each LEA are released per district, each school within that district, and at each grade level.

Teacher Shortage – a teacher shortage is noted by the U.S. Department of Education annually. It occurs when districts present a shortage of available teachers in key subject areas. North Carolina has a shortage of teachers, as reported by the U.S. Department of Education (2017) reported that North Carolina has several teacher shortages in the area of secondary math, science, special education to name a few.

Teacher Working Conditions – nationwide research shows that teaching conditions are positively associated with improved student achievement and teacher retention (ncteachingconditions.org, 2018). The following teacher working conditions are measured biannually in North Carolina:

- Community Engagement
- Teacher Leadership
- School Leadership
- Managing Student Conduct
- Use of Time
- Professional Development
- Facilities and Resources
- Instructional Practices and Support

- New Teacher Support

Teacher working conditions help frame conditions within a school, school culture, and school community.

Title I Program – federal government financial assistance program for schools with high percentages of children from low-income families. The program is in place to ensure that children from poverty-stricken areas receive ample resources to meet state academic standards.

Turnover – the rate at which teachers leave schools and/or districts, creating vacant positions. The teacher turnover rate in NoCo Schools (34%) is the highest rate in North Carolina's public school system (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2018b).

Justification for the Study

This study can be useful to multiple constituencies. It provided an in-depth analysis of the phenomena of high teacher attrition rates and high rates of misconduct in NoCo Schools and districts similar in demographics in nearby districts. Previous research has produced varied responses as to the teacher working conditions that contribute to or predict attrition. O'Brien and Benham-Tye (2002) found that teachers in California were more likely to either leave the profession or move to another district based on the teacher accountability system associated with state-wide testing. Minarick et al. (2003) found that administrative support played a more important role in teacher retention than did other teacher working conditions. Other research has found that student misbehavior is a major contributor in teacher attrition (Kukla-Acevedo, 2009).

It was hoped that the review of research and the findings of this study would provide a clearer picture of how student misbehavior contributes to teacher attrition. It was also

hoped that the findings of this study provided insights into appropriate programming to curb student misbehavior and increase teacher retention in NoCo Schools and similar school districts. In a profession that Ingersoll (2012) called unstable, the research presented in this study could provide policymakers and practitioners with data that disclose whether there is a relationship between high teacher attrition rates and high student misbehavior rates in a low-income, rural school district. Ingersoll (2012) stated, "No one is noticing," in reference to the instability and high turnover rates in the country. It was hoped that this study would draw the attention of both policymakers and educational practitioners.

Increasing teacher attrition rates have impacted all levels of education, from national, to state, to local education agencies (Haynes, 2014). The data collected from this study will add to the related body of knowledge and provide insight to education administrators; it was hoped that the data collected from this study would launch further research into the specific factors associated with teacher attrition rates in NoCo Schools and similar school districts.

Organization of the Study

This study is divided into five chapters. Chapter 1 serves to introduce to the problem, outline the purpose of the research, and present a rationale for the study. Chapter 2 provides a theoretical framework to support the study and provides a review of the literature related to teacher attrition. Chapter 3 serves to explain the methodological protocols for the implementation of the study and the processing of data for the study. Chapter 4 reports the results from these analyses. To conclude the study, Chapter 5 provides a discussion of these results. Implications of the study and any recommendations for future research is also included in Chapter 5.

Summary

As reported by the Public Schools of North Carolina in 2015, teacher turnover rates in the state are on the rise (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2015a). More than 15% of teachers left their positions in 2015 alone. The rate of attrition in NoCo Schools was double the state average. Not only is NoCo Schools the district with the highest teacher turnover rates, the schools were suspending students at a rate double and triple the state averages. Recent data show a 1% increase in NoCo Schools teacher attrition rates from the 2014-2015 to the 2015-2016 school year (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2018b). As outlined in this section, this study explored the high teacher attrition rates in this rural school district in northeastern North Carolina and explored the degree to which such attrition is correlated with high student misbehavior rates.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter Introduction

Although there have been many empirical studies of teacher attrition, I did not find that scholars in this area of inquiry have specifically pinpointed a comprehensive list of causes of teacher attrition. Previous research in the area of teacher attrition has found that teachers make decisions to leave a school or the profession based on a variety of factors ranging from working conditions to school climate and culture to administrative support. The body of knowledge about this phenomenon also presents contradictory findings regarding the leading factors that impact the propensity of teachers to leave a district or to leave the profession. The research presented in this literature review is intended to frame the issues surrounding teacher attrition, with a particular emphasis on the impact of student misconduct upon practitioners' decisions to remain in or depart a teaching position.

The following sections provide review recent historical developments related to the phenomena of teacher attrition, teacher shortages, and the factors that impact these trends. A review of contemporary and relevant policy is also provided in order to provide additional insights into the context in which the study occurred. The chapter then provides an explanation of the theoretical framework for the study. The section on pertinent research and professional perspectives examines prior studies and expert commentary on the study's key variables and the relationships among these variables.

Background and Policy Context

The following sub-sections provide background on the analysis of teacher attrition in recent decades. Seminal studies examining the relationship between attrition and student

behavior are reviewed. Informed by such research, the current policy context in North Carolina and its potential relationship to teacher attrition is explored.

Multi-Year Trends in Teacher Attrition and Related Causes

Nationwide teacher turnover rates have accelerated (Haynes, 2015). In North Carolina teacher turnover rates average 15% with over 10,000 teachers leaving the state in 2015 (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2015). In NoCo Schools, North Carolina, teacher turnover rates are 34%, the highest rate in the state (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2018a). This trend in education both in the state and national statistics has educational policymakers at all levels eager to pinpoint the reasons. Data point in many directions and vary district-to-district based on working conditions, available resources, administrative support, and personal reasons (Kersaint et al., 2007).

Concerns about teacher turnover and teacher attrition are not new. In 1969 the National Education Association (NEA) estimated that teacher shortage numbers were over the 200,000 mark (Carter & McCowan, 1970). On February 20, 1961, in an attempt to increase federal funding to help curb projected teacher shortages, former President John F. Kennedy pleaded to the United States Congress, "Even today, there are some 90,000 teachers who fall short of full certification standards" (Krash, 1961). Kennedy's speech also noted that tens of thousands of other teachers were dealing with large class sizes because of the insufficient number of teachers available at the time.

Even as early as the 1950's teacher turnover was a concern for school boards and school leaders around the country. McQuinn (1957) noted that teacher turnover was the top concern of school board presidents. Nearly 40% of school board presidents responding to a national survey reported that teacher attrition was a top concern for their respective districts.

In 1969, the number of new teachers in the field exceeded the 250,000 mark (Schlechty & Vance, 1983). Many researchers claim that the influx of new teachers in the education field during the late 1960's and 1970's was due to extensive education reform during that decade (Boyd et al., 2011; Ingersoll, 2002; Schlechty & Vance, 1983). Schelechty and Vance (1983) also noted that in 1979, just a decade after the number of new teachers exceeded the 250,000 mark, that new teachers in the field numbered 125,000, a drop of approximately 50%.

Retirement of teachers in the 1980's caused yet another teacher shortage (Rebore, 2001). The teacher shortage numbers caused many states to issue alternative means of entering the teaching field. States with teacher shortages began to allow college graduates without an education background to enter the field and obtain certification while in their beginning years of teaching (Feistritzer, 2001). Consequently, teachers using this means of entering the education field often did not have adequate collegial training and an understanding of curriculum and classroom management techniques. To meet the demands of teacher turnover, many states still have lateral entry programs for college graduates. However, there is a strong correlation between higher teacher turnover rates and the percentage of teachers on lateral entry teaching licenses in correlation with student achievement (Church & Hirch, 2009).

The U.S. Department of Education (2015) conducted the Beginning Teacher Longitudinal Study (BGLS) in an attempt to learn more about teachers over a longer period of time. The BGLS studied beginning teachers over a four-year period, beginning in the 2007-2008 academic year and concluded in the 2011-2012 academic year. Approximately 1,990 beginning teachers took part in the longitudinal survey (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Of the 1,990 teachers who completed the survey, approximately 17% of those who

started the survey in 2007-2008 had left the profession by the conclusion of the study (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

Research shows a history of ebb and flow in the demand for teachers over the last century. Education reform, an increase in federal and state resources, an increase in population, and initiatives for college graduates to enter the education field are just a few of the reasons that new teacher numbers increased during the 1960's and 1970's (Schlechty & Vance, 1983). During the recession years of 2008-2012 the rates of teacher attrition leveled off (McAdoo, 2013). Dunn (2015) found that teachers were less likely to make abrupt career changes because of the scarcity of jobs in other fields during the recession years. "Teachers in this study were no different than people in other professions who, at a time when jobs are scarce, find it difficult to conceptualize giving up a sure thing for an unsure thing" (Dunn, 2015). Economics and job prospects in the United States have improved since the recession ended in 2012.

While a lag in the number of entries into the profession is obviously a trend of significant concern, the issue, as a noted researcher in the field observed, is not simply one of teacher recruitment (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Ingersoll and Strong (2011) contend that the issue that contemporary schools are facing is teacher retention. Ingersoll noted that it is widely believed that there are major shortages of teachers and agreed that nationally, there are shortages of teachers in specific fields such as math and special education. However, he suggested that new teacher graduates saturate the field, but that many are leaving schools at higher rates due to job dissatisfaction. Past research indicates that teachers with less than seven years of teaching experience opt out of the profession at a rate of 50% (Ingersoll, 2002). In 2014, The Alliance for Excellent Education reported that teachers left the

profession or moved from their current schools at a 20% rate nationwide, an increase of over 10% since 2009 (Haynes, 2014).

As has been noted previously, contemporary rates of teacher attrition are cause for significant concern in many of the nation's states and districts. The school district of interest in this study, the NoCo Schools, experiences difficulties with the above-mentioned issues in many of its schools. In addition to the highest turnover rate in the state, NoCo Schools also suspends students on a short-term basis at rates double and triple that of the state averages at the elementary and secondary school levels (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2018a). While it is difficult to pinpoint any direct correlation between teacher attrition and student misbehavior specifically in NoCo Schools, there is significant research about this issue that has been conducted nationwide that could be relevant in an examination of NoCo School's teacher attrition rates.

While research into the relationship between student behavior and teacher attrition has been limited in North Carolina, and even more specifically, in NoCo Schools, Abel and Sewell (1999), in a study conducted in 97 school districts in North Carolina and Georgia, found that student misbehavior, along with time pressures, were among top indicators of teacher burnout and stress. Their study showed that stress from student misbehavior and time pressures were significantly greater than produced by other teacher working conditions. This seminal research into teacher attrition, along with a 15-year-old study by O'Brien and Benham (2002) addressed just a portion of the nationwide issue in teacher attrition. The O'Brien and Benham-Tye study yielded three main explanations for why teachers leave the profession: increased focus on testing, student misbehavior, and lack of administrative/parental support.

O'Brien and Benham-Tye (2002) addressed just a portion of the nationwide issue in teacher attrition. North Carolina has reported rising attrition rates over the last five years (Brenneman, 2015). Brenneman explained that 2,700 of the state's teachers left the state due to personal dissatisfaction with the public schools at the end of the 2014 academic year. Brenneman also noted that the number of teachers who left the state because of personal dissatisfaction with the public schools increased more than 20% from the 2013 school year to 2014 school year.

Ingersoll conducted extensive research in the area of teacher attrition in the nation's schools. In 2004, he found that teachers were leaving the field of teaching at an accelerated rate for reasons other than retirement. Ingersoll found that more often than not, underqualified teachers are hired in school systems where the demand is high. His findings indicated that these teachers quickly become consistently stressed and unmotivated (i.e., burned out) and leave the profession. Teacher stressors, including student misbehavior, are listed as reasons for leaving the field (Ingersoll, 2002).

In 2014, North Carolina Superintendent of Public Instruction, Dr. June Atkinson, responded to the release of teacher turnover rates. "In the past five years, the state's teacher turnover rate has increased in all but one year [2013-2014]. We won't reverse this trend until we address the root causes of why teachers leave the classroom" (Helms & Hui, 2015). Education advocacy groups, like the Alliance for Excellent Education and the Center for Teaching Quality, have conducted research on teacher working conditions and rates of teacher attrition. The Alliance for Excellent Education reported that nationwide teacher attrition rates are on the rise (Haynes, 2014). Haynes (2014) further suggested that nearly half a million teachers either moved or left the profession in 2014. The cost of teacher attrition

nationwide is roughly $2.2 billion dollars each year and disproportionately affects high-poverty school systems (Haynes, 2014).

Counter-Perspectives Regarding Teacher Shortages

An obvious corollary of accelerated teacher attrition is increased demand for teachers. Many argue that the nation faces a shortage of teacher applicants. School districts nationwide spend considerable time attempting to recruit and retain teachers (Church & Hirsch, 2009). Teacher shortages across the country have led to national media coverage, educational reform, and policy initiatives (Ingersoll, 2001). Ingersoll and Smith (2003) cited programs like Troops to Teachers, Teach for America, and Americorp as ways that the country is trying to fill positions in classrooms. In October of 2009 then-Secretary of Education Arne Duncan (2009) stated in a speech to Columbia University prospective teachers, "The challenge to our schools is not just a looming teacher shortage, but rather a shortage of great teachers in the schools and communities where they are needed most" (para. 34).

The Department of Education acknowledges that there are teacher shortages in all 50 states and in the District of Columbia through their annual publication of Teacher Shortage Areas (TSA) Nationwide Listing (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). In the 1990's the federal government attempted to entice teachers to shortage areas through college loan forgiveness programs. These programs are still in place in today for teachers who fulfill minimum commitments in districts on the TSA list. Increasing birth rates, educational policy changes, and teacher retirement all contribute to the demand in educators nationwide. These demands are higher in urban and rural settings with high concentrations of poverty and minority students (Burdick-Will & Logan, 2017).

While data document teacher shortages across the country, Ingersoll (2001) found that teacher shortages are more often than not caused by failure to retain quality teachers in the schools. Ingersoll and Smith (2003) noted that high levels of employee turnover suggest that an organization has underlying problems. Low salaries, student discipline problems, lack of support from the school administration, poor student motivation, and lack of teacher influence over school-wide decision making all contribute to teacher attrition (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). Ingersoll (2003) stated that teacher shortages are real but asserts that they are caused not because teachers are not entering the field, but because schools cannot keep teachers in place.

It is useful to note that a number of researchers disagree that there is actually a teacher problem in the country. Kate Walsh, President of the National Council on Teacher Quality, wrote in the *Washington Post* (December, 2018) "With almost no real data—because neither states nor the federal government collect the information that would be needed to pronounce the onset of a true teacher shortage—we witness the press, school districts, state school boards and even Congress conclude that we are in the throes of a full-blown national crisis" (para. 2). Walsh (2018) contends that there are teacher shortages in some subject areas such as secondary science and math, but states that between 175,000 and 300,000 teachers matriculated through American college and university education programs over the last 30 years. Of those, only 60,000 to 140,000 new teachers were hired in school systems nationwide (Walsh, 2018). Walsh contends that school districts opted to hire teachers with more experience rather than hire newly certified teachers.

Cowan et al. (2018) elaborate a perspective similar to that of Walsh. Cowan et al. (2018) showed that data supported the notion that the number of teacher education graduates

grew over the last several decades. “The production of newly minted potential teachers has increased steadily over the past several decades, and only about half of these recent graduates have been hired as public school teachers in a typical year” (Cowan et al., 2018, p. 460). The authors stated that looking at recent year statistics on teacher shortages does not adequately portray the circumstances related to teacher availability, because teacher production has grown steadily since the 1980s.

It is clear that some authors contest the generally accepted notions in the related literature about teacher recruitment and retention, i.e., they resist the widely held view that a national teacher shortage exists. However, even these authors agree that the issue of teacher shortages is real in some types of schools and communities, and for some types of teaching positions.

Contemporary Policy Context

Teacher working conditions and teacher dissatisfaction are outlined by previous researchers as factors associated with teacher attrition. According to Kersaint et al. (2005), teacher dissatisfaction is associated with poor salaries, poor administrative support, and student discipline issues, all of which fall under the umbrella of teacher working conditions. Teacher concerns over testing and accountability impact decisions to remain in the profession as well (O’Brien & Benham-Tye, 2002). The policy environment in North Carolina has included such factors and is explored in the following paragraphs.

Adnot et al. (2018) conducted a study of teacher effectiveness in schools with high rates of teacher turnover and found that these schools struggled to maintain consistent cohorts of effective teachers. While teacher effectiveness tools vary state-to-state, education policymakers have long known that effective teachers have a positive effect on student

outcomes. What is less clear is how a school with high concentrations of poor, low-performing students and with high teacher attrition rates retains effective teachers.

Bishop et al. (2017) outlined five strategies that help recruit and maintain teachers in hard-to-staff schools. The researchers suggested that "strengthening teacher preparation, improving the hiring of teachers, improving teacher compensation, providing support to new teachers, and improving working conditions" would help hard-to-staff schools recruit and maintain effective teachers. Many researchers have found that these strategies could help the sustainability of an effective teaching staff, however, each strategy requires an ample amount of resources. States like North Carolina have experienced recent cuts in education expenditures. According to Public Schools First NC, since 2009, the per pupil expenditure has dropped from $6,716 to $6,115 (2017). In 2009, North Carolina's legislature enacted a budget cut of $840 million in education spending statewide. Currently, North Carolina ranks 43rd in per pupil expenditures (Public Schools First NC, 2017).

With the reduction in spending, programming to aid developing the teaching and learning processes in low-performing, hard-to-staff schools has been difficult to maintain (Public Schools First NC, 2017). A recent study conducted by Nicoletti and Rabe (2017) in secondary schools in England found that when per student spending increased by $1,400 per pupil, English, science, and mathematics testing scores increased nearly 6%. Nicolletti and Rabe (2017) conducted their study within English school zones that contained dense populations of economically challenged families. Contemporary studies conducted in all parts of the world have shown that per pupil spending does have effects on student achievement. These issues can exacerbate teacher attrition in low-performing, hard-to-staff schools.

In addition to student achievement being related to per pupil expenditures, teacher attrition impacts the budgets of districts nationwide. Attrition rates have risen from 10% to 20% nationwide, especially among teachers in their first five years in the field (Haynes, 2014). Haynes (2014) found that teacher attrition nationwide cost districts nearly $2.2 billion dollars. A report submitted to the University Council for Educational Administration showed that approximately $4.9 billion dollars are spent replacing teachers who transfer schools (Barnes et al., 2018). The report goes on to show that, on average, it costs a small school district $4,336 to replace one teacher, while larger school districts spend upwards of $17,000 to replace one teacher (Barnes et al.).

North Carolina is not alone in the struggle to find and retain teachers. Teacher Working Conditions are directly correlated with teacher attrition (Ingersoll, 2002). Some research suggests that high rates of teacher turnover can have profound and negative effects on district reform, teacher development, and professional learning communities within schools (Guin, 2004). In these same "hard-to-staff" districts, "students are routinely taught by the least experienced, least effective teachers," in turn, placing a strain on the academic success of students (Borman & Dowling, 2008).

As is mentioned throughout this chapter, poor teacher working conditions inhibit the capacity of districts to staff schools; such conditions are often a key variable related to high rates of teacher turnover (Borman & Dowling, 2008; Kersaint et al., 2005). Public education in North Carolina has been a divisive issue for several years. In May of 2018, more than 15,000 public school educators marched on the Capital Building in Raleigh in protest of poor teacher salaries and other concerns related to the profession. According to the National Education Association (2017), North Carolina was ranked 39th in average teacher pay in

2017. In an effort to raise teacher salaries to meet a national average standard, the state legislature voted to increase educator pay 6.2% in the subsequent fiscal year. In a press conference addressing teacher pay in May of 2018, North Carolina House Speaker Tim Moore was quoted as saying, "Remember that just a few years ago starting teacher pay was $27,000. Now it's $35,000. And that's where we were having some of the largest teacher retention issues, in those first few years," (Willett, 2018, n.p.).

Budget cuts in the state of North Carolina since the recession of 2008 have taken a toll on the states' public education system. According to Figueroa et al. (2017), North Carolina was one of 12 states in the union that still have not gotten back to per pupil funding levels that existed before the recession. North Carolina ranks 11th in percent in change in state formula funding per student, with a net loss of -7.9% since the recession of 2008 (Figueroa et al., 2017). Oklahoma is at the top of that same list, with a net loss of -28.2% since 2008.

While North Carolina may have been moving towards a more respectable per pupil spending average, in 2013 such efforts stalled. The legislature enacted, and then-Governor Pat McCory signed into legislation a state budget that had detrimental decreases in education spending (Johnson, 2017). The 2013 approved budget caused outrage among education advocates statewide because it eliminated many educational programs and benefits. In addition to a reduction in per pupil state funding, the 2013 budget cut the North Carolina Teacher Fellows Program (Johnson, 2017). This program was set up to entice future teachers who eventually matriculated from North Carolina colleges and universities back into the public schools around the state and receive forgiveness for the cost of their undergraduate education. Education advocates fought to reinstate the program, addressing the needs of

school districts statewide. In 2017 the program was reinstated for the 2018-19 academic year at five North Carolina Universities (Stancil, 2017).

