

**A CASE STUDY OF TEACHER RETENTION AT ONE
URBAN SCHOOL DISTRICT**

A Dissertation

by

ARCHIE L. BLANSON

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

May 2005

Major Subject: Curriculum and Instruction

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ABSTRACT

A Case Study of Teacher Retention at One Urban School District. (May 2005)

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Teacher attrition is a major topic of discussion and concern in this country. With the growth in the school-age population, the need to attract and retain quality teachers will become even greater. The purpose of this narrative inquiry was to explore factors that influenced teachers' decisions to remain in an urban school. A qualitative research design was used by conducting one interview with 13 teachers in an intermediate school (5th & 6th grades) in an urban school district near Houston, Texas.

The participants' years of experience in this study ranged from 5-33 years. They presented a diverse range of age, career experiences, and cultural/ethnic backgrounds. Data were collected through audio-taped interviews that lasted 45-90 minutes conducted in their classrooms before or after school. Additional follow-up questions and clarification statements were obtained from the participants where it was warranted. The transcribed interviews and the follow-up questions were analyzed using the Labov method of structuring narratives into stories. This method was used in order to compare participants' narratives to identify emergent themes among the rich stories that the participants shared with me.

The findings are presented as three emerging themes on why teachers choose to remain in an urban school. These themes were recurrent and dominant throughout the narratives. Participants generally felt that there were three main reasons why they remained to teach in this urban school. Those three reasons manifested themselves in the form of themes. Those three dominant themes were: (a) making a difference in the lives of young people, (b) having no reason to leave, and (c) having administrative support, which was the leading factor that influenced teachers to remain in an urban school. Each theme had several supporting themes that were explored also. Implications for practice and recommendations for further study were also discussed.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the memory of my sister, Lenda McLeod, who did not have the opportunity to attain the educational goals that she so desired, but who took great joy in her siblings' educational achievements.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am deeply appreciative of the efforts of many individuals who provided guidance and support over the years and during my tenure at Texas A&M University.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	iii
DEDICATION	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vii
LIST OF TABLES	x
LIST OF FIGURES	xi
 CHAPTER	
I INTRODUCTION	1
Statement of the Problem	14
Statement of the Purpose	14
Significance of the Study	15
Assumptions	15
Limitations of the Study	16
Research Questions	16
Definition of Terms	16
Summary	18
II REVIEW OF LITERATURE	19
Teacher Turnover Trends, Characteristics, and Statistics	24
The Reasons Why Teachers Leave the Profession	27
Why Teachers Stay	35
Teacher Mentoring	39
Staff Development	42
Urban Education, Teaching Children of Poverty	46
Teacher Preparation Programs	51
Alternative Certification Programs	54
Campus Leadership	56
Summary	59

TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)

CHAPTER		Page
III	METHODOLOGY	61
	The District.....	61
	Purposeful Sample.....	67
	Instrumentation.....	72
	Data Collection.....	75
	Research Design	77
	Data Analysis	79
	Member Check	85
	Limitations of the Study	85
	Summary	85
IV	FINDINGS.....	87
	Introduction	87
	Sarah’s Story: A Different World	89
	Scott’s Story: I Am Impressed	94
	Ashley’s Story: Coming Home	104
	Marcus’ Story: A Dream Comes True	108
	Amy’s Story: Becoming Part of the Solution.....	114
	Mary’s Story: Teaching Is in My Blood	125
	Gwendolyn’s Story: Service to Mankind	134
	Juergen’s Story: A Different World	141
	Laura’s Story: The Professional.....	150
	Stacy’s Story: Education Chose Me.....	158
	Nicholas’ Story: The Businessman	164
	Cynthia’s Story: Expecting and Getting the Best.....	168
	Gail’s Story: I Found My Place in Life.....	171
	Analysis.....	175
	Results	178
	Selves Presented in Participants’ Narratives.....	195
	Open-Door Policy	196
	Research Questions	197
V	SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS	200
	Summary	200
	A Unique District	205
	Recommendations	214
	Recommendations for Further Studies	218
	Conclusion.....	219

TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)

	Page
REFERENCES	220
APPENDIX A	241
APPENDIX B	244
APPENDIX C	247
VITA	250

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE		Page
1	Shift in the Aldine Independent School District Demographics Over a 28-Year Period.....	61
2	Aldine Independent School District Student Demographics.....	62
3	Parker Intermediate School's Student Achievement, 1994-2002	68
4	Participants' Demographic Information.....	71

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE		Page
1	Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) Reading Scores 1994-2002	63
2	Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) Math Scores 1994-2002	64
3	Emerging Themes	179

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Teacher retention has been found to be a major factor undermining the quality and stability of America's public education system (Boe, Bobbitt, & Cook, 1997). Teacher retention has been a serious problem for this country since the late 1950s (Scott, 1999). Teacher turnover rate in high poverty schools can be as much as 20%-50% higher than in more affluent ones (Ingersoll, 2001). In addition, teachers leave schools serving low-performing students at much higher rates than successful schools (Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 1999). The recent passage of The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 and its definition of a highly qualified teacher has added to the teacher shortage issue. The federal law defines highly qualified as teachers of core academic subjects who meet three basic requirements: (a) hold a bachelor's degree; (b) obtain full state certification, which can be "alternative certification"; and (c) demonstrate subject matter competency in the core academic subjects taught (U.S. Department of Education [USDOE], 2004). With the added expectation of student achievement of the NCLB for teachers factored in, it will be even more challenging to attract and retain quality teachers. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 requires states and local education agencies (LEAs) to have a plan for all teachers in core academic subject areas to become "highly qualified" by the end of the 2005-2006 school year.

The style for this dissertation follows that of *The Journal of Educational Research*.

Teachers hired after the first day of instruction of the school year 2002-2003 who taught core academic subjects in a Title I, Part A program, had to be highly qualified when hired (Fuller, 2002b). The NCLB Act defined highly qualified as: (a) having at least a bachelor's degree, (b) having full state certification, and (c) demonstrating competency in the core academic subject area assigned (USDOE, 2002). This act prohibits the use of local teaching permits and emergency permits that comprise on average 28% of the teaching staff in our nation's schools and as high as 50% in some of our urban schools (National Education Association [NEA], 1999). Hiring quality teachers is vital to the quality of education in this country.

Moreover, it is equally important that we retain quality teachers, especially experienced teachers who have so much to offer. Ingersoll (2002) reported that the teacher shortage problem is a result of retention and not early attrition. The report goes on to say that the retention issue is more pronounced in urban and rural schools where there are large populations of students of color. Simpson and Rosenholtz (1986) established that inexperienced teachers (those with less than three years of experience) are typically less effective than more senior teachers. Simpson and Rosenholtz argue that teachers tend to be more effective when they have more experience. Over two million new K-12 teachers will be employed in the United States over the next decade due to increased student enrollments, reduction in class size, and accelerating retirements among an aging teacher population (Darling-Hammond, 1997).

In Texas, due to the rapid growth in population, the teacher shortage and retention problem is even more widespread. Teacher retention has become a key focus

for school district human resource departments and school principals. Furthermore, teacher turnover is a costly ordeal. Nobscot Corporation (2000) gives the following example of how costly teacher turnover can be. A school system with approximately 10,000 teachers and an annual teacher turnover rate of 20% would stand to save approximately \$500,000 a year by reducing turnover by just one percentage point. Sparks (2000) stated that the high demand for teachers is not being driven by an undersupply of entering teachers, but by an excessive demand for teacher replacements that is driven by staggering teacher turnover. At the end of the 2001-2002 school year, there were 48,000 teaching vacancies in Texas for the 2002-2003 school year (Fuller, 2002b). These vacancies were a result of “baby boomers” retiring and the brightest students choosing careers that are more lucrative (Boe et al., 1997; National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 1996).

