

HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES WITH EMPLOYMENT MOBILITY

A Record of Study

by

BOBBY DAVID LSHIKAR

Submitted to the Graduate and Professional School of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Chair of Committee,	Mary M. Capraro
Co-Chair of Committee,	Bugrahan Yalvac
Committee Members,	Robert Capraro
	Erinn Whiteside
Head of Department,	Michael De Miranda

December 2021

Major Subject: Curriculum and Instruction

Copyright 2021 Bobby David Leshikar

ABSTRACT

This record of study was a sequential quan-QUAL mixed methods study that followed a case-selection explanatory sequential mixed methods research design to understand the employment mobility experiences of teachers on a small, rural high school campus. A descriptive survey instrument was used to gain background knowledge on high school teachers' experiences and as a means through which to determine participants for the qualitative phase of the study. In the qualitative phase of the study, I conducted semi-structured interviews with three teachers who elaborated on the factors that impacted their decisions to leave prior employment positions, factors that impacted their decisions to accept their current teaching role, and the strengths and limitations of their current employment situation. Common responses to factors impacting high school teachers' employment decisions included: geographic location, the support of campus administration, salary, family, student discipline, burnout/stress, and personal connections with current employees. Based on the data analysis, I created a employment brochure for the high school that campus administrators will use during recruiting events.

DEDICATION

I've always felt education is a field of inspiration. Every day as a teacher I try to channel those teachers in my life who inspired me to be a better version of myself. This list of thanks is by no means exhaustive, but I'd like to recognize a few of those teachers briefly: to Mrs. Tone, my kindergarten teacher, who gave me my first taste of being an English teacher by letting me read books to the class during story time; to Mrs. Haase, who lit a fire under my love for reading and writing; to Mrs. Foley and Mrs. Rowe, my senior English and Calculus teachers, respectively, for having the patience to push a career procrastinator with senioritis to not settle for good enough; and finally, to Mr. Rubio, my high school band director and now friend, who saw leadership potential in a shy, introverted high school freshman and who provided the exemplar of a teacher who could both hold incredibly high standards and show grace and love to students.

I also dedicate this journey to my wife, Erin. I am a better person because I met you. Thank you for your encouragement and your love.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

From the moment I first reached out to Texas A&M University about the possibility of applying for the online Ed.D. Program in 2017, the staff and faculty of the Teaching, Learning, and Culture Department exhibited excitement, encouragement, and empathy towards me. Now, as I conclude these chapters of my academic journey, I would like to begin by extending my deepest thanks to Dr. Mary Margaret Capraro, the chair of my Record of Study and professor of several courses during the program. Your dedication to your students is clear and evident through your guidance, your high standards, and your incredible ability to provide timely feedback despite having hundreds of pages of student writing to sort through.

To Dr. Bugrahan Yalvac, the co-chair of my study, and committee members Dr. Robert Capraro and Dr. Erinn Whiteside, thank you for your guidance and your ability to help me redirect and refocus my research on what was most important to my campus and myself. At every step, your advice and your support helped me carry on and finish what I began.

A note of thanks for the Aggie family would be remiss without a mention to Ambyr Rios, the Director for Online Education in the Department of Teaching, Learning, and Culture. Your reminders and amazing organizational abilities ensure that each student in the program feels as if they are in a one-on-one environment.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT.....	ii
DEDICATION.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	v
LIST OF TABLES.....	vii
CHAPTER I LEADERSHIP CONTEXT AND PURPOSE OF THE ACTION.....	1
The Context.....	1
National Context.....	1
Situational Context.....	3
The Problem.....	5
Relevant History of the Problem.....	6
Significance of the Problem.....	8
Research Questions.....	9
Personal Context.....	10
Researcher’s Roles and Personal Histories.....	11
Journey to the Problem.....	12
Significant Stakeholders.....	13
Important Terms.....	14
Closing Thoughts on Chapter 1.....	15
CHAPTER II REVIEW OF SUPPORTING SCHOLARSHIP.....	17
Introduction.....	17
Relevant Historical Background.....	18
Alignment with Action Research Traditions.....	19
Research Framework.....	22
Most Significant Research.....	23
Closing Thoughts on Chapter 2.....	30
CHAPTER III SOLUTION AND METHOD.....	33
Outline of the Proposed Solution.....	33
Justification of the Proposed Solution.....	34
Study Context and Participants.....	35
Research Paradigm.....	37
Data Collection Methods.....	38

Data Analysis Strategy	39
Timeline	41
Reliability and Validity Concerns	41
Closing Thoughts on Chapter 3	43
 CHAPTER IV ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS	 44
Introducing the Analysis	44
Presentation of Data	45
Research Question 1	45
Research Question 2	51
Research Question 3	55
Summary	60
 CHAPTER V DISCUSSION	 63
Summary of Findings from Chapter IV	63
Results of Research	64
Research Question 1	64
Research Question 2	66
Research Question 3	68
Interaction Between the Research and the Context	69
How the Context Impacted the Results	69
How the Research Impacted the Context	71
Discussion of Results in Relation to Extant Literature	73
Discussion of Personal Lessons Learned	77
Implications for Practice	79
Lessons Learned	80
Recommendations	81
Closing Thoughts	83
 REFERENCES	 85
 APPENDIX A	 93
 APPENDIX B	 94
 APPENDIX C	 95
 APPENDIX D	 96

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 4.1 Factors Teachers Identified for Leaving the Teaching Profession	45
Table 4.2 Factors Teachers Identified for Leaving a Previous Teaching Position	46
Table 4.3 Factors Teachers Identified for Accepting a Teaching Position at RHS	52
Table 4.4 Teachers' Reported Plans for School Year 2021/2022.....	56

CHAPTER I: LEADERSHIP CONTEXT AND PURPOSE OF THE ACTION

The Context

The effects of teacher turnover on student achievement have been widely studied. The negative impacts of teacher attrition are compounded for small, rural school districts with large percentages of students from economically disadvantaged homes. Prior research findings suggested the effects of a teacher leaving a school campus could even affect students who had no contact with the exiting teacher due to the vacancy's impact on the "collegiality or relational trust among faculty" or the "loss of institutional knowledge" on the campus (Ronfeldt et al., 2013, p. 32). On a small campus, where there may be fewer than 25 teachers in total, each loss and replacement of a teacher is significant. By understanding the employment experiences of teachers, school districts may be able to mitigate academic and institutional losses through better hiring practices, targeted interventions to improve teacher retention, and an exit-interview protocol that guides hiring and retention strategies.

National Context

A nationwide shortage of quality teachers contributes to schools across the United States failing to meet the instructional needs of students. Over the past two years, as the country and the world learned to coexist with the COVID-19 pandemic, the public opinion of teachers went from recognition as national heroes who rose to meet novel challenges and adopted virtual learning practices in the Spring and Fall of 2020 to being assigned back into classrooms which, for many parts of the United States are not allowed to require face masks for students or school staff. The problem of teacher shortage, even before COVID-19, was bookended by low numbers of new, "highly-qualified" teachers entering teacher education programs and by high numbers of teachers leaving the profession due to retirement, career change, family issues, or job dissatisfaction. At

one end of the spectrum, university programs and alternative teaching certification programs have sought to improve the recruitment and quality of teachers entering the workforce (Putnam et al., 2019); at the other end, school districts and educational researchers examined how to retain quality teachers and thus prevent teacher turnover (Beaudin, 1993; Ingersoll, 2001; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Hancock, 2016; Harrell et al., 2004; Kukla-Acevedo, 2009; Redding & Henry 2018; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Stinebrickner, 1998; Struyven & Vanthrounout, 2014).

At small, rural high schools, recruitment and retention of highly qualified teachers presents unique challenges (Azano & Stewart, 2016; Moffa & McHenry-Sorber, 2018; Sindelar et al., 2018). A larger, urban campus may have ten to twenty teachers in a subject-area department. If a handful of teachers leave a large campus, teaching infrastructure and support systems still remain. However, on a small campus where each subject-area department may have only one to five teachers, each loss can represent the need to replace an entire grade-level of instruction. Additionally, rural schools may also have fewer resources, lower salary schedules, and, due to geographical locations, may have fewer qualified applicants (Miller, 2012).

National and state-level programs arose to help meet the human capital needs of rural school districts. As part of the Every Student Succeeds Act (*ESSA*), the Small, Rural School Achievement Program was introduced to provide financial support for schools to provide a stipend to pay a “prospective teacher to work alongside an effective teacher” (U.S. Department of Education). In Texas, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) began a “Grow Your Own” grant program to encourage and fund the recruitment of rural educators into teacher preparation coursework by focusing efforts to recruit current high school students or current instructional aides or paraprofessionals at rural school campuses (Texas Education Agency). In both instances,

educational agencies have recognized the growing need to recruit and retain high-quality educators in rural school settings.

Situational Context

Riverview ISD (a pseudonym) is located in Riverview (pseudonym) and is approximately 60 miles from the nearest major metropolitan city. The school district consists of three campuses: Riverview Elementary School, Riverview Middle School, and Riverview High School (RHS). The town of Riverview, with a population of just under 2,000 people (American Community Survey, 2018), lies directly adjacent to the larger city of Hillside, with a population just under 24,000 (ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates). A short seven miles to the west of Riverview is Campbell, an unincorporated community with a school district serving grades PK-8. Riverview ISD and Hillside ISD both serve as destinations for high school students who previously attended Campbell ISD, and it is not uncommon for students to further migrate between RHS and Hillside High School. Likewise, campus and administrators often transfer between the three school districts: the Superintendent of Riverview ISD, the head principal of Riverview Middle School, the assistant principal of RHS, and several teachers on all three Riverview ISD campuses are former employees of Hillside ISD. As of the 2021/2022 school year, there are several teachers who had previously taught at Riverview ISD, then taught at Hillside ISD for a few years, and have now returned to Riverview as teachers.

TEA provides annual updates on campus and district performance and institutional data through the Texas Academic Performance Report (TAPR). During the 2018-2019 school year, RHS reported just under 350 students – nearly two thirds of whom were economically disadvantaged and over a quarter of whom were considered at-risk for dropping out of high school (TAPR). Based on this data, the studied school maintained a Title I distinction and

received federal funding to supplement state funding allotments. Because of its distance away from large urban centers and suburbs, the studied school carried a “rural campus” designation through TEA.

With regards to teachers, TAPR data for 2018-2019 revealed the studied school employed 28 full-time teachers; of those, 26.3% had over 20 years of teaching experience, 30.9% had between 11-20 years of teaching experience, 19.2% had between 6-10 years of teaching experience, 20.7% had between 1-5 years of teaching experience, and 2.9% were beginning teachers. Altogether, the average years of teaching experience at the studied school was 13.4 years, with an average of 7 years with the studied school district. While the average years within the district was in line with the Texas state average of 7.2 years in a district, the number of teachers who had more than 20 years of teaching experience was almost 11% higher than the state average (TAPR). With such a small number of teachers, those teachers who remained at the studied school for over 20 years inflated the overall average. Although the studied school was a comparatively small school, according to the TAPR, the average teacher salary was only \$4,000 below the state salary average (\$50,155 to \$54,122). For the 2019-2020 school year, Riverview ISD awarded a further pay increase to teachers due to additional funding provided through Texas legislation. Beginning in the 2020/2021 school year, Riverview ISD will collect data on teachers and submit qualified teacher applicants for designations through TEA’s Teacher Incentive Allotment program. Based on current information, a teacher who receives a Master Teacher designation at Riverview HS could earn an additional \$20,000 annually through state funds (Teacher Incentive Allotment, 2020).

Furthermore, Riverview HS received approval during the early months of 2020 to adopt a Pathways in Technology Early College High School (P-TECH) early college model. Starting

with the 9th grade class of 2021/2022, students were able to earn industry certificates in welding, cybersecurity, and the health science field. Additionally, students were able to graduate from high school with an Associate's degree from a community college in a nearby major metropolitan city. Preliminary implementation of the early college model began during the 2020-2021 school year and the campus could adopt a name change to reflect the new distinction as early as the 2021-2022 school year. With regards to the need for teacher capital, only seven teachers at RHS held post-secondary degrees (TAPR); however, there was not be full alignment with post-secondary degrees and dual-credit course offerings. For an example, I held a Master of Education degree in Secondary Education but had to take additional post-graduate coursework in English to teach Dual Credit Composition and British Literature courses.

The Problem

As Riverview HS transitions towards a whole-campus P-TECH early college model over the next few years, teacher retention and the development of instructional capacity represent important elements for successful implementation. Teacher turnover, especially those teachers in leadership roles or with strong student relationships threatens to impede student success within the new, more challenging model of instruction. At the time of my study the high school did not have an exit interview protocol to help understand what could have been done to retain quality educators. Further, with regards to hiring practices, department chairs were not always invited to interviews with prospective employees who might teach in their department. As with many Texas high schools, athletic directors and high school sports coaching needs dictated hiring decisions at RHS. A shift in hiring practices began to occur which valued teachers with Master degrees and teachers' desires to teach dual-credit collegiate coursework.

Relevant History of the Problem

Riverview High School first opened in the early 1980s after the Riverview community decided Riverview students should attend a local high school instead of commuting to Hillside High School in the neighboring town. From the beginning, RHS struggled with community perceptions it was the high school for low-performing students, students from economically disadvantaged households, and “country” kids. The 2010/2011 School Report Card issued through the Texas Education Agency rated RHS as Academically Unacceptable due to low standardized test scores (“2010-11 School Report Card,” 2012).

The Riverview ISD School Board hired a new superintendent and high school head principal in the 2012-13 school year with the intention of improving student academic performance and to remove the negative reputation the surrounding communities held of Riverview teachers and students. As with any campus improvement initiative, numerous teaching position changes occurred. Campus principals dismissed teachers due to low performance or not buying into the new campus and district directives; teachers voluntarily left the campus in order to take positions at other campuses; and, teachers quit teaching at RHS because of other life and/or employment decisions. Over the next few years, Riverview HS state standardized test scores improved. The most recent report from the Texas Education Agency rated the Riverview school district with an ‘A’ letter grade, alongside several other academic distinctions. As of the end of the 2019/2020 school year, both the superintendent and the high school principal remain in their respective roles in the district.

On a small campus, each change in staffing often creates a ripple effect on other campus programs. Nearly all teachers at RHS lead students as athletic coaches, academic coaches, club sponsors, and program coordinators. When I arrived at RHS at the beginning of the 2017-2018

school year, the University Interscholastic League (UIL) Academic Coordinator on the campus was also the One Act Play director, the theater teacher for Riverview Middle School and RHS, the Debate team sponsor, and the coach for four UIL speaking events. When that teacher resigned to pursue opportunities at another high school, RHS did not just have to replace a theater teacher, but also replace all the extracurricular roles assigned to that teacher. In the ensuing years, I took over the role of UIL Academic Coordinator, and our campus hired a new theater/One Act Play/UIL speech teacher; however, the campus has not competed with a debate team since the spring 2018 semester.

The athletic department at RHS has seen similar issues with regards to staff replacement. As one example, prior to the 2018-2019 school year the football team had only won a small handful of games since 2015. During the 2018-2019 year, our campus hired teachers who were also talented coaches. As a result, the football team not only won more games in one season than they had the previous three, but also advanced to the state playoffs. At the end of the 2018-2019 school year, several of those teacher/coaches resigned their positions; as a result of employee turnover and the resulting coaching changes, the football team's success regressed during the 2019-2020 season. Most recently, during the data collection phase of this study, RHS's Athletic Director (AD) announced his retirement and the search began for a new AD. While I did not know it at the time, that one position vacancy began a domino-effect of attrition and hiring on our campus due to the large number of teacher/coaches and their spouses who began to rethink their future as teachers at RHS.

With the transition to an early college whole-campus model, campus turnover seems likely to increase over the next two years as a result of the increasing teaching demands placed on teachers and the expectation most teachers will need to carry post-graduate degrees.

Therefore, the recruitment and retention of teachers on our campus is paramount to continued academic, extracurricular, and athletic success at RHS. By understanding the characteristics of teachers who resign from RHS and of teachers who decide to accept teaching positions and remain on staff, campus administration can create a hiring profile comparing teaching candidates to our existing successful and long-term teachers. If campus administration understands the needs and expectations of teachers on campus, they can tailor instructional programs, the focus of campus advertising programs, salary packages, and extra opportunities at RHS to ensure yearly teacher turnover is mitigated. Ultimately, consistency of teaching staff should lead to sustained improvement in student achievement in academics and standardized testing, and increased involvement and success in athletics and extracurricular offerings.

Significance of the Problem

Nearly 20 years since Ingersoll's (2001) landmark study on teacher turnover and shortages, teacher turnover remains a nationwide dilemma in the United States. Previous studies revealed salary, opportunities for advancement, student discipline, administration and institutional support systems, and experiences with burnout accounted for the major contributing factors in teachers' decisions to leave a teaching position. At small, rural campuses, these contributing factors were exacerbated by the limited resources available from the campus or school district. A "culture of failure" could also develop, wherein students and the community may not see value in education or hope for future employment and financial opportunities after high school (Hatfield, 2002, p.8).