The 2013 budget also eliminated many benefits for teachers, including a loss of pay for advanced degrees, loss of tenure, and the loss of longevity pay. There was also a reduction in force that included teacher assistants and a freeze in teacher raises that lasted well into 2015 (Johnson, 2017). The budget cuts of 2013 certainly affected the perception of the education system in North Carolina on a national level. This led to a grassroots protest movement that featured rallies known as Moral Mondays in North Carolina's state capital, Raleigh. Moral Mondays gave a non-hierarchal voice to educators who were fed up with political leaders taking the perceived democracy out of the education system (Johnson et al., 2017, p. 365).

In their efforts to address teacher attrition, North Carolina's education leaders and policymakers have a unique tool. Beginning in 2002, a state program in North Carolina began to examine teacher working conditions in an attempt to determine if teachers had the resources in place to support effective teaching. The initiative, the Teacher Working Conditions Survey (TWC), has been in effect since. The survey examines teachers' perspectives about "community engagement and support, teacher leadership, student conduct, use of time, professional development, facilities and resources, instructional practices and support, and new teacher support" (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2014). The significance of the TWC initiative is far-reaching because it gives importance to working conditions, a rising concern in light of teacher attrition rates.

Theoretical Framework

North Carolina State Superintendent June Atkinson promoted getting to the root of why teachers leave the classroom as the only way to curb the increased rates of teacher attrition. Teacher working conditions and teacher dissatisfaction are outlined by previous researchers as factors associated with teacher attrition (Helms & Hui, 2015). The research examined teaching working conditions, specifically student misbehavior, as a root of teacher attrition in NoCo Schools. Gay's (1981) theories on culturally pluralistic classrooms and Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory guided the study.

Culturally Pluralistic Classrooms

Gay (1981) defines diversity in culturally pluralistic classrooms as differences in race, religion, gender, age, socioeconomic status, and individuality. These differences can lead to interpersonal conflicts. Gay (1981) suggests that varying goals between teachers and students lead to conflict between the two groups. Furthermore, Gay (1981) states that conflicts between teachers and students in a culturally pluralistic classroom disproportionally affect teachers because conflicts cost energy, time, and mental and social anguish. Gay (1981) further asserts that these affects distract the teaching and learning processes for both groups.

Gay's conflict theories associated with culturally pluralistic classroom resonate with the study of whether student misconduct plays a role in teacher attrition in NoCo Schools because its schools serve a high-poverty community with a culturally diverse public school population (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2018a). Classrooms in NoCo Schools illustrate the circumstances that Gay's theories define as culturally pluralistic. More than 60% of the county's public school population is African-American, less than 30% is Caucasian, and

percentages of the remaining students fall into Hispanic, Asian, and Other ethnic classifications (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2018a).

Kostis (2009) supported Gay's original theories stating that "while school populations become more and more diverse, the issues of classroom management become more complex and prominent" (p. 171). Kostis (2009) further asserted that misunderstandings between teachers and students with different sociocultural backgrounds are among the biggest challenges that teachers must manage in the modern classroom. Gay (1981) and Kostis (2009) both found that dealing with a culturally pluralistic classroom required specific pedagogical training to reduce classroom conflict and increase classroom management effectiveness and efficiency.

Boyd et al. (2007) found that high teacher turnover rates created instability in schools. "This instability may be particularly problematic when schools are trying to implement reforms, as new teachers coming in each year are likely to repeat mistakes rather than improve upon implementation of reform." High teacher turnover rates in NoCo Schools make it difficult to administer effective training that could create a less conflictive classroom, and thus, potentially lessen the frequency of student misbehavior that results in equally as high student suspension rates.

Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory

Bandura (1977) explains the theory of self-efficacy as the ability of people to process, weigh, and integrate diverse sources of information concerning their capability, and regulating their choices, behavior, and effort expenditure accordingly. Bandura (1977) also suggests that levels of self-efficacy play an important role in one's ability to persevere in the face of threatening situations depending on the use of coping mechanisms. Self-efficacy

plays an important role in the development of effective classroom teachers. Consistent with Bandura's self-efficacy theory, if a teacher experiences success, then her/his confidence levels rise. Conversely, if a teacher experiences failures, then her/his confidence levels lower. Teachers working in challenging school environments are often working with more disruptive behaviors from students. Teachers' ability to persist in the face of these challenges is impacted by their sense of self-efficacy and vice-versa. Bandura (1977) also suggests that mastery in stressful or threatening situations can be achieved through successful experiences and persistence.

Classrooms within the district lines of the NoCo Schools are culturally pluralistic. As mentioned earlier, Gay's theory on cultural pluralistic classrooms suggests that diverse classrooms often create conflict between teachers and students. Teachers, often less experienced, are called to lead a group of students with varying learning goals, cultural backgrounds, value systems, and background experiences. These conflicts within these classroom challenge teachers and the value systems of both parties (Gay, 1981). In classrooms with less experienced teachers, this dilemma could be greater based on a teacher's ability to discern and thus respond effectively to the conflict. This conflict could lead to greater numbers of student suspensions.

These theories underpin the relationships among variables that are proposed in my research questions. Bandura's Theory of Self-Efficacy (1977) suggests that one's ability to persist in adverse conditions, specifically where there is heightened conflict in pluralistic classroom, can affect a teacher's will to remain in a classroom that is challenging (Johnson, 2017). A study conducted by Goldhaber et al. in 2007 found that more resilient elementary school teachers in North Carolina are more likely to remain in the classroom, even in

demanding schools where their self-efficacy is challenged more frequently. The research questions examine such phenomena in a district where rates of teacher tenure are high.

Pertinent Research and Professional Perspectives

A large and diverse body of research exists in the area of teacher attrition, yet further analysis of some of the specific reasons that teachers are leaving at increasing rates is needed. Ingersoll (2001) found that working conditions often framed a teacher's decision to leave a school or the field. Whether working conditions or teacher dissatisfaction based on other factors, the body of research in the area of teacher attrition should provide insights to enable policymakers and practitioners to slow the increasing rates at which teachers are leaving.

The following sub-sections address the body of knowledge on teacher attrition. The content explores teacher working conditions in general, along with their impact on teacher attrition. The topic of support for teachers as a factor in decisions to stay or leave is also explored. The topic of student misconduct and its relationship to teacher attrition is addressed. Additional sections address the impact of behavior management skills and principal support on teachers' sense of self-efficacy.

Working Conditions and Teacher Attrition

Around the nation and in the state of North Carolina, teacher attrition is a cause of deep concern for policymakers, educational leaders, and educational stakeholders. Previous research has shown the need for further examination of the causes of teacher attrition. A plethora of research conducted by researchers has shown a rise in concern over teacher working conditions as reasons for high teacher attrition rates. The following subsections examine elements of working conditions in schools. The subsections highlight research that examines relationships among these working conditions and teacher retention/attrition.

Teacher salaries/benefits. An obvious and fundamental condition of employment is the compensation associated with employment. The 2011 Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) found that salary played a role in whether or not teachers stay or leave. In the 2008-09 school year, beginning teachers who made $40,000 as a base annual salary were still teaching in the 2010-11 school year at higher rates than teachers whose base annual salary was less than $40,000 (need a citation for the 2011 SASS).

Such research is pertinent in that North Carolina's teacher pay scale was among 11 states which saw declining average teacher salaries (National Education Association, 2018). According to the National Education Association (2018), North Carolina currently ranks 41st in the national teacher pay scale at just over $47,000 per year. However, beginning teacher salaries have yet to reach the $40,000 per year mark in North Carolina.

The demographic profile of schools. The rates of poverty, low achievement, and minority enrollment have been found to relate to rates of teacher retention and attrition. Teacher attrition rates are highest in schools with a high concentrations of poor, low-performing students (Boyd et al., 2011). Boyd et al. (2011) also found that working conditions tend to be viewed as less favorable in areas where there is a high concentration of poor, low-performing students.

A study conducted by Ingersoll and Rossi (1995) examined the types of American schools whose teachers leave their positions most often. The study was conducted using research from the Schools and Staffing Survey, which is conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics. The authors studied surveys from a sampling of public and private schools nationwide. Ingersoll and Rossi found that teachers left schools at a higher rate when more than half of the students received free or reduced lunch (1995). The authors also found

that teachers left elementary schools (public and private) with lower student enrollment at a higher rate. At the conclusion of the study, the authors discerned that more research should be conducted in order to understand the underlying components of teacher attrition in these specific school types.

A study conducted by Boyd et al. (2011) also suggested that "teachers choose to leave schools serving large concentrations of poor, low-performing, and non-White students" at a higher rate (p. 306). Boyd et al.'s study framed teacher attrition based on school contextual factors, which created a unique set of data. Boyd et al.'s findings seem to parallel the issues facing NoCo Schools in that teachers leave poor, low-performing schools with high concentrations of non-White students at a higher rate. The demographics of NoCo Schools are specifically similar to those in schools associated with Boyd et al.'s findings.

Assessment and accountability. With school reforms like No Child Left Behind, Race to the Top, and curricula centered on 21st Century education, assessment and accountability policies have become increasingly pivotal in most states' education systems and in their interactions with local districts. In schools and districts that perform inadequately against these accountability policies, the pressure for students to perform at higher standards has been exacerbated by such school reforms, many of them grant- and reward-based. The pressure for states and districts to perform well to receive funding trickles into the classroom in the form of pressure to raise achievement.

A study conducted by O'Brien and Benham-Tye (2002) attempted to gauge working conditions as factors in teachers' decisions to leave the education field in the state of California. The authors conducted surveys of graduates with degrees in education from Chapman University dating back to 1996 and found that 49% were no longer working as

teachers. Those who left the field of education listed state testing and accountability as the main reason for leaving the profession. Other reasons included student behavior, lack of parental support, low status of the profession, and salary considerations.

Clotfelter et al. (2004) found that accountability systems influenced the ability of low-performing school districts in North Carolina to attract and retain high-quality teachers. The pressure for teachers to perform and students to measurably achieve is often too much for teachers to handle, and this pressure is a factor in the decision to leave or to stay in a low-performing district.

Community engagement and support. Teacher persistence is influenced by the degree to which the community and parents support academic achievement. Strong parental involvement has been associated with creating environments that are conducive to academic success (Jones et al., 2000). These authors contend that having a strong community and the support of that community leads to improved school attendance and behavior. As a dimension of working conditions, a teachers' relationships with parents and the surrounding community contribute to their satisfaction and to attrition rates (Loeb et al., 2012). Teachers and school leaders count on parents to help ensure school attendance and reinforce school and classroom rules and procedures (Kraft & Papay, 2013).

Allensworth et al. (2009) studied teacher attrition in Chicago's public schools and found that one of the most important relationships that teachers can have in a low-performing district is one with a parent. The study found that teachers expected a "joint problem solving" relationship with the parents to help with homework and student behavior. An open line of communication between parents and teachers fosters participation and accountability and as Allensworth et al. (2009) found, can be predictive of teacher retention.

Teacher leadership. The opportunity to play a role in the leadership and decision-making of the school impacts teachers' perceptions of the working environment and, hence, their intentions regarding whether or not to remain in their jobs. When teachers are given the opportunity to make decisions regarding their teaching, they are less likely to feel discouraged in their positions (Weiss, 1999). Weiss (1999) found that when teachers are included in decisions, it can play a role in their decisions regarding whether to leave or stay in a school or district.

Having an inclusive environment where teachers believe that their decisions are important, heard, and trusted is key to creating a culture of trust. In schools that serve high-poverty, high need students, teachers often depend on one another as they make decisions and solve problems (Bryk & Schneinder, 2002). When teachers work in an environment that cultivates trust in their principals and their colleagues, they are less likely to leave the district or school.

The preceding subsections make clear that working conditions, while not the sole reason for rising rates of teacher attrition, contribute greatly to a teacher's decision to leave a school or to leave the field. Data show that teachers' decisions about continuing in their current employment are often influenced by conditions like salary, school characteristics, inclusion in leadership, and student demographics and achievement. Student misconduct and the behavioral environment are also important attributes of the work environment in schools. Literature that examines this dimension of the teacher's work environment is examined in the next section.

Student Misbehavior and Teacher Attrition

Student behavior and its relationship to teacher retention/attrition are key variables in

this study. A number of studies demonstrate that student misconduct and the general behavioral climate are significant factors in teachers' decisions about staying in or leaving a school or district.

Boyd et al. (2011) found that student behavior and student motivation were contributing factors in teacher attrition. Student behavior and the level of student engagement are also predictors of teacher retention (Boyd et al., 2011). O'Brien and Benham-Tye (2002) found that student misbehavior and classroom management issues played a role in attrition among teachers in California. With the dynamics of the classroom shifting towards a more culturally pluralistic environment (Kostis, 2009), teacher-student conflict is more prevalent. Gay (1981) suggested that teachers needed pedagogical training to address conflict in the classroom. Maintaining classroom stability in a fluid environment where the teacher attrition rates are high is often difficult in low-performing schools.

Greenlee and Brown (2009) found that "Among teachers leaving challenging schools, the factors affecting teachers' decisions to leave are most frequently related to working conditions and classroom management concerns" (p. 97). These authors also suggest that "addressing the specific working conditions associated with schools that serve high proportions of minority and low-income students may reduce teacher turnover over time."

Kukla-Acevedo (2009) examined the role that workplace conditions played in a teacher's decision to leave a school, a district, or the profession. The author studied three workplace conditions in an attempt to discern why teachers leave a school for another district or leave the profession altogether. The author pointed out a scarcity of evidence as to why teachers leave the profession as an important reason to research the topic. The three workplace conditions studied were administrative support, classroom control, and behavioral

climate. The author picked these three particular workplace conditions because they were controlled by local school and district administrators. After conducting a binomial and multinomial study using SASS results from 1999-2001, Kukla-Acevedo's research revealed that teachers leave a school, district, or the profession more frequently based on two of the three workplace conditions: classroom control and behavioral climate. The author also found that teacher turnover rates were higher for first-year teachers and teachers nearing retirement.

The Impact of Principal Support for Teachers

There is a considerable amount of research that supports the impact of an effective and supportive school administrator on a teacher's decision to remain at or leave a school. Boyd et al. (2011) found that school leadership played a vital role in teacher retention. Both student achievement and teacher effectiveness are influenced by the leadership provided by a school principal (O'Donnell & White, 2005).

A study conducted by Hughes et al. (2015) showed a connection between leadership skills of a school principal and teacher attrition rates in hard to staff schools in the United States. The authors conducted research among such schools in a western United States region. The research included 20 schools and 80 teachers. The teachers were asked to answer survey questions that the authors used to discern a correlation between principal support and teacher retention in hard-to-staff schools. The authors hypothesized that a principals' supportive behaviors do correlate with the retention of teachers who work in hard to staff schools. They found that teacher retention was affected by principal support, specifically emotional support, and environmental support.

O'Donnell and White (2005) completed a study with 325 middle school educators, including administrators and teachers. The study was intended to measure the role that school

leaders play in aiding in instructional effectiveness of teachers. The goal of the study was to determine if a relationship existed between a principal's instructional leadership behaviors and student performance, specifically in 8th grade English and Mathematics. O'Donnell and White surveyed the participants and compared testing data from selected 8th grade English and Mathematics courses. The survey measured behaviors related to school leaders promoting the school learning environment: protecting instructional time; maintaining high visibility; providing teacher incentives; promoting professional development; and providing incentives for learning. The study concluded that, "principals who emphasize the improvement of their school learning climate might be helping to improve their students' ability to achieve at higher levels" (O'Donnell & White, 2005, p. 66). In addition, O'Donnell and White (2005) concluded that principals should work with teachers to identify strengths and weaknesses within the classroom. Higher student achievement is associated with higher teacher retention rates (Ingersoll, 2001).

Burkhauser (2018) found that principals play an intuitive role in how teachers feel about their schools. She further explained that while past principalship practices may have been more managerial in nature, today's school leaders are faced with "managing student behavioral issues to ensure a safe school environment, insulating teachers from external forces, supporting teachers, and acknowledging teachers' accomplishments," (Burkhauser, 2018). Burkhauser's study focused on four school environment measures: teacher time use, physical environment, teacher leadership, and professional development. Her research spanned the years 2005 through 2012, used data collected from the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey and sought to explore whether targeting specific or general principal leadership skills is more beneficial in maintaining teachers in high turnover schools.

The researcher suggested that assessing teachers' perceptions about their school working environment could help principals develop a preparatory program that would focus on needed leadership skills to combat teacher attrition.

According to O'Donnell and White (2005) the primary role of a school principal is to facilitate effective teaching and learning within the overall mission of enhancing student achievement. Grissom (2011) completed a study that examined whether principal effectiveness played a role in teacher turnover rates in hard-to-staff school districts by examining data from the 2003-2005 SASS Teacher Follow-Up Survey. Grissom found that principal effectiveness ratings were lower at hard-to-staff schools. His findings showed that principal effectiveness in these hard-to-staff schools was related to teacher effectiveness and teacher satisfaction. Conversely, principal ratings were higher in circumstances where teacher satisfaction and teacher effectiveness ratings were higher.

Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2011) completed a study of teacher attrition based on factors such as relations within a school, a teacher's feeling of belonging, and emotional exhaustion. Support for teachers is key in decisions to leave; it should be noted that in Skaalvik and Skaalvik's (2011) study, a teacher's feeling of belonging in the school was found to influence her/his decision to remain. The researchers described belonging as "supervisory support and relations with colleagues and parents" (Skaalvik & Skaalvik,, 2011, p. 1031). The researchers noted that their study was contextual and based on variables within specific schools and on teachers' perceptions in regards to their sense of belonging.

Principals play a significant role in support of teachers as they deal with matters of student discipline. Charner-Laird et al. (2015) studied six high-minority, low-performing urban schools and examined the discipline systems and support of teachers working in each

of the six schools. The researchers found that teachers within these schools most often fail in their positions as educators without a systematic support system. The systematic support found to be most effective in these high-minority, low-performing schools was closely associated with a teacher's chance for success: establishing an orderly and disciplined learning environment throughout the school, specialized support for students with emotional and behavioral needs, and efforts to shape the behavior of students' attitudes, behavior, and readiness to learn (Charner-Laird, et al., 2015).

Developing Teachers' Behavior Management Skills

Maintaining an environment conducive to learning is an important responsibility for teachers. However, teachers, particularly secondary teachers, are often not confident about their ability to manage student behavior (Baker, 2005). Teachers report that they were often not well-prepared for this responsibility in their teacher-preparation programs (Flores & Day, 2006). Charner-Laird et al. (2015) found that teachers in high-minority, low-performing schools have an increased chance of effective classroom teaching and professional learning if organizational constructs are in place to aid in discipline and behavior support. This study also suggests that students in these schools may be more challenging, and the teachers may face a lack of parental support. The frequency with which students disrupt the teaching and learning process increases in these situations, necessitating that teachers strengthen their practice in behavior management techniques.

Throughout the history of public schools, educational professionals have penned books, journals, articles, and launched programming geared towards developing behavior management skills in teachers. Impactful teaching and satisfactory learning in the classroom rely on the teacher employing effective behavior management strategies (Collins et al.,

2010). Given the challenges that many students bring with them to the classroom, teachers are tasked with engaging students in a variety of ways and non-dimensional approaches to behavior management have changed over time. Collins et al. (2010) found that teachers often prefer a proactive behavior management approach; however, most interactions with misbehavior are negative and more reactive.

One proactive approach that is practiced across grade levels in at least 37 states nationwide is called Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) (Freeman et al., 2017). PBIS is a behavior system that emphasizes positive discipline procedures for all students, staff members, and all settings within the school and school community (Eber & Netzel, 2003). Teachers are able to receive both district and statewide PBIS training to assist in implementing the approach in their respective classrooms. Many schools in North Carolina have school-based leadership teams that receive the training and create PBIS committees to help deliver the proactive approaches to behavior management to the classrooms. School-based positive intervention programs like PBIS have been found to have a positive effect on teachers' beliefs and perceptions in the classroom (Becker et al, 2018).

Even with the development of PBIS systems nationwide, new teachers are still concerned with feelings of inadequacy in managing classrooms (Arnold & Mitchell, 2004). Arnold and Mitchell contend that effective classroom management requires, "common sense, consistency, a sense of fairness, and courage" (p. 216). These authors studied teachers within a south Texas school district and found that veteran teachers felt more at ease in dealing with discipline problems and managing their classrooms, while problems with these areas of teaching were more prevalent among recent college graduates and teachers under the age of 30. To combat ineffectiveness, the researchers suggested that first-year teachers need

effective training in behavior management prior to entry into their second year. They also suggested that being paired with a veteran teacher with strong classroom management skills increased feelings of adequacy moving forward. Finally, Arnold and Mitchell (2004) suggest that districts and school leaders research and practice effective classroom management practices to help instruction, student achievement, and student behavior.

Principals' Impact on Teachers' Sense of Efficacy

Principals play an important role in helping teachers to improve their practice and develop a sense of efficacy. Charner-Laird et al. (2015) found that principals play a pivotal role in developing school-wide systems that allow teachers to develop as effective teachers. Providing a sound, structural support system that allowed teachers to be more effective in the classroom, increased the frequency of teacher success and thus, the students' chances for academic and behavioral success.

Principals impact teachers' capacity to manage student behavior. According to Bandura (1977), teachers who have success in managing discipline issues have an increased self-efficacy, thus, increasing chances of teacher retention.