The lack of effective mentoring and internship programs are factors also in teacher retention. In many professions, such as medicine and law, for example, novices matriculate through an intensive internship or an extended training, development, and mentoring program before taking on the responsibilities of full professionals. Yet, teaching is one of the few professions that will allow graduates at the age of 21 to become managers of 18 to 150 people. To compound matters, teachers are isolated most of the day from their peers. This isolation can lead to teacher burnout or high teacher turnover (Recruiting New Teachers [RNT], 1999).

Texas colleges and universities produced 15,000 teachers through traditional teacher preparation programs during the 2002-2003 school year (Fuller, 2002b).

Alternative certification programs produced approximately 7,000 interns to start the 2003-2004 school year (Fuller, 2002b). In Texas, at the end of the 2002-2003 school year, there was a teacher shortage of 26,000. Most school districts were forced to recruit aggressively outside the state and offer incentives such as relocation supplements and critical need supplements. Some school districts recruited aggressively outside of the country.

One third of the teachers leave the profession during the first five years of service and 50% or more in urban schools (Fuller, 2002b). Ingersoll (2002) argues that the high rates of turnover have little to do with a graying workforce. He reports that as many as 33% of new hires leave teaching altogether in their first three years and 46% leave in the first five years. He also states in his report that the best and brightest are often among the first to leave. Almost half of all teacher turnover is due to dissatisfaction or teachers seeking different careers (Ingersoll, 2002). Of the teachers leaving because of dissatisfaction, 43% reported that inadequate support from their school administration was the main reason, and about a quarter said student-discipline problems drove them out of the profession.

For many years, educators and researchers have debated which variables influence teacher retention. Some reasons for the current teacher shortage include: (a) poor working conditions in the school, (b) lack of career opportunities for teachers, (c) lack of support from the administration and parents, (d) poor compensation, (e) poor performing school, and (f) lack of appreciation (National Commission on Teaching &

America's Future [NCTAF], 2003). In a study conducted by the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, two findings were identified:

1. Teacher shortage is a symptom of the teacher retention problem.
2. Hardest hit are urban, rural, and minority communities, which frequently struggle with a revolving door of under-qualified and under-experienced teachers (NCTAF, 2003).

Even though the statistics on teacher turnover are discouraging for the education profession, there are schools across this country in urban areas that are doing an effective job in retaining teachers. This study examined one urban school with a high teacher retention rate in order to learn the factors that influence teachers' decisions to remain in an urban school setting.

The difficulties of urban schools to attract and retain teachers have been well documented, but very little research has been done on why teachers with five plus years of experience remain in urban schools. This study identified factors that affect the retention of teachers with five plus years of experience in an urban school.

When competent, caring, and effective teachers leave urban schools for another profession, transfer to another school within the district, or move to an affluent school district, it becomes an issue of quality in educational opportunity.

The No Child left Behind Act of 2001 defines a highly qualified teacher as a teacher who (a) holds a bachelor's degree, (b) obtains full state certification by passing a rigorous state exam, and (c) demonstrates competency in the academic subject taught. But from a personal perspective, I have my own definition of a "highly qualified

teacher.” To me, a highly qualified teacher is a teacher who has a caring heart for children and has a strong desire or passion to make a difference in their lives. Caring represents an educational orientation that stresses the creation of a trusting relationship as the foundation for building an effective academic and social climate for schooling (Chaskin & Rauner, 1995; Eaker-Rich & Van Galen, 1996; Erickson, 1993). Naturally, this teacher would have also demonstrated a level of competency in teaching. As I look back on my many years of education, those were the qualities that my highly qualified teachers had. They inspired, encouraged, and expected the best from every child, and they did it from a caring perspective – not just saying that they care, but by demonstrating it every day by their efforts. I want every child to have and to keep their “highly qualified teacher,” as I have defined highly qualified. I want them to have caring teachers like the ones that I had; like Ms. Boatner, Ms. Dean, and Dr. Bradford. These three teachers spent over 110 years educating thousands of students because it was their passion in life. They remained in the profession, they did not move to more affluent schools, and they did not transfer to another campus. They overcame teacher burnout, despite the inequalities in educational opportunities for students of color and the social inequalities that they had to face personally.

I attended segregated public schools in the rural south the first half of my public school experience, during the early to late sixties. The facilities, transportation, food, instructional materials, were all below standards or nonexistent. There was never enough oil to keep the heat on throughout the winter. The custodian had to mop the floors with motor oil to keep down the dust. The restrooms were out doors. The school

board would not accept federal funds for free lunch, because accepting it would require the school system to integrate. Wisner, Louisiana is a farming town in northeast Louisiana. Integration did not come until 1970, despite the fact that 16 years earlier the United States Supreme Court decision in 1954 in *Brown vs. Board of Education* ordered this nation's schools integrated school "with all deliberate speed." My family members were sharecroppers, who had 40 plus acres to farm. As a result of having to work the farm, we did not have the opportunity to attend school on a regular basis. Other than when it rained or during six-week exams, we did not go to school. We had to work the fields, so going to school was a luxury that we could not afford; working the farm was a necessity and came first.

It became apparent to me the first day that I walked into my first grade classroom, that the teacher did not see the value in most of her students; she did not have a caring spirit for any child in her classroom. She saw nothing positive and seemed to be bothered with having a class to teach. My second and third grade teachers were more of the same, never bothering to show genuine concern for me, other than to find the right group in which to place me. I and others needed extra help because we did not attend school every day like other students. I needed more time because I had missed concepts, formulas, passages, definitions, examples; therefore, I had to work extra hard to close the gaps in my education. I do not remember one positive thing that any one of them ever said to me or any other student.

By the time that I was in fourth grade, I had very little use for school and had little motivation to do well. I had not been given what I needed to learn by the people

responsible for teaching me, and they saw nothing wrong with it; or worst, they did not care.

By that time, I thought that all teachers were the same: they gave attention to only a few, viewed teaching as a job and not a vocation, were mean, and had a dislike for children. I had to re-think my position and beliefs on teachers when I was assigned to Ms. Boatner's fourth grade class. She was a small lady, with a bright smile, and saw the good and the potential in every child. She knew the history of every child and knew just what each one needed to be successful in her class. The first thing that happened that caused me to have a change of heart about how I felt about teachers, was when we had our first spelling test. There were ten spelling words and I spelled only four correctly. When Ms. Boatner handed the corrected papers back to us, she stopped at my desk and said, "Great job, you got four right." By the way, I failed to mention that Ms. Boatner had one glass eye, and everybody knew it. I thought to myself, that she was looking out of the glass eye. I said to myself, "How can getting only four out of ten right be doing a great job?" But it was the first positive thing that a teacher had ever said to me, and it felt great. Even though I thought the teacher was seeing things that were not there, it still was a great feeling.

I had attended school for years, and I was just beginning to feel that I belonged there. I was beginning to believe that school was a place where the teachers cared about their students. Throughout the year, Ms. Boatner continued to make similar statements when I got six, eight, and all ten correct. There was no difference in the way she congratulated me for getting four correct, than when I got all ten correct.