Teacher turnover was associated with numerous aspects of school performance. Specifically, turnover has been found to negatively affect student achievement, diminish school morale, and increase financial strain on a campus and district because of hiring and induction

program costs (Watlington et al., 2010). Additionally, students most at risk for negative effects come from “high-poverty, low-performing, and geographically isolated schools” which were more likely to hire underqualified or novice teachers than wealthier, high-performing schools (Sorensen & Ladd, 2020). Considering these findings, campuses and school districts implemented various strategies to decrease teacher turnover.

As each school campus is unique in terms of students and staff, geographical location, financial and infrastructural resources, and overall culture and climate, addressing the full gamut of teacher hiring, induction processes, and retention efforts is imperative to improve student achievement. In order to make the best hiring and retention decisions, the campus administration should fully understand the characteristics and factors contributing to teachers’ decisions about accepting employment opportunities or seeking employment elsewhere. By understanding the experiences of teachers with regards to employment mobility, the campus leadership team can better tailor hiring practices and retention strategies to their particular situation. This study built upon prior research about teachers’ employment by investigating teachers’ experiences with employment mobility and factors contributing to their employment decisions at a small, rural high school campus.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to understand teachers’ experiences with employment mobility within the teaching profession at a small, rural Texas high school. At the heart of the questions is the desire to understand teachers’ perceptions with regards to leaving a teaching position and accepting a different teaching position. The three research questions guiding this study were:

- What do teachers report as factors in their decisions to leave teaching positions?
- What do teachers report as factors in their decisions to accept teaching positions?

- What do teachers report as strengths and areas of concern with their current employment situation?

Personal Context

My interest in researching teacher employment mobility arises out of my own experiences and discussions with colleagues. I earned my bachelor's degree in English in 2003 and earnestly began job hunting. After a few weeks of dead-ends, I decided to pursue my teaching certification through an alternative certification program offered through the regional Education Service Center. The program filled me with hope and idealism, and I believed that my work would make a positive difference in the lives of my students. In the fall of 2004, I took the only job offer I received – freshman English teacher at a historically low-performing urban high school. I survived my first year as a teacher by relying upon my amazing mentor teacher on campus, supportive teachers in my hallway, and the advice and counseling offered through my certification program. I decided to remain in my position for the 2005/2006 school year with hopes of continued support. In August of 2005 I was moved to a different part of the school, with a different teaching assignment, a new head principal, no mentor teacher, and no service center support. I endured to the end of October, when I turned in my resignation letter effective at the conclusion of November. I thought I would never teach again. In fact, I was told by a colleague no principal would ever hire me after quitting in the middle of the school year.

Nevertheless, in December 2007 I interviewed for a long-term substitute English teacher position at a small, rural school district. During the interview, the principal offered me a full-time English position for the remainder of the 2007/2008 school year. Since that time, I have worked as English Department Head at three high schools, finished a Master's degree in Secondary Education, earned my Principal certification, and served as a mentor teacher for novice teachers

and student teachers from local university programs. Through conversations with other teachers, I discovered my journey was not unique. In fact, many teachers have left the education profession and then returned to the classroom later in life. My personal experience with employment mobility and conversations with other educators led me to want to further explore teachers' experiences not only with quitting the profession completely, but also with decisions to join or leave campuses.

Researcher's Roles and Personal Histories

I currently teach a college-level English coursework to 11th and 12th grade students at Riverview High School. I also serve as the English Department Chair and lead our department's weekly professional learning community sessions. Last year, during the course of the study, I worked as a member of the campus leadership focus group planning for the transition to a P-TECH campus for the 2021/2022 school year. In previous years at RHS I also mentored new teachers on our campus and was the clinical supervisor for a local university student's student teaching semester. My direct role remained primarily engaged with the English department; however, as part of my scope as researcher, I also worked with the campus principal, assistant principal, and district leadership to help build and retain a strong cadre of teachers.

My past three high school teaching placements have been in rural high schools. The first, from 2008-2012, was a high school with a student population of under 100. I was one of two English teachers there. During my time there I worked alongside three different English teachers; each replacement equated to a 50% department turnover rate and meant all of the trainings and campus initiatives begun with English Language Arts (ELA) instruction had to either be retaught or removed. The next campus, from 2012-2017, was a larger rural high school district with a student population of just under 1000. I became the English Department Chair for an ELA

department of nine teachers. There were two teaching positions experiencing significant turnover: the English I position and the remediation reading teacher position each changed teachers three times during my time there. With many remaining teachers, however, overall instructional programs in the ELA department could continue year over year with little retraining.

Journey to the Problem

Since 2017 I have taught at Riverside High School where I am one of four English Language Arts (ELA) teachers. RHS is a Title I, rural high school campus with just under 350 students. After the 2017/2018 school year one of the ELA teachers was reassigned to the middle school and the other teacher resigned to take a position at a neighboring school district. Two new ELA teachers were hired for the 2018/2019 school year – a married couple. Yet again, at the end of the school year, the two other ELA teachers on the high school campus resigned. The wife wanted to quit teaching for a few years to raise their upcoming child, while the husband quit teaching in order to take a more lucrative offer in the private business sector. During the 2019/2020 school year, the ELA department added an additional teaching position, raising the number of staff to four. At the end of the 2019/2020 school year, two of the four teachers took teaching positions at other campuses.

As a result of the significant ELA teacher turnover, year-over-year data analysis and program implementation has proved difficult. Each year, the ELA department rebuilt professional relationships with staff, learned campus programs and initiatives, and cultivated relationships with students. Instructional programs, lesson plan design and consistency, campus-specific content vocabulary, and instructional resources were retaught and revised to attain vertical and horizontal alignment. Students were also directly affected by teacher turnover. I

have had students increasingly come to me with problems and concerns because they do not have established relationships with other staff members.

RHS recently received approval to implement a full-campus early college high school model, beginning in the 2020/2021 school year. With that direction in mind, the hiring and retention of high-quality educators becomes even more important for our campus. Another uncertainty faced by RHS is the effect the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) had on teachers' employment decisions – especially those nearing retirement age. My goal through this research study was to empower both the ELA department and the RHS campus with knowledge about the employment characteristics of teachers on our campus. Through my research, I hoped to provide valuable information informing our hiring practices and ensure we meet the needs of the teachers on our campus so we can reduce teacher turnover.

Significant Stakeholders

Although this study focused on the experiences of teachers, the primary stakeholders of this research were RHS's campus principals and Riverview ISD's district leadership team. The artifacts produced and discussions held as a result of the findings of this study better informed hiring practices for the high school campus, which will hopefully reduce future teacher turnover rate and thus, positively impact student achievement and campus morale. Additionally, by hiring teachers and improving retention efforts, the district and campus will be able to reallocate finances away from hiring and induction and towards developing existing teachers on the high school campus.

Moving from the big picture of hiring and retention down to the day-to-day experiences on a campus, existing teachers and students at RHS were also stakeholders. Teacher turnover affected remaining teachers by forcing the rearrangement of extracurricular responsibilities and

course offerings. By improving hiring and retention practices, bonds between teachers can have more time to develop, which may improve campus morale and positively impact students, as well. Students were also key stakeholders. Educational bonds between teachers and students were allowed to develop over the child's four years in high school. This was particularly important when considering coaches, extracurricular sponsors, elective course teachers, and even content teachers often who often build positive relationships with students in multiple capacities. Consistency of teachers allowed for greater vertical alignment of curriculum and expectations, thus allowing students the possibility of reduced stress at the beginning of the school year since they have an existing educational relationship with the teacher. In conclusion, this study affected campus and district leadership, other teachers on campus, and, most importantly, the students of RHS.

Important Terms

Burnout – “a psychological syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment that can occur among individuals who work with other people” (Maslach et al., 1996)

Employment mobility – As used in this paper, employment mobility refers to the movement of teachers from one place of employment to another. It could address profession changes (into or out of the education field), geographic location changes, or district/campus changes.

Rural school – The term maintains more specific definitions depending on distance from urbanized areas and urban clusters. With regards to the term as it is used to describe Riverview ISD, it refers to “all areas outside urban areas with 10,000 or more people” (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2018).

Teacher attrition – “those who leave the occupation of teaching altogether” (Ingersoll, 2001, p. 503)

Teacher resignation – When a teacher submits a letter of resignation to their current place of employment and then does not return. This paper will not distinguish between voluntary resignation by the teacher and employer-encouraged resignation in which the employer recommends an employee resign in order to avoid being fired or removed from the position of employment.

Teacher turnover – “the change in the number of teachers from one year to the next in a particular school setting” (Sorensen & Ladd, 2020)

Closing Thoughts on Chapter I

The effects of teacher turnover on a school’s budget, morale, and student learning are well documented by the research community and through the anecdotal experiences of teachers and students who experience them. For a small, rural high school campus, the loss of competent teachers can be the difference between the campus receiving academic accolades and extracurricular achievement, or the need to implement academic remediation plans and rebuild extracurricular programs.

The following record of study allowed me to better understand the employment mobility experiences of teachers at Riverside High School. I created an informational survey to gather information from teachers about their employment experiences, then purposely selected three participants who completed the survey to engage in a series of informal interviews regarding their employment experiences. The results of this study led to the creation of an informational brochure that will be used to advertise RHS and Riverview ISD’s positive characteristics to prospective employees.

In Chapter II of this document, I reported on previous research conducted about rural education, teacher attrition, retention, and turnover. Additionally, I will establish this study's connection to existing action research and theoretical frameworks. Next, in Chapter III, I discussed the research methodology and theoretical frameworks used in this study. In Chapter IV I presented and analyzed the results of the background information gathered through the survey and the semi-structured interviews. Finally, in Chapter V I offered concluding thoughts and reflections as well as discussed connections to existing research and made recommendations for further studies.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF SUPPORTING SCHOLARSHIP

Introduction

Teacher attrition has been widely studied by educational researchers. Among the most common reasons teachers give for leaving the teaching profession are salary and campus support systems, including campus administration. Other researchers have examined teachers' experiences after leaving the teaching profession. Some former teachers returned to school campuses, while others pursued careers in other industries. In a rural, small campus setting, the detrimental effects of exiting teachers are exacerbated. If two teachers leave a department at a large school, the negative effects can be mitigated by the remaining staff; however, on a small campus, two teachers could easily represent the turnover of half of the department. My ROS examined the career pathways and employment decisions of teachers who taught at a small, rural Texas high school in order to improve recruitment and retention practices.

The purpose of this chapter was to review existing literature to understand the circumstances surrounding teacher employment mobility. I first detailed this study's alignment with the action research tradition. Then, I documented and explained my study's connection with existing theoretical frameworks. Finally, I examined previous scholarly research about teacher attrition and the factors surrounding teachers' decisions to leave the classroom. Within this first section, the impact of salary, campus support systems, burnout, student discipline, and teacher characteristics on teachers' employment was discussed. Next, I presented the research findings on teacher leavers and returners. I also discussed relevant research about the negative connotations teacher leavers face after quitting the classroom; and finally, examined how leaving the classroom can be an instrument of agency for teachers. Because of the significant role

athletics coaches had on the context of this study, I have also added a section to the literature review about teachers who were also coaches.

Relevant Historical Background

Attrition, defined as teachers who leave the education profession, occurs for numerous reasons. Some of the biggest contributing factors in teachers' decisions to leave the classroom are economic considerations, such as salary (Beaudin, 1993; Gunther, 2019; Harrell et al., 2004; Ingersoll, 2001; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Raab, 2018; Stinebrickner, 1998; Struyven & Vanthournout, 2014). Some researchers have also noted the role and/or quality campus and district administrative support have on teachers and their career decisions (Harrell et al., 2004; Huk et al., 2019; Kukla-Acevedo, 2019; Lawrence et al., 2019; Raab, 2018; Redding & Henry, 2018). Several studies also exist reporting on the role of burnout in teachers' decisions to leave the profession. The literature suggests the major contributors to teacher burnout are student issues, including discipline and classroom management, workload and time commitments, and emotional exhaustion and stress caused by the demands of working with coworkers, students, and the parents/guardians of students (Buchanan, 2012; Dirghangi, 2019; Ford et al., 2019; Huk et al., 2019; Lawrence et al., 2019; Lee, 2019; van der Want et al., 2019). Other studies have further examined the characteristics of teachers who leave the classroom to determine the role of gender, years of experience in the classroom, and school setting (Beaudin, 1993; Ingersoll, 2001; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Hancock, 2016; Harrell et al., 2004; Kukla-Acevedo, 2009; Redding & Henry 2018; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Stinebrickner, 1998; Struyven & Vanthournout, 2014).

Teacher leavers (sometimes labelled as teacher quitters or teachers on hiatus) can be further broken down into two categories: teachers who leave their campus or district, and teachers who leave the education profession entirely. Among teacher leavers are teachers who

retire, teachers who leave due to issues related to pregnancy and family rearing (Hancock, 2016; Harrell et al., 2004), and teachers who choose to pursue other careers (Hancock, 2016; Rinke & Mawhinney, 2017). For the purposes of this study, I will focus on teachers who leave the classroom with the intent to start new careers outside of teaching.

The term teacher returner refers to teachers who have left the profession and later return to the teaching profession. Previous studies have examined the characteristics of teachers who return to teaching, the locations and situations in which teachers return to the classroom, and the outcomes of the decision to return (Beaudin, 1993; Beaudin, 1995; Hancock, 2016; Harfitt, 2015; Kukla-Acevedo, 2009; Mawhinney & Rinke, 2018; Rinke & Mawhinney, 2017).

My study will report on the prevalence of different types of employment mobility among teachers at a small, rural Texas high school. I hope to add to the body of research by discovering what factors teachers at RHS identify as contributing to their decision to leave their former place of employment and accept their current teaching position.

Alignment with Action Research Traditions

According to Anderson et al. (2007), action research is “‘insider’ research done by practitioners using their own site...as the focus of their study” (p. 2). Likewise, Willis & Edwards (2014) argued action research (specifically participatory action research) typically occurs “within the workplace, school, or community” (p. 58) and researchers work with stakeholders to find “local truth” rather than results are generalizable to other locations and contexts (p. 52). Plano-Clark (2015) described action research as practitioner-led research that is systemic, cyclical, and utilizes a variety of data sources. Further, the researcher who conducts action research creates an “action plan [that] consists of a series of tasks that would help practitioner-researchers achieve a resolution of the problem they are investigating” (Plano-Clark,

2015, p. 47). Ivankova (2015) expanded on this definition by asserting action research “addresses specific practical issues that have value for a specific community and a professional setting” (pp. 29-30). Action research, then, is the identification of a problem and implementation of research methodologies to understand or solve a problem within the researcher’s sphere of influence.

A researcher who incorporates action research frameworks might implement several components to ensure the planning, implementation, and results of the research study are meaningful and sustainable to the researched site. Among the considerations for an action researcher are the involvement and participation of those impacted in the researched problem, a focus on localized solutions able to be implemented, the involvement of stakeholders in the planning and implementation phases, a reflection phase in which the researcher and stakeholders examine the results of the research, and, finally, an awareness about the impact the action research study might have on empowering the researcher, the participants, and the stakeholders (Ivankova, 2015, pp. 29-35).

Stringer (1999) referred to the researcher as a facilitator in the research process “who acts as a catalyst to assist stakeholders” in the identification of problems and the implementation of solutions (p. 25). As facilitator or researcher, one must possess an awareness of one’s position in the organization and among peers with regards to power imbalances and threats. One way to accomplish this goal is for the facilitator to attempt to remain neutral in all phases of the research process and not “be associated too closely with any one of the stakeholding groups” (Stringer, 1999, p. 55).

I created the current study in partnership with my campus principal to address the issue of teacher attrition on our high school campus. I followed Stringer’s (1999) *Look, Think, Act* approach through investigating the high percentage of teacher turnover occurring on our campus

over the past four years, and then creating a plan through which campus administrators could learn about the factors impacting teachers leaving our campus and factors impacting teachers who accepted offers to teach at RHS. Based on the results of this plan, our campus enacted new protocols to address negative issues expressed through the data and doubled-down on positive aspects of our campus attracting teaching talent.

Insofar as my position in the action research study, I worked to navigate the differing roles I had on campus by clearly communicating how I would collect data and publish the results. I am a classroom teacher first and foremost; however, I also represent the English department in campus leadership team meetings and work closely with campus administration on curriculum. Stringer (1999) advised the researcher/facilitator “must...establish a stance that is perceived as legitimate and nonthreatening” (p. 53). I am fortunate our campus is relatively small and as teachers, we tend to think of each other as a family instead of merely coworkers. I try to maintain positive professional relationships with other staff on our campus, and, over the four years I have worked at RHS, have cultivated a reputation as someone who will step in to help staff or students whenever necessary.