Teachers of all backgrounds and educational levels report that they struggle with student discipline and need administrative support for disciplinary issues (Marinell & Coca, 2013). How an administrator supports, guides, and leads teachers can determine classroom effectiveness. Blase (2000) found that "effective principal-teacher interaction consisted of two major themes: talking with teachers to promote reflection and promoting professional growth." Blase (2000) reported that promoting reflection and professional growth systematically enhanced instructional effectiveness. Teachers who can reflect on practices

that work and don't work, including behavior management, are able to create a more effective classroom environment.

A collaborative principal-teacher relationship is important to meet the needs of the students and the organization as a whole (Hughes et al., 2015). In order for teachers to best deal with difficult situations within the classroom, including classroom management, an effective principal-teacher relationship should include open forums, meetings, discussions, and related professional development.

Summary

Chapter 2 and the aforementioned studies shed light on the importance of research in understanding why teachers are leaving districts and the profession at elevated rates. The research shown in this subsection was an attempt to illustrate that education administrators need to understand the reasons behind teacher attrition in order to implement proactive and preventive measures to deter teacher attrition.

This chapter provided background for the proposed study and highlighted the contemporary policy context in which the study occurred. The theories of culturally pluralistic classrooms and Bandura's self-efficacy theory provided the conceptual framework for the study.

It is important to examine extant research in order to discern what experts and researchers have concluded about the research issues that are proposed in a new study. The concluding sections of the chapter examined the relationship of teacher persistence to selected working conditions and dimensions of the teacher's role, with a particular focus on the impact of student misconduct in teachers' decisions to remain in or leave their employment. Additional sections explored the literature on the impact of professional

development and principal support in the development of teachers' behavior management skills and overall sense of efficacy.

Chapter 3 provides the methodology for the study. The research design and research questions are outlined. The chapter further explains the processes for selecting participants and securing their consent, along with procedures for data gathering and analysis.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Chapter Introduction

Previous research has shown that teacher attrition rates are increasing (Ingersoll, 2012). The state of North Carolina has a 15% teacher attrition rate (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2018a). According to the Public Schools of North Carolina's annual report, *North Carolina Public School Safety,* NoCo Schools reported that the short-term suspension rate at the high school level was 48% in 2018, compared to the average statewide rate of 14%; this was the highest rate among the 112 statewide public school districts.

This mixed methods study examined the phenomena of high teacher attrition and student misbehavior rates in a low-income, rural school district in Northeastern North Carolina. The following sections outline the research procedures for this study and present a rationale for the use of a mixed methods study.

Research Design

The research was implemented using qualitative methodology with quasi-quantitative elements. According to Creswell (2014), using a mixed method approach to conduct research provides a better understanding of the research problem. In addition, using multiple forms of data helped to expand research possibilities. Because the data presented in the research study were a combination of personal individual teacher experiences and database statistics related to teacher turnover, a mixed method approach was the most pragmatic way to convey research results in this study.

Creswell (2014) notes that a quantitative research design allows for analysis of data gathered through statistical procedures. In this case, archival data related to the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey were analyzed.

Using a mixed methods approach to the research allowed me to use qualitative data collected to help explain the quantitative data used in analysis. The quasi-quantitative portion of this study pre-dated implementation of the qualitative procedures and involved analysis of archival data from the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey. Data was analyzed specifically from the NoCo Schools survey results. The TWC survey answers analyzed were most directly related to the variables that are central in the qualitative portion of this study. Basic descriptive statistics are reported.

The primary research protocol for this study was qualitative in nature. A qualitative approach allows the researcher to, "identify a culture-shaping group" and "interview individuals to determine how they have personally experienced a phenomena", (Creswell, 2014, p. 19). The qualitative research design that I chose was phenomenology. Groenewald (2004) explains that phenomenologists are concerned with understanding social phenomena from the perspectives of those involved. The study that I conducted was constructed to enable me, in the role of researcher, to understand the experiences of those involved with the phenomena of teacher attrition and student conduct.

This study used structured personal interviews with elementary and middle school educators in NoCo Schools. Before this study was initiated, all interview protocols and documents were approved by the NoCo Schools district superintendent. The superintendent and director of human resources aided in the sampling of teachers who meet criteria outlined in the procedures. A standard letter requesting the participants' participation was mailed directly to prospective participants with details outlining case study participation.

Research Questions

Reference has been made to the limited extant literature addressing the relationship between teacher attrition and student behavior. In light of this, the current study was both timely and relevant. Answers to the following research questions were sought during this study.

Table 3.1

Research Questions and Methodology

	Research Question	Data Source	Analysis Technique
1.	What are the perceptions of teachers regarding working conditions related to student misconduct in the NoCo schools?	North Carolina Dept. of Public Instruction, NCTWCS database	Statistical Analysis MS Excel
2.	How do teachers describe the impact of student misconduct on their decisions to persist in current position, move to another school district, or to leave the profession?	Participant interviews	Transcribing, coding. ATLAS.ti 22.1.5.0 coding software (Student Edition)
3.	What is the impact of the development of specific behavior management skills on teachers' sense of self-efficacy in the classroom?	Participant interviews	Transcribing, coding. ATLAS.ti 22.1.5.0 coding software (Student edition)
4.	What is the impact of principal support on teachers' sense of self-efficacy in the classroom?	Participant interviews; North Carolina Dept. of Public Instruction, NCTWCS database	Transcribing, coding. ATLAS.ti 22.1.5.0 coding software (Student edition), Statistical Analysis MS Excel

Participants

Two groups of teachers were interviewed, all from a rural, northeastern North Carolina school district: NoCo Schools. NoCo Schools served as a pseudonym to protect the anonymity of the district in this study. The teachers were randomly selected with the assistance of the director of human resources and the district superintendent. Middle and elementary school teachers served as the sample in the study. The exclusion of high school teachers was based on the fact that none volunteered to engage in this research. A letter (Appendix A) was submitted to the superintendent of schools in order to obtain permission for the study to be conducted and for the sample to be collected. The sample included middle and high school teachers, since more serious disciplinary infractions presented more frequently on the secondary level. The first group of participants were teachers who were identified by the human resources director and superintendent as teachers who were working in the district at the time of the study. The second group included participants who had moved to another district or left the profession. These interviewees were chosen based on availability and willingness to participate.

Bertaux (1981) suggests that qualitative studies utilize at least 15 participants. Other researchers in qualitative methods, like Creswell (2009), state that qualitative researchers must believe in multiple perspectives from participants rather than a single reality (p. 20). Creswell (2009) continues that qualitative studies should include 5 to 25 participants, all of whom have experienced the same phenomena.

The confidentiality of participants whom I interviewed was very carefully protected. While I had no supervisory relationship with any of these individuals, I worked in the NoCo Schools at the time of the study. Information about participants and data from the study were

maintained in a locked file cabinet at my home and on a password protected computer.

The relevance of the proposed categories of participants arose from literature discussed earlier in the literature review. As was previously mentioned, teacher working conditions, especially in challenging school districts, play an important role in teacher attrition (Greenlee & Brown, 2009). In addition, Ingersoll (2002), found that student behavior and teacher retention are closely related. Ingersoll (2002) found that schools with higher rates of student misbehavior tend to have higher rates of teacher turnover. In this study, it was important to assess the reasons that teachers left the district or left the profession. It was hoped that this research would help pinpoint factors, particularly student misbehavior, that led to teacher attrition.

Variables

This section describes the major constructs that were measured for the purpose of enabling me to answer the research questions. Data for this study were collected through two means and consists of several variables. The first variable was the perceptions of teachers regarding selected working conditions. This variable was operationalized through data from the 2018 North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey. Selected portions of the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey were analyzed. The survey items analyzed were selected based on what the literature suggests are dimensions of student behavior that are shown in research to contribute to a teacher's decision to leave a school or the profession. The working conditions measured came from the following sections of the NCTWCS: (a) student conduct (Q5.1) and (b) teacher efficacy (Q6.1). Survey results for each of the items were analyzed based on teacher responses in NoCo Schools and reported along with the results for the statewide sample.

There were two dependent variables in the qualitative portion of the study. The first dependent variable in the research was teacher decisions to leave the school or profession. For purposes of this study, this variable was operationalized as either the fact of having left, or the intent to leave. Status in the district is a dichotomous variable. A teacher either has or has not left. Since teachers who were in the district would not, by definition, have left, analysis of their consideration of the prospect of leaving was an important dimension of this variable. This variable appears in Research Questions 2 and 3. Nationwide teachers are leaving at high rates. Teachers with less than five years of experience are leaving schools at a 30% rate. Some research indicates that those rates increase to nearly 50% in high-poverty schools (Loeb et al., 2013). Research indicates that persistence in the current position or in the profession is impacted by working conditions. There is a growing body of research that suggest that high teacher turnover rates are driven by dysfunctional and unsupportive school environments (Boyd et al., 2011; Ingersoll, 2001; Johnson et al.,, 2011). Similarly, the literature provides evidence that a decision to leave one's district or to leave the profession is impacted by student misconduct. Ingersoll has completed extensive research on the relationship between teacher working conditions and teacher attrition. Ingersoll (2002) found that student misconduct and teacher attrition are closely related. In low-performing schools where the non-White population is higher, teachers cite misconduct and classroom management as reasons for leaving the profession or the district (Boyd et al., 2005).

The second dependent variable in the research was teachers' sense of self-efficacy in the classroom. For purposes of this study, this variable was operationalized as a teacher's perception of the degree to which she/he is able to maintain a behavioral climate conducive to learning. This variable appears in Research Question 4. Research supports the notion that

teacher skill in managing student behavior is related to their sense of efficacy. A teacher's positive self-efficacy is often based on external factors such as the ability to control the environment and climate in the classroom (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2018). Furthermore, Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2018) found that environmental stressors like student misconduct play a role in teacher stress and ultimately a decision to leave a district or a school. Likewise, studies indicate that principal support affects teachers' sense of self-efficacy. When teachers believe that they are supported by school administrators, there is less teacher turnover (Ingersoll, 2001). Brown and Wynn (2007) found that lower levels of teacher attrition have been seen in schools with strong principal support and fewer discipline issues. Teachers who believe that they have administrator and peer support are more likely to stay in schools, even schools that are low performing (Loeb, et al., 2013).

There were four independent variables. The first was teacher working conditions. This variable was operationalized as teachers' perceptions of their workplace or teacher working conditions, and the variable appears in Research Question 2 in conjunction with the dependent variable, decisions to move to another district or to leave the profession. The body of knowledge related to this research is replete with findings that suggest that working conditions play a significant role in teachers' perceptions about their work and in their decisions about whether or not to persist in their current job or in the profession. Kraft and Papay (2015) found that a teachers' view of their working conditions are strong predictors of whether they persist in the profession. Teachers who view their working conditions as positive have lower turnover rates, even if those teachers work in areas of high poverty and low-achieving schools (Loeb et al., 2013).

The second independent variable was the specific teacher working condition, student misconduct. Student misconduct is defined as behavior and/or actions by enrolled students that directly violate the student code of conduct or behavior that adversely affects the teaching and learning process, school and/or district mission and vision, and school and/or district policies and codes. This variable was operationalized as student suspensions that fall into four categories: (1) In-school suspension, (2) short-term suspension, (3) long-term suspension, (4) expulsion. This variable was in Research Question 3, and was associated with the dependent variable, decisions to move to another district or to leave the profession. Research provides evidence of the impact of this variable on teachers' decisions to leave a school district or the profession. According to Kersaint et al. (2005), teacher dissatisfaction is associated with poor salaries, poor administrative support, and student discipline issues, all of which fall under the umbrella of teacher working conditions. Ingersoll (2001) finds that teacher attrition is higher in schools with low salaries, poor support from school administration, and student discipline problems. I gathered data from participant interviews that, through a process of transcribing and coding their responses, provided insights into the relationship between student misconduct and the decisions of teachers to leave.

The third independent variable was behavior management. This variable was operationalized as the teacher's ability to maintain appropriate student behavior in the classroom and school setting. It appears in Research Question 4 with the dependent variable, teachers' sense of self-efficacy in the classroom. The sample teachers were interviewed regarding principal support and then I transcribed and coded the answers in order to provide insight into a relationship between teacher self-efficacy and principal support.

The final independent variable was principal support. For purposes of this research, this variable was operationalized as a teacher's perception of principal support. Principal support is associated with the dependent variable, teachers' sense of self-efficacy in the classroom, in Research Question 4. The sample teachers were interviewed regarding principal support and then transcribed and coded in order to provide insight into a relationship between teacher self-efficacy and principal support.

Instrumentation

A mixed methods approach to the research gave a pragmatic view of the phenomena of high teacher turnover and student misconduct in NoCo Schools. There were two forms of instrumentation for data collection. The first was the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey (2018), from which archival data were drawn for the NoCo County Schools, the state and for a comparison group of 8 northeastern North Carolina school districts that were similar to the NoCo Schools. NCTWCS Q5.1 and Q6.1 survey items provided data for the analyses related to Research Questions 1 and 4.

The second instrument was a structured interview protocol that was differentiated for two groups of participants. The protocols, entitled Impact Interview Protocol-A, and Impact Interview Protocol-B, were differentiated slightly for the two groups of teachers who participated: teachers employed in NoCo Schools at the time of the study, and teachers who had left the NoCo Schools or the profession. Additional details about these interview instruments is provided in the sub-sections that follow. These instruments are attached as Appendices B and C. Data from the interviews were used in the analyses associated with Research Questions 2, 3, and 4.

The Teacher Working Conditions Survey

Research Question 1 addressed the perceptions of teachers regarding selected working conditions. The primary instrumentation for collection of data regarding teachers' perceptions of working conditions in the school district upon which the study was focused were the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey (NCTWCS). The literature review in Chapter 2 informed the selection of the particular working conditions that were reflected upon least favorably by teachers in the district chosen for this study. Basic descriptive statistics were reported for these items, including frequencies, means, and standard deviations. Means testing was employed to determine whether the means for NoCo Schools teachers were different than those of teachers in the statewide sample.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, teacher working conditions frame a teacher's experience in a public school setting. The TWC was first developed in 2002 during then-Governor Mike Easley's administration. Easley commissioned a NCTWCS Advisory Committee, still in practice today, which helps to administer and guide the NCTWCS survey (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2014). North Carolina's implementation of the Teacher Working Conditions Survey in 2002 has been praised in the field and used as a model to measure teacher satisfaction in many other states in the nation (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2014). The survey is completed by certified teachers in public schools and covers the areas of community engagement and support, teacher leadership, school leadership, managing student conduct, use of time, professional development, facilities and resources, instructional practices and support, and new teacher support. Data collected from the survey are made available to policymakers statewide and used to develop school improvement plans (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2014). The plans are intended to aid in instructional effectiveness

and the improvement of student achievement.

Although the NCTWCS survey is based on perceptions of teachers, it is their sense of reality and therefore, is a valid source of data (North Carolina Public Schools, 2014). Educator perceptions of their school culture and teacher working conditions are linked to "student learning, future employment plans, efficacy, and motivation," (North Carolina Public Schools, 2014). In order to validate the data retrieved from the NCTWCS survey, a triangulation method was used to examine data. The use of triangulation further enhanced the credibility of the research. The variety of the representative sample ensured that adequate data were recorded. The varying participant accounts were cross referenced with supporting documents and background data with the completed surveys and interviews. The data from the NCTWCS for the school district are open source and can be downloaded from the North Carolina Teaching Conditions website (https://ncteachingconditions.org). Thus, author permission was neither required nor sought.

The Impact Interview Protocols

The Impact Interview Protocols were developed based on the need to explore a relationship between the proposed research questions and the variables mentioned in the previous subsections. I created two instruments: Impact Interview Protocol-A and Impact Interview Protocol-B. Impact Interview Protocol-A was geared towards teachers who were employed in NoCo Schools at the time of the study, specifically in secondary schools. Impact Interview Protocol-B was geared towards teachers who left the district or the profession. To assist in validating the Impact Interview Protocols I sought a panel of experts within the field. The panel consisted of four members: (a) NoCo Schools superintendent, (b) former director of human resources for NoCo Schools, (c) chair of Department of Education, Salem College

(NC), and (d) a researcher with expertise in the area of teacher retention/attrition. A feedback form was created in order to solicit specific comments from these individuals on the appropriateness of the interview elements and on whether the data collected would be relevant in NoCo Schools. Based on panel member recommendations, I edited the instruments to create final versions.

Procedures

Approval of the study was provided by NC State University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) in 2018. I proceeded with securing data from the Teacher Working Conditions Survey database, which is hosted by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. These data are publicly available, so I proceeded directly to the online resources in the database.

In order to collect data needed to complete the research, I needed to conduct interviews with the participants. I secured explicit approval from the superintendent of the NoCo Schools superintendent. Appendix A includes the letter to the superintendent and the consent form that the superintendent signed.

Sample participants were chosen based on written (electronic) and verbal solicitations to teachers who fall into the specified group perimeters. Appendices D and E include the letters sent to each participant based on the group into which each was assigned. Group participants were selected with the assistance of the director of human resources and the district superintendent. School board minutes and inquiries with the district's human resources director were used to identify teachers who resigned to teach elsewhere or left the profession. School board minutes list reasons for resignation or departure. Many of the identified teachers who left NoCo Schools left to teach in nearby districts that had less

teacher turnover. I requested interviews with those individuals in the process. To ensure the confidentiality of participants, I did not share identifying information. Prior to the interview process, pseudonyms were assigned to those who agreed to participate. All sample participants were identified in the study materials using these pseudonyms; no personal identification information was disclosed. All information and data were stored in a locked file cabinet and on a password-protected computer and only accessed during times of data analysis.

The identities of the participants were known only to me in my role as researcher. While the superintendent and human resources director helped me identify the potential populations of teachers identified for each of the groups of teachers, they were not informed of the identities of final participants who were randomly sampled from these populations. The identities of teachers remained confidential throughout the study and they were not identified in the dissertation document nor any reports or articles that were produced on the basis of this research.

Once the participants were identified, a consent form and a demographic information form were sent to each participant electronically and returned to me with the participant's signature. Those forms are found in Appendices F and G. The consent form contained information specific to the study, a confidentiality agreement, and a risk notice. The demographic form collected information regarding the multiple participant characteristics.

The primary data gathering process for the qualitative elements of the study were structured interviews with participants in the groups described previously. The interview protocols are included in Appendices B and C. Appendix B applied to teachers still employed with NoCo Schools and Appendix C applied to those teachers who left the district. The

interview sessions were conducted in person and via Skype, an online synchronous audio/video conversation medium. The in-person interviews were conducted at a public site that was most convenient for each participant and one that ensured that the anonymity and confidentiality of each participant was protected. For those who were not able to participate in in-person interviews, a web-based interview session was conducted via Skype. The study participants had a demographic information form to complete that included their educational levels and previous public school experiences. Structured personal interviews were conducted with each study participant in order to secure data that were pertinent to the study. The interview questions in the instruments were written to address a broad scope of factors associated with teacher attrition as well as questions that frame student behavior as a specific working condition.

During the interview sessions, I took detailed notes based on interviewees answers to protocol questions. I also recorded the interviews using a digital recording device. All data collected were stored in a locked file cabinet and on a password-protected computer and only accessed when needed for data analysis.

Data Analysis

Basic descriptive statistics were generated for the archival data from the Teacher Working Conditions Survey. The descriptive statistics that were reported included frequency, mean, and standard deviation. Quantitative studies describe variables using such statistical procedures (Creswell, 2014). The NCTWCS was created in 2002, is implemented in a biennial basis, and has proven to give valuable insights into teacher perceptions of school climate and culture (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2014). As was noted previously, the quantitative data from the NCTWCS were used in the analyses associated with Research

Questions 1 and 4.

Once the interviews were completed, I transcribed the notes and audio recordings from each interview. I organized the transcriptions by participant and delivered to each participant the transcript of her/his interview to confirm that accounts were accurate. Once the transcripts were confirmed by each participant, I scoured all transcriptions for common themes, key issues, relevant events, or occurrences in the responses. I organized the common themes for each participant and compared those to the other participants in the case study. I utilized coding software (i.e., ATLAS.ti 22.1.5.0) to help skillfully and systematically organize the data collected. I organized the common themes using the software and compare themes to the research questions presented in the initial study. In that comparison I collected common and emerging themes. The analysis of data included an examination of common and emerging themes, as well as unique perspectives or narratives in relation to teacher attrition and student behavior.

Research Validity and Reliability

The number of teachers chosen to participate in the interviews was sixteen. The Principle of Theoretical Saturation states that a researcher continues with research until a no new data are being presented (Bowen, 2008). The Principle of Theoretical Saturation asserts that, while a specified number of participants are sought for a study, if a point is reached where no new data are presented, then the study has met saturation and the data are analyzed at saturation numbers.

My actual participant pool was split proportionally based on the previously described employment status of the teachers who agreed to participate in the survey. Initially sixteen interview candidates who either worked in NoCo Schools or had previously worked in NoCo

Schools were asked to participate in the interviews. Sixteen electronic solicitations to participate in the study were sent. Eight solicitations were sent to teachers who left the district and eight solicitations were sent to those who remained in the district. The overall response rate was 56%, with nine of the sixteen potential interviewees responding to the request to be interviewed for the research. A form with demographic items was collected from each of the nine participants. Five of the participants had left the NoCo School District, but remained in the teaching profession, while four of the teacher participants were still employed within NoCo Schools. The teachers who were interviewed were each asked to provide the total number of years that they had taught and the number of years that they had taught within the NoCo Schools. The nine teachers had a combined 140 years of total teaching experience. The teachers interviewed participated with an assurance of confidentiality. No participants were named in the study, and care was taken to ensure that participants cannot be identified through context clues.