Ms. Dean was my high school English teacher whose father was my elementary school principal. She expected every student in her class to excel and did everything that she knew how to accomplish that goal. She made us stay after school to work on papers and would make us correct them over and over until we did it right. When I walked in her class, I really wanted to be there; I wanted to be around her and listen to everything that she had to say about Shakespeare, Aristotle, James Baldwin, Langston Hughes, and literature in general. She saw things in her students that other teachers could not or would not see – which was always, potential. When we did not perform the way that she knew we could, she would be disappointed in us and we could see it in her face. We learned to do our very best all the time, because she always gave her very best. She was the only teacher that I had in high school, including the coaches who I had played sports for, for four years, who encouraged me to go to college, because she believed in me and my abilities.

Dr. Bradford was my college English professor, who made literature come to life by using contemporary comparison to arouse our interest. She knew every student's strengths and weaknesses and made sure that she gave us what we needed to do well in her class and in life also. She treated us with respect, as equals, and as though we were all her biological children. She did not see class, status, or race, just students who came to her to learn. She made learning new things challenging, interesting, and fun.

All of these educators showed a genuine concern for all of their students and did whatever it took to get the best out of them. They taught us to be proud of who we

were and to always do our best. They were caring educators who wanted equality for their students. They expected the same thing from us that our parents did. They looked for options to use to educate their students rather than excuses and giving up on them. They were well aware of the social injustices that students of color were facing in this country, and they did their part by preparing us through education. They were activists and advocates for us in and out of the classrooms. Their expectations for their students became a *self-fulfilling prophecy*, a term coined by Robert Merton (1948) that means that students perform in ways that teachers expect. He argues that student achievement and performance are based on overt and covert messages from teachers about students' worth, intelligence, and capability.

These three teachers that I have talked about were masters at boosting their students in all of the above areas. Those teachers had a caring approach to teaching, and they had a positive effect on my intellectual development. From that point on, I enjoyed school and excelled in it. These teachers loved their students and we felt it. Noddings (1988) stated that children will work harder for people they love and trust; he was right, we did. This perspective is called The Ethic of Caring (Noddings, 1992), which means that teachers make a moral commitment to care for and teach each and every student and to develop reciprocal relationships with them. In a caring school environment, teachers are more concerned with the development of the whole person, regardless of the subject that the student is taking (Pang, 2001). Pang also stresses the need to bring culture into the classroom by incorporating it into the curriculum and day-to-day instructions. Her premise is that our culture does matter and is important

and should be used to help educate children instead of ignoring it. Pang (2001) argues that culture shapes who we are and how we see and interpret the world, and it is important for educators to know and appreciate the culture of their students. The concept of caring-centered education, Pang (2001) states, is built upon the importance of building trusting relationships and understanding between students and teachers. Pang (2001) identifies fundamental beliefs of Caring-Centered Multicultural Education as follows:

- Relationships are reciprocal and built on trust.
- Trusting relationships form the basis and context for teaching and learning.
- Teachers and students feel an interconnection with each other. Each is concerned with the well-being of the other, and within this context a community of learners is created.
- Intellectual development is seen through diverse lenses and stimulated through diverse methods.
- Culture is an intimate aspect of how many students identify themselves, define themselves, value, behave, and are motivated: their sense of being may be culturally rooted.
- Caring for others can lead to social justice. We want fairness for those we care for on a personal level. We still believe in social justice for those with whom we do not have a personal relationship, because we care for the humanity of individuals and the larger community orientation.

- Caring students develop a capacity to feel, see, or view the world from someone else's perspective, which promotes problem solving and academic skill development from a community orientation.
- The teacher feels a part of the community and shares life experiences by participating in the community where she/he teaches.
- The teachers, along with students, create a democratic classroom.

The teachers who I described in my story who had a positive impact on my life all held these fundamental beliefs of caring.

Noddings (1992) argues that the foundation of education is based on a moral purpose, and it is the role of education to produce children to be ethical, competent, but also caring. He also argues that when teachers operate from the ethic of care, they consciously make a commitment to their students to care for and teach them and develop a mutual relationship of trust and respect with them. The educators described above accomplished that goal. Noddings (1992) goes on to say, "Our aim should be to encourage the growth of competent, caring, loving, and lovable people" (p. xiv). When I became a teacher, I looked for a teacher role model for myself, but I did not have to look far. I used some of the same strategies, terminologies, and the same caring approach to teaching, that the three teachers in my story used. My students knew that I cared about them and expected the best from them at all times. They knew that being a demanding teacher did not mean that I did not care about them or their education.

During my second year of teaching, there was a blind student in my class named Cathy. Throughout the school year, when my students did not do as well as I

knew they could, I would go over and over the work until they got it. I would not let them in my class without their books, materials, and homework. I only had two students who did not come to class with the things that they needed for class, and for those, I gave them the supplies. Cathy was a student who sat on the front row, and she always smiled when I would lecture the class on always doing their best and encouraging them to come to me for help if I did not come to them. The last day of school, I asked Cathy, “Why did you smile the whole year?” She told me that she was smiling at me, and I asked her “Why?” She said she could see right through me, so I asked her what she meant by that. She said that I pretended to be a tough guy, but she saw what I was trying to do. She said that I wanted them to learn, and it was obvious in my voice and actions that I cared about them.

Children know when their teachers are there for them and when they are there for the paycheck. When I became a human resources director, I recruited and only hired teachers who had a love for children and a passion for teaching and making a positive impact on young people’s lives. I learned to read the faces of the applicants and their body language when certain questions were asked. I even used the Haberman Urban Teacher Interview Selection Instrument to identify those “highly qualified teachers.” When I became assistant superintendent, I trained and hired principals who had those caring characteristics. When I became deputy superintendent, I focused on the development of current employees on a district-wide level into educators who take responsibility for educating their students and who do not make excuses for their failures. I argue that the absence of caring, supportive teachers, due to whatever

reasons, constitutes one facet of inequality in educational opportunity. Identifying the factors that affect teachers' decisions to remain in an urban school and developing programs to address those factors, should be at the forefront of educators and policymakers.

Statement of the Problem

Much attention and research have been focused on teacher turnover; however, there is a need for new research on retention, particularly in urban schools. Research shows that the national turnover rate for teachers is over 16% and as high as 50% in urban schools (Ingersoll, 2003). Sparks (2002) stated that "retaining teachers is one of the top educational challenges facing our country today" (p. 323). He also stated that our inability to support high quality teaching in many of our schools is "driven not by too few teachers coming in, but too many going out, by staggering teacher turnover and attrition rate" (Sparks, 2002, p. 323). This large and constant teacher turnover rate in urban schools not only has negative effects on student academic achievement due to the lack of continuity, but also there is a drain on their financial resources that are already in short supply. In urban schools where the effects of teacher turnover are most acutely felt, vacancies are often filled with ill-prepared and under-qualified teachers (Darling-Hammond, 1999; Ingersoll, 2001).

Statement of the Purpose

There is a body of research on why teachers leave the teaching profession and why they leave one school to teach at another school. There is much less research on why teachers remain in an urban school. The purpose of this study was to contribute to

the body of knowledge by identifying factors that influence teachers with five plus years of experience in an urban school to remain teachers in their school. A case study design was utilized in this research in order to gain an in depth understanding of why these teachers chose to remain. It also sought to determine and understand the nature of the professional lives of these teachers.