Since the topic of my research study invited participants to share their thoughts and experiences regarding employment, some teachers were reluctant to participate in the interview portion of the because they might express negative feelings about coworkers, campus administration, students, or the campus and community. As such, I adopted the role of detached-insider: someone who shared the same experience as the participants as a teacher, but also someone reporting anonymized data with fidelity in order to, ultimately, improve the learning situation of the students at RHS.

Research Framework

I adopted a social constructivist framework for the current study because I recognized each individual's experiences with employment mobility are "varied and multiple" and I wanted to "focus on the specific contexts in which people live and work" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 8). I do not seek to generalize the experiences of the teacher participants at RHS to other teachers or to other campuses or school districts. Rather, through the utilization of a descriptive survey instrument and a multiple case study, I wanted to describe the phenomenon of teacher employment mobility at a specific campus and at a specific point in time. I recognized a teacher's experiences and self-reflection might vary from day to day, and even class period to class period; further, I acknowledged RHS exists in a specific geographic region which makes the generalizability of the findings in this study nearly impossible.

For my study, I chose to follow a descriptive phenomenological framework. The research questions I posed seek to "gain a deeper understanding" of the factors and experiences teachers face when considering employment mobility. Although I implemented a survey instrument in my study, the interview phase of the study allows participants to expand on their experiences and the factors influencing them. The researcher's usage of interviews and the subsequent descriptive reporting of the data and analysis are defining elements of descriptive phenomenological research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Giorgi, 2009; Vagle, 2018). As a means through which to diminish researcher bias in the implementation of the study or the data analysis and reporting of data, I employed bracketing as much as possible. Bracketing refers to the researcher "putting aside or rendering non-influential" prior knowledge they have about the context, the participants, or the studied phenomena (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Giorgi, 2009; Vagle, 2018). In the first few chapters of this report, I shared my own experiences with employment mobility and ensured

the collection and reporting of data closely aligned with existing published research and captured the exact words of the participants where possible.

Most Significant Research

Salary

Salary and financial compensation are often cited as one of the most noted reported reasons teachers leave their positions (Gunther, 2019; Harrell et al., 2004). In some cases, teachers left their former positions to take similar jobs in school districts or on campuses with higher salaries (Hancock, 2016; Harrell et al., 2004; Ingersoll, 2001; Raab, 2018). Stinebrickner (1998) found wage differences between males and females had statistically significant impacts on longevity in the teaching profession; male teachers, who may have opportunities to earn a higher salary in other industries, were found to remain in the teaching profession longer than females. On the contrary, Beaudin (1993) reported teachers with better job opportunities and higher salaries were among those least likely to return to teaching. In another study, Beaudin (1995) found teachers who had left a school district for better opportunities in another district were “more likely to return to the districts they left rather than other districts in the same state if their original districts paid higher beginning teacher salaries” (p. 472). While adequate financial compensation contributes greatly to teachers’ decisions to remain in or leave the teaching profession, salary is not the only factor; increasing salary without addressing the other factors in the decision-making process will have little effect on teacher retention (Beaudin, 1995; Gunther, 2019; Hancock, 2016; Hancock, 2016; Harrell et al., 2004; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Macdonald, 1999).

Campus support systems

The level and quality of campus administration support also contributes to a teachers' decision about whether to quit or to continue working at a particular school. A lack of administration support systems was found to be a critical factor in a teachers' decision to remain at a campus (Buchanan, 2012; Redding & Henry, 2018). Poor campus administration can lead to teachers reporting feelings of emotional and mental burnout (Dirghangi, 2019; Lawrence et al., 2019); Dirghangi (2019) further added "increased support from the administration is associated with less overall teacher burnout" (p. 800). In contrast, Kukla-Acevedo (2009) found first year and novice teachers were more likely to leave the profession when the teachers received a high degree of support from their campus administration. It may be the increased role of campus administration for teachers who left was the result of existing struggles in the teachers' classrooms. As a result, those teachers may have quit regardless of the level of campus administration involvement.

Another consideration is Kukla-Acevedo (2009) only noted the quantity of support offered, not the quality of support. In separate studies, Ingersoll & Smith (2003) and Ford et al. (2010) argued campuses should work to improve access to high quality administrative and mentor support. Likewise, Redding & Henry (2018) found "an increase in the quality of principal leadership is associated with a lower risk" of teachers quitting their teaching positions (p. 584). Support, however, does not necessarily mean continuous contact; rather, support can refer to meeting the teachers' psychological needs and desire for autonomy (Ford et al., 2019). Analysis of the literature suggests teachers weigh both the quantity and the quality of the support they receive from campus administrators when making employment decisions. One area the literature does not fully address is how to rate the quality of support structures teachers experience.

Burnout

Burnout is another factor contributing to teachers' decisions to quit the teaching profession. As previously discussed, poor campus administration and support systems and poor financial compensation lead to feelings of stress among teachers. These feelings of stress can eventually manifest into physical, mental, and/or emotional burnout. According to Kim et al. (2019), "burnout was most strongly associated with emotional stability" for the teachers they studied. Likewise, Lawrence et al. (2019) found workload and poor support systems contributed to feelings of burnout among teachers. Teachers who had strong support systems on their home campus were less likely to report instances of burnout (Lawrence et al., 2019). Dirhangi (2019) noted there were differences in support systems in that "colleague support was not related to any burnout measure" (p. 801), but "increased support from the administration is associated with less overall teacher burnout" (p 800).

With regards to colleague mentors as a support system, research suggested for the majority of teachers, the existence or quality of mentors did not affect feelings of burnout or the desire to leave a campus (Harrell et al., 2004). The ability of campus administration to successfully meet the psychological needs of teachers was found to greatly impact teachers' decisions about whether to remain in the classroom or to leave their current teaching positions (Ford et al., 2019). The review of literature suggested support systems directly tied with campus administrators, rather than peer or mentor-driven support systems have a greater impact on teacher attrition or retention.

Student discipline

In addition to support systems, poor student discipline systems or classroom management may also contribute to feelings of burnout among teachers. In schools where managing student

discipline is not a strength, repeated discipline issues “may influence school culture by ‘normalising’ incivilities, and draining teachers’ capacity for care and support,” leading to “overwhelming workloads” for teachers in those classrooms (Buchanan, 2012, p. 211). The connection between student discipline and teacher burnout was also discussed by Dirhangi (2019), who found “the less behaved students are, the more likely a teacher may experience burnout” (p. 800). Macdonald (1999) conducted a literature review over the topic of teacher attrition and concluded there were definitive links between what he referred to as “teacher stress” and attrition. However, Harmsen et al. (2018) explored the connections between stress and teacher attrition and found there was not a “significant relationship between negative emotions and attrition” (p. 638).

Further, the researchers determined novice teachers who learn “how to cope with student misbehavior...would take a great amount of the pressure away” (Harmsen et al., p. 639) teachers report feeling. In addition to coping mechanisms, researchers also discussed the connections between surface acting and deep acting among teachers and burnout. Surface acting refers to teachers whose true personalities do not match with their teacher personas; deep acting, on the other hand, describes when the teacher persona and the personality of the person match. Lee (2019) found surface acting among physical education teachers had a “positive relationship with teacher burnout;” deep acting, however, led to a “feeling of personal accomplishment” (p. 247). At what point feelings of stress become feelings of burnout is something not discussed in the literature but is an important distinction. Normal, day-to-day stress may not affect teachers’ decisions to leave the classroom, but there appears to be a tipping point after which stress becomes burnout and does impact teachers’ decision-making when making career choices.

Teacher characteristics

Significant research has also been conducted on the characteristics of teachers who leave the profession. Age, gender, years of experience, grade level, and the subject(s) taught have been found to be predictors of teachers' longevity in the classroom (Ingersoll, 2001; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Hancock, 2016; Harrell et al., 2004; Kukla-Acevedo, 2009; Redding & Henry 2018; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Stinebrickner, 1998; Struyven & Vanthrounout, 2014). Overall, nearly 50 percent of novice teachers quit the profession within the first five years of employment (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). Other studies have found more specific results with regards to teacher attrition. According to Kukla-Acevedo (2009), "novice teachers were nearly 1.5 times as likely to leave the field of teaching...as were experienced teachers" (p. 446) and "teachers who were younger than 30 years old were more than 3 times as likely to exit teaching...than were teachers who were 50 years old or older" (p. 447).

Glennie et al. (2016) compared teacher attrition rates at early college high school campuses and regular high school campuses. Attrition rates for novice teachers were found to be fairly equal between the two campus settings; overall turnover rates for teachers, however, occurred at higher rates in the early college high school setting (Glennie et al., 2016). Additionally, teachers' subject areas and location were also found to correlate with teacher attrition. Teachers of special education classes and teachers in high poverty areas were both at a higher risk of attrition than teachers not in those situations (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). What is clear from the research is location, subject-area, and years of experience are all indicators of teacher attrition.

The experiences of novice teachers have also been explored along gender-lines, although studies present opposing findings. Redding & Henry (2018) found novice female teachers were

more likely to leave the classroom than their male counterparts; on the other hand, Struyven & Vanthournout (2014) reported novice male teachers were more likely than novice female teachers to quit their teaching positions. Stinebrickner (1998) found although male teachers may receive better financial compensation in other career fields, research found “being male increases the length of a person’s teaching spell” (p. 131). One possible explanation for why female teachers may leave the classroom, particularly in the middle of the year, is due to pregnancy or raising a family (Hancock, 2016; Harrell et al., 2014).

Although it’s difficult to fully generalize the characteristics of teachers who leave the classroom, numerous studies have attempted to understand how different variables connect with teachers’ longevity in the profession. Perhaps the most significant takeaway is novice teachers with under five years of teaching experience are far more likely to quit; however, as teachers remain in the profession, factors not directly connected with classroom experiences influence teachers’ career decisions (Rinke & Mawhinney, 2017).

Negative connotations of teacher leavers

The experiences and perceptions of teachers who have left the profession are also worthy of investigation. Once teachers leave the classroom to pursue other careers, raise families, or retire, it may be difficult for researchers to locate participants for educational research studies. As such, my review of literature reveals fewer studies examine the experiences of teachers who have quit teaching. Negativity surrounds much of the discussion around teacher leavers both inside and outside of the profession. Haberman (2017), a former educator himself, wrote teachers who leave the profession “do not respect and care enough about the children to want to be their teachers” (p. 174). The idea of being a failure as a teacher and professional can lead to feelings of feelings of guilt and emotional distress in teachers who have quit (Mawhinney & Rinke,

2018). Teachers who quit teaching under duress or with negative emotions may also share feelings of negativity toward the educational profession with others (Buchanan, 2012). Feelings of guilt, shame, or negativity might prevent teachers from wanting to return to the classroom. Further, more research is needed to determine how the views of former teachers might influence the employment decisions of current and future educators.

Agency

Findings from research studies also revealed teachers who quit teaching could be viewed as agents of change. Rather than being viewed as failures of the system, Glazer (2018) asserted teachers should be viewed as agents of resistance, because quitting may be the only voice those teachers have with regards to changing the educational landscape. In school systems where curriculum, classroom instruction, and occupational roles are decided by others, the choice of whether or not to remain in the classroom may be the only means of agency teachers can exert (Raab, 2018). Along those same lines, teachers may leave their classroom positions in order to attain more education or advanced training in order to return to the profession in leadership roles (Harfitt, 2015; Mawhinney & Rinke, 2018). A perceived lack of opportunities for true professional development or career advancement was noted as being contributing factors in teachers' decisions to quit teaching (Buchanan, 2012; Harmsen et al., 2018). In fact, one proposed solution to retain teachers was for campus administrators to recognize teachers' need for development and professional autonomy (Ford et al., 2019). Through further professional education and training, teachers can advance in their professional roles to become instructional coaches, principals, or attain other leadership roles allow them to enact change or be a part of school or district-wide decision-making teams (Hancock, 2016; Harfitt, 2015; Mawhinney & Rinke, 2018).

Teacher as Athletics Coach

After realizing the impact the experiences of teacher/coaches had on my study, I was forced to examine the existing literature on teacher/coaches and the teaching profession. One recurring idea found in the literature explores role identify among teacher coaches. Millslagle & Morley (2004) found among participants in their survey, “43% were motivated to enter the dual teacher/coach profession by the coaching role, compared to only 12% who were motivated by the teaching role” (p. 127). In the same study, the authors found it was more common among teacher/coaches to feel job satisfaction and goal attainment through their work as coaches than through their work as classroom teachers (Millslagle & Morley, 2004). Based on the analysis of their data, Millslagle & Morley (2004) argued “recruiting and retention of teachers may be related to the opportunity to coach” (p. 129) and when forced to focus on one role over the other (teacher vs. coach) teacher/coaches might spend a “larger time on coaching” (p. 129).

Templin et al. (1994) conducted a life history study in which they reported on a single case study of a teacher/coach from university graduation through retirement. The participant revealed he self-identified as a coach rather than as a teacher and became a teacher because it was the only viable pathway through which to become a coach (p. 279). In a finding mirroring those of Millslagle & Morley (2004), Templin et al. (1994) reported coaches tend to fall even more in the coach role identity during the times of the year in which the sports they coach occur. In a separate study, Richards & Templin (2012) went so far as to postulate “the dual role of T/C is challenging if not unrealistic for many role incumbents” (p. 171).

Closing Thoughts on Chapter II

Research about teacher attrition and the experiences of teachers who leave the teaching profession informs the recruitment and retention of quality educators. Though there were a

myriad of reasons leading to teacher attrition, a review of the literature revealed alarming trends and highlights areas of focus for researchers and practitioners who seek to alleviate the negative effects of teacher attrition. Major factors have been identified as contributors to teachers' decisions to quit include salary positions (Gunther, 2019; Harrell et al., 2004), support of campus administration (Buchanan, 2012; Redding & Henry, 2018), burnout (Dirhangi, 2019; Kim et al., 2019; Lawrence et al., 2019), and student discipline (Buchanan, 2012; Dihangi, 2019; Harmsen et al., 2018; Macdonald, 1999). Insofar as common characteristics of teachers who leave the profession, studies revealed sometimes opposing findings with regards to teachers' genders (Redding & Henry, 2018; Stinebrickner, 1998; Struyven & Vanthournout, 2014). What is generalizable is teachers with under five years of teaching experience are far more likely to quit than teachers with more than five years of experience (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). It remains unclear as to what significant event occurs at the five-year marker to explain the decreasing likelihood of attrition.

The experiences of teachers who quit teaching are often fraught with negativity. Feelings of guilt, shame, and failure often haunt former teachers. Some of these former teachers choose to pursue other careers, but there are many who attain more training and/or education so they can return to schools in leadership positions as agents of change (Mawhinney & Rinke, 2018). Much of the research found on this topic was qualitative in nature and consisted of small sample sizes. One lacking piece of information from the research is the prevalence of teachers who leave and then return to the classroom.

The first part of my record of study determined the prevalence of types of employment mobility among rural high school teachers at the campus where I teach. Rinke & Mawhinney (2017) reported on the different types of what they call "push and pull" contributing to teachers'

career decisions; through the second portion of my study, I examined the “push and pull” factors revealed within a nested sample of participants through semi-structured interviews. With information gathered from my study, I created a pamphlet for our campus and district leadership teams which will be used to recruit high quality teachers who are more likely to remain on our campus for several years. Through my research, I gained a better understanding of the factors leading to their decisions not to return and if there is anything the campus or district could do to retain them.

CHAPTER III: SOLUTION AND METHOD

Outline of the proposed solution

RHS, like many other campuses, struggles with teacher turnover. In conversations with the head principal and district administrators, understanding the factors impacting teachers' employment decisions was determined to be beneficial during the hiring process and in creating programs to help with the retention of quality educators. During the 2020/2021 school year, RHS transitioned into a whole-campus Pathways in Technology Early College High School (P-TECH). As such, the campus leadership became more selective with hiring decisions. To meet the needs of an early college high school, hiring preferences included: finding teachers with a post-graduate degree or the desire to attain one, teachers committed to building strong academic and career and technical education (CTE) programs, and teachers with prior experience teaching in an early college high school setting.

Out of approximately 27 high school teachers during the 2019/2020 school year, nine submitted letters of resignation. To highlight the numerical impact those departures had on the campus' teaching staff, they were comprised of the sole theater teacher (for both middle school and high school), two of the four English teachers, and two of the four science teachers. Through informal, off-the-record conversations with other teachers, I learned the degree to which uncertainty in the job market caused by the COVID-19 pandemic impacted teachers' decisions to remain at RHS for one more school year; otherwise, there might well have been even more teacher turnover at the end of the 2019/2020 school year.