Personal accounts used in qualitative studies often leave room for bias and assumptions. It is imperative that a qualitative researcher show trustworthiness in order to be credible (Shenton, 2004). The use of triangulation enhanced the credibility of such research in this study The variety of the representative sample ensured that adequate data were recorded. The varying participant accounts were cross-referenced with supporting documents and background data.

I also used debriefing with peer groups to ensure that personal biases and assumptions were eliminated (Shenton, 2004). The peer review group featured two North Carolina State University Ed.D. Cohort members and a NoCo Schools administrator. Reflective data were used in order to help develop themes and saturation levels. Shenton (2004) explains that

reflective data play an important role in forming credibility. During the study, I periodically reviewed data collected and reflected upon the flow and relevance of the interview dialogues. Additionally, in accordance with establishing this credibility, all participants were asked to review data collected for accuracy, tone, and bias. This form of member checking was another way to help provide credibility to a qualitative research study (Shenton, 2004).

Limitations

When the research questions were chosen many months ago, the phenomena presented were issues that I deal with as an educator on a daily basis. Teacher retention and incentives that prompt teachers to stay in teaching are complex, daily issues for administrators to solve. As an administrator in a hard-to-staff district, I could foresee myself wanting to force answers on participants, voice my opinion in interviews, and delegate the tone and direction of the interviews. Overcoming these personal biases did not prove to be difficult and was very necessary in order to maintain the trustworthiness of the case study.

Since the case study participants were from a rural, northeast North Carolina single school district, the scope of the research was narrow. One might argue that researching another district in urban areas of the state would provide a broader scope of data, but the selection of this school district, based on its demographic profile, was very intentional in light of its status relative to teacher attrition and academic performance.

In addition to the narrow scope of data based on the focus of data retrieval in one school district, the number of actual survey participants was small in nature. The sample included only elementary and middle school teachers. Exclusion of high school teachers was not intentional but rather based on those willing to participate in the study. Since the

phenomenon of teacher attrition is actually a nationwide trend (Ingersoll, 2011), a small sampling from one rural district could have produced a shallow analysis.

Safeguards Against Researcher Bias

In order to guard against researcher bias, which is often associated with qualitative research methods, all participants received pre-established questions prior to the recorded interview sessions. While some of the interview questions were structured, I did not lead, coerce, or direct the answers of the participants. Since all interviews were documented using audio technology, I examined each interview extensively and coded each interview with a pre-established coding theme book.

As recommended by Shenton (2004), I used debriefing methods with peer groups to ensure that personal biases and assumptions were eliminated. The peer review group included two North Carolina State University Ed.D. cohort members and a district human resources administrator from NoCo Schools. This department deals directly with teacher shortage issues and data that are reflective of teacher shortages in NoCo Schools. Reflective data, transcriptions, and codes were used in order to help develop themes. Shenton (2004) explains that reflective data play an important role in forming credibility. During the study, I reviewed data collected periodically and reflected upon the flow and relevance of the interview dialogues. Additionally, in accordance with establishing this credibility, all participants were asked to review data collected for accuracy, tone, and bias. This form of member checking is another viable way to help provide credibility to qualitative research study (Shenton, 2004).

Assumptions

In order to effectively administer the participant protocol and analyze data gathered, I made the following assumptions:

1. During the interview, the participants responded with honesty in their answers.
2. During the interview, the participants did not feel threatened or concerned about negative consequences of their specific responses.
3. Participants understood that the information collected was sensitive in nature.

Summary

The methodology used in the research enabled me to examine factors associated with teacher attrition rates in the NoCo Schools district. Qualitative research methods provided rich data regarding teacher perspectives on reasons for withdrawal from their positions. It was hoped that the data collected in this study would disclose common themes with respect to the correlation of teacher attrition and student misbehavior. It was further hoped that such analyses provide insights that may be of value to practitioners and policymakers as they seek to diminish teacher attrition rates.

Chapter 4 of this study outlined the findings and provided the results from the data collected. Chapter 5 featured a discussion of the findings along with implications for policy and practice, and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Chapter Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the phenomena of high teacher attrition and student-misbehavior rates in a low-income, rural school district in northeastern North Carolina. As mentioned in Chapter 1, NoCo Schools has posted the state's highest teacher attrition rate, as well as some of the highest long-term and short-term suspension rates.

Chapter 4 provides an analysis of the data collected from the mixed-methods research approach. Quantitative data collected from the 2018 North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey are addressed first. Data were analyzed using the seven district schools within NoCo Schools, along with district data from eight demographically similar school districts in northeast North Carolina. A standard set of statistics were calculated in the analysis of data. Demographic data included the frequency, mean, and standard deviation. *T*-tests were used to assess the statistical significance of differences among means.

The chapter then details the examination of qualitative data collected from interviews with public school teachers who have chosen to remain in the low-income, rural school district and data from interviews with teachers who left the district. These data sets aided me in answering each of the four research questions.

Research Procedures

Reference has been made previously to the limited extent literature addressing the relationship between teacher attrition and student behavior. In light of this, I concluded, in conjunction with my advisors, that this study was both timely and relevant. Answers to the following research questions were sought during this study. This chapter provides an analysis of the results of the mixed methods, quasi-qualitative study that was conducted in order to

answer the following research questions:

- **RQ1**: What are the perceptions of teachers regarding working conditions related to student misconduct in NoCo Schools?
- **RQ2**: How do teachers describe the impact of student misconduct on their decisions to persist in current position, move to another school district, or to leave the profession?
- **RQ3**: What is the impact of the development of specific behavior management skills on teachers' sense of self-efficacy in the classroom?
- **RQ4**: What is the impact of principal support on teachers' sense of self-efficacy in the classroom?

Data for the quantitative portion of the study were derived from the 2018 North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey. The scores for schools and districts in the NCTWCS are derived from a calculation that divides the number of school or district teachers who selected "agree" or "strongly agree" as the response to an item statement divided by the total number of teachers in that school or district. The related analysis of data for the schools and districts in my study was completed using descriptive statistics: frequencies, means, and standard deviations. Means testing was accomplished with a basic *t*-test.

Data for the qualitative portion of the study were derived from teacher interviews. Two groups of teachers were interviewed for the study. These included teachers who have remained in the low-income, rural district and those who have chosen to leave the district. All participants were middle or high school level teachers in NoCo County, which, based on North Carolina School Report Cards, had the highest teacher turnover rate in public schools

in North Carolina at the time that data were collected for the study (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2018a). According to the 2018 North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey, 53% of teachers agreed that students "follow the rules at their school." This was compared to a state mean of 65%. In addition, only 16% of teacher's surveyed from NoCo Middle School East agreed that students at their schools "follow rules at their school." In the same category, 39% of NoCo Middle School West teachers felt the students followed the rules at school. Forty-five % of teachers from NoCo High School reported that students followed the rules at school. All of these numbers indicate that teachers believe that less than half of the student body at their respective schools follow the school rules.

I interviewed nine teachers to complete the qualitative portion of this research. The data collected from these interviews were used as the primary source of research data. The interviews were transcribed and then coded using a coding software package at the completion of each interview. Emerging themes were noted and used in the data analysis portion of the study. All interviews were coded using an axial coding method that employed ATLAS.ti 22.1.5.0 software.

Quantitative Results

District Demographic and Working Conditions Archival Data

This research study utilized a mixed-methods approach with the study of archival data taken from the 2018 North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey (NCTWCS) and teacher interviews. The quantitative portion of the study examined archival data from the NCTWCS. Data from seven NoCo schools, along with eight demographically similar school districts located within northeast North Carolina were analyzed. The similar districts met the following criteria in order to be included:

- Districts were neighboring LEAs within northeast North Carolina.
- Districts had similar demographics, including serving high poverty, low-income populations.
- Districts were Title I school(s), as designated by federal agencies.

According to the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (2018c), all schools within the eight neighboring districts chosen were Title I schools. These neighboring districts are all located within northeast North Carolina. NoCo Schools had seven schools at 100% Title I funding (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2018). Table 4.1 outlines the percentages of Title I schools within the examined districts.

Table 4.1

Title I Status by District

School District	Title I	% Schools Title	# Schools in district
NoCo Schools	Yes	100%	7
Bertie County	Yes	100%	7
Gates County	Yes	100%	5
Halifax County	Yes	100%	10
Hertford County	Yes	100%	7
Tyrell County	Yes	100%	3
Washington County	Yes	100%	5
Warren County	Yes	100%	8
Weldon City	Yes	100%	4
Total	**9**	**100%**	**56**

The survey results taken from the 2018 North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey were analyzed using an agree analysis, based on the rate at which survey participants agreed with the statements in items taken from the survey. Two sections from the survey were chosen for analysis. In order to provide an in-depth look at student conduct and teacher efficacy, sections Q5.1 and Q 6.1 were chosen. Section Q 5.1 of the NCTWCS contained items regarding student conduct, while section Q6.1 contained items regarding teacher efficacy. The items from each of these sections of the NCTWCS are provided in Tables 4.2 and 4.3 below.

Table 4.2

Q5.1from the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey

Survey Item	**Survey Statements**
Managing Student Conduct Q5.1 Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements about managing student conduct in your school.	a. Students at this school understand expectations for their conduct. b. Students at this school follow rules of conduct. c. Policies and procedures about student conduct are clearly understood by the faculty. d. School administrators consistently enforce rules for student conduct. e. School administrators support teachers' efforts to maintain discipline in the classroom. f. Teachers consistently enforce rules for student conduct. g. The faculty work in a school environment that is safe.

Table 4.3

Q6.1 from the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey

Survey Item	Survey Statements
Teacher Efficacy Q6.1 Please rate how strongly you Agree or disagree with the following Statements about teacher leadership in your school.	a. Teachers are recognized as educational experts. b. Teachers are trusted to make sound professional decisions about instructions. c. Teachers are relied upon to make decisions about educational issues. d. Teachers are encouraged to participated in school leadership roles. e. The faculty has an effective process for making group decisions to solve problems. f. In this school we take steps to solve problems. g. Teachers are effective leaders in this school.

After creating a database listing the survey items in Q5.1 and Q6.1 from the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey (2018), I ran statistical tests for frequencies, means, and standard deviations. The scores for schools and districts in the NCTWCS are derived from a calculation that divides the number of school or district teachers who selected "agree" or "strongly agree" as the response to an item statement divided by the total number of teachers in that school or district. The related analysis of data for the schools and districts in my study was completed using descriptive statistics: frequencies, means, and standard deviations. Means testing was accomplished with a basic *t*-test, which assessed if there was a significant difference between the means of the NoCo district schools and the means of the state results for the NCTWCS Q5.1 and Q6.1 items.

Research Question 1

The first research question read as follows: What are the perceptions of teachers regarding working conditions related to student misconduct in NoCo Schools? NoCo Schools had 100% participation by teachers district wide in the 2018 North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey. The data derived from the survey were based on agree analysis or the degree to which a teacher would agree with statements for each of the survey items. Q5.1 of the survey, which included the 7 items outlined in Table 4.2, addressed student conduct within the confines of the school building.

To provide context for the NoCo Schools NCTWCS means, survey results were compared to those of the state and for 8 demographically and geographically similar school districts. I note for the record that the data for the NoCo Schools were not excluded from the state means. However, given the fact that the NoCo School system is a small district among 115 districts, the impact on the state means for items was very likely negligible. Table 4.4 provides the means and standard deviations for the 7 items from the NCTWCS Q5.1 for NoCo Schools, for the state, and for the 8 other school districts.

Table 4.4

Percent Agreement with NCTWCS Survey Items Q5.1(a-g) for RQ1

Survey Item	NoCo Schools	State	Standard Deviation	Similar Districts	Standard Deviation
(a) students at this school understand expectations for their conduct	80%	82%	11%	77%	10%
(b) students follow the rules at this school	53%	65%	20%	51%	17%
(c) policies and procedures about student conduct are clear	90%	81%	6%	82%	9%
(d) school administrators consistently enforce rules for conduct	79%	69%	15%	70%	10%
(e) school administrators support teachers' efforts to maintain discipline in the classroom	86%	78%	10%	78%	10%
(f) teachers consistently enforce rules for student conduct	78%	77%	13%	80%	6%
(g) the faculty work in a school environment that is safe	92%	89%	6%	86%	7%

Teachers surveyed in NoCo Schools agreed with the statement, students at this school understand expectations for their conduct at an 80% rate. The state mean of 82% was slightly

higher than that of the NoCo Schools, which in turn was slightly higher than the mean for the 8 similar districts, which was 78%. The agree analysis for the three data sets was marginally dissimilar; as is noted in Table 4.5, the differences in means were not significant. A majority of teachers agreed that students understand expectations for their behavior. On the other hand, approximately 20% of the teachers in each of the 3 data sets (NoCo Schools, state, and similar districts) disagreed that this was the case.

Teachers surveyed in NoCo Schools agreed with the statement, students follow the rules at this school at a 53% rate. The state means was 65%, with a standard deviation of 20%. The 53% agree analysis representative of NoCo Schools is 14% less than the statewide means of 65%. The standard deviation was calculated at 20%, which is considered 20% from the means. Within the similar district data set, the means to was 50% with a 17% standard deviation. The results relative to Q5.1 found that 53% of teachers surveyed agreed that students understand expectations for their conduct. Regionally, other teachers within the respective analyzed schools suggest that 50% of teacher surveyed believe that their students understand expectations for their conduct. The statewide means average was measured at 65% for the same survey item. The difference in measurement suggests that statewide, teachers agree at a higher percentage that students follow the rules at their respective schools than teachers from NoCo Schools and districts measured with similar demographics.

NoCo Schools teachers' survey results for the statement policies and procedures about student conduct are strongly indicated that generally they agreed with the survey statement. Ninety percent of NoCo Schools teachers agreed that policies related to student conduct are clear. The state means for came in at an 81% agreement rate, with a standard deviation of 6%. In similar districts, teachers surveyed agreed with the statement at an 80%

with a standard deviation of 9%. The data set outlined proves that a high rate of teachers surveyed agreed that student conduct policies within their respective schools are clear.

Teachers surveyed in NoCo Schools agreed at a 79% rate with the statement school administrators consistently enforce rules for conduct. The state means saw teachers agree at a 69% rate with a 15% standard deviation. The 15% standard deviation rate indicates a 15% disparity in the means statewide, which is a high rate. However, teachers within NoCo Schools agreed at a higher rate than the state. Similar school districts data saw that 70% of teachers agreed that school administrators consistently enforce rules for conduct with a 10% standard deviation. Both NoCo Schools and the similar school district samples had higher agreement rates than the state overall.

NoCo Schools teachers agreed with the statement school administrators support teachers' efforts to maintain discipline in the classroom at an 86% rate while statewide, teachers agreed at a 78% rate. Similar school districts measured 78% agreement with the statement from the survey with a 10% standard deviation. This data set from all samples shows that teachers in NoCo Schools and similar districts agree at rates marginally higher and similar to the state with a 10% standard deviation. This data implied that teachers in NoCo Schools and similar districts feel supported by their respective school administrators in their efforts to enact disciplinary measures in the classroom.

NoCo Schools teachers agreed with the statement teachers consistently enforce rules for student conduct at a rate of 77% compared to the state means of 78%. The standard deviation in the sample was 13%. Similar school districts agreed at an 80% rate that teachers consistently enforce the rules for student conduct. The standard deviation was much lower in this sample at 7%. The results taken from the survey item in both samples indicated that the

majority agree with that teachers are consistent when they enforce rules related to student conduct in the classroom.

Teachers in NoCo Schools agreed at a 92% rate that the faculty work in a school environment that is safe compared to a state means of 92%. The standard deviation in this data set was 6%. In similar school districts the agreement rate was 86% with a 7% standard deviation. This specific data measurement suggested that a majority of state, NoCo Schools, and similar districts' teachers agreed that the environment in which they worked is a safe one. Table 4.4 outlines the data set from the NCTWC Survey (2018).

I conducted a basic *t*-test to determine if there were significant differences among the means of the 3 datasets (NoCo Schools, state, and similar districts) for the items in NCTWCS Q5.1. Table 4.5 shows a summary of the *t*-test results.

Table 4.5

T-test Results for Q5.1 from the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey

Survey Item	NoCo Schools	State	NoCo Schools	Similar Districts
(a) students at this school understand expectations for their conduct	80%	82%	80%	77%
(b) students follow the rules at this school	53%	65%	53%	51%
(c) policies and procedures about student conduct are clear	90%	81%	90%	82%
(d) school administrators consistently enforce rules for conduct	79%	69%	79%	70%
(e) school administrators support teachers' efforts to maintain discipline in the classroom.	86%	78%	86%	78%
(f) teachers consistently enforce rules for student conduct	78%	77%	78%	80%
(g) the faculty work in a school environment that is safe	92%	89%	92%	86%
p-value		.69		.47

Note. $p > 0.05$ is considered "not significant."

The first *t*-test was conducted to assess variance in the state and NoCo School means. The *p*-values ($p = .69$) for the results indicated that there was not a significant difference between the values. The second *t*-test was conducted to assess the variance in the means for the similar districts and NoCo Schools. The *p*-value ($p = .47$) for the results indicated that there was not a significant difference between the similar district means and the NoCo Schools means.

Summary for Research Question 1

Research Question 1 was a quantitative query worded as follows: What are the perceptions of teachers regarding working conditions related to student misconduct in NoCo Schools? It was important to the research because of the questions posed to teachers to discern whether a relationship between high rates student misconduct and high rates of teacher turnover existed. Tables 4.4 details the descriptive statistics from questions 5.1 and 6.1 of the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey.

NoCo teachers indicated that a majority (m=80%) agree that students understand the expectations for their behavior. Collectively the state results indicated that 82% of teachers agree that students understand the expectations that they lay out. Teachers in similar districts scored just below both NoCo Schools and the state means with 77%. These numbers are steady, indicating that a majority of teachers in the state agreed that students understand the expected behaviors. The majority means for all three entities indicated that they feel reasonably good about what the teachers are doing to state clear rules and expectations related to student behavior. On the other hand, teachers did not agree that students follow the rules at the same high rate. NoCo Schools recorded a 53% rate in which they agreed that students follow the rules at their schools. Similar districts recorded similar numbers to NoCo

Schools (m=51%) while the statewide percentages had a higher mean of 65%.

In order to provide some comparative context for the perceptions of the NoCo teachers, I contrasted the NoCo Schools results with those for similar districts and the state. I used *t*-tests and set a *p*-value of .05 as an indicator of whether or not there was a significant difference in in the means. Each of the *p*-values in comparative groups indicated that there was no significant difference between the means of NoCo Schools and the state, nor was there a significant difference between NoCo Schools and similar districts. The *p*-value results indicated that there were no significant differences in the perceptions of teachers in the three comparative groups regarding their expectations for their students to behave. It was also clear that, in spite of their perceptions that students understood these expectations, that teachers in all their groups had substantially lower perceptions that students comply with these expectations.

Qualitative Results

Research Questions 2 – 3 were qualitative queries based on structured interviews with teacher participants. Research Question 4 also relies on the perspectives from the interviews but adds data from the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey. The interview questions addressed the phenomenon of teacher turnover rates in districts with high student misbehavior rates and whether teachers' decisions to remain in or leave a district were related to high rates of student misbehavior.

I interviewed nine teachers for this study, five of whom left NoCo Schools to teach in another district. Middle and elementary school teachers served as the sample in the study. The exclusion of high school teachers was based on the fact that none volunteered to engage in this research. The following subsections provide the demographic information about the

nine participants. A biographical profile is provided for each of the participants. Subsequent subsections report the qualitative findings for the research questions.

Demographics of Teacher Interview Participants

Initially, 16 interview candidates were solicited electronically to participate in the interviews; these candidates included both individuals who were working within NoCo Schools at that time and individuals who had left the NoCo Schools. The response rate was 56%, with 9 of 16 potential interviewees responding to the request to be interviewed for the research. A form with demographic items was collected from each of the nine participants. Five of the participants had left NoCo School District, but remained in the teaching profession, while four of the teacher participants were still employed within NoCo Schools. The teachers who were interviewed were each asked to provide the total number of years that they had taught and the number of years that they had taught within the NoCo Schools. The nine teachers had a combined 140 years of total teaching experience. All nine of the participants were secondary teachers whose teaching assignments ranged from 6th grade to 8th grade. Two of the nine participants were male, seven were female. Six of the participants were white, while three of the participants were African American. The teachers who participated in the study ranged in age from 28 to 51 years of age. Teaching experiences fell into three categories, characterized by the number of years in the field. Three of the interviewed teachers had five years or less of teaching experience. Three of the participating teachers had 15-19 years of classroom teaching experience. Three of the participating teachers had over twenty years of classroom teaching experience. The nine who agreed to participate in the interview are identified with pseudonyms in order to maintain their

anonymity. Tables 4.6 and 4.7 summarize the demographic information about the nine participants.