Significance of the Study

This study explored the factors that affect the retention of teachers with five plus years of experience in an urban school. Research shows that school systems will continue to face the rapidly growing teacher shortage over the next ten years (Sparks, 2000). Therefore, it would be prudent for institutions that prepare teachers, to understand why teachers stay in urban schools. This research will guide program development, incentives, and the creation of environments that can be duplicated in other schools. This research is being guided by the need to hear the stories of teachers to determine the nature of their professional life as teachers. This research will become a resource for educational entities that serve urban schools to be used to combat the high teacher turnover rate in on their campuses.

Assumptions

As researcher, I made several assumptions based on my experiences in an urban district and the work that I have been exposed to in the doctoral program. I assume that teacher retention in urban schools can be improved and that the teachers who were interviewed in this study told their stories honestly and to the best of their ability.

Limitations of the Study

This study focused on factors that influence teachers with five plus years of experience decision to remain in an urban school. They were asked to tell their professional stories to the researcher. They were the judges of the stories that they told, the format in which they told them, and what was not told during the interviews. This study used a case study design and was limited to one intermediate (5 & 6 grades only) school.

Research Questions

In this study, the professional stories from teachers were solicited. The following research questions guided this study:

1. What reasons do teachers with five or more years of experience attribute to their retention in the profession?
2. How do the characteristics of the leadership influence their reasons for staying in the profession?
3. How does mentoring play a role in teacher retention?
4. How does professional development play a role in teacher retention?

Definition of Terms

The terms used in the study and their definitions are as follows:

Attrition: Attrition occurs when public school teachers (K-12) begin public school teaching in one school year, leave public school teaching during or at the end of that school year, and do not return the following school year (Boe et al., 1997).

Intermediate School: A school student population at an intermediate school that is comprised solely of 5th and 6th graders.

Mentor: A mentor is a tenured teacher who has been partnered with a probationary teacher to help him or her become accustomed to the classroom and the policies of the school where he or she works.

Novice Teacher: A novice teacher is any first, second, or third year teacher in public education who has been assigned a mentor.

School District: An agency administratively responsible for providing elementary and secondary instruction is known as a school district.

Teacher: A teacher is defined as a full-time or part-time teacher who teaches any regularly scheduled classes in any of grades pre-K-12 (NCES, 1999).

Teacher Retention: Teacher retention refers to the proportion of teachers in one year who are still teaching in the same school the following year (Texas Education Agency [TEA], 1994).

Teacher Turnover: The rate at which teachers exit schools is known as teacher turnover. It consists of both teacher migration (“movers,” those who transfer or migrate to teaching positions in other schools) and teacher attrition (“leavers,” those who leave teaching altogether).

Urban School: An urban school is located in a community, city, or town with a population of more than 250,000 residents.

Summary

Given the entirety of the data presented in this chapter, the teacher retention issue is a national crisis. If this problem is not addressed appropriately on a national and local level, our urban schools will continue to pay the expensive monetary and academic cost of high teacher turnover. They will continue to attract teachers that they cannot retain and student academic success will suffer due to the lack of instructional continuity. It is the responsibility of policymakers, school administrators, and the public to find solutions to the high teacher turnover rate that is plaguing our schools.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this chapter is to develop a context that explains, by presentation of pertinent literature, the uniqueness of the study outlined in Chapter I. This chapter provides a review of literature that supports the study of factors influencing why teachers with five plus years of experience remain in an urban school. This chapter will also identify variables and their domains for analysis by looking at similar studies.

If education be equally diffused, it will draw property after it, by the strongest of all attraction; for such a thing never did happen, as that an intelligent and practical body of men should be permanently poor. Property and labor, indifferent classes, are essentially antagonistic; but property and labor, in the same class, are essentially fraternal...Education, then, beyond all other devices of human origin, is the great equalizer of the conditions of men – the balance – wheel of the social machinery. – Horace Mann, 1849

We have been told that the great equalizer is education, and it can be if there is equality. Inequality in educational opportunity has many facets, such as school funding, teacher/pupil ratio, laboratories, facilities, number of volumes of books in the library per student, and quality of the curriculum, just to name a few. Claycomb and Haynes (2003) report that students of color in urban and rural areas have poorly qualified teachers. She states that in Tennessee, African American students are nearly two times more likely to be taught by an ineffective teacher than European American students. The report goes on to say that some schools are operating at two and three times their intended student capacity, which means that the libraries, computer labs,

and gymnasiums have been converted to classrooms; which also means that important academic resources are lost.

Inequality in educational opportunity is not a new concept. Having a quality teacher can affect the educational opportunity of a child (Darling-Hammond, 2000). However, sometimes we often confuse equality and sameness as having the same meaning. Sameness denotes a belief that every student has the same needs and should be given the same things. Whereas fairness denotes an individualized plan, giving every person what he/she needs. What one student needs may not be what the student who is sitting next to him/her needs. One student might need compensatory programs, such as Even Start or Head Start programs; but another student might need (b) tutorial programs before, during, and after school; (c) to attend Saturday school; (d) transportation services in order to participate in extracurricular activities; (e) one-on-one help while in the classroom; or (f) other special services. In addition to the needs mentioned above, equality of education opportunity can also mean having a quality teacher who cares about his/her students and wants and expects the very best for them. These quality teachers have high expectations of their students and manage to get the most from them regardless of their urban background, which is what every child has a right to expect. Martin Haberman (1995) called these teachers: “star teachers.”

The root of urban schools’ inequality, regardless of the area, is school funding. Funding is one of the largest contributing factors to the inequities in urban schools (May, 1999). The money used to fund schools comes from three different areas: 48% from the state government, 45% from local property tax, and 7% from the federal

government (May, 1999). If most of the communities in the urban areas are impoverished, the schools will only receive a small amount from property tax. This lowers the amount of money that the schools have to work with, which results in the school not being able to afford resources to support quality teachers, and, therefore, a lower quality of education.

Students of color have populated urban schools, and high quality teachers have long fled these schools to suburban schools (Ingersoll, 2001). Kozol (1967) provided a devastating critique of the condition of urban schools in his book, *Death at an Early Age*. He argued that the dismal political, social, and economic conditions of urban communities continue to deteriorate (Kozol, 1991). He states that the impact on these schools and communities is profound and impedes the hopes of millions of Americans for equality of educational opportunity (Kozol, 1991). He also argues that some progress has been made since the 1960's; however, dramatic disparities still persist.

In his book, *Salvage Inequalities*, Kozol (1991) describes the striking differences between public schools in urban setting, which the majority were students of color and their suburban counterparts, who were mostly European American. He reports that while Chicago public schools spent more than \$5,000.00 per student in 1989, nearby Niles Township High School spent \$9,371.00 per student. Also, Central City Schools, Camden, New Jersey, spent \$3,500.00 a year, while affluent suburban Princeton spent \$7,725.00 per student.

Institutionally sanctioned inequalities, such as the ones that I mentioned in my story, are older than the America itself. From the time southern states made it illegal to

teach an enslaved person to read, through the 19th century and into the 20th, African Americans faced *de facto* and *de jure* exclusion from public schools, as well as Native Americans and Mexican Americans (Tyack, 1995). Educational opportunities for students of color continue to be an equality issue. African American and Hispanic American students continue to be concentrated in central city public schools and have become the majority population, and the inequalities of educational opportunities still exist (Ingersoll, 2001). They also tend to have unqualified teachers or have permitted teachers at a higher rate than suburban schools and a higher attrition rate than suburban schools (Ingersoll, 2001).