During the fall semester of the 2020/2021 school year, I distributed a voluntary survey through Google Forms to teachers at RHS. This survey collected descriptive data about the participants' prior and current employment, job satisfaction, factors influencing decisions about

employment, and prior teaching experience. Based on data analysis from the survey results, I selected three case study participants and crafted interview questions that were used in the second phase of this current study. Beginning in January of 2021, I obtained permissions from the three participants who will engage in a semi-structured interview that was conducted in March 2021. Data gathered through the interview supplemented and added depth to the data gathered through the previously administered survey instrument.

Data analysis from both the survey and semi-structured interview were used to create a employment brochure for the campus principals and district leadership that highlighted the characteristics of the town of Riverview and Riverview ISD identified by current teachers as contributing to their decision to accept the teaching offer from Riverview ISD. Ensuing conversations highlighted areas of improvement and also campus and district strengths revealed through the survey and interview data. The brochure will hopefully aide the campus and district leadership in the promotion of RHS for prospective employees and serve as part of a needs assessment for ways in which the campus leadership can better meet the needs of current employees.

Justification of proposed solution

In order to create the brochure, I gained an understanding of the experiences that teachers report with regards to employment mobility decisions. The survey instrument was used to gather big-picture data from teachers on the campus; analysis of the data provided descriptive information about the factors that teacher reported as influencing their employment decisions and served as a means through which to select three case studies for the interview phase of the study. The interviews allowed me to gain an in-depth understanding of the individual situations,

emotions, and rationale that those teachers reported experiencing in their employment satisfaction and employment decisions.

Study context and participants

This study was conducted using adult volunteer participants at RHS. All participants were certified, full-time teachers at RHS during the 2020/2021 school year. For the initial quantitative portion of the study there was an *n* of 19 out of 24 possible respondents, representing a 79% response rate from campus teachers. The survey was primarily descriptive in nature and was conducted through Google Forms. Because of the need to isolate individual responses in order to select possible interview participants, responses were not anonymous. The survey instrument questions were multiple choice; however, respondents had the option to type additional descriptions if the prepopulated answer choices did not allow for an accurate response. Based on analysis of the data collected, I chose a purposeful convenience sample (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2018) of three participants with whom I conducted follow-up interviews. Saturation (Charmaz, 2006; Creswell & Creswell, 2018) was attained by selecting interview participants who shared common answers and themes with the responses gathered from the initial survey instrument data. Additionally, an athletics coach was selected to represent the experiences of the coaches whose employment decisions might have been affected by the retirement of RHS's Athletic Director in mid-spring 2020.

According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), researchers implementing a phenomenological study should recruit "3 - 10" participants (p. 186) for qualitative investigation. For my study, I selected three teachers who answered the survey and expressed an interest in subsequent interviews. I intentionally chose teachers who were mid-career. Novice teachers did not have the prior experiences with teaching positions, and teachers nearing retirement age are

not actively seeking further employment as a teacher. I wanted representation in the qualitative portion of the study from teachers who could provide insight into three phases of the employment mobility process: leaving a prior teaching position, the decision to stay or leave in a teaching position, and the search for future teaching employment.

Teacher 1 and I have worked closely together for the past two years and have built a positive professional relationship. They noted 21-30 years in the teaching profession and have taught in no more than five different schools. Further, they matched on two commonly cited reasons for leaving previous teaching positions: lack of administrative support and seeking a new job opportunity. Likewise, they reported geographical location and campus administration were two of the reasons they decided to accept the teaching position at RHS. *Teacher 1* stated they plan to remain a teacher at RHS for an extended period of time, perhaps even until retirement. This teacher also brought both a wealth of experience teaching in an early college high school environment and has an understanding of the challenges teachers face with regards to the initial implementation and growth of an early college model. Their knowledge and experiences informed the recruitment and retention of teachers within the early college model.

Teacher 2 was selected as a representative of teachers who also coach athletics, and thus operate under a different set of employment expectations than other teachers. Of the respondents to the initial survey, only one coach expressed a willingness to participate in the interviews. Additionally, *Teacher 2* was chosen due to matches with popular survey responses on reasons they chose to teach at RHS - citing geographic location, campus administration, and salary as influencing factors. Prior to learning about the change in Athletic Coordinator, *Teacher 2* shared they intended to remain at RHS as a teacher for the 2021/2022 school year.

Teacher 3 represented an “interesting” or “unusual” story that arose out of the survey data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 195). The survey responses from *Teacher 3* revealed they came to education as a second career. The employment change earned less money, but provided a more spiritually valuable job experience. They shared on their survey they felt God encouraged them to apply for the teaching position at RHS and that a spiritual “calling” was what drove employment decisions. This teacher also reported they were planning to leave their teaching position at RHS and were currently taking courses to make a career transition into the health industry. This teacher also matched with common responses for accepting a teaching position at RHS: geographical location, salary, and campus administration.

Research Paradigm

This current study was a sequential quan-QUAL mixed methods study (Ivankova, 2015) that followed a case-selection explanatory sequential design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). This paradigm was selected because the preliminary quantitative data will be used to “identify and purposefully select the best participants” (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018, p. 82) for the subsequent qualitative phase of the study. Data gathered from the qualitative phase of the study was analyzed and then used with the initial quantitative data to reach a more complete picture of the problem. The combination of qualitative and quantitative data analyses provided complementarity in which the “conclusions...are more meaningful and complete by using the two methods to get results that enhance coverage and clarify and/or supplement each other to address the complexity of a topic” (Plano Clark & Ivankova, 2016, p 85).

The initial quantitative phase of the study was used to gather information about the factors teachers reported as contributing to their decision to join, remain at, or leave a teaching position. Data analysis of the quantitative phase was used to provide background descriptive

information and to discover trends among teacher participants. From the quantitative data, a purposeful convenience sample of participants was selected to participate in the qualitative phase of the study. Sequential integration was achieved because of the “strong connection between the phases” resulting from using quantitative data analysis to select qualitative interview participants and the co-presentation of data from both phases of the research study (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2018). I conducted semi-structured interviews in the qualitative phase of this study. I created a base set of questions that guided discussion and “maintain[ed] consistency across interviews,” but allowed for improvised questions and conversations that went beyond the scripted questions in order to gain a better understanding of the problem (Bhattacharya, 2017).

Data Collection Methods

The initial survey instrument was performed through Google Forms since it allowed for multiple different avenues for answer choices and could be completed easily through the Google Education accounts already set up for RHS teachers. Questions inquired about the teachers’ years of experience, current teaching position, the number of different places of teaching employment, and if the teacher has quit the teaching profession. Depending on the answer to the initial questions, participants were guided to different secondary questions. If the teacher indicated they taught at other schools, they were asked about their prior teaching locations, type of schools formerly taught at, and reasons for leaving those job placements. I crafted multiple choice selection responses based on the most prevalent reasons discussed as to why teachers leave positions: family reasons, economic reasons, school culture, student discipline, poor administration, burnout, or other job opportunities.

In order to maximize the amount of information gathered from the survey, participants could select multiple options, and were provided a blank space in which to add descriptors not in

the answer choices. For novice teachers, there was also a separate section asking about the number of interviews they completed and the reason why they chose to accept the offer from RHS. Answer choices for this question included: Riverview ISD was the only offer received, geographical location, student demographics, preference for the early college model, campus administration, salary, and a final option in which the participant can add their own description.

Interview questions for the first interview closely followed the questions from the survey instrument and allow participants to provide greater depth and explanation to their survey answers (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The scripted questions for the interview were:

- Tell me about your previous work experiences.
- Tell me about the factors that previously led to you leaving your prior teaching positions.
- Tell me about the factors that led you to accept the teaching position at Riverview.
- Has anything related to your employment at Riverview changed since you completed the survey? If so, please expand on that.
- What factors might lead you (or have led you) to consider leaving Riverview in the future?
- What do you believe to be the best characteristics that Riverview has to offer teachers?
- What do you believe to be areas that Riverview can improve to retain quality teachers?

Data Analysis Strategy

In an explanatory sequential qual-QUAN mixed methods study, the quantitative portion of the study seeks out to describe, explain, or understand results from the quantitative phase (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Plano Clark & Ivankova, 2016). Data gathered from the multiple-choice quantitative survey instrument was tallied and analyzed for trends and outliers. As there were open-ended options on the survey, data was coded along commonalities, tallied,

and analyzed to discover similar or contradicting responses. I followed Creswell and Creswell's (2018) recommendation to search for "expected codes," "surprising codes," and "codes of unusual or of conceptual interest" (p. 195). While information about the participants was gathered so individuals could be selected for the qualitative phase, during the data analysis portion of the quantitative phase, names were temporarily removed from the data to maintain the integrity of the results.

As noted by Creswell & Plano Clark (2018), participants invited to the qualitative phase of the study can be those whose responses were "typical or representative of different groups" (235) from the quantitative phase. Three teachers who met those requirements were asked to engage in one hour long semi-structured interviews. After the interview in March 2021, my researcher notes along with the audio recording was manually transcribed and then coded using an in-vivo coding strategy (Ivankova, 2015). Analysis incorporated an inductive approach, through which data gathered through the interviews are "systemically organiz[ed] into categories and themes from specific to general" (Ivankova, 2015, p. 233). Using the member checking strategy to protect the validity of the study, participants had the opportunity to review my transcriptions of the interviews and my coding interpretations (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Ivankova, 2015). From the survey instrument data coupled with the interview data, I used complementarity (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Ivankova, 2015) to determine broad commonalities and differences between participants. Those findings were used in the creation of a presentation to campus and district administrators.

Timeline

- Summer 2020 – design survey instrument
- November 2020 – open and close survey instrument data collection
- December/January 2020 – analyze quantitative data, purposefully select qualitative participants, gain participant permissions
- March 2021 – engage in semi-structured interviews with participants
- Summer 2021 – qualitative data analysis, analysis of the integration between quantitative and qualitative data, and creation of exit-interview protocols and staff employment profile brochure
- Fall 2021 – Submission and defense of study
- December 2021 – Graduation

Reliability and Validity Concerns

Mixed methods research designs must address quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods reliability and validity concerns. Anderson et al. (2007) argued action research in whole must pass a test of “trustworthiness” in which the results of the study “lead to a...deeper understanding of the problem and how to go about resolving it in the future (p. 40) and the interpretation of those results is “credible” (p. 36). In my study, I used multiple measures of data collection, including a survey instrument administered to the entire teaching staff at RHS and three multiple case study interview participants to ensure I captured the experiences of as many teachers at RHS as possible. Through the employment of member-checking and in-vivo coding, I attempted to ensure the reporting of the qualitative data closely matched with the expressed experiences of the interview participants.

In a quan-QUAL mixed methods explanatory sequential design study, the quantitative phase of the study serves to provide data that informs the explanatory qualitative phase. As such, data analysis from my survey instrument relied solely on tabulation and did not undergo further analysis. Despite this qualification, two threats to internal validity existed in the quantitative phase of my study: response bias and maturation. Response bias refers to the “effect of nonresponses on survey estimates (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 157). Out of 24 possible survey responses, five teachers did not participate in the survey administration. Three of the nonrespondents were athletic coaches who also taught in the classroom. After speaking informally with those three teachers, I believe the experiences of those coaches would not have significantly changed the results of the survey data. The other two teachers were full time classroom teachers with whom I was also able to speak and share results of the survey instrument. Again, based on those conversations, I do not believe the results of the survey would have drastically change with the addition of those two responses.

Maturation was also an internal validity threat to the survey instrument. Maturation threats occur when outside changes arise which might alter the results of the survey (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). After the administration of the survey instrument, RHS’s Athletic Director announced his retirement. Since the survey asked about teachers’ employment plans for the upcoming school year prior to the retirement announcement, I believe there might have been more uncertainty expressed on that particular question if it had been asked a few weeks later than I did. Part of the reason I selected an athletics coach for the interview phase of my study was to capture the experiences of those teachers.

One of the main validity concerns on the qualitative phase of my study was researcher bias. I came to this study partially due to my own experiences with employment mobility in the

education field. In order to overcome my own biases, I utilized member checking and in-vivo coding to ensure the words and experiences of the interview participants were captured with fidelity and avoided my own interpretations (Anderson et al. 2007; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Ivankova, 2015). I used “rich, thick descriptions” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 200) to summarize the overall impression of the data gathered and the context in which that data was collected. Finally, throughout this report, I attempted to “clarify the bias [I brought] to the study” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 200) through explaining my personal background and journey to the problem.

Closing Thoughts on Chapter III

This study followed a quan-QUAL explanatory sequential mixed methods design in order to gain a deeper understanding of the factors teachers reported as influencing their decisions about teaching employment. In the quantitative phase of the study, a survey instrument was administered to full time teachers at RHS to gain broad descriptive data about the teachers’ experiences. From the pool of data, I selected a convenience sample of three teachers to participate in a semi-structured interview as part of a multiple case study qualitative phase. Data from both the quantitative and qualitative phases of the study were analyzed and then combined in reporting to generate a more complete understanding about the factors teachers identified in their employment decisions.

CHAPTER IV: ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Introducing the Analysis

My purpose for conducting this research study at Riverview High School (RHS) was to answer three questions:

- What do teachers identify as factors that contributed to their decisions to leave teaching positions?
- What do teachers identify as factors that contributed to their decisions to accept teaching positions?
- What do teachers identify as strengths and areas of concern with their current employment situation?

A survey was administered through Google Forms to 24 full-time teachers at RHS. Of those 24 teachers, 19 teachers answered the survey questions and submitted them back to me. The survey asked questions about prior work history and factors contributing to the teachers' decisions about leaving the education profession, quitting a teaching position, and accepting a new teaching position. Tabulation of the survey responses provided descriptive data about teachers' experiences with the education profession and with teacher employment mobility. Follow up semi-structured interviews with three willing survey participants were conducted on the high school campus. The interviews were designed to allow the teachers to elaborate on their survey answers and their personal experiences with employment mobility.

Presentation of Data

Research Question 1

What do teachers identify as factors that contributed to their decisions to leave teaching positions?

Tabulation of the survey data revealed 21% of respondents had previously left the teaching profession entirely. Through the Google Form, teachers who reported leaving the teaching profession were sent another multiple-choice questionnaire allowing for further delving into what factors may have led to their decision. Teachers were allowed to select as many responses as they needed and were allowed to respond through an open-ended format to add additional notes or options not listed on the multiple-choice selections. Although there were only four teachers who self-identified as having left the teaching profession, a total of six responses were entered when those teachers were asked to identify factors influencing their decision to quit teaching, as seen in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Factors Teachers Identified for Leaving the Teaching Profession

Which of the following factors best describes your reason(s) for leaving the teaching profession?	Number of Responses
Economic reasons (wanted a job with better pay)	2
Family reasons (birth of a new child, taking care of a family member, spend more time with family, etc.)	1
School culture (did not mesh with overall culture of the school)	1
Job opportunity (received a job offer in a new field)	1
Other	1

Note: The one respondent for Other entered they were “Currently- Ready for a new career”

All 19 teachers who participated in the survey answered a question about the factors contributing to their decision to leave prior teaching positions. Teachers were allowed to select multiple selections and were provided the option of adding additional comments if desired. There was also an option on the multiple-choice to identify teachers who began their teaching career at RHS and have not left. Data from that question is reported in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Factors Teachers Identified for Leaving Previous Teaching Positions

Which of the following factors contributed to your decision to leave your prior teaching position?	Number of Responses
Economic reasons (wanted a job with better pay)	6
Job opportunity (wanted an opportunity different than the one assigned)	6
Family reasons (birth of a new child, taking care of a family member, spend more time with family, etc.)	5
Lack of administrative support	5
School culture (did not mesh with overall culture of the school)	4
Student discipline	4
Other	4
I've only worked at RHS	2

Teachers who selected Other were offered a chance to further elaborate through an open-ended response. Two of these typed responses were from teachers who are also athletics coaches. One stated they were the Athletic Coordinator at their previous campus and “did not trust the [school] board.” Another teacher/coach wrote:

I did not get the AD [Athletic Director] job. The person who was hired for the job brought in his offensive coordinator so I had to make a choice to stay there and be demoted or move on. In the coaching profession it is wise to move on. It is just part of the job of a football coach.

The third teacher stated they had recently married and “wanted a shorter commute.” The fourth teacher who submitted a response for Other commented it was “The knowledge that I was sought out and the increase in pay” leading to them to leave their prior teaching position.

During the interview portion of the study, three teacher participants were offered opportunities to expand on their survey responses about previous work experiences and factors contributing to their decision to leave those positions.

Teacher 1

Teacher 1 began working as a teacher after university training and originally taught 12th grade at an urban high school in Austin, Texas. They then moved to west Texas to be with their spouse, who was also a teacher. At that location, they taught four years at a middle school and stated through working at different grade levels and in different schools, learned what they “didn’t want” with regards to teaching positions. Eventually they took a job teaching at a newly opened early college high school which had an application system for students across a large school district. They “enjoyed” the “collegial” atmosphere of the campus, but suffered from “intense panic attacks” and “burnout” brought on by intense pressure by the district and campus administration to increase rigor to match college standards despite many students not having the academic skills necessary to be successful in a collegiate environment.