Table 4.6

Teacher Interview Demographics-Currently in NoCo Schools

Name/Reference	Sex	Race	Years of Experience
Sheila Harper	F	African American	19
Laura Minton	F	White	11
Tammy Futrell	F	White	20
Gerald Carter	M	White	5
Totals:			55

Note: These are teachers who were in NoCo Schools at the time of the interview session.

Table 4.7

Teacher Interview Demographics-Left NoCo Schools

Name/Reference	Sex	Race	Years of Experience
Keith Cummins	M	African American	5
Chelsea Crosby	F	African American	5
Geri Como	F	White	24
Winnie Howell	F	White	26
Marsha Ross	F	White	25
Totals:			85

Note: These are teachers who were previously in NoCo Schools but had left the district prior to the time of the interview session.

Biographies of Participants

Teachers Who Were Still in the NoCo Schools

At the time of this study, four of the nine participants were still teaching in the NoCo Schools. Their combined experience in teaching totaled 55 years, and for each, the majority, if not all of their years had been spent in this district. Individual details about each participant are offered in response to the interview prompts, are provided below.

Sheila Harper was an African American, female teacher with 19 years of teaching experience. Sheila spent all of her teaching career in NoCo Schools and at the middle school level. She graduated from a four-year, public institution in North Carolina and later in her career went on to receive her master's degree in education from the same undergraduate institution. Ms. Harper grew up in an area close to NoCo Schools. After undergraduate graduation she chose to pursue a career in education that was close to her family and her community.

Laura Minton was a White, female teacher with 11 years of teaching experience. Ms. Minton spent time teaching in both the public and private sector. She received her undergraduate degree from a four-year institution in Mississippi and her graduate degree from a university in North Carolina. She is a lateral entry certified teacher with a master's degree in education but was not trained as an educator as an undergrad. Ms. Minton's husband works at a large employer within the local community. The Minton's have traveled extensively for Mr. Minton's work. Ms. Minton decided to get into the education field while her husband was settling in his position. Ms. Minton has taught all of her years in North Carolina at the middle school level.

Tammy Futrell was a White female teacher with 20 years of teaching experience. Ms. Futrell taught at the middle school level her entire teaching career, and all of those 20 years have been within the NoCo School District. Ms. Futrell received her education from a private, four-year institution within the state. She was native to the local community and returned to her hometown to teach. She taught middle school English/Language Arts for all of those 20 years. Ms. Futrell was working on her master's degree in education at the time of the interview. Ms. Futrell chose not to complete her master's degree course work because North Carolina cut funding to incentivize master's degrees in recent years.

Gerald Carter was a White male with five years of teaching experience. Mr. Carter was hired following graduation from a four-year institution with a degree in Physical Education. While not completely local to NoCo, Mr. Carter and his family settled in the area to be close to both his parents and his in-laws. Mr. Carter taught both elementary and middle school health and physical education in NoCo Schools. Mr. Carter had an interest in art and also sought certifications in art education while teaching for NoCo Schools.

Teachers Who Left the NoCo Schools

At the time of this study, five of the nine participants made decisions to leave NoCo Schools. Their combined experience in teaching totaled 85 years. Three of the five teachers who left NoCo Schools had master's degrees in education and one was seeking a master's degree in education administration. Individual details about each participant are offered in response to the interview prompts, are provided below.

Keith Cummins was an African American male with five years of teaching experience. Mr. Cummins was working locally and applied for an open science position at the middle school level. All of his five years of teaching were within NoCo Schools. Mr.

Cummins received his undergraduate degree from a private, four-year school in North Carolina. He completed his teaching certifications in science through the lateral entry program. Mr. Cummins was enrolled in a Master of Education Administration program through a university in North Carolina at the time of this interview. Mr. Cummins left NoCo Schools to teach in another district, within another state.

Chelsea Crosby was an African American female with five years of teaching experience, all of which came within NoCo Schools. Ms. Crosby taught middle school science. She received her undergraduate education from a private, four-year institution in North Carolina. She studied to become a pastor however felt a calling to teach in a disadvantaged school district. Ms. Crosby applied for a science position and was hired through the lateral entry program. Ms. Crosby left NoCo Schools after five years to extend what she called her "mission" to work with the underserved in a nearby school district in a different state.

Geri Como was a White female with 24 years of teaching experience. Ms. Como was educated in North Carolina and was hired at the school she completed her student teaching. Ms. Como worked for three different districts before being hired in NoCo Schools. Ms. Como received her master's degree in education and also completed certifications to become a school administrator. Ms. Como left NoCo Schools after five years in the district to pursue a leadership position within another district in North Carolina. All of Ms. Como's experience was at the elementary school level.

Winnie Howell was a White female teacher with 26 years of experience. Ms. Howell was educated at a public, four-year institution. Ms. Howell was raised in a community near NoCo Schools. She returned home following graduation to teach in NoCo Schools. She later

earned her master's degree in education. She taught all of her years at the elementary education level. Ms. Howell left NoCo Schools to teach in a different district, but still within North Carolina.

Marsha Ross was a White female teacher with 25 years of education experience. Ms. Ross was educated at a public, four-year university and trained as an educator. Ms. Ross taught at the middle school level for all of her years in NoCo Schools. After 19 years in NoCo Schools, Ms. Ross sought a position within a district that was closer to her home. Ms. Ross earned a master's degree in education while working in NoCo Schools. She worked a lead teacher for many years and taught English/Language Arts.

Interview Protocols

The qualitative findings in this study were derived from structured interviews using the questions listed in tables 4.8 and 4.9. These tables include questions from the Impact Protocol A (see Appendix B) and Impact Protocol B (see Appendix C). Responses to these interview items provided data that enabled me to answer Research Questions 2 and 3, as well as the qualitative component of Research Question 4.

Table 4.8

Impact Interview Protocol for Teachers Who Stayed in the District

Research Question	Interview Questions
RQ2: How do teachers describe the impact of student misconduct on their decisions to persist in the current position, move on to another school district, or to leave the profession?	5. Are teachers equipped with resources such as peer mentors, classroom management training, professional development related to classroom climate? 6. Do you think that student misconduct in the classroom is addressed effectively by school administrators? 1. In what specific ways do feel that classroom conduct is addressed effectively by your school administrators? 2. In what specific ways do you feel that classroom conduct is not addressed effectively by your school administrators? 7. Did you feel supported by school administration and peers in your efforts to help combat student misconduct? 8. Why do you think that this district has the highest teacher turnover rates in the state? 9. Why do you think the rates of student misconduct are high in this district? 10. What specific factors contributed to you staying the district?

Table 4.9

Impact Interview Protocol for Teachers Who Left the District

Research Question	Interview Questions
RQ2: How do teachers describe the impact of student misconduct on their decisions to persist in the current position, move to another school district, or to leave the profession?	5. What role did teacher working conditions play in your decision to leave NoCo Schools? 6. Was student misconduct a factor in your decision to move to another school or leave the profession? 7. Were teachers equipped with resources such as peer mentors, classroom management training, professional development related to classroom climate? 8. Was student misconduct in the classroom addressed by school administrators? 9. Did you feel supported by school administration and peers in your efforts to help combat student misconduct? 10. From your perspective, what role did student misconduct at this school play in teacher attrition? 11. Why do you think that this district has the highest teacher turnover rates in the state? 12. Why do you think the rates of student misconduct are high in this district? 13. What specific factors contributed to you leaving the district?

Research Question 2

Research Question 2 was a qualitative query and was worded as follows: How do teachers describe the impact of student misconduct on their decisions to persist in current position, move to another school district, or to leave the profession? An analysis of results from the Impact Protocols A and B (Appendices B and C) revealed varied results based on which group the participants fell into. The response transcripts were analyzed separately using ATLAS.ti 22.1.5.0 software because of the two different groups of participants being interviewed. I then analyzed the responses together and I used the ATLAS.ti 22.1.5.0 software in each instance. The teacher participant responses to the interview items fell primarily into two common themes related to Research Question 2. The first was the impact of student misconduct on persistence and the second was parent and home support. These two themes are explored in the following subsections.

The Impact of Student Misconduct on Persistence

Teachers Who Left NoCo Schools. Four of the five teachers who left the district stated that student misconduct played a role in their decision to leave the district. An analysis of interview quotes in ATLAS.ti 22.1.5.0 revealed that four of the five responded similarly to the question of whether or not student misconduct was directly related to their respective decisions to leave NoCo Schools.

Geri Como reported that student misconduct was relational to her decision to leave NoCo Schools. She stated, “After years of creating my own classroom management style, too many changes in administration was the ultimate crux in my decision to leave. I think that student misconduct and how it was handled was different based on every administrator that I worked under. This made every misconduct issue an issue for me, even as a veteran teacher

in all Title 1, low-performing districts." Chelsea Crosby was also one of the four that stated that student misconduct played a role in her decision to leave NoCo Schools. She commented, "I would say it (student misconduct) played a big role. I did not feel like I had a voice and I felt there was a lack of administrative support. Also, there was a lack of parent and community support as it related to student behavior."

Winnie Howell was a veteran teacher who chose to leave NoCo Schools after more than 20 years in the district. Howell's decision to leave the district was partly due to student misconduct and the persistence of school administrators in requiring her to defend her discipline. Howell said, "Administration was asking so much of us as a low-performing school, even as a veteran teacher who really didn't want to leave, I chose to leave and go to a district that had community support and didn't have a reputation for behavior issues." Howell went on to say that her choice to leave the district in which she began her teaching career in the mid-1990's was difficult. However, changes in administration and the lack of parent support became factors that were too daunting.

The lone former NoCo teacher who indicated that student misbehavior did not play a role in his decision to leave the district was Keith Cummins. Mr. Cummins had personal circumstances in his life that made moving to a more centralized location near his hometown more amenable for his family. Mr. Cummins said, "I saw the challenges that the students brought as a cry for help. I truly felt that working in NoCo Schools and dealing with the challenges associated with being in a low-performing district was a calling. Ultimately the decision to leave came down to me wanting to raise my family closer to my hometown."

Teachers Who Remained in NoCo Schools. Four of the nine teachers in the research study persisted in NoCo Schools. While all nine of the teacher participants stated in

various parts of the structured interviews that the students were the reasons that each stayed in education, it could be deduced that perceived failures by the district to gain adequate traction in establishing consistency affected them all on some level.

The four teachers who remained in the district were established within the school community as well as the surrounding communities. The collective group had an average of 13.75 years of classroom teaching experience; the highest number of years in the classroom was 20 and the least number of years in the classroom was five. In three of the four cases in which teachers remained in the district, each had taught two generations of students.

Parent and Home Support

Parent and home support related to student misconduct was a common theme that arose during the interviews with teachers in both groups of participants. While information provided by the participants was not as robust as that in the previous overarching theme, each of the nine participants discussed parent and home support relative to student misconduct.

Teachers Who Left NoCo Schools. The interview item that produced responses about parent and home support among teachers who left the NoCo Schools was "Why do you think the rates of student misconduct are high in this district?" Of the five teachers that participated in the study, each touched on the lack of home support as an issue that impacted behavior within the classrooms. Several individuals described efforts to secure the engagement of parents in securing more appropriate conduct among students were of little value. Marsha Ross noted that, in her experiences, a call home to parents as a consequence to student misconduct had diminished as a consequence. "A phone call home used to be all we needed as teachers to get any student behavior back on track," stated Ross. She went on to say that these calls home were futile and often resulted in parents or family members

negating any consequences for poor behavior in the classroom. Geri Como stated that calls home resulted in little more than "wasted time and energy." Como suggested, "At some point I stopped making calls home unless it was a classroom emergency or if a student was sick. Calls home for misbehavior just became a waste of time and energy."

Cummins, a teacher who left the district, described the lack of parental support as a caveat to teaching in NoCo Schools that one simply accepted. "When I accepted the job to teach, I did so idealistically. I was there to make a difference in the lives of the students, knowing that they came from broken homes and many lived in poverty," Cummins stated. "I grew up in a similar district, just in an urban setting. I accepted what I had personally witnessed with the lack of parent and community involvement in the urban schools I grew up in." Cummins mentioned that establishing relationships with the students is vital in trying to curb misbehavior in the classroom, regardless of the lack of parent involvement.

Teachers Who Remained in NoCo Schools. The interview item that triggered related responses among teachers who chose to remain in the NoCo Schools was "Why do you think that this district has the highest teacher turnover rates in the state?" All four of the teachers who stayed in the district responded to the Impact Interview Protocol (see Appendix B) regarding high rates of misconduct in the district with similar answers. Besides classroom management training and administrative support, these teachers each generally felt that the lack of parental support related to school policy played a factor in the high rates of misconduct. Sheila Harper, who had 19 years of teaching in NoCo Schools, described the lack of support at home came in a failure to reinforce classroom rules and disciplinary actions with the problematic students. Harper stated, "Student behavior comes down to what is permitted at home and what kind of behavior is supported. If students are not held to rules

at home, it is hard to make them follow rules at school. If those same students who have no rules are misbehaving, there is no reinforcement outside of school to help keep them on track."

All four of the participants who remained stated that reinforcing behavior that mirrored school practices and rules was not a priority in many homes of the students with consistently problematic behavior. Laura Minton expressed the same sentiments as Harper stating, "Some of the students don't have rules at home. There's little to no support from parents of students who have no rules at home. Over the years I have been teaching, parents supporting the schools is lower."

Summary for Research Question 2

One common theme arose from the research was the lack of parental support related to student misbehavior. All nine of the participants stated that the lack of parental support contributed to the misbehavior in the classroom. Of the five teachers who left the district, all cited that the lack of parental support in enforcing rules was problematic. Only four of the five teachers stated that that misbehavior in the classroom was the reason they left NoCo Schools. The fifth, Keith Cummins, decided to leave to put his growing family in a situation that benefitted them more. Cummins did agree that the lack of parental support was problematic; however, he relied heavily on building relationships with students to help combat misbehavior in his classroom.

Regarding teachers who stayed, all agreed that inadequate parental support strained classroom behavior culture greatly. However, it was not so great that they made ultimate decisions to leave the district. Each of these four teachers persisted in NoCo Schools for 20, 19, 11, and 5 years respectively. It could be stated that community entrenchment by each of

these four has kept them in NoCo Schools. Three of the four had taught two generations of students already.

All nine teachers shared that administrative and district changes and also turnover made positive school culture difficult to attain. New district programming, school initiatives, and changes in both district and school administrators made gaining traction with preventative and reactive measures difficult and challenging.

Research Question 3

Research Question 3 was qualitative in nature and read as follows: "What is the impact of the development of specific behavior management skills on teachers' sense of self-efficacy in the classroom?" As is noted in Table 4.8, Interview Protocol Question 5, and Table 4.9, Interview Protocol Question 7, teachers who stayed and teachers who left were asked whether they had been equipped with resources such as peer mentors, classroom management training, professional development related to classroom climate?

Two overarching themes emerged from the research study related to classroom management and training that teachers said that they had received. First, teachers found that there was an overall lack of training related specifically to classroom management. Second, new programs and initiatives from both district- and school-level administrators, who often were new in their roles, were perceived by teachers to be difficult to initialize and ultimately sustain.

Lack of Training and Other Support

Participants addressed this theme in similar fashion, whether they had remained in the district or left. The results are therefore reported together, rather than divided by the two teacher subgroups. All nine participants were asked if teachers were equipped with resources

to create a successful classroom climate (i.e., peer mentors, classroom management training, and relevant professional development). All nine of the participants, four from the group that remained in the district and five from the group that left the district, indicated that they did not feel that the support and training provided by the district adequately prepared them for dealing with the types of student misconduct that they faced in their classrooms respectively.

In terms of dealing specifically with student misconduct, proper training for the types of behaviors that arose in the classroom setting was a concern for all nine of the participants. For example, a common factor mentioned among the nine interviewees was the lack of specialized training for the types of behaviors that they faced in their classroom settings.

This lack of professional development was noted as particularly detrimental for early career teachers. Four of the veteran teachers indicated that they felt more adequately trained in classroom management than new teachers or teachers who didn't get a traditional student teaching experience. Marsha Ross, who left NoCo Schools, stated, "I would say that the teachers who were hired 10 or more years ago did get the training for classroom management that was needed. Newer teachers do not get as much targeted and specific behavior training. There is more focus [from the district level] on academic success and meeting academic benchmarks than there is on student behavior." Winnie Howell, who left NoCo Schools, said, "Classroom management came down to each teacher learning on their own how to address the problems and then hoping that your administrator supported those efforts. I was fortunate enough to complete student teaching, be trained in classroom management techniques, and also be a part of the new teacher program that North Carolina used to implement for all new teachers. New teachers no longer have those opportunities, and it shows when they have to deal with misconduct or behavior issues."

Chelsea Crosby, who left NoCo Schools echoed the other veteran teachers in her perception of the lack of training related specifically to student misconduct. “District-level training was made available for serving homeless students or ESL students, but not enough training was available for to support teachers with dealing effectively with misconduct.” Gerald Carter, a veteran teacher who stayed within NoCo Schools, expressed similar sentiments to those of the other research participants. Carter described the emphasis that was placed on district level training about student behavior many years ago but observed that most new programming and district initiatives were geared towards academic benchmarks. “I spent a lot of time in PD (professional development) early in my career for classroom management and we had something new to try all the time. The young teachers coming in have little to no training in that area. Now most PD is academic in nature or addresses broad concerns like homelessness or ESL students.”

Sustainability of New Programs and Initiatives

The second theme that emerged from the participants related to Research Question 3 was the impact of the shifting nature of district level programming upon the capacity of teachers to effectively deal with instances of student misconduct. In this instance, the perspectives differed somewhat between the subgroups of teachers.

Teachers Who Left NoCo Schools. Five of the nine research study participants had left the district prior to their interviews. Four of the five participants felt inadequately prepared for the types of student misconduct they would face; they associated this lack of readiness, in part, with inadequate training and support. Keith Cummins, who left the district stated, “I feel that some of the misconduct was a direct result of underlying issues that classroom teachers are not trained to handle. Emotional needs, family concerns, and home

issues often worked themselves into misconduct scenarios. We are not trained properly to deal with those concerns effectively."

Marsha Ross, who left the district, said that the training she received involved programming to address English as a Second Language students as well as homeless students; however, little to no training was prioritized regarding classroom management. "Structured behavior and consequence plans need to be taught to teachers and then enforced by all within the school community. ESL and homelessness are important but so is consistent classroom management policies." Chelsea Crosby, who left the district, agreed with this sentiment and described the lack of classroom management training as problematic for her attempts to establish consistent classroom routines and practices. She stated that new programming for both positive and negative classroom behaviors changed each year in her five years of employment with the school she was assigned.

Teachers Who Remained in NoCo Schools. Of the four teachers who stayed in the district, each identified that district driven classroom management initiatives were inconsistent from year-to-year. Each of the four teachers who had stayed in the district observed that these inconsistencies were based on changes in administration at both the district and school levels. Tammy Futrell, a veteran teacher with 20 years of experience in the classroom stated, "Building a rapport with students and administrators is important to helping reduce classroom misconduct. It (building rapport) was a difficult task in itself, let alone when administration seemed to roll in and roll out."

In addition, three of the four participants in this subgroup stated that new programming for student behavior was rolled out every year; therefore, sustaining efforts to thwart student misconduct seemed a daunting task. Laura Minton, a teacher with more than

10 years in the classroom, undergirded this observation by stating, “New incentive-based behavior programs were rolled out each year. We knew it was an attempt to target student misconduct, but as teachers, it was difficult to gain any traction with all the switching up with programs.”

Two teachers specifically mentioned Positive Behavior Intervention Strategies (P.B.I.S.) as a district driven initiative to combat high rates of student misconduct. The theory of action in this model is that teachers and school administrators incentivize positive behaviors and give students rewards for following classroom rules. Teachers and administrators then levy incentives against student misbehavior. While these strategies are common in education, in NoCo Schools, these teachers stated that each school administrative team was responsible for creating a P.B.I.S. committee and implementing a P.B.I.S. plan each academic year. Administrative turnover and teacher turnover made it hard to establish consistency with P.B.I.S. programming. Tammy Futrell, a veteran with over 20 years of teaching experience in NoCo Schools, stated, “The new teachers were great at coming up with P.B.I.S activities for the students. However, the same teachers struggled in the classroom with the day-to-day behavior issues they faced. It wore them down and they left. It was just a cycle of turnover and the school suffers because we had so many new teachers to orient, let alone come up with effective P.B.I.S. strategies.”

Summary for Research Question 3

Of the nine research participants, each expressed that the lack of preparation was integral in the overall creation of a positive classroom experience. The participants seemed to agree that training was not targeted enough to bridge any misbehavior gaps. Furthermore, the inability to sustain specific district programming caused teacher frustration. Administrator

support in building self-efficacy in teachers is paramount, as the research from Chapter 2 suggests. However, according to the themes that emerged from the nine teacher participants in this study, administrator support was often road blocked due to district changes and turnover.

Research Question 4

Research Question 4 read as follows: What is the impact of principal support on teachers' sense of self-efficacy in the classroom? To address Research Question 4, qualitative research was conducted. The qualitative elements were complemented by quantitative analyses as well. This mixed-methods approach was used in an attempt to collect data relevant in finding correlations between teacher self-efficacy and administrator support. As the following subsections indicate, the perspectives of the teachers who participated in the structured interviews contrast somewhat with those of teachers who participated anonymously in the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey.