But it does not have to be that way. An ongoing study by the Teacher Education Program Research Group at Center X at the University of California, Los Angeles, has found that their teacher candidates, who are among the best and the brightest, stay in urban teaching at higher rather than the national averages (Quartz, Barraza-Lyons, & Thomas, 2005; Quartz & TEP Research Group, 2003). These authors cite specialized recruitment and preparation for urban schools, coupled with school and community-based professional learning communities, as major factors in these teachers remaining in an urban school.

In the last few years, more than 25 states have enacted legislation to improve teacher recruitment, education, certification, or professional development (Darling-Hammond, 1997a). In urban schools, the problem with teacher retention is a much larger one than in suburban schools. Teacher turnover in some urban schools is as high as 48% (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). For years, urban school districts have been serving

as training ground for novice teachers (NCES, 1998). Haberman (1995) describes how teachers of children of poverty can become “star” teachers. These are teachers who are successful in teaching children of poverty.

Haberman (1995) described the following characteristics to be common in “star” teachers of students in poverty: (a) persistent, (b) promote learning, (c) have a use for theory and practice, (d) able to work with children at risk, (e) develop a professional and personal relationship with students, (f) do not burnout, and (g) are not afraid to admit to fallibility. Those are the same qualities and characteristics that the three teachers who I mentioned in my story possessed. One of the factors identified by the National Association of State Boards of Education’s (2002) study group that contribute to the persistence of low-student achievement is the inequitable distribution of high quality staff. The report goes on to say that little is expected of students in high-poverty schools by the small number and low level of assignments they get in week or month.

Carl Rogers and Jerome Freiberg (1994) laid the foundation for the development of a caring-centered philosophical framework. Noblit, Rogers, and McCadden’s (1995) definition of caring is the best that I have read during my research. They defined caring as a value that is invisible in an educational environment, but this value guides the interactions and organization of schools and classrooms. They also write that:

Morally and culturally, caring is a belief about how we should view and interact with others. In this way, caring is essential to education and may guide the ways we instruct and discipline students, set policy, and organize the school day...Caring in or schools lies hidden beneath the technical and instrumental

ways of viewing culture and schooling...[Though] more technical aspects of teaching dominate our thinking...caring gives priority to relationships. (Noblitt, Rogers, & McCadden, 1995, pp. 680-681)

They argue that the development of strong relationships at school, between the students and the teachers, is the key element in educating the whole child. They identified characteristics that are exhibited by teachers who are caring-centered teachers. They stated that those characteristics will foster an effective learning environment, where these students would develop high self-esteem, confidence, and personal growth. Those educators are empathetic, the classroom has a positive climate, and the relationship is trusting. They also argue that these characteristics will foster an effective learning environment, and that students will develop high self-esteem, confidence, and personal growth.

Teacher Turnover Trends, Characteristics, and Statistics

The enrollment in elementary and secondary schools grew rapidly during the 1950s and 1960s and reached a peak in the early 70s (NCES, 2002). This enrollment rise was caused by what is known as the “baby boom,” a dramatic increase in births after World War II (NCES, 2002). From 1971 to 1984, total elementary and secondary school enrollment decreased (NCES, 2002). After years of decline, enrollment in elementary and secondary schools started increasing in the fall of 1985. New record enrollment levels were reached in the mid-1990s (NCES, 2002). With this rapid growth in student enrollment and the increase in teacher turnover rate, I saw a need to find the factors that affects the retention of teachers with five plus years of experience, to remain in an urban school. The identification of these factors is something that is vital

if the education system will have enough teachers to educate America's children in the future. According to the report, *What Matters Most: Improving Teaching and Learning* (NCTAF, 1996), three of every four potential teachers who begin an undergraduate teaching program leave the profession before their first year of teaching.

Additionally, in a research study conducted by Ponessa (1996) over an 18-year period in North Carolina, it was revealed that 15%-18% of all new teachers left by the end of their second year, and as many as one-third left by the end of their fifth year. Of the teachers who left the profession by the end of the fifth year, 44% had graduated from colleges considered to be in the top one-fourth in the state (Ponessa, 1996). This information was interesting and caused me to conclude that the most talented teachers have the best chance of being hired by school systems. Other researchers have discovered lower attrition rates among new teachers. Most significant is the recent U.S. Department of Education (2001) study that reported an attrition rate of 18% over the three-year study period.

Research conducted by Boe et al. (1997), Grissmer and Kirby (1992), Murmane, Singer, and Willett (1989), and Rumberger (1987) showed that teacher turnover is strongly affected by academic field. Their research shows that special education, mathematics, and the sciences are affected by teacher turnover the most. These subjects were found to have the highest turnover rate compared to all areas (Boe et al., 1997; Grissmer & Kirby, 1992; Murmane et al., 1989; Rumberger, 1987). Also, nationally, the attrition rates of European American, African American, and Hispanic teachers are reported to be similar, with African American teachers being slightly more

likely to leave (USDOE, 1992). Teachers who are Asian or Pacific Islander leave at higher rates than any of the other, while American Indian, Aluet, and Eskimo teachers leave at the lowest rates (USDOE, 1992).

Other national data show that when school conditions are taken into account, African American teachers are actually less likely to leave than European American teachers (USDOE, 1992). African American teachers, as well as other teachers of color, are more likely to teach in large urban districts that serve higher proportions of poor children (USDOE, 1992). Teachers who work in such school conditions are more likely to leave, regardless of race/ethnicity (USDOE, 1992). When all of the factors are accounted for, African American teachers actually have higher retention rates in the teaching workforce than European American teachers (USDOE, 1992). Most schools systems could solve their public school teacher shortages if they simply did a better job of retaining the teachers that they already have.

According to American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (AACTE) (1999), the majority of elementary and secondary schoolteachers are female and European American. They report that the nation's teacher population is 87% European American and 74% female (Snyder, 1998). Recent estimates indicate that the percentage of European American teachers in public schools increased to 90% (Snyder, 1998). Also, approximately 35% of students in classrooms across the country are minorities: 64.2% European American, 16% Black/African American, 14% Hispanic, 3.8% Asian/Pacific American, and 1% American Indian/Alaskan Native teachers (Snyder, 1998).

When the racial/ethnic makeup of students is compared with the racial/ makeup of public school teachers in schools where they teach, the numbers are very interesting. Sixty-eight percent of African American teachers are teaching in schools with a student of color enrollment of more than 50%, and approximately 67% of European American teachers are in schools with no more than 30% students of color enrollment (AACTE, 1999). This indicates that the higher the number of students of color enrollment, the higher the percentage of teachers of color. This also means that students of color and European American teachers are both losers in the battle to create a true multicultural learning environment.

This problem of teacher retention is a very complex one. It is important to focus on the retention of teachers because the pipeline for new teachers does not look promising, particularly for teachers of color. Sparks (2002) stated that the “ability of school leaders to create a professional culture in which teachers thrive and grow throughout their careers is an essential ingredient in ensuring quality teaching in all classrooms by dramatically reducing the staggeringly high rate of teacher turnover” (p. 324). Establishing such culture in all schools is one of this nation’s most significant educational challenges.

The Reasons Why Teachers Leave the Profession

There are a number of factors that have been identified as influencing teachers’ decisions to leave the profession or move to other schools. According to a survey released in 1997 by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 1997b), retirement (at 27.4%) is the single biggest cause, followed by pregnancy or childrearing

(at 14.3%). Another 12.1% leave to pursue another career. A family or personal move is cited by 10.1%, other family or personal reasons by 6.5%, and health concerned by 4.7%. Another 3.4% leave to take a sabbatical or other break from teaching. The survey also states that additional causes include a combination of factors that relate to job satisfaction, including salary or benefits (6.5%), dissatisfaction with teaching as a career (5.3%), and school staffing action (3.2%).