When asked to describe the factors leading to their decisions to change jobs, *Teacher 1* replied the factor leading to resigning from the first school was marriage. Their spouse took a job in another city and the school was able to offer employment to both of them so they could both work on the same campus. The second campus move was due to the community environment

and wanting to work for a “better school.” They wanted to live in a different neighborhood and did not want to “commute across the city to teach at a school which was already challenging” to teach in due to “bad” student discipline, poor administrative support, and high teacher turnover. A change in campus administration and a deteriorating local economy, in their opinion, pointed to a further upcoming decline in job satisfaction and quality of life. “I wanted to get out before things got worse,” they said.

The final move before transitioning to RHS was brought about because *Teacher 1* felt they were in a teaching and career “rut.” They had been teaching the same subject at the same academic level for a while and “wanted a new challenge.” The school district was opening a new early college high school magnet campus, so they decided to apply in order to gain a new experience. While they reported there were positive aspects of that position (competent and supportive colleagues, “freedom to take risks in the classroom,” and the novel experience of teaching in an early college environment), they suffered through several “intense” panic attacks which at one point required medical attention. They reported feeling an “immense pressure” to get students to an academic level they felt many students were not prepared to meet. They also stated the campus administration expected them to “teach a large number of different courses and sections,” which added to stress levels and feelings of burnout

Teacher 2

Teacher 2 began their teaching career knowing they wanted to be an athletics coach. They had difficulty obtaining job offers as a beginning teacher, but through a connection received a job offer to teach and coach at a mid-sized middle school campus. In addition to teaching responsibilities, they coached football, basketball, and track. *Teacher 2* discussed factors leading to their decision to leave their teaching positions were the positive connections

with students, “loyalty” to the Athletic Director (AD), and teaching opportunities. At their longest-held position as a teacher and coach, the AD of that campus recruited them and served as a coaching and teaching mentor. *Teacher 2* shared they were able to transition up the grade levels with their students. They discussed sharing a “strong bond” with a particular group of students, and they made teaching and coaching “fun.” They stated they enjoyed working with students and had the opportunity to work their way up through the grade levels, moving from 6th, to 7th, to 8th, and then 9th grade with a cohort of students. *Teacher 2* felt when those students were ready to graduate, they could consider leaving their position. What made the decision to leave easier was “that the AD announced his retirement that same year.” In their words, “I could either start with a fresh group of kids and AD, and maybe coach something that I didn’t want to, or I could start fresh at another school district and get exactly what I wanted.”

Teacher 3

Teacher 3 began working as a hotel desk clerk during college and felt working in customer service provided an opportunity to practice skills which would later prove beneficial to a teaching career. They took a job as an engineer at Texas Instruments but found they “weren’t happy” with the career, even though the salary was “competitive.” They felt “God was calling [them] to be a teacher.” They recalled “the economic recession hit the United States in 2008” and “hit the technology field pretty hard.” *Teacher 3* interpreted the new stresses on their job as a “sign” it was time to “make a career shift.” When asked what they interpreted as “signs,” they responded they would “frequently meet people who talked about teaching.” Additionally, they would “see advertisements on TV and on billboards about becoming a teacher.” Finally, *Teacher 3* shared during times of prayer and reflection they would often “randomly turn to a verse in the

Bible talking about being in the service of others.” “I believe God leads people where they are supposed to be, and this is where He led me,” they added.

Teacher 3 initially accepted a teaching position in a school district within 20 miles of Riverview. They taught there for six years before stress and “burnout” led them to pursue employment at a different school district. They then taught at another neighboring rural school district for five years. When asked about why they left that position, *Teacher 3* said they “experienced burnout” because they did not feel like they “fit into the community” and had numerous “parent difficulties.” They shared a story about parents complaining about grades and teachers not receiving support from the campus administration when dealing with parent issues. In one particular instance, a parent complained when *Teacher 3* gave their child “a 94 rather than a 100 on an assignment.” *Teacher 3* believed the campus administration sided with parents over teachers in order to keep the community happy, at the expense of supporting teachers. “In a small town like that, the parents are sometimes family friends with the principal, or the superintendent, or [members of] the schoolboard,” they explained.

Teacher 3 indicated on the survey they were not planning to return to RHS for the upcoming school year. During the interview they shared there were a few reasons why they chose not to return to the campus. *Teacher 3* taught multiple different courses during the school day over the past few years. “Too many preps led to burnout,” they said. When I asked them to expand on what burnout meant, *Teacher 3* responded “each individual course required extensive planning and preparation, including submitting lesson plans for each course.” They felt they were continuously rushing to end one class, clean up, and then prepare equipment and the lesson for the upcoming class. “By the time I clean up after a class, the next class is already starting and I haven’t set anything up yet,” they remarked. Another reason they discussed was considerations

related to their child who had also attended school at RHS and was graduating from high school at the end of the current school year. “I stayed for [my child],” they acknowledged. “I wanted to make sure that [they] had the senior year she deserved without worrying about moving.”

Finally, they shared about not agreeing with the shift to the whole-campus Early College High School model. They worried about increased “micromanagement” from campus and district administrators and felt as though many instructional and curricular changes were instituted only to “fill a checkbox” and “cater to TEA [Texas Education Agency]” instead of working to educate students. According to *Teacher 3*, “forcing” all students to make “college and career decisions as eighth graders,” and then requiring they take college level coursework at the high school level was “bad for education.” They believe students should have more “choice in their education” and have the opportunity to “be kids” rather than rush into adulthood. After the school year ends, they are planning to accept a position in the medical field; they shared they felt “God was calling them to help people in a different arena.”

Research Question 2

What do teachers identify as factors that contributed to their decisions to accept teaching positions?

There were several questions on the online survey inquiring about factors identified by teachers as important in their decision to accept new teaching positions at RHS. Teachers who reported they left the teaching profession were asked in a separate open-ended question why they chose to return to teaching (not necessarily just at RHS). Three of those four responses identified some form of financial reasons for accepting a teaching position. One responded they “couldn’t find a comparable paying job in the area.” Another stated their “husband had cancer and could not work.” The third teacher responded “the economy crashed” and they “felt being ‘called’ back

to it.” Finally, the remaining teacher stated the “career path I was on in another industry would not have provided the opportunity for a quality home/family life.”

Table 4.3 depicts responses from the 19 survey participants about factors impacting their decision to accept the offer to teach at RHS.

Table 4.3: Factors Teachers Identified for Accepting a Teaching Position at RHS

Which of the following factors contributed to your decision to accept the RHS teaching position?	Number of Responses
Geographical location	15
Campus administration	11
Salary	7
Other	6
Student demographics	5
Early college atmosphere	4
It was the only job offer I received	1

Teachers were allowed to select as many options as matched their experiences and were given an open-ended section in which to add any additional responses or explanations. Written responses were as follows:

- “Professional contacts w/ people here”
- “Felt God called me here”
- “It was the only school with reasonable driving distance from my home”
- “I knew the AD here at the time and knew of the principal”
- “Friendly staff, and I fit in well with the school. (I was able to contribute to the students)”

- “[RHS] is in the community in which I live. My children attended this HS”

Teacher 1

Through the interview process, *Teacher 1* shared one of the biggest draws to the city of Riverview was the geographic location. The places where they most recently taught were “flat, dustbowls” and they knew the Hill Country area of Texas due to their time living in and around Austin. Because they and their spouse are nearing retirement age, they wanted to find a location where they could “build a retirement home” and “be happy while teaching” here and during retirement. The participant and their spouse “loved the hills, the greenery, the wildflowers” of the area west of San Antonio and applied to several locations inside San Antonio city limits and throughout the suburbs.

Upon arriving for their interview with the campus principal, *Teacher 1* shared “if the interview went well, this is where they want to be” as a couple. They “fell in love” with the trees and landscape design at RHS’s campus. They had previously interviewed at three other high schools: one in San Antonio at a high school campus on a military base, another with Hillside ISD, and a small ISD within 20 minutes of Hillside/Riverview. According to them, none of those campuses had the “beauty” RHS offered.

The fact RHS was developing an early college high school model was also a deciding factor for them. *Teacher 1* reported wanting the “personal challenge” of working with a whole campus model and have “the ability to share their experiences and expertise from working at the other early college high school” to help “the teachers and students adjust to the new reality.” During the interview, they said they appreciated how the campus administration seemed “fair,” “calm,” and “supportive” of teachers. They also liked how RHS was a smaller school and the

campus administration was “strict on discipline enforcement” and held students to high standards of behavior and academic performance.

Teacher 2

Teacher 2 spoke extensively about the role coaching plays in the decision to accept teaching positions. It was an AD who initially interviewed them for their first teaching/coaching job and pushed the campus administration to hire them. At this first campus, they changed teaching jobs each year, but maintained their coaching duties year over year. *Teacher 2* shared they “enjoyed” the experience of teaching different grade levels due to teaching a cohort of students from sixth grade through ninth grade. “Loyalty” was a concept *Teacher 2* mentioned throughout their interview. They remarked despite receiving offers to teach and coach at other schools which offered a higher salary and prestige, they felt loyalty to the AD and to their cohort of students to remain at their position. It was not until the cohort of students graduated and the AD retired they “entertained thoughts of leaving.” According to *Teacher 2*, “I could either start fresh with another group of students and coaches here, or I could start fresh somewhere new.”

When asked to expand on why they accepted the teaching and coaching position at RHS, *Teacher 2* said they were “familiar” with the AD at RHS and several of the coaches already on staff. They mentioned coaching is a “small world” due to several factors, including coaching camps across the state of Texas, playing against a variety of schools and getting to know coaches through competition, and “word of mouth.” In addition to the coaching connections, *Teacher 2* reflected on the positive experience they had being recruited and the “immediate connection” they felt with the campus administrative team. They also said they liked the fact they would coach the sports they were interested in and would be able to “teach the grade level and subject that [they] wanted.” Finally, *Teacher 2* noted even though they were moving to a smaller school,

the base salary coupled with coaching stipends meant they would “earn more money” at RHS than they had at their previous school.

Teacher 3

Teacher 3 discussed how they felt drawn to Riverview. When they first applied for a teaching position, they recalled no openings for the teaching position they wanted existed, but “God told [them] to apply anyway.” They had already lived in the area for a number of years and had experience working at neighboring school districts. As a member of the community and with the reciprocal nature of hiring among the school districts, they stated they “already knew [the head principal] and a lot of the teachers” at RHS. *Teacher 3* felt “God lead [them]” to teach at RHS through the application process, and because shortly after applying to the school, a teaching position matching their certification opened up.

Research Question 3

What do teachers identify as strengths and areas of concern with their current employment situation?

The next to last question on the survey inquired about teachers’ preliminary decisions about whether or not they will return to teach at RHS for the 2021/2022 school year. Generally, teachers in Riverview ISD receive contract renewal notification for the upcoming school year in late March or early April. Responses to this survey were collected in late February. Results are presented on Table 4.4

Table 4.4: Teachers’ Reported Plans for School Year 2021/2022

As of today, what are your plans for next school year?	Percentage of Responses
I’ve decided to remain a teacher at RHS	58
I haven’t made up my mind about my job next year	21
I’ve decided to retire from education	16
I’ve decided to leave RHS to pursue a career other than education	5
I’ve decided to leave RHS to pursue a job teacher at another school	0

Based on analysis of the data collected through the survey, the interview participants reflected on the three responses which were not retirement related. *Teacher 1* was confidently planning to return, *Teacher 2* had not yet made up their mind about their return, and *Teacher 3* had decided to leave RHS to pursue a non-education career.

Teacher 1

In response to the question about what factors might lead them to consider leaving RHS, *Teacher 1* replied there would be a few factors possibly causing them to want to leave. The first concern was the amount of “stress [became] unmanageable” to the point of having panic attacks during the school year like they had in previous teaching positions. They shared “at this stage of [their] career, [they] know [their] limits” and if they see their teaching or livelihood suffer as a result of their workload, they would definitely search for other employment opportunities.

When asked to explain more about what would increase feelings of stress, they responded the biggest concern was the “number of different course preps.” They shared “crafting

assignments and activities” for different grade levels and working to differentiate coursework from regular to honors-level takes “too much time and effort.” They also shared it is “stressful” when campus administrators or others “add extra duties and expectations to the teaching load.” Examples of extra expectations shared included teachers needed to video record and reflect on lessons, documenting Student Learning Objective data, multiple preps of lesson plans, and observations and coaching sessions from contractors from outside the district.

“Micromanagement” by superiors was also mentioned as a potential cause of stress. “I’ve been teaching for a long time and have heard nearly every ‘new’ way to teach over and over again. I don’t need three people looking over my shoulder to make sure that I did lesson plans in the format they want,” they asserted.

According to *Teacher 1* RHS has many strengths from a teacher perspective. They reported feeling the teachers and campus administration were “positive” and “supportive” of each other. They felt they were “trusted” by the campus administration to be a competent teacher and were “left alone to teach” instead of being micromanaged. They observed co-teachers were “helpful” and willing to work together. Further, they believed if they needed anything (materials or supplies), the campus administration would “do everything they could to provide whatever was needed” for students and teachers to be successful. They also mentioned the “natural beauty” of the campus, the small average class size, and the good behavior of students. Lastly, they reiterated “this is the place [they] want to retire from.”

Insofar as areas of improvement impacting teacher retention, Teacher 1’s most pressing concern was the need for “clear and consistent communication” from campus administration and district administration. “If I have a problem,” they stated, “I don’t know the chain of command to address that problem.” They recalled there were several times over the past year when they

learned about important campus activities or new directives from students or through rumors rather than through official channels. They claimed “not knowing what you’re going to be doing...is exhausting.”

Teacher 2

Although *Teacher 2* answered on the survey they were still deciding whether or not to stay at RHS, after meeting with the newly hired AD and receiving confirmation about coaching duties, *Teacher 2* stated in the interview they were committed to returning to RHS for the 2021/2022 school year. They felt “confident that [they] could teach the subject at any school,” but “coaching is really what I want to be doing.” When asked what might cause them to leave their teaching/coaching position at RHS, *Teacher 2* talked about the role of the AD in high school hiring and decision-making: “the Athletic Director supersedes the campus Principal in a lot of ways. [The AD] decides coaching assignments and makes decisions and recommendations about coaching stipends.” Because coaching and “being able to interact with kids and build those relationships through sports” is so important to them, *Teacher 2* claimed the only way they would leave their current position is if they were not able to coach the sports and specific areas of those sports they wanted.

Considering the positive aspects of RHS, *Teacher 2* first commented on the “quality of living” and the “geographic beauty” of the Riverview area. As someone who previously taught on a campus with a larger student population, they expressed appreciation for the “small classes” and the fact “we really don’t have ‘bad’ kids here.” Additionally, *Teacher 2* felt the campus Principal was “supportive,” “transparent,” and “honest,” adding “I always know where I stand and what’s expected of me.” Lastly, they said they felt the salary and stipends offered by the

district were positives: “I make more money here dealing with less stress than I did at bigger schools.”

Teacher 2 shared concerns about RHS and ways to counter those issues. Communication between district and some campus administrators was lacking, according to *Teacher 2*. “I want to know the ‘what’ and the ‘why’ of what we’re doing,” they said. In light of the move to the whole campus early college model, they wanted to see “more diversity in class offerings” and “fun, high interested electives” offered to students. Finally, they expressed concern about the “checkboxes” teachers, campus administrators, and district administrators must tally in order to meet the requirements of an early college high school instructional model. “School should be familial,” they offered, “it shouldn’t feel like a business.”

Teacher 3

As previously mentioned in the response to Question 1, *Teacher 3* had already decided to leave their teaching position at RHS and pursue a new career in health care before the interview. *Teacher 3* said among the good things at RHS were the “geographic location” and the “hometown small school feeling” of the high school campus and “kids are really good.” *Teacher 3* said they are planning to remain in the area for their new employment and did not want to move away.

Insofar as areas of concern, *Teacher 3* explained “micromanagement is not good leadership.” They added having someone watch over classroom instruction and monitor lesson plans made them feel “untrusted as a teacher.” Further, they expressed the campus and district should “bring teachers’ strengths to school and not try to change them.” Asked to expand on those ideas, *Teacher 3* said “teachers are brought in based on their abilities to teach, and then each year given new instructional programs and checklists to fill out.” One example they shared

of added responsibilities was a new requirement for teachers to video record lessons using an iPad and schedule times with the assistant principal to watch the video and go over what they saw. *Teacher 3* asserted the video recording requirement felt “intrusive” and “unnatural.”