Qualitative Results for Research Question 4

The qualitative elements of Research Question 4 were addressed through data collected in structured interviews with the nine teacher participants. Five of these individuals had elected to leave the NoCo Schools. The other four were teachers who continued to teach in the district. Tables 4.8 and 4.9 provide the interview questions to which these nine participants responded in order to provide data for answering the research questions.

Teachers Who Left NoCo Schools. As previously mentioned in the literature review, prior research has found that administrator support was critical in developing teachers in the area of classroom management. In the case of NoCo Schools, three of the five teachers who left the district felt unsupported by their school administrators; there was thus

an apparent failure on the part of school administrators to provide needed support. Without the support of school administrators, teachers felt the inability to build the self-confidence needed to effectively manage classroom misbehavior. Participant responses varied on where the breakdown in providing classroom support. Responses included school administrators and district expectations placed on school administrators that did not prioritize classroom management support.

Chelsea Crosby, a teacher who left with five years of experience, stated, “I sent students to the office and ten minutes later, they were right back in the classroom with no consequences. I felt we didn’t have any administrative support, which is very deflating as a young teacher.”

Winnie Howell, who left NoCo schools with over 25 years of teaching within the district, stated that she had worked for as many as 7 principals and even more assistant principals. “The changes in administration were difficult to keep up with,” she said. “Discipline tactics changed from administrator to administrator and with each change, my confidence in any support with classroom management dwindled. I got to a point in my career where I would try to handle the misbehavior and if I could not do it, I worked with my teacher team or professional learning community.”

Keith Cummins, who left NoCo Schools with 5 years of experience, found that administrative support was important but did not definitely say it affected his own ability to create an environment conducive for student learning. “Administrative support was different from leader to leader. I tried to handle as much of my own classroom misconduct issues because I felt that I would get different support from different administrators. I was given autonomy to make a lot of classroom management decisions by one administrator, but not

another one. It was very difficult place to be in as a young educator." Cummins viewed conflicted expectations from his school administrators as a problem in developing consistency in support. In other words, what support Cummins got from his principal was marked differently than the support he received with his assistant principal. This was not a problem he thought he could not effectively handle. "I still created boundaries and incentivize those boundaries across the board. I am not saying it's easy, it is draining mentally, but I wouldn't say it lessened my confidence as a teacher to handle discipline issues."

Two of the five teachers who had departed were indifferent to administrator support and its impact on their self-efficacy in the classroom was concerned. These two teachers instead cited a lack of communication between upper administrators that they believed led to widespread ineffectiveness in classroom management. Marsha Ross, who left the district, said, "The administrators are important but classroom management begins with the teachers. It's nice to have administrators that have your back but I understand that the administrators have so many other fires to put out. What I did see is that the administrators often times had different strategies and different ways to deal with misbehavior. Communication was limited at the top level and that could sometimes confuse expectations set on the teachers related to classroom management concerns."

Echoing a similar sentiment was Geri Como. Como, who left the district with more than 25 years in education, found that she had become insular with her classroom management style. Como said, "I relied on my own experiences to help shape my classroom culture. I think there was a gap in communication with the administrators at the top on how to best support the staff. I could see how that left some of my colleagues frustrated in their

attempts to gain any traction when it came to discipline."

Teachers Who Remained in the NoCo Schools. Of the four teachers who stayed within the district all four felt degrees of administrator support. Two of the four teachers that stayed were definitive in the answers regarding administrator support. The remaining two felt that administrators were spread thin in dealing with misbehavior issues at a high rate, lending them unavailable to tend to their classroom needs, and hence, leaving them with greater uncertainty about their capabilities with regard to classroom behavior management.

Sheila Harper, who remained in NoCo Schools stated, "As a teacher who has been in the district for 20 years, I am confident in my classroom management skills. I feel that I get support from my administration because they know that I am going to try everything that I can to get my students to behave. If I need my administration they are there, and they support my efforts." At the time of this interview session, Harper had recently been name teacher of the year for the school in which she worked and was highly regarded within NoCo Schools as a problem-solver who led with a "tough-love" approach.

Laura Minton, who also had stayed in the district and had 11 years of experience in NoCo Schools, stated, "I felt supported by my administration because when you needed help with behavior issues, it was always on point. I felt supported in what I was trying to accomplish in the classroom. The administration was always dealing with little fires all over the place. I understood that their jobs were difficult as well. I can say that I got support when I needed it from my school administration."

Tammy Futrell and Gerald Carter, who had also remained in the district, had somewhat different perspectives. Futrell stated, "The frequency in which students are written up or called out or sent to the office appears to have increased. Our administrators were

constantly on the move to deal with student conduct issues. It was like putting one fire out and moving on to another within minutes. This was hard for everyone in the building because often times when you needed administrator support, they were dealing with other misconduct issues in other classrooms." Futrell had amassed over 20 years of classroom experience at the time of this data collection. "With years, comes experience in dealing with a lot of behavior problems," said Futrell.

Gerald Carter, who had remained in the district and had 5 years of experience in NoCo Schools, shared the sentiment as Futrell. Carter stated when administrators were not available to assist with misconduct issues or support him in the classroom, he relied on peers to assist. "I relied on my administrators to support with my classroom management but when they were not around to assist, I relied on my peer support. Having peers to assist when dealing with misbehavior is helpful. Sometimes other teachers on the hall or on the grade level may know how to deal better with certain students."

Futrell said, "As I continued on in my career, I saw many administrators come and go. Some had strengths in classroom management, others were better at curriculum. Over time, I got a feel for how I could operate with each administrators' specific strengths. I think that this is part of the growth as an effective educator. I did a lot of growing on my own over the years, especially with classroom management, because of the changeover, and also because of the constraints being placed on school administrators."

Carter expanded on his feelings about how the lack of administrator support made him feel. "Of course, I didn't want to always rely on peer support but I am thankful to have had it when my administrators were not available to assist me with discipline issues. For me, it was important to know that if I had to rely on just myself and my peers as the primary

measuring stick for classroom management, then I would want our school administrators to have our backs if it didn't go the way we wanted."

Quantitative Results for Research Question 4

Research Question 4 was also addressed with quantitative data. This information was analyzed in order to provide additional context for the perspectives of the participants in the NoCo Schools. The quantitative results were derived from the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey (NCTWCS). NoCo Schools had 100% participation by teachers in the 2018 NCTWCS. The survey results related to teachers' sense of efficacy were analyzed for the NoCo Schools, the selected group of demographically and geographically similar districts, and for the state. The data derived from the survey were based on agreement analysis (i.e., the degree to which a teacher agreed with statements associated with each of the survey items). Q6.1 of the NCTWCS, which included the 7 items outlined in Table 4.3, addressed teacher efficacy. Table 4.10 provides the means and standard deviations for the 7 items from the NCTWCS Q6.1 for NoCo Schools, for the state, and for the 8 similar school districts.

Table 4.10

Percent Agreement with NCTWCS Survey Items Q6.1 (a-g) for RQ4

Survey Item	NoCo Schools	State	Standard Deviation	Similar Districts	Standard Deviation
(a) teachers are recognized as educational experts	87%	84%	6%	82%	7%
(b) teachers are trusted to make sound professional decisions about instruction	85%	85%	10%	85%	8%
(c) teachers are relied upon to make decisions about education issues	85%	83%	10%	83%	8%
(d) teachers are encouraged to participate in school leadership roles	93%	91%	11%	91%	4%
(e) the faculty has an effective process for making group decisions to solve problems	82%	77%	8%	76%	8%
(f) in this school we take steps to solve problems	83%	83%	15%	81%	8%
(g) teachers are effective leaders in this school	87%	87%	10%	84%	6%

Teachers surveyed in NoCo Schools agreed that they are recognized as educational experts at an 87% rate. The state mean of 84% was slightly lower than that of the NoCo Schools. The mean for NoCo was also higher than the mean for the 8 similar districts, which was 82%. The agree analysis for the three data sets was marginally dissimilar; as is noted in Table 4.10, the differences in means were not significant. A majority of respondents agreed that teachers are recognized as educational experts. On the other hand, 13-18% of the teachers in each of the 3 data sets (NoCo Schools, state, and similar districts) disagreed that this was the case.

Teachers surveyed in NoCo Schools agreed that they are trusted to make sound professional decisions about instruction 85% rate. The state means was 85%, with a standard deviation of 10% between the two data sets. In similar school districts, the means was 85% with an 8% standard deviation. The data sets analyzed from these samples are consistent and similar with an 85% rate of agreement.

Eighty-five percent of NoCo Schools teachers agreed that they are relied upon to make educational decisions while the state means was 83%. The standard deviation was 10% between the two means. The similar districts also agreed at a high rate, with 83% of the sample in agreement that they have decision-making authority related to educational issues. There was an 8% standard deviation between the two groups.

Teachers surveyed in NoCo Schools agreed at a 93% rate that they are encouraged to participate in school leadership roles. The state means saw teachers agree at a 91% rate with an 11% standard deviation. Similar school districts data saw that 91% of teachers agreed that they are encouraged to take on leadership roles within the school. The standard deviation between the two samples was 4%. Overall, the data revealed that a large percentage of school

educators believe that they are encouraged to take on leadership roles within the schools they are employed.

NoCo Schools teachers agreed that the faculty has an effective process for making group decisions to solve problems at an 82% rate while statewide, teachers agreed at a 77% rate. Similar districts measured 79% agreement with statement (e) from the survey with a 9% standard deviation.

NoCo Schools teachers agreed that teachers in this school take steps to solve problems at a rate of 83%. The state means was also 83%. The standard deviation in the sample was 15%. Similar school districts agreed at an 81% rate that teachers take steps to solve problems. The standard deviation was much lower in this sample at 8%. The results taken from the survey item in both samples indicated that the majority agree with that schools take steps to solve problems that exist within each school.

Teachers in NoCo Schools agreed at an 87% rate that teachers are effective leaders in this school. The state means for this sample was also 87%. The standard deviation in this data set was 10%. In similar school districts the agreement rate was 84% with a 6% standard deviation. This specific data measurement suggested that a majority of state, NoCo Schools, and similar district teachers agreed that teachers are effective leaders within the school.

I conducted a basic *t*-test to determine if there were significant differences among the means of the 3 datasets (NoCo Schools, state, and similar districts) for the items in NCTWCS Q6.1. Table 4.11 shows a summary of the *t*-test results.

Table 4.11

T-test Results for Q6.1 from the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey

Survey Item	NoCo Schools	State	NoCo Schools	Similar Districts
a	87%	84%	87%	82%
b	85%	85%	85%	85%
c	85%	83%	85%	83%
d	93%	91%	93%	91%
e	82%	77%	82%	76%
f	83%	83%	83%	81%
g	87%	87%	87%	84%
p-value		.43		.22

Note. $p > 0.05$ is considered of "no significance".

The first *t*-test was conducted to assess variance in the state and NoCo School means. The *p*-value ($p = .43$) for the results indicated that there was not a significant difference between the values. The second *t*-test was conducted to assess the variance in the means for the similar districts and NoCo Schools. The *p*-value ($p = .22$) for the results indicated that there was not a significant difference between the similar school means and the NoCo Schools means. With a *p*-value of .05 as an indicator of whether or not there is significant difference in testing comparatives, each of the *p*-values in comparative groups indicate that there is no significant difference between NoCo Schools, the state, and similar districts. Using *t*-tests, I found that there was little statistical difference between the state means and NoCo Schools for research question 4.

Summary of Results for Research Question 4

Research Question 4 was worded as follows: What is the impact of principal support on teachers' sense of self-efficacy in the classroom? The qualitative results showed varied

results regarding the lack of principal support on a teachers' sense of self-efficacy. Nine total teacher participants were sampled through a series of structured interviews. A common theme found was that all nine of the teachers seemed to rely on themselves or their peers heavily as it related to dealing with classroom discipline. Seven of the nine teachers mentioned specifically that they relied on their own strategies or called upon the assistance of peers to assist with classroom management. Two of the teachers, both of whom remained within the district, stated that they undoubtedly had the support of their school principals. It was difficult to determine if this perceived show of support was for each administrator that the teachers had worked with, since each teacher had been supervised by several principals over their years within the district. The other two teachers who remained in the district had accepted that administrator turnover was going to happen and began to implement classroom management strategies that were amenable to a dynamic school culture. Neither teacher stated that principal support negatively affected their self-efficacy; they simply asserted that they began to rely on their own skills and growth process as educators.

Five teachers left the district, while four remained in NoCo Schools. Of the teachers who left NoCo Schools, three of the five clearly stated that the lack of perceived principal support had an effect on how they felt about their capabilities in the area of classroom management. Perceived inconsistencies in principal strategies and communication were a common theme among the three who left the district; they stated that they felt there were not supported by their principals. These three teachers expressed that the communication about classroom misconduct varied from administrator to administrator. There was an apparent lack of communication between the principal and the assistant principal, which led to different discipline strategies by each. A common example was given by the teachers. If the teacher

chose to include the principal in the student misconduct issue, the assistant principal might intervene later with other conflicting consequences. Each principal gave different consequences or had different expectations on how to handle the discipline issue. This lack of communication with the top school administrators created a loss of trust in the top school leaders to handle school discipline issues. These same teachers described feeling frustrated, confused, and drained in dealing with the lack of principal support. Two of the five teachers who left were indifferent regarding how they felt about the impact of principal support on their sense of self-efficacy. These two teachers relied on both personal and peer strategies related to classroom management, without focusing on the overall lack of principal support.

The quantitative results for the question varied somewhat from the qualitative results. Analysis of differences in the means for percent agreement with NCTWCS Survey Items Q6.1 (a-g) for RQ4 produced insignificant results for all three comparison groups (NoCo Schools, state, and similar districts.) The majority means for all three entities indicated that each group felt reasonably good about their respective roles within their schools. The data suggested that NoCo Schools, the state, and similar districts agreed that teachers are encouraged to take active leadership roles within their schools. In all of the data collected within state level means, NoCo Schools means, and similar district means there appeared to be little significant data to support the idea that teachers had negative feelings about their self-efficacy and role within the school. According to the data represented in quantitative results for determining a teacher's self-efficacy on the NCTWS, most felt respected by their peers, administrators, and students. A high rate of teachers who responded also felt they were confident decision makers and were effective leaders within their respective schools.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the results from the mixed-methods findings that specifically addressed the four research questions presented in Chapter 3. Data derived from the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions survey and the teacher impact interviews were analyzed to determine if there was a relationship between the high rates of student misbehavior and teacher attrition in NoCo Schools. The data collected from the 2018 North Carolina Teacher Working Survey came from questions 5.1 and 6.1 (see Tables 4.2 and 4.3). The survey questions polled teachers on student conduct and teacher efficacy in a % degree analysis style. NoCo Schools data were then compared to similar districts within Northeast North Carolina.

Qualitative interview data were collected from nine teachers: four who stayed within the district and five who left the district for other teaching positions. Data were collected and transcribed using ATLAS.ti 22.1.5.0 software. From the auto-code method in ATLAS.ti 22.1.5.0, three common themes emerged, (a) parent and home support, (b) administrative support, and (c) classroom management and training.

The quantitative portion of this study provided descriptive results for the NCTWCS items listed in Tables 4.3 and 4.4 and the teachers in the NoCo School District, along with their counterparts across the state and in eight similar districts within the region in which the NoCo School District is located. Teachers in all three groups largely felt good about their work and that of the school to set expectations and communicate them to students. The groups also agreed at a much lower rate that students abided by the expectations set for them. The three teacher groups were in strong agreement on all of the NCTWC 6.1 survey questions components. NoCo School teachers, similar district teachers, and state teachers all

showed strong agreement in feeling that they were each relied upon to make decisions in their schools. The strong agreement means continued with each category in the survey question, including that they were encouraged to participate in leadership roles, that they stepped up to solve problems in the school, and that they largely believed themselves to be effective leaders in their schools.

The quantitative data also provided insights into the NCTWCS ratings of the NoCo School District's teachers by contrasting the NoCo means with those of the state and the eight similar districts. NCTWCS Q5.1, (b) students follow the rules at this school, was the only survey item that deviated from state standards. NoCo Schools and similar school districts agreed with the statement in Q5.1 (b) at a 53% rate while the state mean for that same survey item was 65%. NCTWCS Q6.1 disclosed no major discrepancies in degree analysis between the state means, NoCo Schools, and similar school districts.

The qualitative portion of this study revealed three common themes among the nine total participants, even in groups that left the district and that remained in the district. The themes that emerged were directly related to student behavior and the school and district administration's response to preparing teachers to deal with student misconduct. Overall, while the quantitative research revealed no major discrepancies from state means to district means, the qualitative results provided significant insights into why the district's NCTWCS participants believed that student misconduct rates are so high in NoCo Schools.

Analysis of data from the interviewed teachers showed that each felt that the lack of classroom management training led to higher rates of student misconduct. Teachers in the research study also suggested that administrator supports, at both the district and school levels, was inconsistent. The frequency of the misconduct incidents within the schools in

which they were employed was a concern for each of them and it was suggested that a lack of parent and home support contributed to the high rates of student misconduct.

Chapter 5 of this study reviews the purpose of the study and summarizes key findings. A discussion of the findings from the mixed-methods research study is presented; this discussion employs Chapter 2 peer-reviewed literature relevant to the overall study. Lastly the limitations of the study and recommendations for policy, practice, and further research are addressed.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Chapter Introduction

Chapter 5 provides a summary and discussion of the findings from the study of high teacher attritions rates in a rural, Northeast North Carolina school district that also had high rates of student misconduct. I have offered implications for policy, practice, and future research regarding the findings from this research. An intensive literature review revealed relatively little extant research regarding the phenomena of high teacher attrition rates and high rates of student misconduct within a rural, low-wealth school district. It is my hope that findings from this study can be of use in NoCo Schools or in similar districts around the state and nation.

Purpose of the Study

Teacher turnover in NoCo Schools and similar districts continues to be a concern to school administrators and district administrators alike. The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to explore the relationship between the high rates of teacher attrition and student misconduct in NoCo Schools. The study sought to determine if there was a relationship between the phenomena of the high teacher attrition rates and high student misconduct rates within NoCo Schools. At the time of the study, the district at the center of the research, NoCo Schools, had the highest teacher turnover rate in the state of North Carolina. The same district also posted some of the highest short term and long-term suspension rates in the state.

Using archival data from the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey, I incorporated a semi-quantitative research protocol. Data specific to the NoCo Schools regarding selected teacher working conditions were gathered and reported through basic descriptive and inferential statistics.

The qualitative components of the study, which were the primary research design elements, explored teachers' perspectives regarding the impact of working conditions on their decisions to remain in their current professional roles. The study focused particularly on the perspectives of teachers regarding the degree to which the phenomena of teacher attrition and student misconduct are related. This study examined high teacher turnover and high student misbehavior rates in this low-income, rural school district in northeastern North Carolina. As was mentioned previously, NoCo Schools had the highest teacher turnover rate in the state at the time of the study. In addition to the high teacher turnover rates, NoCo Schools also reported high student suspension rates.

Two groups of teachers were interviewed; all were either working in or had recently been employed by the NoCo Schools. The first group of participant included four teachers who had a period of sustained employment within the district and who were still employed there. The second group included five teachers who left the district or the profession. The study participants completed a preliminary form that included educational levels and previous public-school experiences. Structured interviews were conducted with each study participant in order to secure data that were pertinent to the study. There were two different interview protocols, one for each of the aforementioned groups. The interview protocols were biographical in nature but also addressed the role that teacher working conditions, specifically student behavior and administrative support, played in a teacher's decision to stay or to leave. The analysis of data included an examination of common and emerging themes, as well as unique individual perspectives or narratives in relation to teacher attrition and teacher dissatisfaction.

Summary of Findings

A mixed methods approach to the research gave an expanded view of the phenomena of high teacher turnover and student misconduct in NoCo Schools. There were two forms of instrumentation for data collection. The first was the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey (2018), from which archival data were drawn for the NoCo County Schools, the state, and for a comparison group of 8 northeastern North Carolina school districts that were similar to the NoCo Schools. NCTWCS Q5.1 and Q6.1 survey items provided data for the analyses related to Research Questions 1 and 4.

The second instrument was a structured interview protocol that was differentiated slightly for the two groups of participants. The first of these, which was entitled Impact Interview Protocol-A, was used in dialogues with teachers employed in NoCo Schools at the time of the study. Impact Interview Protocol-B was used in conversations with teachers who had left the NoCo Schools or the profession. Data from the interviews were used in the analyses associated with Research Questions 2, 3, and 4.

In order to address the research aims associated with this study, the following research questions were posed:

1. What are the perceptions of teachers regarding working conditions related to student misconduct in the NoCo Schools?
2. How do teachers describe the impact of student misconduct on their decisions to persist in the current position, move to another school district, or to leave the profession?
3. What is the impact of the development of specific behavior management skills on teachers' sense of self-efficacy in the classroom?