Research shows that younger teachers are more likely to transfer to other schools than older teachers, and math and science teachers are also more likely to move from one school to another school (NCES, 1998). Among ethnic groups in both elementary and secondary public schools, Hispanic teachers are most likely to transfer to other schools, followed by African American teachers, with European American teachers least likely to move to other schools (NCES, 1998).

Salary

There is evidence that shows that salary does influence teacher turnover. Large urban districts often serve as training grounds for novice teachers, who then move to comfortable suburban districts with better pay, better working conditions and prestige (Ingersoll, 2001). Some urban schools suffer from turnover rates as much as 20%-50% higher than that of affluent schools (Ingersoll, 2001). As a result, urban districts often decide not to invest in resources in training beginning teachers, because they feel these teachers will leave for suburban schools at the first opportunity (Darling-Hammond, 1994). Urban school districts' administrators might ask themselves, "Why should we train teachers who will leave the first chance they get to work in a suburban school

district for more money,” and consequently, that decision adds to the teacher retention problem.

An example of this is seen when analyzing the data in Texas. The Texas Public Education Compensation Plan sets mandatory minimum salaries for teacher based on years of experience. In 1994, the average base salary for Texas teachers was \$24,876 (TEA, 1994). The average teacher salary at the end of the mobility period, 1993-1994, was \$28,894 (TEA, 1994). Of all Texas teachers who moved from district to district during 1998-1989 to 1993-1994, over 44% were teaching in districts that were below the state average for base salary. Over 20% were teaching in districts that were at the state average, and about 35% were teaching in districts that were above the state average (TEA, 1994). At the end of the mobility period, 41% of those who changed districts were teaching in districts that were below the state average. Almost 19% of teachers were teaching in districts that were at the state average, and about 40% were teaching in districts that were above the state average (TEA, 1994).

Contrary to what some might think, salaries are not the most important factor in teacher retention. In a study conducted and reported by Shann (1988), it was near the bottom in terms of a group of urban teachers’ ranking of importance. However, teacher salary is still an issue that needs to be addressed by policymakers and administrators. Loeb and Page (2000) report that once teachers begin work, transfers to other schools often appear to be influenced only modestly by salaries and more by other factors, such as working conditions, student body composition, school leadership, teacher support, resources, facilities, and safety.

California has one of the highest retention rates of teachers in the nation. An analysis of the data from a study by Ingersoll (2002) commissioned by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CCTC), shows that California surpassed the national average in teacher retention. California has an average salary of \$54,348 as compared to \$31,383 in South Dakota (USDOE, 2003). Ingersoll (2002) reports that California surpassed the national average in teacher retention (employed in public education) by 17%. Of the 14,643 individuals earning new California teaching credentials during 1995-1996, over 13,000 became employed in the California public school system their first year (Ingersoll, 2002). Of the first-year teachers, 94% were still employed in public education after their first year on the job, compared to 89% nationally (Ingersoll, 2002). The data showed that 84% of the 1995-1996 new teachers were still active in education after four years, compared to 67% nationally (Ingersoll, 2002). This data would lead one to believe that by paying teachers more their first years of teaching, that the retention rate would be higher. Maybe we should invest our money in teachers at the beginning of their career, when money seems to be more important to them, because after six years of teaching, the turnover rate drops dramatically.

But when it comes to urban teachers' salaries, research shows that the more low-SES students there are in a school, the more dissatisfied teachers are with their salaries (NCES, 1997b). Urban teachers in high-need schools are half as likely to state that they are satisfied with their salaries as opposed to suburban teachers. We can assume that urban teachers believe they have a tougher job than their counterparts in

the suburbs, of which they are often compensated less. Among alternatively credentialed teachers, salary, discipline, and lack of respect from students were cited as reasons for leaving the profession (Kirby, Darling-Hammond, & Hudson, 1989). However, they are more likely to state they planned to stay in teaching than are teachers with traditional certification (Kirby et al., 1989).

Discipline

Student discipline is another important factor that affects teacher retention. In high-poverty schools, teachers are likely to state that student misbehavior interferes with the job of teaching (NCES, 1997b). Students in high-poverty and urban schools often bring their problems to school with them and sometimes those problems are acted out in the classroom. Those problems could include such things as caring for younger family members, poor nutrition, irregular sleep habits, frequent moves, and unstable relationships with caregivers and abuse. I am not implying that only urban students have to contend with the problems listed above, but they are more prevalent among urban students.

Demographic trends show that by 2020, approximately 40% of the nation's school-age population will be students of color, who currently account for 70% of the student population in the 20 largest school districts (Irvine & Armento, 2001). Other demographic data indicate that by 2020, nearly half of the nation's school-aged population will be students of color (Banks, 2001). As our nation's schools are becoming more and more diverse in student population, at the same time, the number of teachers of color is decreasing, with 80% of beginning teachers being European

American (Irvine & Armento, 2001). Major urban areas, such as New York, Los Angeles, Washington-Baltimore, San Francisco, Chicago, Miami, Houston, and Dallas-Fort Worth, have long been a magnet for all ethnic groups, but in particular for people of color. The demographics of this nation's urban areas are continuing to transition to larger numbers. For example, in New York City, the population grew by 9.4% from 1990 to 2000. The European American population decreased by 11.4%, while the African American population increased by 6.2 %, the Asian population increased by 59.9%, and the Hispanic population increased by 21.1% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). The bureau also reports that New York City is number one in African American population with Texas being number two and California having the largest Hispanic population and Texas being number two.

Poor people and people of color from other nations settle in cities more than any other place. Schools have larger numbers and, therefore, deal with problems and at a multiplied level. In some cases where teachers have not been exposed or trained in issues facing urban educators, they might find certain behaviors in class to be irritating and frustrating and as a consequence, decide to leave the school. Beginning teachers in schools with mostly students of colors also have lower levels of job satisfaction and report higher levels of complexity in the school environment, and because of discipline problems, state that they have difficulties forming positive relationships with students (Freeman, Brookhart, & Loadman, 1999; Irvine & Armento, 2001). What these teachers do not understand is that something can be done to help them form the type of relationship that they want with their students, and that is through culturally responsive

environments. Gay (2000) defines culturally responsive teaching as “using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them” (p. 29).

Then the teacher and the student respect and understand each other’s culture, values, norms, customs, and beliefs, and positive relationships begin to form. When there is not that appreciation and understanding of culture, there is often (a) miscommunication; (b) confrontations between students, teachers, and home; (c) hostility; (d) alienation; (e) diminished self-esteem; and (f) eventual failure of the school to students and teachers (Irvine, 1990). Since the majority of students who are in urban schools are students of color, then multicultural education is a necessity for students’ and teachers’ success. Banks and Banks (1993) define multicultural education as “a total reform effort designed to increase educational equity for a range of cultural, ethnic, and economic groups” (p. 6).

Our society and our schools’ demographics are changing and, as a result, we must change and accept the racial and cultural diversity of all of our students. A multicultural education that is not surface in its efforts can result in a positive relationship between teachers and students. Multicultural education does this by reinforcing to each child that his or her culture, race, religion, social economic status, gender, or heritage is important and should be celebrated and is integrated in the curriculum and classroom instruction. Quite often these teachers do not recognize the difference between a discipline problem and an academic or learning problem. Just

because a student of color is misbehaving in class, it does not mean that he/she cannot learn.