Another example they indicated was the role of outside instructional coaches on the RHS campus. Over the past two years RHS has worked with the Regional Education Service Center to bring an instructional coach to the campus a few times each year. During those coaching sessions, the instructional coach visits the classrooms and observes five to fifteen minutes of a teacher’s class and then a substitute teacher takes over the class while the teacher, the instructional coach, and the assistant principal debrief the observation. *Teacher 3* expressed frustration about these coaching sessions, saying, “I’m not sure how they can give me notes about my teaching when they only saw a few minutes of one lesson at a random time.” *Teacher 3* continued, “if they had come into my class five minutes before or five minutes later, they would have seen the very thing they’re coaching me to include in my lesson.”

Summary

Through the research I conducted in this study, I sought to understand the factors identified by teachers as contributing to their decisions about teacher employment decisions. A descriptive background survey was administered to all full-time teachers at a relatively small, rural high school campus in Texas. The survey instrument was designed by the researcher to gain a broad understanding of commonly identified factors impacting employment decisions. From the analysis of the survey data, common factors and unusual circumstances were identified. Next, three teachers were invited to participate in semi-structured interviews in which they were allowed to expand and explain their survey answers in greater detail.

Several factors were identified by teachers through survey responses and interviews as impacting their career decisions. With regards to the decision to leave prior teaching positions, the plurality of teachers responded economic reasons and seeking out new job opportunities were a factor. Within the scope of economic reasons, interviewed teachers reported teacher salary and the impact of economic recessions as important facets. Family reasons, including the birth of a child or spousal obligations, and a perceived lack of administrative support tied for the second most commonly identified factor impacting teachers' decisions to leave prior employment. Issues with student discipline enforcement and overall school culture tied as the next most commonly cited factors based on the data gathered through the survey instrument.

Teachers who participated in the current study indicated through a majority of responses how Riverview's geographical location in the Texas Hill Country was an important factor when deciding whether or not to accept a teaching position at RHS. RHS teachers also claimed existing RHS employees, including the campus administration and other profession connections, also played a role in their decision to teach at RHS. Positive impressions about Riverview ISD's salary structure, student demographics, and a desire to work at an early college high school rounded out the most commonly identified factors for why teachers accepted the job offer from RHS. One teacher revealed through the survey instrument and later through the interviews their personal religious faith was another driving factor, and they believed God led them to Riverview.

I interviewed participants to expand upon the strengths and areas of concern they had for RHS. Those three teachers offered the natural geographical beauty of the campus and the impression they had of the student body as well-behaved and academically driven were both positive aspects of teaching at RHS. They further positively reflected on the familial environment cultivated among teachers and staff. Interview participants claimed communication

between campus and district administration and teachers needs improvement. Interviewed teachers also claimed campus directives and the ensuing check-ins by campus and district administrators contributed to feelings of stress and diminished value.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

Summary of Findings from Chapter IV

Through this study, I hoped to gain a better understanding of the factors leading teachers at RHS to leave prior teaching positions, accept their current role as classroom teacher at RHS, and evaluate the current environment at RHS with regards to teacher retention. I created a multiple case study quan-QUAL mixed methods design and administered it with the participation of full-time campus teachers at a rural Texas high school. In many cases, responses from the teachers at RHS mirrored existing research findings presented in the literature.

RHS teachers reported financial reasons, the desire to seek out new opportunities, family considerations, support provided by campus administrators, and burnout were contributing factors impacting their decisions to leave previous teaching positions. Participants stated contributing factors impacting their decisions to accept a teaching position at RHS included: geographic location and beauty, initial positive impressions or previous knowledge of campus administration, and salary packages. Study participants acknowledged there was a need for improved communication between campus and district administration teams and teachers. Uncertainty about the teaching workload and additional expectations placed upon teachers due to the implementation of the P-TECH model was also expressed by study participants. On the other hand, teachers shared appreciation and praise for the familial nature of the staff and students on campus, citing student discipline issues as merely minor concerns. The perception, according to those interviewed, is students were engaged in the learning process.

Results of Research

Research Question 1

What do teachers identify as factors that contributed to their decisions to leave teaching positions?

Analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data suggests economics, seeking out new or different roles, family considerations, and the role of campus administration were all factors impacting teachers' decisions to leave teaching positions. Economic reasons for leaving a job, including salary and cost of living, was the most selected choice on the survey among both teachers who decided to leave the education profession and those who left teaching positions. Additionally, all three interview participants discussed the role of finances in their decisions to leave jobs. Tied with economic reasons as responses on the survey was the desire to seek out a new job opportunity or teaching position. All three interview participants noted they were interested in starting fresh. *Teacher 1* wanted a “new challenge” and felt immense stress from their prior teaching position; *Teacher 2* expressed “excitement” at the prospect of coaching new students at a new school; and *Teacher 3* was, to use Rinke and Mawhinney’s (2017) language, pushed away from their previous teaching positions by job-induced stress and a perceived mismatch of “community values” and pulled toward RHS through “God’s will.”

The role of family and lack of administrative support were tied as the second most selected response on the multiple-choice survey question about the factors contributing to the decision to leave a teaching position. With regards to the role of family, *Teacher 1* left a teaching position in order to move to the same city as their spouse (who is also a teacher). Similarly, *Teacher 3* only felt ready to leave their current position at RHS because their child was also graduating at the end of the current school year. The role of campus administration was also

mentioned by all three interview participants. *Teacher 1* reported experiencing burnout due to what they perceived as unrealistic campus administrator expectations and poor implementation of student discipline. *Teacher 2* reflected on the role Athletic Directors have on the coaching profession. It was not until after the previous AD decided to retire that *Teacher 2* even entertained the idea of changing schools. Further, the initial relationship with the incoming AD at RHS was said to directly impact their decision about whether or not to remain a teacher and coach in Riverview. For *Teacher 3*, the perception of being overly watched and inspected by campus and district administration was identified as a key factor in their decision to pursue other employment.

Interestingly, burnout was not selected by a single respondent to the survey, however, two of the three interviewed participants discussed the role burnout had in their decision to leave teaching positions. *Teacher 1* reported panic attacks and burnout being the primary reason they would consider leaving their teaching position at RHS; *Teacher 3* cited burnout caused by “micromanagement” and the number of different course preps as being a factor leading to their decision to change career fields. Mawhinney and Rinke (2018) researched the role of guilt and shame in teachers who experience burnout and quit teaching positions. Because of possible feelings of guilt and shame in admitting how teachers feel overstressed, I’m curious if burnout is more common on our campus than was found through the survey. If so, I am eager to discover why teachers might not have wanted to share their feelings of stress and burnout.

Research Question 2

What do teachers identify as factors that contributed to their decisions to accept teaching positions?

The geographic location of RHS was the highest tallied response on the survey question about the factors impacting teachers' decisions to accept their position at RHS. Other top responses included: campus administration, salary, and personal connections. Two of the three interviewed participants and 15 out of the 19 survey participants cited the geographic location of RHS as a contributing factor to their decision to take the job offer at RHS. *Teacher 1* and *Teacher 2* both celebrated the natural beauty of the Texas Hill Country and appreciated the trees and natural landscape of the high school campus. Campus administrators represented the second highest tallied response on the survey question about accepting employment at RHS. All three interviewed participants shared their positive experiences and perceptions about the head principal on the high school campus. *Teacher 2* added commentary about the role of the Athletic Director and how administrative roles often carry the same, if not more, weight for coaches than head principals when deciding whether or not to accept a coaching position. Although *Teacher 3* addressed perceived campus administration micromanagement of teachers as a negative, more specifically they claimed to refer to assistant principals and district administrators rather than the head principal.

Salary considerations were chosen by 7 of the 19 survey participants. *Teacher 2* reflected they actually made more money teaching at RHS than their previous placement in a larger school district; *Teacher 3*, on the other hand, admitted to taking a decrease in pay in transitioning from the private work sector to education. They would be making more money in their new career than they would in education, although "money isn't the reason [they] wanted to leave" their

teaching position. Finally, of the six survey respondents adding their own written responses, four of them mentioned personal connections attracted them to RHS. Likewise, *Teacher 2* and *Teacher 3* both mentioned in their interviews they knew teachers and administrators at RHS prior to accepting the positions.

Informal conversations with the head principal and the superintendent of Riverview ISD revealed one of the goals of Riverview ISD is to be the highest paying school district in the area. The implementation of the Texas Incentive Allotment (TIA), a state-based program which provides teachers with levels of distinction and incentivizes those distinctions with additional funding to school districts added to teachers' salaries, is one step towards this goal. Although districts can allocate state funding in different ways, according to the documentation provided to the public, Riverview ISD has committed to providing teachers who earn distinctions with 90% of received funds (Teacher Incentive Allotment & Evaluation Practices, 2021).

Further, the head principal and associate superintendent both shared with me their willingness to bringing high priority candidates for job openings on tours of the local scenery. During my personal interview and those I have been involved with as a department lead and professional internship, I witnessed campus walking tours with interviewees in which they were allowed to walk the grounds of the high school and take in the nearby natural features.

Because personal connections with existing staff was frequently mentioned by the teachers during their interviews and the fact many teachers and other staff members at Riverview ISD come from neighboring school districts, it would be interesting to further study how leveraging personal and professional local networks might impact hiring practices. I know in other industries there are hiring referral financial incentives in which current employees might be compensated for helping bring in new hires, I wonder what similar incentives would look like if

Riverview ISD adopted a similar practice for high-needs teaching and staffing positions otherwise difficult to fill.

High school sports in Texas are arguably an important component of the high school experience. Numerous books, television shows, and Hollywood movies all attest to the power of the “Friday Night Lights” on building community pride, drawing financial revenue, and providing students opportunities to compete and collaborate through sport. In order to offer and be successful in those sports, campuses must hire coaches. More than anything to me, this study highlighted the need for further studies on the role of coaching and Athletic Directors on high school campus hiring decisions.

Research Question 3

What do teachers identify as strengths and areas of concern with their current employment position?

One of the most cited strengths of RHS based on analyzing data from the interviews was the positive aspects of the student population. All three interviewees shared beliefs praising students at RHS as great kids who “were well-behaved and eager to learn.” Similarly, all three participants in the interviews reflected on the familial nature of the campus and how teachers worked well together and seemed to have the same foundational values as one another. As aforementioned, another positive aspect about RHS is the geographic location and the attractive landscaping and natural beauty of the campus. However, as the transition to a P-TECH campus unfolds, teachers who were interviewed expressed concerns about burnout due to higher expectations and course loads, over-management by campus and district administration, and a perception about how communication lines between upper administration and campus teachers needs improvement.

Although there were focus groups with teachers as members during the P-TECH planning process, the three major concerns appear to revolve around the need for teachers to be heard and involved in campus decisions. If teachers have a voice in course and campus academic expectations, there might be fewer instances of burnout because teachers would have been involved in the pre-planning of the courses. *Teacher 1* and *Teacher 3* both reported in their interviews feelings of stress due to course-load choices. *Teacher 1* reported stress due to the “uncertainty of what classes [they] were going to teach.” *Teacher 3* maintained “just because I *can* [emphasis theirs] teach different courses, doesn’t mean that I should teach all of them.” Likewise, concerns of micro- or over-management might be alleviated if teachers were allowed to take ownership of their personal professional development and the campus better utilized peer leadership and cooperative learning among teachers. *Teacher 1*, as someone who previously taught at early college high schools, had “insight” into the “struggles” and “needs” teachers are going to face as RHS begins P-TECH implementation. They felt as though “teachers who have been through this already” could provide more “advice and support” if they were “involved in [teacher] development.” Finally, the desire for improved communication lines appears to signify teachers want to be involved in decision-making and understand the direction of the campus. *Teacher 2* expressed in their interview they were eager to do anything for students, “just explain to me the how and the why of what we’re doing.”

Interaction between the Research and the Context

How the context impacted the results

Several changes in campus administration personnel impacted the results and the study itself. Initially, I expected concerns about COVID and the shift to the early college model to be the most significant factors teachers would report in their decision about whether or not to

remain at RHS. However, after completing the campus survey, the Athletic Director (AD) decided to retire from education. This one decision directly impacted the employment decisions of several teacher on campus who also coach in the athletic program. Only one coach who responded to the survey was willing to participate in the follow up interview. As such, they were selected to provide insight into the unique situation high school coaches navigate with regards to employment decisions. I spoke with other coaches about their inclination to not participate in interviews. The primary concern from several of them being it is a small campus and people would be able to ascertain who participated based on what might be said and then reported. These coaches did not want to say things about the outgoing AD or the new AD which could possibly impact their future employment or coaching duties. As the 2021/2022 school year begins, at least five high school teacher/coaches decided to pursue other employment outside of Riverview ISD. Because we are a connected school in which teachers/coaches might have classes at both RHS and Riverview Middle School, the impact on teacher retention would be even higher if I had considered middle school teaching/coaching positions in this study.

Additionally, after interviews were completed, the middle school principal, middle school assistant principal, and high school assistant principal all changed their employment status. Of the four campus administrators during the 2020/2021 school year, only one will remain in their same position for the ensuing school year. Two of the campus leaders decided to leave the school district entirely, and one administrator accepted a new position as the campus counselor for the middle school. As mentioned previously in this report, Riverview ISD and Hillside ISD often poach employees from one another. The new campus principal for Riverview Middle School and the new assistant principal for RHS are both former employees of Hillside ISD. While these

campus administrator changes did not directly impact this study, they do highlight the fluid nature of employment at all campus levels.

How the research impacted the context

During the planning and implementation phases of the study, I worked closely with three members of district leadership: the Riverview ISD Superintendent, the Assistant Superintendent, and the RHS Principal. My interactions with the RHS Principal were particularly fruitful resources. On numerous occasions we discussed the ongoing process and they offered suggestions for questions I might ask during the interviews that would yield beneficial responses. It was upon their suggestion I selected the aforementioned coach/teacher as one of the participants for the interview portion of the study.

Upon completion of the interviews, I shared preliminary findings with all three leaders, and have since shared the full report with them. Geographic location was found to be one of the major factors impacting teachers' decisions on accepting teaching positions at RHS. The campus Principal and Assistant Superintendent both mentioned for major district positions a portion of the interview might involve driving the candidate along the river and into the scenic hills surrounding our campus and community. At this time, teachers are provided a walking tour of the RHS campus, but more sightseeing might be encouraged to promote the Hill Country beauty and lifestyle. With the recent development of a shortage of affordable housing options in the greater Hillside area, it might be in Riverview ISD's best interest to have recommendations for housing assistance ready for incoming hires.

Secondly, quality of communication between district and campus leadership and teaching staff was found to be an area of concern for teachers who participated in the study. One impact of COVID on the RHS campus was monthly faculty meetings were cancelled in lieu of utilizing

Department Chairs as communication liaisons. Department Chairs and campus administrators would hold weekly meetings and then Department Chairs would share out information from those meetings to their respective departments during Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings. Issues arose as a result of secondhand presentation of information, because not all teachers on campus were able to attend PLC meetings, and surrounding instances in which Department Chairs might not have had all the relevant information to share. For the upcoming 2021/2022 school year, the campus Principal has promised to resume monthly in-person faculty meetings and weekly email blasts highlighting the successes of the previous week and providing a calendar and expectations for the upcoming week.

Finally, program and faculty impacts will need to be monitored by district and campus leaders as the implementation of the whole campus P-TECH model begins with the Fall 2021 ninth grade cohort. All three interview participants noted the increased expectations placed upon teachers as an important factor in their continued employment. One of the participants expressed overall concern based on the stress and scrutiny placed on students and staff in a P-TECH model. Another referenced stress-induced burnout as a future problem as teachers work to get nearly all students to be college ready and to obtain successfully passing grades in college classes at the 10th and 11th grade levels. *Teacher 2* shared those teachers and students were promised extracurricular activities and the athletic program would not be negatively impacted by more students taking an increased number of college and career pathway courses. They indicated if the athletic program were to be negatively impacted (through reduced student involvement or limiting the number of sports or individual games that students are able to participate in), they would definitely consider leaving the district.

Discussion of Results in Relation to the Extant Literature

Salary

Previous researchers found teachers might take jobs at a different campus if there was the expectation of a salary boost (Hancock, 2016; Ingersoll, 2001, Raab, 2018). Economic reasons, including an increase in pay, was also found to be a contributing factor to teachers' decisions to leave previous job placements in the current study. Financial reasons tied for the most cited response in a teachers' decision to leave their previous job and was the third most selected factor identified as impacting teachers' decisions to accept their current position at RHS.

In their interview, *Teacher 2* made mention of the fact they would be making more money at RHS than their previous job, despite Riverview ISD being a smaller and more rural school district. *Teacher 3* also spoke to salary considerations but did not compare school district to school district; instead, they discussed their employment and salary experiences in the private sector and the ways in which the job market necessitated their switching careers.