4. What is the impact of principal support on teachers' sense of self-efficacy in the classroom?

Research Question 1 was a quantitative query that asked the following: What are the perceptions of teachers regarding working conditions related to student misconduct in NoCo Schools? For Research Question 1, I used archival data from the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey to determine teachers' perceptions regarding student misconduct. Specifically, I made use of the response data for the items in NCTWCS 5.1. The results for these items are reported in the form of rates of agreement among respondents. I first calculated the descriptive statistics for the items for NoCo Schools, the state, and the similar districts. I then compared the data from NoCo Schools, the state, and 8 similar school districts. Means testing in the form of a basic *t*-test was employed to determine whether the means for NoCo Schools teachers were significantly different from those of teachers in the statewide sample, and in similar districts. This question probed teachers' level of agreement with statements related to student misconduct. A majority of NoCo teachers (m=80%) agreed that students understand the expectations for their behavior. Collectively the state results indicated that 82% of teachers agreed that students understand the expectations that they lay out. Teachers in similar districts agreed at a rate just below both NoCo Schools and the state means; their rate was 77%. There was not a significant difference among the three means ratees of agreement.

The majority means for all three entities indicated that the vast majority of teachers felt reasonably good about what the teachers are doing to state clear rules and expectations related to student behavior. On the other hand, teachers did not agree that students follow the rules at the same high rate. NoCo Schools recorded a 53% rate of agreement with the

statement that students follow the rules at their schools. Similar districts recorded similar numbers to NoCo Schools (m=51%) while the statewide percentages had a higher mean of 65%. I used *t*-tests and set a *p*-value of .05 as an indicator of whether or not there was a significant difference in the means between the three groups. Each of the *p*-values in comparative groups indicated that there was no significant difference regarding these two perspectives between the means of NoCo Schools and the state, nor was there a significant difference between NoCo Schools and similar districts. Teachers across the three data sets, regardless of district teacher attrition or student suspension rates, felt that students struggled to follow the rules despite what they believed were clear expectations.

Research Question 2 was qualitative in nature and read: How do teachers describe the impact of student misconduct on their decisions to persist in the current position, move to another school district, or to leave the profession? Using the respective interview protocols for each group, I transcribed answers given by nine participant teachers in structured interviews. I formulated common themes that emerged during the interview process with each teacher participant. The teacher participant responses to the interview items fell primarily into two common themes related to Research Question 2. The first was the impact of student misconduct on persistence and the second was parent and home support. An analysis of interview quotes in ATLAS.ti 22.1.5.0 revealed that four of the five teachers who left NoCo Schools provided similar answers to the question of whether or not student misconduct was directly related to their respective decisions to leave NoCo Schools. These four teacher participants stated that student misconduct played a role in their decisions not to persist in NoCo Schools.

Among the four of nine participants in the study who had persisted in NoCo Schools, each stated that, while there might be difficulties student conduct at times, the students were the reason behind their persistence. It should be noted that these four teachers were established within the school community as well as the surrounding communities. The collective group had an average of 13.75 years of classroom teaching experience; the highest number of years in the classroom was 20 and the least number of years in the classroom was five. In three of the four cases in which teachers remained in the district, each had taught two generations of students. Of the five teachers who left the NoCo Schools, only one participant was established within the community.

All nine of the teacher participants stated that the lack of parent and home support played a role in the high rates of student misconduct in NoCo Schools. Of the five teachers that left NoCo Schools, each touched on the lack of home support as an issue that impacted behavior within the classrooms. Three of the five said that efforts to secure the engagement of parents in trying to generate more appropriate conduct among students were of little value.

Research Question 3 was qualitative in nature and read as follows: "What is the impact of the development of specific behavior management skills on teachers' sense of self-efficacy in the classroom?" All nine teacher participants were asked whether they had been equipped with resources such as peer mentors, classroom management training, professional development related to classroom climate? As there was substantial consistency among the responses of teachers in the two groups, the perspectives are not contrasted, but instead are described jointly below.

Two overarching themes emerged from the research study related to classroom management and training that teachers said that they had received. First, teachers found that

there was an overall lack of training related specifically to classroom management. Second, new programs and initiatives from both district-and school-level administrators, who often were new in their roles, were perceived by teachers to be difficult to initialize and ultimately sustain. In terms of dealing specifically with student misconduct, proper training for the types of behaviors that arose in the classroom setting was a concern for all nine of the participants. For example, a common factor mentioned among the nine interviewees was the lack of specialized training for the types of behaviors that they faced in their classroom settings. This lack of professional development was noted as particularly detrimental for early career teachers. Teachers in both groups stated that district-driven classroom management initiatives were inconsistent from year-to-year. The participants seemed to agree that training was not sufficiently targeted to address student misconduct. Furthermore, the inability to sustain specific district behavior management initiatives caused teachers frustration.

Research Question 4 read as follows: What is the impact of principal support on teachers' sense of self-efficacy in the classroom? To address Research Question 4, qualitative research was conducted. The qualitative elements were complemented by quantitative analyses as well. This mixed-methods approach was used in an attempt to collect data relevant in finding correlations between teacher self-efficacy and administrator support. Using transcriptions from the structured interviews, I found that three of the five teachers who left the district felt unsupported by their school administrators. Indeed, among the nine total participants, seven felt they were not supported by their school administrators. There was thus an apparent failure by school administrators to provide support and to help these teachers build the self-confidence needed to effectively manage classroom behavior.

The quantitative results for Research Question 4 were derived from the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey. I associated NCTWCS Survey Items Q6.1 (a-g) for RQ4 with teacher self-efficacy. The perspectives of the three comparison locales (NoCo Schools, state, and similar districts) regarding these items were similar. My analysis of variance among the means for percent agreement among the three comparison groups produced no statistically significant differences.

The descriptive quantitative results for this research question varied somewhat from the qualitative results. The majority means for all three entities indicated that each group felt reasonably good about their respective roles within their schools. The data suggested that respondents in the NoCo Schools, the state, and similar districts agreed that teachers are encouraged to take active leadership roles within their schools. In the NCTWCS data collected within state, NoCo Schools, and similar district, the means produced little significant data to support the negative feelings articulated by the nine interviewees about a teacher's self-efficacy and role within the school. The different data collection methods showed a difference among teacher participants and their feelings related to self-efficacy and principal support. The quantitative results from the NCTWCS related to RQ4 showed that teachers in all three groups (NoCo schools, the state, and similar district) felt strongly about their roles within their respective schools and the support that each received.

Discussion of the Study Findings

This research examined the relationship between the high rates of teacher attrition and student misconduct in NoCo Schools. The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to explore the relationship between the high rates of teacher attrition and student misconduct in NoCo Schools. Attrition among North Carolina's teachers is consistent with a problem that is

national in scope. According to Crosby (2002), nationwide, one-fifth of new teachers quit within three years. That number increases to half in five years (Crosby, 2002). Crosby and other researchers in the area of teacher attrition recognize the tremendous strain which teacher attrition places on districts each year. Across the country, teachers are leaving the profession at alarming rates. In 2014, The Alliance for Excellent Education reported that teachers left the profession or moved from their current schools at a 20% rate nationwide, an increase of over 10% since 2009 (Haynes, 2014). Education administrators and district leaders are challenged to address teacher attrition, so it is important to understand why teachers are leaving schools at such high rates.

Teacher working conditions frame a teacher's experience in a public school setting. Educator perceptions of their school culture and teacher working conditions are linked to "student learning, future employment plans, efficacy, and motivation," (North Carolina Public Schools, 2014. p. 2). The study sought to determine if there was a relationship between the phenomena of the high teacher attrition rates and high student misconduct rates within NoCo Schools. At the time of the study, the district at the center of the research, NoCo Schools, had the highest teacher turnover rate in the state of North Carolina. The same district also posted some of the highest short term and long-term suspension rates in the state. Ingersoll (2001) finds that teacher attrition is higher in schools with low salaries, poor support from school administration, and student discipline problems. The study used both quantitative and qualitative data. The data from the research were analyzed in an attempt to determine whether there was a correlation between the high rates of teacher attrition and high rates of student misconduct in a rural, Northeast North Carolina school district.

The primary instrumentation for collection of quantitative data regarding teachers' perceptions of working conditions in the school district upon which the study was focused were selected North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey (NCTWCS) items. Data analysis included descriptive statistics from questions 5.1 and 6.1 of the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey. To provide context for the NoCo Schools NCTWCS means, survey results were compared to those of the state and for 8 demographically and geographically similar school districts.

The primary instrumentation for the collection of qualitative research was the use of structured conversations. This component of the research design elements explored teachers' perspectives regarding the impact of working conditions on their decisions to remain in their current professional roles. The study focused particularly on the perspectives of teachers regarding the degree to which the phenomena of teacher attrition and student misconduct are related. As was mentioned previously, NoCo Schools had the highest teacher turnover rate in the state at the time of the study. In addition to the high teacher turnover rates, NoCo Schools also reported high student suspension rates. Two separate interview instruments, Impact Protocols A and B (Appendices B and C) were created and used in dialogues with individuals from the two groups: (1) teachers who had remained in NoCo Schools and (2) teachers who had left NoCo Schools. I interviewed nine teachers to complete the qualitative portion of this research. The data collected from these interviews were used as the primary source of research data.

Research Question 1 read as follows: What are the perceptions of teachers regarding working conditions related to student misconduct in NoCo Schools? This question was quantitative in nature and I employed data from the North Carolina Teacher Working

Conditions Survey to answer it. Teachers in NoCo Schools, the state, and in similar districts agreed at high rates that students understand expectations for their conduct at school, that faculty understand policies and expectations for students, that school administrators enforce the rules consistently, that school administrators support teachers' efforts in the classroom regarding student misbehavior, and that the schools they work in are safe. Lower teacher agreement rates were found in the area of perceptions about actual student conduct. Generally, teachers did not agree at the same high rates that students in their respective schools follow those rules. The research indicated that higher rates of student misbehavior generally stemmed from the lack of parent and home support, lack of sustainability in behavior programming and initiatives, lack of specific training for teachers, and inconsistent administrator support.

These findings were consistent with the extant literature that is highlighted in Chapter 2. O'Brien and Benham-Tye found three main explanations for why teachers leave the profession: increased focus on testing, student misbehavior, and lack of administrative/parental support. Abel and Sewell (1999), in a study conducted in 97 school districts in North Carolina and Georgia, found that student misbehavior, along with time pressures, were among top indicators of teacher burnout and stress. Their study showed that stress from student misbehavior and time pressures were significantly greater than produced by other teacher working conditions. Ingersoll conducted extensive research in the area of teacher attrition in the nation's schools. Ingersoll is considered to be an expert in teacher attrition and has conducted numerous studies to assist practitioners in finding research driven ways to combat it. Teacher stressors, including student misbehavior, are listed as reasons for leaving the field (Ingersoll, 2002).

The findings from this research study related to findings regarding teacher working conditions and student misconduct in the aforementioned literature. Lower teacher agreement rates on the NCTWCS were found in the area of perceptions about actual student conduct. Teachers in NoCo Schools, the state, and similar districts agreed at the low rates of 53%, 65%, and 51% respectively that students followed rules in their respective schools. As a former school administrator and current district administrator, I found the gap between teachers' perceptions about high clarity of expectations for behavior and the level of compliance with these expectations to be instructive.

Research Question 2 read as follows: How do teachers describe the impact of student misconduct on their decisions to persist in current position, move to another school district, or to leave the profession? Using the respective interview protocols for each group, I transcribed answers given by nine participant teachers in structured interviews. I formulated common themes that emerged during the interview process with each teacher participant. The most expansive portion of data for Research Question 2 came from statements about the lack of parental support related to student misbehavior. All nine of the teacher participants sampled in the study recorded that the lack of parent involvement in NoCo Schools increased the difficulty in dealing with classroom misconduct. Of the five teachers who left NoSo Schools, three stated explicitly that student misbehavior played a role in their decisions to leave. Of the four who remained in the district, all stated that student misconduct was an issue at their respective schools but not so egregious that leaving the district was considered. A study by O'Brien and Benham (2002) addressed a portion of the nationwide concerns about teacher attrition. This study yielded three main explanations for why teachers leave the profession: increased focus on testing, student misbehavior, and lack of administrative and

parental support. The third explanation found by the O'Brien and Benham-Tye study correlated with the results of my study: lack of administrative/parental support. NoCo Schools have long struggled to garner the support of parents. As a practitioner with 28 years of experience, I believe that having a parent or guardian reinforce expected school conduct is considered a viable classroom management resource.. However, the research revealed that all nine participant teachers found that relying on parent support was typically not an option when dealing with student misconduct. The participants expressed that, while NoCo Schools does attempt to combat the lack of parent involvement in a variety of data driven programs, few initiatives had been touted as successful. At best, they explained, marginal parent support could be expected in any school within NoCo Schools District.

With the exception of the source cited in the previous paragraph, I found that the literature revealed little data regarding the level of parent support as a reason for teachers choosing to leave or persist in a school district. But the research conducted through this study revealed that all nine teacher participants attributed degrees of student misconduct to the lack of parent and home support. This lack of parent and home support led to higher rates of student misbehavior in their respective classrooms. In turn, these high rates of student misbehavior were mentioned as a reason for leaving NoCo Schools by three of the five participants who had exited the district.

Boyd et al. (2007) found that high teacher turnover rates created instability in schools. At the time of this study, teacher turnover rates in NoCo Schools were 33%, the highest in the state of North Carolina. Historically, turnover rates had been more than 20% in NoCo Schools for at least a decade. The practitioners further perceived that the lack sustainable

programming that addressed student misconduct within NoCo Schools was compounded by the high rate of turnover among teachers and administrators.

Research Question 3 read as follows: "What is the impact of the development of specific behavior management skills on teachers' sense of self-efficacy in the classroom?" All nine teacher participants were asked whether they had been equipped with resources such as peer mentors, classroom management training, professional development related to classroom climate? Two overarching themes emerged from the research study related to classroom management and training that teachers said that they had received. First, teachers found that there was an overall lack of training related specifically to classroom management. Second, programs and initiatives from both district-and school-level administrators, who often were new in their roles, were perceived by teachers to be difficult to initialize and ultimately to sustain. In terms of dealing specifically with student misconduct, they asserted that the lack of effective training for the types of behaviors that arose in the classroom setting was a concern for all nine of the participants. This lack of professional development was noted as particularly detrimental for early career teachers. Teachers in both groups stated that district-driven classroom management initiatives were inconsistent from year-to-year. The participants seemed to agree that training was not sufficiently targeted to address student misconduct. Furthermore, the inability to sustain specific district programming caused teacher frustration.

Bishop et al. (2017) outlined five strategies that help recruit and maintain teachers in hard-to-staff schools. The researchers suggested that "strengthening teacher preparation, improving the hiring of teachers, improving teacher compensation, providing support to new teachers, and improving working conditions" would help hard-to-staff schools recruit and

retain effective teachers. The research by Bishop et al. mirrored the data revealed by teacher participants in my research study. Seven of the nine teachers stated that teacher training that targeted student misbehavior would assist in lowering misconduct rates. It was also found that veteran teachers believed that new teacher training was critical for improving their classroom management culture.

Research Question 4 read as follows: What is the impact of principal support on teachers' sense of self-efficacy in the classroom? To address Research Question 4, qualitative research was conducted. The qualitative elements were complemented by quantitative analyses. This mixed-methods approach was used in an attempt to collect more robust data relevant to correlations between teacher self-efficacy and administrator support. The qualitative results showed varied results regarding the impact of principal support on a teachers' sense of self-efficacy. Among the nine teachers, a common theme was that the teachers seemed to rely on themselves or their peers heavily as it related to dealing with classroom discipline. Seven of the nine teachers mentioned specifically that they relied on their own strategies or called upon the assistance of peers to assist with classroom management. The other two teachers, both of whom remained within the district, stated that they undoubtedly had the support of their school principals.

The quantitative results from the NCTWCS related to RQ4 were not consistent with the interview data. These survey results showed that teachers in all three groups (NoCo schools, the state, and similar district) felt strongly about their roles within their respective schools and the support that each received. The different data collection methods showed a difference among teacher participants and their feelings related to self-efficacy and principal support.

Principals impact teachers' capacity to manage student behavior. According to Bandura (1977), teachers who successfully manage discipline issues have increased self-efficacy, increasing chances of teacher retention. Teacher retention is at the root of Ingersoll's research regarding teacher attrition rates. Ingersoll argued that there is not a national teacher shortage but rather a nationwide higher rate of teacher attrition. Ingersoll and Strong (2011) contended that the issue that contemporary schools faced is teacher retention. Ingersoll noted that it is widely believed that there are major shortages of teachers and agreed that nationally, there are shortages of teachers in specific fields such as math and special education. However, he suggested that new teacher graduates saturate the field, but that many are leaving schools at higher rates due to job dissatisfaction. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, teachers leave the profession or move to other school districts because of low salaries, student discipline problems, and poor administrative support (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). Ingersoll's research suggested a direct correlation between teacher attrition and teacher working conditions. Principal support was reported as a vital teacher working condition that supported a teacher's self-efficacy in the classroom. While self-efficacy reports from the NCTWCS survey data in this study showed strong agreement rates among the three groups (NoCo Schools, the state, and similar districts), narratives from the nine teacher participants showed the lack of principal support created frustration among seven of the nine teachers. Inconsistent practices by school administrators led these teachers to rely heavily on peers for assistance with student behavior issues.

Reflections on the Theoretical Framework

Bandura's self-efficacy theory and Gay's theories about culturally pluralistic classrooms served as the conceptual framework for my study. Bandura (1977) explained the

theory of self-efficacy as the ability of people to process, weigh, and integrate diverse sources of information concerning their capability, and regulating their choices, behavior, and effort expenditure accordingly. Bandura's theory of self-efficacy undergirded the quantitative research in this study; it aided me in the development of the research questions. Items from the NCTWCS 5.1 (a-g) and 6.1 (a-g) were specifically chosen to provide data related to teachers' sense of efficacy, as well as perceptions of behavior management and student misconduct. Further, Bandura's theory of self-efficacy aided me in the crafting of the interview questions for the qualitative portion of the study and the Impact Protocols.

Quantitative data from the NCTWCS addressed external factors that contribute to a teacher's sense of self-efficacy, in this case, efficacy related to the management of student behavior. According to the NCTWCS data, the great majority of participants in my three quantitative research groups (NoCo Schools, state, and similar districts) felt respected by their peers, administrators, and students. A high rate of teachers who responded also agreed that they were confident decision makers and were effective leaders within their respective schools. Teachers who believe that they have administrator and peer support are more likely to stay in schools, even schools that are low performing (Loeb, et al., 2013).

Gay (1981) defines diversity in culturally pluralistic classrooms as differences in race, religion, gender, age, socioeconomic status, and individuality. These differences, she asserted, can lead to interpersonal conflicts. Gay suggests that varying goals between teachers and students lead to conflict between the two groups. Furthermore, she states that conflicts between teachers and students in a culturally pluralistic classroom disproportionally affect teachers, because conflicts cost energy, time, and mental and social anguish. Gay contended that these affects distract the teaching and learning processes for both groups.

My study occurred in a high-poverty rural setting in which school populations are diverse and struggle academically. Gay notes the potential for greater conflict in such circumstances. Gay's theory of culturally pluralistic classrooms aided me in the development of research questions and the crafting of the interview questions for the qualitative component of the study.

Ingersoll (2001) found that working conditions often framed a teacher's decision to leave a school or the field. When teachers believe that they are supported by school administrators, in this case, with the management of student misconduct, teacher turnover is less likely (Ingersoll). Brown and Wynn (2007) found that lower levels of teacher attrition have been seen in schools with strong principal support and fewer discipline issues.

Bandura's theory of self-efficacy suggests that one's ability to persist in adverse conditions, specifically where there is the kind of heightened conflict in pluralistic classroom suggested by Gay, can affect a teacher's will to remain in a classroom that is challenging (Johnson, 2017). Goldhaber et al. (2007) found that more resilient elementary school teachers in North Carolina were more likely to remain in the classroom, even in demanding schools where their self-efficacy was challenged more frequently.

I found that Bandura's theory of self-efficacy (1977) was helpful in developing research components for the study and for making meaning of the results. For the purposes of this study, self-efficacy was related to a teacher's ability to deal with adverse teacher working conditions such as student misbehavior and the degree to which he or she is able to maintain a behavioral climate conducive to learning. Further, Bandura (1977) suggests that self-efficacy controls one's efforts to cope in adverse situations and whether or not he or she will persist in those efforts in adverse situations.

I conclude that Bandura's theory of self-efficacy is still relevant to the overall body of research. A teacher's self-efficacy is critical to success in the classroom and is especially important in a teacher's assessment of the working conditions of their respective schools. The research conducted in this study showed that a principal's support is vital in developing a teacher's self-efficacy in the classroom when dealing with student misbehavior.

Gay's theory of cultural pluralistic classroom (1981) still supports research in the field of education and I found that the research study that I conducted held up under this framework. Kostis (2009) supported Gay's original theories stating that "while school populations become more and more diverse, the issues of classroom management become more complex and prominent" (p. 171). Kostis (2009) further asserted that misunderstandings between teachers and students with different sociocultural backgrounds are among the biggest challenges that teachers must manage in the modern classroom. Gay (1981) and Kostis (2009) both found that dealing with a culturally pluralistic classroom required specific pedagogical training to reduce classroom conflict and increase classroom management effectiveness and efficiency. The research I conducted disclosed that the lack of specific training for classroom management led to concerns of all of the teacher participants.