Teacher efficacy impacts the personal effectiveness of the teacher and plays a role in teacher turnover. Teachers with high efficacy believe they can control events and produce desired outcomes (Hudson, 1998). Teachers with a strong sense of efficacy tend to do better at planning, organization, preparing, and spend more time teaching and are more open to ideas and willing to experiment with new methods to better meet the needs of their students (Hoy, 2003-2004). When a teacher has low efficacy, that teacher has little to no drive or motivation to help students to succeed. The opposite is the case when the teacher has high efficacy. The teacher's belief in his or her ability to influence student achievement is an important component in being an effective teacher. If teachers do not have confidence in their abilities, then the students will sense it and both will become a casualty of the education process.

Lack of Support From Staff and Administration

Sparks (2002) believes teachers, even those in the most demanding settings, are far more likely to remain in their positions when they feel supported by administrators, have strong bonds of connection to colleagues, and are aggressively pursuing a collective vision for student learning about which they feel passion and commitment. This lack of support from the administration leads to teachers feeling that they do not belong to the learning community, which is the foundation of a strong school (Sparks, 2002). The NCTAF (1996) commission report recommends the creation of school organization and learning communities for student and teacher success. The report

suggests that these learning communities can be created if we restructure the time and staffing so that teachers have regular opportunities to work together to share responsibility for communities or groups of children. Teachers who work in these small learning communities become more committed to teaching. They report that they are more satisfied with their jobs, more likely to collaborate with colleagues, more likely to engage in professional development they found valuable, and more able to build a coherent educational program for students between disciplines and across grade levels (NCTAF, 1996). Teachers who feel this way about teaching are more likely to stay in the profession. Teachers' connections to the profession and to their schools are strengthened when they feel they possess the content knowledge and instructional skills that include culturally responsive teaching.

Why Teachers Stay

As this research project began, it became apparent to me that there was a wealth of research on why teachers leave the teaching profession or move from one school to another. It also became apparent that there has been much less current research done on why teachers remain in urban schools. While 50% of new teachers in American urban schools leave the profession in the first five years of teaching, 50% remain (Darling-Hammond, 2003; Wong, 2003).

Many teachers have few life experiences to prepare them to relate to the realities of high-need city communities and receive minimal academic preparation or internship exposure to urban schools. Teachers who are most successful and remain in urban schools tend to be involved in the schools' community and have an

understanding of students' lives outside of school (Cook & Van Cleaf, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994). It is important for teachers to know where their children are coming from: what part of the community they are from and what their home life is like. Students need to know that teachers care about them. Teachers can show their concern by attending students' sporting events, visiting students' homes to meet with their parents, visiting churches in the community, and by attending special events where they are invited by their students.

It is just as important for teachers to be culturally competent. Being culturally competent stresses the importance of culture in a learning environment. Cross, Bazron, Dennis, & Isaacs (1989) stated that how we act and react to children, our attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or among professionals enables the system, agency, or professionals to work effectively in cross-cultural situations. As educators and policymakers, we should be cognizant of the impact of our attitudes, interactions, and policies that affect children. Cultural competency occurs when teachers have included all their students in the learning that takes place in the classroom community. Students learn about the world through the eyes of culture – theirs and those of others. As educators, we can help students realize the potential by using various cultures in all facets of the educational process.

It is also important to have a socio-political consciousness in the context of the school, community, and nation (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2001). Ladson-Billings (1995) stated that teachers can achieve cultural competence by nurturing and supporting culturally relevant teaching by using the students' home and community

experiences as a foundation upon which to develop knowledge and skills. Content learned by using culturally relevant teaching is more significant to the students and facilitates the transfer of what is learned in the school to real-life (Ladson-Billings 1995). Hollins (1996) found evidence that there is a link between culture and classroom in that cultural practices shape thinking processes, which serve as tools for learning within the school and the community.

Salary has been also identified as a reason why teachers stay in education; however, there were no studies found that listed it high on the reasons for staying in the teaching profession. Teachers with higher salaries tend to stay longer in teaching careers, and leavers and movers tend to be teachers with lower salaries (Shen, 1997). An example of how important salary is to teachers is shown in a study by Clark (2000) that showed when given an option between two identical school districts, 82% of new teacher surveyed reported that they chose a school district that offered administrative support, and 17% chose a school that offered higher salary. Singh and Billingsley (1996) found in a study called “Intent to Stay in Teaching” that the most important determinant of intent to stay in teaching was workplace conditions. Job satisfaction had the strongest direct positive effect on intent to stay (Singh & Billingsley, 1996).

Another important factor in why teachers stay is the teacher’s initial field experience. A positive student teaching experience was found to be positively correlated with teacher retention (Metzke, 1988). There is a chain reaction when it comes to pre-service training and teacher retention. Often, pre-service teachers who are not of color, have low expectations of students of color and urban students because

they have different cultural backgrounds and experiences. Pre-service teachers often demand uniformity and conformity from students of color instead of accepting and respecting them for who they are (Payne, 1980). When these teachers do not receive what they want, they often leave their position. This reaction results in them leaving for the same reasons students drop out, a failure in student-teacher interaction (Weiner, 1993). An example of this is illustrated in a study of student teachers by Gibson (2002) who found that student-teacher interaction revealed that predominantly European American teachers often spoke of the Hispanic and Black students as “aliens.” These student-teachers indicated that these students cause problems, and they felt ineffective teaching these students.

Teacher resiliency has also been identified as a reason why teachers stay in education. Teacher resiliency is the ability to adjust to varied situations and increase one’s competence in the face of adverse conditions, which is a critical element in classroom success (Gordon & Coscarelli, 1996; Masten, Best, & Garmezy 1990). There has been much written about student resiliency, but much less research done on teacher resiliency. Resiliency has been a term used mostly when describing children who overcome the odds despite their environment, but resilience applies to all of us. Whatever sustains and provides direction for young people during trying times is also what enables teachers and support staff to overcome the challenges that they face in their schools. Teachers need: (a) caring relationships with colleagues; (b) positive beliefs, expectations, and trust on the part of the administration; and (c) ongoing opportunities to reflect, engage in dialogue, and make decisions together (Benard,

1998). Holloway (2003) listed teacher resiliency as one of the three things that a teacher needs in order to stay in the classroom. He states that teachers become resilient, and teacher retention is at its highest when teachers are competent, feel that they belong, and feel useful. Research done by Bernshausen and Cunningham (2001) suggests they must be taught how to be resilient, and that without it, teachers are more likely not to stay. They also suggest that significant attrition, high stress levels, and burnout in education indicate that organizational cultures may not provide adequate support for educator resiliency. Resiliency is something that the community, the school, and the central administration can help promote by encouraging teachers to teach high levels of competence, belonging, and usefulness and by providing a career ladder for teachers with differentiated salary schedules linked to the career ladder (Shen, 1997). These incentives may take the form of merit pay, which adjusts salaries upward or provides compensation for higher levels of performance (Ellis, 1984). Career ladder compensation may take the form of performance-based pay, job enlargement, and professional development (NASBE, 2002). Performance-based pay rewards teachers as that demonstrates competency, job-enlargement involves giving teachers additional responsibilities outside the classroom, and professional development rewards teachers for developing knowledge and skills through continuous professional development (NASBE, 2002)

Teacher Mentoring

Koki's (1997) definition of mentoring captures the essence of modern mentoring. The researcher states that it is a complex and multi-dimensional process of

guiding, teaching, influencing, and supporting a beginning teacher or new teacher.