RHS maintains one of the highest base salaries for teachers in the area and offers numerous opportunities for additional stipends (including extra money for graduate degrees, academic coaching, testing tutorials, athletic coaching, and teaching in high-needs areas). By entering the district as a participant in the Texas Incentive Allotment for teachers, Riverview ISD leadership looks to continue to offer competitive salaries to teachers and staff.

Campus Support Systems

The tabulation of the survey data and analysis of the interview data mirrors research undertaken by Buchanan (2012) and Redding and Henry (2018) who found campus administrative support systems are a contributing factor to teachers' employment decisions. Tabulation of the survey data indicated the impression of campus administration was the second

highest tallied response for why teachers chose to accept a teaching position at RHS.

Administrative support from campus leadership was also the second highest tallied response on the survey question asking about factors impacting teachers' decisions to leave their previous teaching positions. Responses to the open-ended section of the survey questions also spoke to the importance of a campus' administration team, with some participants explicitly stating the awareness of or previous positive interactions with principals influenced their decision to accept the job at RHS. Although I did not initially plan for the Athletic Director to be considered a part of the campus administration team, it was evident from the open-ended responses and from interview data that at RHS the Athletic Director holds strong pull with regards to the recruitment and retention of teachers who are also athletic coaches.

All three interview participants expressed concerns about communication between campus and district administration and teachers; however, they all also noted feeling supported by campus leaders (although *Teacher 3* only reported feeling supported by the head campus principal). Ford et al. (2019) found among teachers, administrative support could also refer to allowing teachers to have autonomy and be able to work as professionals; *Teacher 3's* reported experiences shed light on the increased involvement by the campus administrative team does not necessarily equal supporting teachers as individuals and content experts.

Burnout

Ford et. al (2019) found empathetic and supportive campus leadership might be able to reduce feelings of stress and burnout experienced by teachers. As mentioned above, survey responses and interview data all seem to indicate teachers believe current campus leadership supports teachers inside and outside of the classroom. However, two of the three interview participants did discuss the role of stress and burnout on their employment decisions.

Teacher 1 shared how poor campus leadership and persistent negative student behaviors led to feelings of stress and burnout to the extent they had panic and anxiety attacks requiring medical attention during the school year. Although they felt comfortable with the status quo at RHS, they mentioned they had concerns about the future implementation of the early campus model with regards to additional duties and expectations placed onto already hard-working teachers. They further said one of the only factors possibly causing them to want to leave RHS is if levels of stress and burnout returned to the levels causing their anxiety and panic attacks.

Teacher 3 remarked about their perception of campus and district leadership's micromanagement and how this management style was causing feelings of stress and performance anxiety. Furthermore, they felt additional expectations put on both teachers and students to meet the requirements of an early college high school model were not worth the time and energy they spent on preparation and teaching. As a teacher in specialized field, Teacher 3 also felt stress due to the number of different assigned course preps, including gathering materials, preparing assignments, grading, and submitting individual lesson plans for each course.

Student discipline

Buchanan (2012) and Dirhangi (2019) both connected teachers experiences with poor student discipline with feelings of exhaustion and burnout among teachers. As previously discussed, feelings of burnout are associated with teacher's decisions to leave jobs. Analysis of the data collected through my survey revealed issues regarding student discipline as the third highest tabulated response to the factors teachers identified as contributing to their decision to leave a teaching position. Negative student behavior was cited by two of the interview participants as contributing to their decision to leave previous teaching positions. In one case,

students were engaging in stereotypical bad behaviors (foul language, fighting, vandalism, tardiness, etc.); however, in the other case, high performing students were seen by the teacher to openly challenge teachers on grading and assignments. Interestingly, all three interview participants raved about the student discipline issues at RHS. In some manner, each teacher shared their beliefs concerning how students at RHS were well-behaved and held to high standards of behavior by the campus administration team.

Teacher Characteristics

Much research exists on novice teachers and job attrition. However, this study did not focus on the experiences of novice teachers due to the limited number of prospective candidates at RHS. Glennie et al. (2016) found experienced teachers may be more likely to quit teaching positions at early college high school campuses; although there were other factors mentioned, *Teacher 3* did share they had serious disagreements with the whole campus early college high school model and the upcoming shift did contribute to their decision to not only quit their job at RHS, but leave the education profession entirely. *Teacher 3* also provided a case sample countering Stinebrickner's (1998) findings about the increased longevity of male teachers in the teaching profession who might earn more money in other career fields. According to *Teacher 3*, they quit their private sector job to take a career in education in part because of a spiritual calling to serve others, but also due to the economic crash of 2008. *Teacher 3* also revealed they might have left education sooner if it was economically viable to return to their previous profession.

Teacher as Athletics Coach

A significant amount of research exists about the dual roles teachers who also coach athletics face in education. Findings from prior studies suggested coaches self-identify their role of coach over the role of teacher during their individual athletic seasons (Millslagle & Morley,

2004; Richards & Templin, 2012; Templin et al., 1994). However, at small schools, coaches often do not just coach one event over a small portion of the year. It is not uncommon for a football coach, for example, to then coach basketball, and finally coach a track and field event. In that scenario, the entire school year would be considered an athletic season.

Similar to findings of Millslagle and Morley (2004) and the experience of the teacher participant in Templin et al. (2004), *Teacher 2* shared they became a teacher because they wanted to coach athletics. Further, they emphasized when they make employment decisions, it is not based upon teaching assignments or academic responsibilities, but rather which sports and coaching positions within those sports are available, as well as coaching stipends.

Discussion of Personal Lessons Learned

As a teacher in Texas and as someone who was educated in the Texas school system, I always knew in the back of my mind high school athletics programs have an impact on school hiring practices, but I never realized the extent to which coaching positions shape the hiring process. The biggest upheaval of employment on our campus this year came as the result of changing Athletic Directors. This disruption had little to nothing to do with the quality of the teacher as a classroom educator, but rather decisions seem to have been made based upon shifting coaching duties and the ability to mesh with the new Athletic Director and their program philosophy.

It was interesting to learn the myriad of reasons teachers chose to take employment at RHS. I was shocked at how much geographic location played into people's decisions to accept employment. Rural schools traditionally have a tougher time recruiting and retaining quality teachers due to their distance from urban centers. Through this study I revealed in the case of Riverview, the rural, riverside, Hill Country served as a selling point for recruiting teachers.

When my wife and I decided to move out of the a nearby metropolis's suburbs and out to the Texas Hill Country, we were looking for a slower pace of life and to get closer to nature. The natural beauty of the Texas Hill Country appeared to provide a draw of talent from larger cities. I remember when I first visited the Riverview ISD webpage, it had typical pictures of students and images from inside of the building. In the past two years, the website has undergone significant changes and now prominently features drone-filmed aerial videos of the campus, the nearby river and the athletic facilities (football field, baseball field, and track).

I think it is easy for teachers to feel confined to the four walls of a classroom and experience isolation from their peers and others' experiences, even within a small campus. This study, for me, highlighted how by talking about our individual and shared experiences regarding employment, teachers might feel connected to one another and have their thoughts and feelings validated, thus leading them to remain in their current teaching positions.

One shocking conclusion from this study was the limited impact COVID-19 had on teachers' employment decisions at RHS. During the course of the 2020/2021 school year, the vast majority of students were in-person learners. Only a handful of students at any given time were digital learners due to COVID-19 quarantine protocols. Inside the school, social distancing was enforced as much as possible and masks were required to be worn by students and staff for most of the school year. In March, the COVID-19 vaccines were encouraged for staff, but not required; and, after returning from spring break in the middle of March, mask wearing was declared by the school board to be optional for both students and staff. COVID-19 was not mentioned in any context during the survey nor the individual interviews.

Implications for Practice

Connections to the Context

Through this study I built upon the existing literature about teacher attrition and retention on a localized scale. RHS, though in many ways a typical small, rural high school, has several unique characteristics possibly providing a further influence on teachers' employment decisions. For one, Riverview's close association with the larger community of Hillside allows for relatively easy transfer from one school district to the other. Additionally, Riverview's location near state parks and alongside the river and its popularity as a tourist destination also could have impacted the study in ways such that the results might not be transferrable to other small, rural high schools.

There were a few results from the study which add credibility to current practices at RHS. Interpretation of the results from the study help affirm the marketing direction of the Riverview ISD website and interview practices in which candidates are shown natural attractions and popular tourist destinations in and around Riverview. Further, the results of the study suggested the high school campus principal exerts a positive influence on interviewees who accept teaching positions at RHS and also among existing teachers on the campus.

Connections to the Field of Study

Prepopulated multiple-choice selections on the survey portion of the study were drawn from the literature's often cited factors influencing teacher attrition. The relatively small number of open-ended responses to multiple choice questions seems to confirm pre-existing research on teacher attrition. Data from the interview portion of this study also supported previous findings about teachers' feelings about leaving and accepting teaching positions. Burnout, financial considerations (including salary), the role of family, campus support systems, and student

discipline were all mentioned by the interview participants as factors impacting their employment decisions.

One area not fully investigated through this study was the experiences of novice teachers. A vast array of research on the topic of teacher attrition highlights the unique experiences of teachers with under three years of teaching experience. However, of the 19 responses to the survey question about years of service, only one teacher reported being a beginning teacher, and one other reported between two and five years of teaching experience. With slightly over 89% of respondents reflecting six or more years of teaching experience and over 73% of participants claiming 11 – 30 years of teaching experience, RHS may be an outlier with regards to levels of teaching experience. Two of the interview participants had between 11 and 20 years of teaching experience and the third participant had between 21 and 30 years of teaching experience. As a result, this study did not add to the body of knowledge about novice teachers, but rather focused on the experiences of veteran teachers.

Lessons Learned

My personal experiences with employment in the teaching profession originally led me to pursue a doctorate in education. I originally wanted to understand if my personal story was really all that unique, or if the scenario in which a teacher quits education and then later returns and finds success as a teacher was more common than I was originally led to believe. Education course professors for preservice teachers often share studies about the precipitous teacher attrition occurring within the first five years of teaching. But what happens to those teachers after they quit? This question drove me to pursue further education providing me the skills, resources, and drive to find an answer.

When I first proposed my study to my doctoral committee, I was informed the focus and breadth of my proposal was more suited for a Ph.D. track, which would allow me to venture into the theoretical aspects of the question. To continue on the course I chose as an Ed.D. student, I would need to realign my study within the scope of action research traditions and work to understand the issue on a microlevel at my current teaching location. This conversation shifted everything for me. From that moment, I was able to take my interest in teachers' employment decisions and create something directly and, hopefully, positively impacting my school district, my campus, my co-teachers, and, most importantly, my students.

I tried to enter the research process with as open a mind as I could. I knew my personal experiences, I scoured the existing literature about teacher attrition and retention, but I wanted to keep an open mind. Riverview, Texas is not like other towns; the 2020/2021 school year was unlike any other year due to COVID-19 and the implementation of synchronous, asynchronous, and other forms of hybrid online/in-person learning; and each individual teacher has a unique story to tell about their employment experiences. And, while there were quite a few findings in my study aligned with existing research and my own personal experiences, there were also several new topics of interest emerged regarding the role of geography in rural schools' ability to recruit teachers and attrition and retention of teachers who also coach athletics. These topics will hopefully serve as the seeds for further studies.

Recommendations

This study built upon the existing literature about teacher attrition and retention on a localized scale. Riverview High School, though in many ways a typical small, rural high school, has several unique characteristics influencing on teachers' employment decisions. Although I presented data from this study building upon and affirming previous research findings, there are

a few areas I feel need further investigation in order to better understand teachers' experiences with employment mobility.

One area for further study is the experience of teachers who are also coaches and the role sports programs and athletic leadership has on teacher recruitment, retention, and attrition. I was able to find studies addressing the educational roles and responsibilities of teachers who are also athletic coaches, however, I was not able to locate much outstanding research on how coaching impacts employment decisions among teachers. While this topic would be ripe for investigation at high school campuses of all sizes and locations, I am particularly interested in smaller campuses (those with fewer than 30 full time teachers on staff) in which teachers who are also coaches might make up nearly half of the teaching staff.

Another area for further exploration not explored in detail in my study are the experiences of teachers who have left the teaching profession and then returned to the classroom. There were four respondents to the survey who indicated they had left the education profession in the past, one of whom was selected for the interview portion of the study. Despite the anecdotal stories about how teachers' salaries are low, three of the open-ended responses to the interview related to how salary considerations were a factor bringing teachers back to the education profession. Particularly in rural school environments, the public school may be one of the top job opportunities for salary and benefits, such as insurance and retirement. I found this data especially fascinating and it made me think about small town economic factors, such as limited employment opportunities, impacting employment decisions.

Finally, although COVID-19 dramatically affected the national conversation about teachers, the pandemic did not seem to have much of an impact on teachers' employment decisions at RHS. Anecdotally, we did have a more difficult time finding substitute teachers than

normal, and teachers were asked by administrators to help cover classes during conference periods. Since substitute teachers are frequently older in age and/or retired teachers, future studies might investigate how substitute teaching was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. I had conversations with substitute teachers on our campus who shared they did not feel safe working on school campuses during the pandemic. One remaining question is when, if ever, will those substitute teachers return to the classroom?

Closing Thoughts

Anderson et al. (2007, p. 7) argued “action research [is] an opportunity to make the voices of those who work closest to the classroom heard.” At a campus where teachers reported communication between administration and teachers is an area in need of improvement, my hope is the voices of teachers on my campus have been heard as a result of this study. Since the 2021/2022 school year began, I can already see where campus administration has taken the lead on many of the issues and bright points presented through my research. The district website showcases the landscape around RHS’s campus; the head principal has begun weekly emails highlighting important events and directives for the upcoming week; finally, the new assistant principal has put together a full newsletter highlighting campus initiatives and recognizes teachers on campus and our organizations. Teachers have also taken charge and have begun a campus spirit organization for teachers to continue to build camaraderie and support one another during stressful times.

Looking ahead, I can see how action research could be utilized to help teachers guide campus decision-making. It feels as though many campus and district decisions are knee jerk reactions to internal issues, such as low standardized test scores or student discipline issues, or, are made in response to external factors, such as new legislation, school board decisions, or

pandemics. As a teacher, one often hears teachers are “life-long learners;” how powerful for teachers to learn the way in which we know students learn best – through active, real-world, relevant activities. I am excited to help employ research about best practices on our own campuses in the coming years.

With regards to the brunt of this study, that is to say teachers’ experiences with employment mobility, I have learned a myriad of factors influence teachers’ decisions to leave: money, family, faith, friends, geographic location, support systems, and job opportunities. That said, I no longer believe the discussion about solutions to lowering teacher attrition or increasing teacher retention can be accomplished with a one-size-fits-all mindset or exit-interview protocol. To truly retain teachers, campus and district leadership must get to know their teachers to ensure each teachers’ needs and concerns are heard and support is provided. This current study supported other researchers’ findings when teachers feel they are a part of the decision-making process and feel supported through job growth opportunities and salary, teachers may be less likely to leave. However, in some cases there maybe be nothing a campus can do to retain teachers. In short, life happens and, in the end, as illustrious as many in the education profession like to make it, teaching is just a job.

My final thought is one of appreciation for my campus principal, my district superintendent, my co-teachers and friends, my students, my professors, my wife, and the opportunity to branch beyond the four walls of my classroom to hopefully make a difference in my community and maybe inspire others to do to the same for their communities.

REFERENCES

- American Community Survey. (2018). *2018: ACS 5-year estimates data profiles*.
https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=Ingram%20texas&g=1600000US4836032&hidePreview=false&tid=ACSDP5Y2018.DP05&vintage=2018&layer=VT_2018_160_00_PY_D1&cid=DP05_0001E
- Azano, A. P., & Stewart, T. T. (2016). Confronting challenges at the intersection of rurality, place, and teacher preparation: Improving efforts in teacher education to staff rural schools. *Global Education Review*, 3(1), 108-128.
- Bhattacharya, K. (2017). *Fundamentals of qualitative research*. Routledge.
- Beaudin, B. Q. (1993). Teachers who interrupt their careers: Characteristics of those who return to the classroom. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 15(1), 51-64.
- Beaudin, B. Q. (1995). Former teachers who return to public schools: District and teacher characteristics of teachers who return to the districts they left. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 17(4), 462-475.
- Buchanan, J. (2012). Telling tales out of school: Exploring why former teachers are not returning to the classroom. *Australian Journal of Education*, 56(2), 205-217.
- Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory*. SAGE.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). SAGE.
- Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2018). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (3rd ed.). SAGE.