As a practicing administrator, it was difficult for me not to draw on personal experiences. However, it was critical to the study that I did not lead the research in a way that supported my own untested theories about teacher attrition in districts like the NoCo Schools. Despite my own responsibility for filling numerous teacher vacancies each year and dealing with numerous student misconduct issues, I firmly believed that it was important to examine the data without personal bias. Bandura's and Gay's theories helped me to ensure that my conclusions were reinforced by the data.

Delimitations and Limitations of the Study

Due to the high teacher attrition and high student suspension rates in NoCo Schools, I chose to focus the research on teacher working conditions that effected teacher's self-efficacy. Because I worked as a school administrator, and served as a district administrator currently, I saw up close both high rates of teacher attrition and high rates of student misconduct. These phenomena were of interest to me as someone who was fervently filling vacant teacher positions while also trying to create a safe teaching and learning environment. I chose to triangulate data between NoCo Schools, the state, and school districts with similar demographics. I elected to interview teachers who had left the district and teachers who had remained in the district. The mixed-methods approach to the research provided insights through the analysis of quantitative survey statistics and responses in structured conversations. Ultimately the scope of research was aimed at determining whether high teacher attrition rates and high rates of student misconduct within a school district were related.

With these research interests in mind, I delimited the research to a study of one school district. While I used archival data from the NCTWCS and similar districts, the qualitative research gave a richer body of findings. The qualitative research focused solely on the perspective of teachers from NoCo Schools. This narrow scope of research gave only the perspective of teachers employed in a small, rural school district. In this study I chose to get teacher perspectives. I did not include administrators or other school stakeholders in the research study. Using teachers only in this study gave a first person perspective on the issues related to teacher attrition and student misbehavior.

The limitations of the study included the lower-than-anticipated number of participants in the qualitative research portion. Initially, I sought to include16 interview participants. Candidates were solicited electronically to participate in the interviews; these candidates included both individuals who were working within NoCo Schools at that time and individuals who had left NoCo Schools. The response rate was 56%, with 9 of 16 potential interviewees responding to the request to be interviewed for the research.

Implications of the Study for Policy and Practice

The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to explore the relationship between the high rates of teacher attrition and student misconduct in NoCo Schools. The research was constructed in a way that collected responses from teachers from both archival data and structured conversations. The quantitative research specifically examined teacher working conditions related to student misconduct and the effect of principal support on teachers' self-efficacy. The qualitative research provided a deep dive into teacher perceptions regarding student misconduct, principal support, and programming to assist teachers with student misconduct. This portion of the research gave notable insights into the perspectives of participant teachers regarding student misconduct and their decisions to either leave NoCo Schools or remain in the district. The following subsections address implications for policy that could help combat rising teacher attrition rates in NoCo Schools and similar school districts.

Recommendations for Policy

Nationwide, teacher turnover rates have accelerated (Haynes, 2015). In North Carolina teacher turnover rates average 15%, with over 10,000 teachers leaving the state in 2015 (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2015). In NoCo Schools, North Carolina, teacher

turnover rates were 33% at the time of the study, the highest rate in the state (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2018a). This trend in education both in the state and national statistics has educational policymakers at all levels eager to pinpoint the reasons. Data point in many directions and vary district-to-district based on working conditions, available resources, administrative support, student misconduct, and personal reasons (Kersaint et al., 2007).

The school district focused on in this study, the NoCo Schools, experienced difficulties with the above-mentioned issues in many of its schools. In addition to the highest turnover rate in the state, NoCo Schools was suspending students on a short-term basis at rates double and triple that of the state averages at the elementary and secondary school levels (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2018a). Teacher stressors, including student misbehavior, are listed as reasons for leaving the field (Ingersoll, 2002).

State and district policymakers can more effectively address teacher attrition rates and student misbehavior rates by rigorously investigating the problem. Teachers across the three data sets, regardless of district teacher attrition or student suspension rates, felt that students struggled to follow the rules despite what they believed were clear expectations. However, the level-of-agreement format of the NCTWCS survey leaves little room for teachers to adequately enumerate concerns specific to their education experience. A more personalized survey process could assist policymakers and district and school leaders to gain important feedback through descriptive narratives from teachers in the classroom.

In districts in which teacher turnover rates are high like NoCo Schools, district leaders can use protocols for structured interview sessions with teachers and analyze the feedback from emerging themes. Based on the data correlations between teacher working

conditions and teacher self-efficacy found in this study, I offer the following recommendations to education practitioners nationwide, state, and local policymakers.

- District policymakers should enact policies that require routine, in-depth analyses of NCTWCS archival data for their districts and schools to identify key working conditions that influence a teacher's experience;
- District policymakers should create an ad hoc task force with key school and community stakeholders led by an outside consultant group to create comprehensive initiatives to address teacher working conditions, with a special emphasis on student behavior management;
- District policymakers and school administrators should communicate expectations of district-wide participation in student behavior in order to address correlation between teacher attrition and working conditions and ensure program sustainability;
- District policymakers, school administrators, and the ad hoc committee should identify and commit proper resources to implementation of the above-mentioned initiatives;
- State education leaders should deliver data driven, well-designed training to school administrators, school counselors, and teachers aimed at addressing the multi-cultural nature of contemporary classrooms;
- State education leaders should provide robust state-level service centers dedicated specifically to consultations with and supports for districts related to school safety and student behavior management;

- State policymakers and education leaders should engage with university teacher education programs to ensure that teachers and administrators take classes and engage in practicum experiences relevant to student behavior management.

Recommendations for Practice

In order to address the issues of high teacher attrition rates and high rates of student misconduct, practices for implementation need to be aligned with the needs identified in my data analysis. As literature confirms and is outlined previously, self-efficacy plays a role in framing the likelihood that a teacher will persist in the field of education. Research indicated that principal support plays a role in a teacher self-efficacy and in turn, a higher sense of self-efficacy assisted teachers in coping with student misconduct. I recommend the following for education practitioners in rural, low-income districts. District and school administrators and teachers should:

- Identify evidence-based programming that addresses student misconduct that directly impacts teacher satisfaction and attrition in rural, low income school districts;
- Involve school stakeholders to create uniform, school wide behavior targets that address student misbehavior and ensure an enriching and comprehensive training plan is implemented;
- Mandate school administrator weekly team meetings using a checklist dedicated to effectively addressing student misconduct and increasing communication between administrators and teachers. While not directly addressed in my findings, this recommendation arises from my professional experience and what I learned from the literature;

- Along with community stakeholders, routinely examine consultant reports from an ad hoc committee to assess progress and make adjustments in new programming that addresses student behavior initiatives;
- Designate standing time for weekly meetings with school committees to address and evaluate progress towards behavior targets;
- Develop measurable practices to address teacher attrition and working conditions that include incentivizing behavior improvement targets for teachers and for students;
- District leaders should use and act upon teacher surveys as a means of monitoring teacher perspectives about student conduct, administrator support, and administrator leadership for behavior management issues.
- District leaders should mandate quarterly meetings for school administrators to work with university teacher education programs to advise on matters related to the training of teacher education students in the area of student behavior management.

Recommendations for Further Research

Despite the rich body of research regarding the trending rates of teacher attrition, there is little research that aids in the discovery of specific factors that lead to teacher attrition. Districts with characteristics similar to those in NoCo Schools could benefit from further research. The scope of my research was limited as the teacher participants were just nine in number and all were either employed or had been previously employed within one rural school district. The following recommendations are offered for future research:

- Researchers should gauge the impact of measurable practices that address teacher attrition and working conditions that include incentivizing behavior improvement targets for teachers and for students;
- Qualitative data from a small sample of participants were analyzed in this research. Although 16 teachers were initially solicited, only 9 completed the structured conversations. A more robust sample would provide a broader scope of data to analyze. Future researchers should create a research sample with a larger number of participants. Resources for incentivizing participation in future research can be considered;
- Future researchers should compare data on this topic that are collected from protocols from demographically similar districts, but also consider expanding the research into districts that have researched-based programming that is effective in curbing teacher attrition and student misbehavior;
- In addition to creating protocols to add to the body of qualitative research, future studies can target data for future training for teachers that lends to the creation of classroom culture with less misconduct issues;
- The qualitative data collected in this study focused on the perspectives of teachers. Future studies should include the perspectives of additional school stakeholders. Gaining the perceptions of such stakeholders would add to the body of research and provide more informed guidance to assist in formulating plans address the issues of concern in this study.
- The recommendations for policy in the previous section spoke of adapting the NCTWCS to provide a more personalized survey process that would allow

teacher respondents to provide descriptive narratives. Such narratives would be a rich new source of research data from which to draw fresh conclusions about the issues of student misconduct and teacher attrition.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to explore the relationship between the high rates of teacher attrition and student misconduct in NoCo Schools. The study was aimed at determining the impact of high rates of student misconduct upon teacher attrition within a rural, low-performing school district. At the time of the study, the district at the center of the research, NoCo Schools, had the highest teacher turnover rate in the state of North Carolina. The same district also posted some of the highest short term and long-term suspension rates in the state.

Using archival data from the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey, the research incorporated a semi-quantitative element. Data specific to the NoCo Schools regarding student behavior and teacher self-efficacy were gathered and reported through basic descriptive statistics. To provide context for the data from the NoCo Schools, NCTWCS statistics from the state and a group of similar districts were also examined. The NCTWCS data from all three groups indicated that teachers did not believe that students in their schools followed the rules despite clear expectations set for them by adults.

The qualitative components of the study, which were the primary research design elements, explored teachers' perspectives regarding the impact of working conditions on their decisions to remain in their current professional roles. Two groups of teachers were interviewed, all were from the NoCo Schools. The first group included teachers who had a period of sustained employment within the district and were still employed there. The second

group included were teachers who left the district or the profession. Two separate interview instruments were created and used in dialogues with individuals from the two groups.

In total nine teachers participated in the study. Five teachers left NoCo Schools and four teachers remained in the district. The structured conversations revealed three common themes related to high rates of student misconduct and a teacher's self-efficacy: (a) parent and home support, (b) administrative support, and (c) classroom management and training. Three of the five teachers who left NoCo Schools identified that student misconduct played a role in their decisions to leave. Among the nine teachers, common concerns included a) a lack of administrator support for teachers in managing behaviors and b) ineffective leadership for initiatives that addressed student behavior management. Teacher participants shared that they routinely had to rely heavily on themselves or their peers heavily in dealing with classroom discipline. Seven of the nine teachers mentioned specifically that they relied on their own strategies or called upon the assistance of peers to assist with classroom management. The other two teachers, both of whom remained within the district, stated that they undoubtedly had the support of their school principals.

The quantitative results from the NCTWCS related to the question of the impact of principal support on teachers' sense of self-efficacy in the classroom were not consistent with the interview data. These survey results showed that teachers in all three groups (NoCo schools, the state, and similar district) in large majority were positive about their roles within their respective schools and the support that they received. The different data collection methods showed a difference among teacher participants and their feelings related to self-efficacy and principal support.

The study concludes with implications for further study as well as for policy and practice. These recommendations are offered to assist policymakers and education practitioners in proactively addressing student behavior concerns, strengthening teacher satisfaction, and combatting high rates of teacher attrition.

In short, this study examined the degree to which student misconduct impacts teacher persistence in high-poverty, low-performing schools in northeastern North Carolina. While I interviewed both teachers who have chosen to remain in the district of interest and those who had chosen to leave the district, it was clear that student behavior issues were troubling to all participants. All nine of the teachers stated that the lack of parent involvement played a role in the high rates of student misbehavior issues within the district of interest. In addition to the lack of parental involvement, all nine teachers in the study consistently stated that a lack of proper classroom training impacted the teaching and learning process. Lastly, the fact that administrators were inconsistent in their implementation of initiatives to address problematic behavior and in the level of support that they provided teachers only made the problems worse and contributed in many instances to low levels of self-efficacy among these teachers.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

LETTER TO THE SUPERINTENDENT

Dear (Superintendent Name),

My name is Mark Long and I am doing research for my doctoral dissertation on relationships between student misconduct and teacher retention in NoCo Schools (NC). I am currently in my third year of Ed.D. work through North Carolina State University's Northeast Leadership Academy. I have had the privilege of receiving targeted education and practical experiences in the NELA Master's program and the NELA Doctoral program. This targeting approach allowed me to continue working within NoCo Schools but receive practical experiences that could be applied to rural and struggling schools in Northeast North Carolina.

I am writing to request your permission to conduct research in your school district. My dissertation title is Moving On: A Qualitative Analysis of Teacher Attrition in Northeastern North Carolina. The goal of the research I am conducting is to examine if a relationship between high rates of teacher turnover and teacher working conditions are interrelated. The specific teacher working condition I am seeking to examine is managing student conduct. I am seeking to interview two teacher populations: (1) teachers working within the district (2) and teachers who left the district. I am hoping that the Director of Human Resources can help populate sample lists of both populations. I have agreed not to interview any participants that are currently under my supervision.

I will interview using a set interview protocol in which participants will respond to a series of questions related to the research. The survey will be video and audio recorded as well as recorded manually with paper and pen. All interview responses will remain confidential and all participants will remain anonymous.

I look forward to hearing from you. In the meantime, I can be reached at (252) 209-5523 or melong3@ncsu.edu. My committee co-chairs are Dr. Michael Ward and Dr. Bonnie Fusarelli. Each can be reached at meward@ncsu.edu and bcjohns2@ncsu.edu.

If you agree to this research request I will need the enclosed consent form completed and sent back via mail using the self-addressed, stamped envelope or electronically scanned to melong3@ncsu.edu. I appreciate your time and your consideration.

Yours in Education,

Mark Long

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW WITH TEACHERS STILL EMPLOYED IN NOCO SCHOOLS

Impact Interview Protocol A (Teachers who are still in NoCo Schools)

1. How many years have you been a teacher?

2. How many years were you a teacher in NoCo Schools?

3. How did you become a teacher in NoCo Schools?

4. What role did teacher working conditions play in your decision to leave NoCo Schools?

5. Are teachers equipped with resources such as peer mentors, classroom management training, professional development related to classroom climate?

6. Do you think that student misconduct in the classroom is addressed effectively by school administrators?

   A. In what specific ways do feel that classroom conduct is addressed effectively by your school administrators?

   B. In what specific ways do you feel that classroom conduct is not addressed effectively by your school administrators?

7. Do you feel supported by school administrators and peers in your efforts to help combat student misconduct? Please give examples.

8. Why do you think that this district has the highest teacher turnover rates in the state?

9. Why do you think the rates of student misconduct are high in this district?

10. What specific factors contributed to you staying in the district?

11. What, if anything, can be done to help curb teacher turnover in this district?

12. What, if anything, can be done to help curb student misconduct rates in this district?

13. Is there anything that you would like to address during this interview that I have not covered?

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW WITH TEACHERS WHO LEFT THE DISTRICT

Impact Interview Protocol B (Teachers who left NoCo Schools)

1. How many years have you been a teacher?

2. How many years were you a teacher in NoCo Schools?

3. How did you become a teacher in NoCo Schools?

4. What was your next career move immediately following your departure from NoCo Schools?

5. What role did teacher working conditions play in your decision to leave NoCo Schools?

6. Was student misconduct a factor in your decision to move to another school or leave the profession?

7. Were teachers equipped with resources such as peer mentors, classroom management training, professional development related to classroom climate?

8. Was student misconduct in the classroom addressed by school administrators?

9. Did you feel supported by school administration and peers in your efforts to help combat student misconduct?

10. From your perspective, what role did student misconduct at this school play in teacher attrition?

11. Why do you think that this district has the highest teacher turnover rates in the state?

10. Why do you think the rates of student misconduct are high in this district?

11. What specific factors contributed to you leaving the district?

12. What, if anything, can be done to help curb teacher turnover in this district?

13. What, if anything, can be done to help curb student misconduct rates in this district?

14. Is there anything that you would like to address during this interview that I have not covered?

APPENDIX D

PARTICIPANT LETTER A

Dear (Teacher Participant Name),

My name is Mark Long and I am doing research for my doctoral dissertation on relationships between student misconduct and teacher retention in NoCo Schools (NC). I am currently in my third year of Ed.D. work through North Carolina State University's Northeast Leadership Academy. I have had the privilege of receiving targeted education and practical experiences in the NELA Master's program and the NELA Doctoral program. This targeting approach allowed me to continue working within NoCo Schools but receive practical experiences that could be applied to rural and struggling schools in Northeast North Carolina.

I am very interested in interviewing you regarding your experiences in NoCo Schools, specifically related to student misconduct, teacher self-efficacy, and principal and peer support. Your expertise within the district will lend greatly to the research I am conducting regarding teacher retention and student misconduct in NoCo Schools.

With your permission, I would like to conduct an interview with you. The interview will last approximately one hour. I will work with you on a date, time, and location based on your schedule.

It is my hope that you will agree to take part in this study. Your name, position, and school will be strictly confidential. Great care will be taken to ensure that neither you nor other participants can be identified in the reporting of data in my dissertation.
If you agree to participate, please complete the attached consent form. You can send the consent form to me electronically as a scanned PDF file or via the self-addressed and stamped return envelope.

Your perspective is important and I very much look forward to talking with you about the pressing issue of teacher turnover in NoCo Schools.

Yours in Education,

Mark Long

APPENDIX E

TEACHER PARTICIPANT B LETTER

Dear (Teacher Participant Name),

My name is Mark Long and I am doing research for my doctoral dissertation on relationships between student misconduct and teacher retention in NoCo Schools (NC). I am currently in my third year of Ed.D. work through North Carolina State University's Northeast Leadership Academy. I have had the privilege of receiving targeted education and practical experiences in the NELA Master's program and the NELA Doctoral program. This targeting approach allowed me to continue working within NoCo Schools but receive practical experiences that could be applied to rural and struggling schools in Northeast North Carolina.

I am very interested in interviewing you regarding your experiences in NoCo Schools, specifically related to student misconduct, teacher self-efficacy, and principal and peer support. With your permission, I would like to conduct an interview with you. The interview will last approximately one hour. I will work with you on a date, time, and location based on your schedule.

It is my hope that you will agree to take part in this study. Your name, former position, and former school will be strictly confidential. Great care will be taken to ensure that neither you nor other participants can be identified in the reporting of data in my dissertation.

If you agree to participate, please complete the attached consent form. You can send the consent form to me electronically as a scanned PDF file or via the self-addressed and stamped return envelope.

Your perspective is important and I very much look forward to talking with you about the pressing issue of teacher turnover in NoCo Schools.

Yours in Education,

Mark Long

APPENDIX F

INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR RESEARCH

Title: Moving On: A Qualitative Analysis of Teacher Attrition in Northeastern North Carolina
Principal Investigator: Mark Long Faculty Sponsors: Dr. Bonnie Fusarelli, Dr. Michael Ward

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I am asking you to participate in a research study that will examine the relationship between rates of teacher turnover and rates of student misconduct in NoCo Schools.

INFORMATION

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in an hour-long face-to-face interview, at a confidential setting of your choosing. If you have questions regarding the nature of the interview after reading this consent form, please feel free to contact me at any time.

RISKS

Participation in this study is voluntary. The confidentiality procedures outlined below ensure that you and any other participants will not be named during this study nor in the reports of results that follow. Readers of the study will simply know that comments were collected by me and came from randomly selected teachers within the district or from randomly selected teachers who left the district. Since your participation is optional, you can opt out of this study at any time before or during the study with no penalty.

BENFITS OF PARTICIPATION

Although there are no financial or extra benefits associated with participation in this study, the information collected will produce insights into issues related to teacher attrition that could help school districts retain quality educators in NoCo Schools. With the highest rates of teacher attrition in the state, studies that examine why and how these rates are so high could help administrators create plans to assist in retaining teachers.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The information collected in this study will be kept strictly confidential. All data collected will be stored in a locked file cabinet and in a password-protected computer. The data will only be accessed when I am analyzing it. No participants' names will be used; all participants will be identified with a code using number and letter sequences. No data collected could be linked to you in any way.

CONTACT

If you have questions regarding this study or how information will be collected, please feel to contact me, Mark Long, at any time. My contact information is listed below. Mark Long, melong3@ncsu.edu, (252) 209-5523. My committee co-chairs are Dr. Michael Ward and Dr. Bonnie Fusarelli. Dr. Ward can be reached at meward@ncsu.edu and Dr. Fusarelli can be reached via email at bcjohns2@ncsu.edu. If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions provided to you during the research study or your rights have been violated, please contact the Chair of the NCSU IRB, PO Box 7514, NCSU Campus, Raleigh, NC 27695 or (919) 515-2444.

CONSENT

“I have read and understand the information listed above. I have received a copy of this consent form for my own records. I agree to participate with the understanding that I may withdraw participation or consent at any time.”

Subject’s
Signature_____Date_____
_

Investigator’s
Signature_____Date_____

APPENDIX G

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND-DEMOGRAPHICS

Please answer the following questions to the best of your knowledge and ability.

Please check the box that best describes your education level.

_____Four years of college

_____Master's Degree

_____Ph.D, Ed.D, or other terminal degree

_____Other

Please check the box that best describes your public school teaching experience.

_____5 or less years of teaching experience in the public schools

_____6-10 years of teaching experience in the public schools

_____11-15 years of teaching experience in the public schools.

_____16-19 years of teaching experience in the public schools.

_____20 or more years of teaching experience in the public schools.

Please describe your educational philosophy and what or who has influenced your educational philosophy.