- Dahlkamp, S., Peters, M. L., & Schumacher, G. (2017). Principal self-efficacy, school climate, and teacher retention: A multi-level analysis. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, 63(4), 357-376.
- Dirghangi, C. (2019). Mindful self-inquiry: Preventing burnout in preservice English teachers through a tailored mindfulness-based curriculum. *The Virginia English Journal*, 69(1), 72-78.
- Ford, T., Olsen, J., Khojasteh, J., Ware, J., and Urick, A. (2019). The effects of leader support for teacher psychological needs on teacher burnout, commitment, and intent to leave. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 57(6), 615-634.
- Giorgi, A. (2009). *The descriptive phenomenological method in psychology: A modified Husserlian approach*. Duquesne University Press.
- Glazer, J. (2018). Learning from those who no longer teach: Viewing teacher attrition through a resistance lens. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 74, 62-71.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2018.04.011>
- Glennie, E. J., Mason, M., & Edmunds, J. A. (2016). Retention and satisfaction of novice teachers: Lessons from a school reform model. *Journal of Education and Training Studies*, 4(4), 244-258.
- Gunther, J. (2019). Quantifying the value teachers place on non-monetary factors when evaluating job opportunities. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 27(45), 1-31.
- Hancock, C. B. (2016). Is the grass greener? Current and former music teachers' perceptions a year after moving to different school or leaving the classroom. *Journal in Research in Music Education*, 63(4), 421-438. doi: 10.1177/0022429415612191

- Harfitt, G. J. (2015). From attrition to retention: A narrative inquiry of why beginning teachers leave and then rejoin the profession. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 43(1), 22-35, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1359866x.2014.932333>
- Harmsen, R., Helms-Lorenz, M., Maulana, R., & van Veen, K. (2018). The relationship between beginning teachers' stress causes, stress responses, teaching behaviour and attrition. *Teachers and Teaching*, 24(6), 626-643. <https://doi-org.srv=proxy2.library.tamu.edu/10.1080/13540602.2018.1465404>
- Harrell, P., Leavell, A., van Tassel, F., & McKee, K. (2004). No teacher left behind: Results of a five-year study of teacher attrition. *Action in Teacher Education*, 26(2), 47-59.
- Hill-Jackson, V., & Stamford, D. (Eds.). (2017). *Better teachers, better schools: What star teachers know, believe, and do*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age.
- Huk, O., Terjesen, M. D., & Cherkasova, L. (2019) Predicting teacher burnout as a function of school characteristics and irrational beliefs. *Psychology in the Schools*, 56(5), 792-808. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.22233>
- Ingersoll, R. M. (2001). Teacher turnover and teacher shortages: An organizational analysis. *American Educational Research Journal*, 38(3), 499-534.
- Ingersoll, R. M., & Smith, T. M. (2003). The wrong solution to the teacher shortage. *Educational Leadership*, 60(8), 30-33.
- Ingram Independent School District. (2021). Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA) & Evaluation Practices 2021-2022. <https://www.ingramisd.net/site/handlers/filedownload.ashx?moduleinstanceid=2724&dataid=2309&FileName=Ingram%20ISD%20TIA%20Teacher%20Guidebook%202021-2022.pdf>

- Ivankova, N. V. (2015). *Mixed methods applications in action research*. SAGE.
- Johnson, S. M., & Birkeland, S. E. (2003). Pursuing a “sense of success”: New teachers explain their career decisions. *American Educational Research Journal*, *40*(3), 581-617.
- Kim, L. E., Jorg, V., & Klassen, R. M. (2019). A meta-analysis of the effects of teacher personality on teacher effectiveness and burnout. *Educational Psychology Review*, *31*(1), 163-195. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-018-9458-2>
- Kukla-Acevedo, S. (2009). Leavers, movers, and stayers: The role of workplace conditions in teacher mobility decisions. *The Journal of Educational Research*, *102*(6), 443-452.
- Lawrence, D. F., Loi, N. M., & Gudex, B. W. (2019). Understanding the relationship between work intensification and burnout in secondary teachers. *Teachers and Teaching*, *25*(2), 189-199. doi: 10.1080/13540602.2018.1544551
- Lee, Y. H. (2019). Emotional labor, teacher burnout, and turnover intention in high-school physical education teaching. *European Physical Education Review*, *25*(1), 236-253. doi: 10.1177/1356336x17719559
- Macdonald, D. (1999). Teacher attrition: A review of literature. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *15*, 835-848.
- Makhdoom, I. F., Atta, M., & Malik, N. I. (2019). Counterproductive work behaviors as an outcome of job burnout among high school teachers. *Bulletin of Education and Research*, *41*(2), 79-92
- Maslach, C. M., Jackson, S. E., & Leiter, M. P. (1996). *Maslach burnout inventory manual* (3rd ed.). Palo Alto: Consulting Psychologist Press.

- Mawhinney, L., & Rinke, C. R. (2018). I just feel so guilty: The role of emotion in former urban teachers' career paths. *Urban Education, 53*(9), 1079-1101. doi: 10.1177/0042085917741726
- Miller, L. C. (2012). Situating the rural teacher labor market in the broader context: A descriptive analysis of the market dynamics in New York State. *Journal of Research in Rural Education, 27*(13), 1-31.
- Millslagle, D. & Morley, L. (2004). Investigation of role retreatism in the teacher/coach. *Physical Educator, 61*(3), 120-130.
- Moffa, E. D., & McHenry-Sorber, E. (2018). Learning to be rural: Lessons about being rural in teacher education programs. *Rural Educator, 39*(1), 26-40.
- Plano Clark, V. L., & Ivankova, N. V. (2016). *Mixed methods research: A guide to the field*. SAGE
- Putnam, H., Walsh, K., & National Council on Teacher Quality. (2019). A fair chance: Simple step to strengthen and diversify the teacher workforce. In *National Council on Teacher Quality*.
- Raab, R. R. (2018). A statistic's five years: A story of teacher attrition. *Qualitative Inquiry, 24*(8), 583-591. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800417729849>
- Redding, C., & Henry, G. T. (2018). New evidence on the frequency of teacher turnover: Accounting for within-year turnover. *Educational Researcher, 47*(9), 577-593. doi: 10.3102/0013189X18814450
- Richards, A. R., & Templin, T. J. (2012). Toward a multidimensional perspective on teacher-coach role conflict. *Quest, 64*(3), 164-176. doi: 10.1080/00336297.2012.693751

- Rinke, C. R., & Mawhinney, L. (2017). Insights from teacher leavers: Push and pull in career development. *Teaching Education*, 28, 360-376. doi: 10.1080/10476210.2017.1306047
- Ronfeldt, M., Loeb, S., & Wyckoff, J. (2013). How teacher turnover harms student achievement. *American Educational Research Journal*, 50(1), 4-36. doi: 10.3102/0002831212463813
- Sindelar, P. T., Pua, D. J., Fisher, T., Peyton, D. J., Brownell, M. T., & Mason-Williams, L. (2018). The demand for special education teachers in rural schools revisited: An update on progress. *Rural Special Education Quarterly*, 37(1), 12-20.
- Smith, T. M., & Ingersoll, R. M. (2004). What are the effects of induction and mentoring on beginning teacher turnover? *American Educational Research Journal*, 41(3), 681-714. doi: 10.3102/00028312041003681
- Sorensen, L. C., & Ladd, H. F. (2020). The hidden cost of teacher turnover. *AERA Open*, 6(1), 1-24. <https://doi-org.srv-proxy1.library.tamu.edu/10.1177%2F2332858420905812>
- Stinebrickner, T. R. (1998). An empirical investigation of teacher attrition. *Economics of Education Review*, 17(2), 127-136.
- Stringer, E. T. (1999). *Action Research* (2nd ed.). Sage Publications.
- Struyven, K., & Vanthournout, G. (2014). Teachers' exit decisions: An investigation into the reasons why newly qualified teachers fail to enter the teaching profession or why those who do enter do not continue teaching. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 43, 37-45. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2014.06.002>
- Teacher Incentive Allotment. *Funding*. Retrieved from <https://tiatexas.org/about-teacher-incentive-allotment/funding-allocations-map/>

Templin, T. J. Sparkes, A., Grant, B., & Schempp, P. (1994). Matching the self: The paradoxical case and life history of a late career teacher/coach. *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education*, 13(3), 274-294. doi: 10.1123/jtpe.13.3.274

Texas Education Agency. 2020-2022 *Grow Your Own Grant Program, Cycle 3*. Texas Education Agency. Retrieved from <https://tea4avoswald.tea.state.tx.us/grantopportunities/forms/grantprogramsearch.aspx>

Texas Education Agency. (2012). *2011-12 Academic Excellence Indicator System* [PDF file]. Retrieved from https://rptsvr1.tea.texas.gov/cgi/sas/broker?_service=marykay&_program=perf rept.perfmast.sas&prgopt=2012%2Faeis%2Falltypec.sas&year4=2012&year2=12&topic=aeis&gifname=%26GIFNAME&title=AEIS%2BReport&level=campus&search=campback&third=0&sublevel=camp&pptype=PDF&campback=133904001+

Texas Education Agency. (2019). *2018-19 Texas Academic Performance Report* [PDF file]. Retrieved from https://rptsvr1.tea.texas.gov/cgi/sas/broker?_service=marykay&year4=2019&year2=19&_debug=0&single=N&batch=N&app=PUBLIC&title=2019+Texas+Academic+Performance+Reports&_program=perf rept.perfmast.sas&pptype=H&paper=N&level=campus&search=campname&namenum=ingram&campus=133904001&prgopt=2019%2Ftapr%2Fpaper_tapr.sas

U.S. Department of Agriculture. (2019). *Data documentation and methods*. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/rural-definitions/data-documentation-and-methods/>

U. S. Department of Education. (2018, March 20). *Small, Rural School Achievement Program*. U.S. Department of Education. <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/reapsrsa/index.html>

Vagle, M. D. (2018). *Crafting phenomenological research*. ProQuest Ebook Central.

<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com>

van der Want, A. C., den Brok, P., Beijaard, D., Brekelmans, M., Claessens, L. C. A., &

Pennings, H. J. M. (2019). The relation between teachers' interpersonal role identity and their self-efficacy, burnout and work engagement. *Professional Development in*

Education, 45(3), 488-501. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/19415257.2018.1511453>

Watlington, E., Shocklye, R., Guglielmino, P., & Felsher, R. (2010). The high cost of leaving:

An analysis of the cost of teacher turnover. *Journal of Education Finance*, 36(1), 22-27.

Willis, J. W., & Edwards, C. (Eds.). (2014). *Action research: Models, methods, and examples*.

ProQuest Ebook Central <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com>

APPENDIX A
IRB APPROVAL

DIVISION OF RESEARCH



NOT HUMAN RESEARCH DETERMINATION

February 18, 2020

Type of Review:	Initial Review Submission Form
Title:	High School Teachers' Experiences with Employment Mobility
Investigator:	Mary Margaret Capraro
IRB ID:	IRB2020-0145
Reference Number:	105880
Funding:	
Documents Received:	IRB Application (Human Research) - (Version 1.0)

Dear Mary Margaret Capraro:

The Institution determined that the proposed activity is not research involving human subjects as defined by DHHS and FDA regulations.

Further IRB review and approval by this organization is not required because this is not human research. This determination applies only to the activities described in this IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made you must immediately contact the IRB about whether these activities are research involving humans in which the organization is engaged. You will also be required to submit a new request to the IRB for a determination.

Please be aware that receiving a 'Not Human Research Determination' is not the same as IRB review and approval of the activity. IRB consent forms or templates for the activities described in the determination are not to be used and references to TAMU IRB approval must be removed from study documents.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB Administrative Office at 1-979-458-4067, toll free at 1-855-795-8536.

Sincerely,
IRB Administration

750 Agronomy Road, Suite 2701
1186 TAMU
College Station, TX 77843-1186
Tel. 979.458.1467 Fax. 979.862.3176
<http://rcb.tamu.edu>

APPENDIX B

INITIAL SURVEY INVITATION EMAIL

Hello RHS Teachers!

I'm excited to announce that I'm starting the action research phase of my doctoral program!

My research will explore the experiences that teachers have with employment and the factors that contribute to teachers' employment decisions.

My research design will follow two phases: 1) a survey to all RHS teachers to gather broad information about our campus, and 2) face-to-face interviews with 3 volunteers to tell more of their individual stories.

Since some of the questions deal with your employment decisions and your thoughts about our school and campus/district administration, your individual responses **will not** be seen by campus principals or district administration **or shared** with them. My reporting of data will anonymize participants as much as possible.

I would greatly appreciate your participation in the following survey. It shouldn't take more than 10 minutes of your time. I will collect responses through Friday, March 12.

<https://forms.gle/cS2XSS4cVbNxpg47>

Please let me know if you have questions about my research or the study.

Thanks and have a great weekend,

Bobby

APPENDIX C

FOLLOW-UP SURVEY EMAIL

Happy Monday!

Huge thank you to everyone who filled out the survey last week!

I still need quite a few more to fill it out so that I have a big enough sample size to justify my findings. If you could spare a few minutes and your honest thoughts, I'd really appreciate it! I'm planning to shut down the survey on Friday, so that I can start my write up on findings during spring break.

Here is the link again: <https://forms.gle/cS2XSS4cVbNxpfg47>

Thanks again!

Bobby

APPENDIX D

INITIAL SURVEY INSTRUMENT

8/16/2020

Teacher Employment Mobility Survey

Teacher Employment Mobility Survey

Thank you for participating in this exploratory survey about teachers' experiences with employment mobility. This survey will be used to inform my Record of Study about teacher employment mobility at Ingram Tom Moore High School. Results from the survey will be reported, but will remain anonymous. You may be asked to participate in follow-up interviews in spring 2021.

Participation in this survey and subsequent interviews is completely voluntary and will not affect your duties as a teacher at Ingram Tom Moore High School. IRB approval for this study has been granted by Texas A&M University and can be shared upon request.

* Required

1. Email address *

2. Your Name *

3. How many years of teaching experience do you currently have? *

Mark only one oval.

- Beginning teacher *Skip to question 14*
- 2 - 5 Years
- 6 - 10 Years
- 11 - 20 Years
- 21 - 30 Years
- More than 30 Years

4. Which of the following best describes your current teaching position? *

Mark only one oval.

- ELAR
- Math
- Science
- Social Studies
- Fine Arts
- CTE
- Other/Not Listed

5. In many different schools have you taught? *

Mark only one oval.

- 1 - I've only taught at Ingram Tom Moore High School *Skip to question 18*
- 2 - 5
- 6 - 10
- More than 10

6. Have you ever left the teaching profession? *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes *Skip to question 11*
- No

Other School
Employment

This section asks about your other teaching assignments at other school campuses.

7. Which of the following best describes previous school employment placements?
(Select all that apply) *

Check all that apply.

- Rural campus
- Urban campus
- Suburban campus
- Alternative learning center
- Early College campus

Other: _____

8. Which of the following best describes previous school employment placements?
(Select all that apply) *

Check all that apply.

- 500 or fewer students
- 501 - 1000 students
- 1001 - 2000 students
- Over 2000 students

9. Which of the following factors contributed to your decision to leave your prior
employment position? (Select all that apply) *

Check all that apply.

- Family reasons (birth of a new child, taking care of a family member, spend more time with family, etc.)
- Economic reasons (wanted a job with better pay)
- School culture (didn't mesh with the overall culture of the school)
- Student discipline
- Poor administration
- Burnout (too much stress tied to teaching)
- Job opportunity (wanted an opportunity different than the one assigned)

Other: _____

10. If you answered Other to prior question, please explain what factors contributed to your decision to leave your prior employment position.

**Profession
Change**

This section asks about your experience leaving and returning to the teaching profession.

11. Which of the following factors best describes your reason for leaving the teaching profession? *

Mark all factors that led to your decision.

Check all that apply.

- Family reasons (birth of a new child, taking care of a family member, spend more time with family, etc.)
- Economic reasons (wanted a job with better pay)
- School culture (didn't mesh with the overall culture of the school)
- Student discipline
- Poor administration
- Burnout (too much stress tied to teaching)
- Job opportunity (received a job offer in another field)
- Other

12. If you selected Other for the previous question, please share your experience.

13. Please describe the factors that led you to return to the teaching profession. *

Beginning Teacher

This section of the survey is for novice teachers.

14. Which of the following best describes your teaching certification program? *

Mark only one oval.

- Part of undergraduate education
- Alternative certification program through an Education Service Center
- Alternative certification program through another program

15. How many interviews did you attend? *

Mark only one oval.

- I only interviewed at ITM
- 2 - 5
- More than 5

16. Which of the following were factors that contributed to your decision to accept the ITM teaching position? *

Check all that apply.

- It was the only job offer I received
- Geographical location
- Student demographics
- Early college atmosphere
- Campus administration
- Salary

Other: _____

17. If you selected Other, please elaborate.

This is the last screen! You made it!

Final Section

18. As of right now, are you thinking about leaving ITM at the end of the 2020/2021 school year? (This will NOT be shared with campus administration) *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
 No
 I'm not sure

19. Would you be willing to be asked to participate in follow-up interviews in spring 2021? *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
 No

Thank you for participating in this study! I hope to have the full document completed in summer 2021 and will be happy to share it with you upon request.

This content is neither created nor endorsed by Google.

Google Forms