Darling-Hammond (1996) defines mentoring in the following manner: when a veteran teacher is assigned to a novice teacher to help him or her learn the philosophy, cultural values, and established sets of behavior expected by the school where they are employed (Darling-Hammond, 1996). It is rooted in the belief that mentoring focuses on the worth of people and goes beyond the induction of new teachers to passing the torch through professional guidance. Mentoring is usually a component of the new teacher induction program and can last for years. Dr. Sharon Feiman-Nemser of Michigan State University and David Haselkorn of Recruiting New Teachers report that after surveying urban teachers who had a formal mentoring program, they indicated that retention went up, attitudes improved, feelings of efficacy and control increased, and a wider range of instructional strategies was demonstrated. Their report indicated that districts with mentoring programs showed a 7% attrition rate, as compared to a national rate of 9.3% of public school teachers within the first year (Staff, 2004). Gold (1999) found that there were positive benefits to teacher mentoring programs, in that in their study, they found that mentees had a slightly higher retention rate than did the teachers who were not mentored.

Finally, Odell and Ferraro's (2000) study of the effects of mentoring on teacher retention indicated that 88% of the participants, who were mentored for the one year of the study, were retained. Breaux and Wong (2003) reported that 95% of beginning teachers who experienced mentoring support during their initial years, remained in teaching after three years, and 80% remained after five years. New teachers, those with

fewer than three years of experience, generally feel that they are not prepared to meet the needs of their students. NCES (1999) reported after surveying new teachers that 18% of them felt confident in addressing the needs of diverse students, 24% felt confident in integrating technology, 28% felt confident in implementing state and district standards, and 15% felt confident in addressing the needs of disabled students. One reason for these numbers is that less than 75% of all teachers in the United States have had courses in child development, teaching methods, learning, have degrees in their subject areas, and have passed state licensing requirements (Boreen, Johnson, Niday, & Potts, 2000).

Successful mentor programs are dependent upon the quality of training afforded the mentors and the support that the program gets from the administration. Novice teachers have different needs than experienced teachers. Some of their needs are: (a) getting students to cooperate, (b) improving instructional techniques, (c) how to talk to parents and legal guardians, (d) understanding working environment (Odell & Ferraro, 2000), and (e) dealing with academic and extra-curricula assignments (Huling-Austin, 1992). It has been shown that induction programs need to be structured to allow for interaction since cohort groups have been shown to reduce isolation among novice teachers and foster professional growth (Carter & Merchant, 2004; Huling- Austin, 1992).

Odell, Huling, and Sweeny (2000) summarize the qualities of mentoring and induction programs that they value using eight characteristics. Such programs (a) focus on helping novices learn to teach in accordance with professional standards; (b) are

responsive to the evolving needs of individual novices and their students; (c) view becoming a good teacher as developmental process; (d) view mentoring as a professional practice that must be learned and developed over time; (e) include careful selection, preparation, and ongoing development for new mentors; (f) involve experienced teachers as mentors and include mentors in program design and evaluation; (g) are collaboratively planned, implemented, and evaluated by key stakeholders; and (h) are learning to teach. Mentored novice teachers tend to focus on student learning sooner and leave teaching at a lower rate (NCTAF, 1996). Weiss (1996) concludes that new teachers who spend their first year in collaborative school environments that support mentoring are likely to have higher morale, be more committed to teaching, and plan to remain in the profession. Odell and Ferraro (2000) report that a properly structured induction program may have a positive effect on teacher retention. Their study showed that in New Mexico, 96% of the teachers were still teaching four years after their induction program.

Staff Development

Teachers' connections to the profession and to their schools are also strengthened when they feel they possess the content knowledge, instructional skills, and technological tools to meet the challenges of standards-based education in increasingly diverse classrooms (Sparks, 2002). Good teaching thrives in a supportive learning environment created by teachers and school leaders working together to improve learning in school. To support quality teaching, our schools must support strong professional learning communities (NCTAF, 2002). According to the U.S.

Department of Education (2000) Initiative on Teaching, collaborative professional development such as common planning periods, team teaching, and regularly scheduled collaboration with other teachers and administrators, is more effective than other forms of collaboration. Making investments in staff development is one of the most cost-effective measures a school district can take to improve student achievement (Greenwall, Hedges, & Laine, 1996; Harris, 2000). Common criticisms of current staff development programs include: (a) inadequate funding, (b) insufficient time, and (c) lack of results-driven professional development (USDOE, 2000). The U.S. Department of Education recommends the following when structuring a staff development program (USDOE, 2000):

1. Commit more resources to staff development.
2. Create job-embedded, collaborative, and content-focus throughout the school year.
3. Implement year-round contracts for teacher to provide extra time for professional development, curriculum planning, and collaboration to improve time for teachers.
4. Restructure the school schedule to provide longer, uninterrupted planning time for teachers.
5. Provide summer institutes that allow teachers to recharge their intellectual batteries.
6. Evaluate professional development based on improving teaching, improving student learning, and narrowing student achievement gaps.

Staff development for all teachers is an important element in teachers' effectiveness and teacher retention. Effective staff development gives teachers those skills needed to understand and handle behavior problems, performance standards, and be able to tap into resources in order to create new lessons.

Teachers are more likely to stay in schools where they feel they have more influence over school and teaching related policies (Shen, 1997). NCES (2000) reports that the more time teachers spend in subject-area professional development (eight or more hours), the more likely they are to state that their classroom teaching was substantially improved as a result of the professional development. Professional development should be closely connected to not only subject areas but also to classroom life, the day-to-day operations, which consist of planning, discipline, teaching, and learning, because these are everyday things that the educator must be able to navigate to be effective in the classroom and teachers need to be able to connect what they are teaching to other subjects (Lieberman, 1995). As I stated earlier in the teacher efficacy section, an effective teacher is more likely to stay in the profession. It should be context-specific, and it should be ongoing, giving teachers a chance to discuss, implement, and evaluate new practices (Lieberman, 1995).

Professional development must also be responsive to the different needs of teachers at different stages of their careers. Urban schools with mostly students of color population are often staffed with young, European American teachers (Freeman et al., 1999). Their focus should be on being a teacher because they are likely to be new to the profession, understanding their students, and the community from which they come. It

should also focus on managing a classroom and understanding how to work with different backgrounds and ethnic groups.

Professional development for urban schools over the years has become a mechanism to just bring new teachers up-to-speed because the number of new teachers is so large due to the high turnover rate. Less time is spent tailoring staff development to the needs of the teachers, as opposed to meeting the district staff development required hours. Professional development should be planned and implemented with the idea that teacher learning is career-long (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995). Different professional development should be offered for teachers at various career stages. Moreover, teachers should be allowed to choose professional development topics and sessions that interest them.

Malcolm Knowles (1984) noted that adults and children learn differently and adults have different needs than children. He coined the term “andragogy,” which means how adults learn or the teaching of adults. He made the following assumptions about the adult learner:

1. Adults tend to be self-directing.
2. Adults have a rich reservoir of experience that can serve as a resource for learning.
3. Since adults’ readiness to learn is frequently affected by their need to know or do something, they tend to have a life, task, or problem-centered orientation to learning as opposed to a subject-matter orientation.

4. Adults are generally motivated to learn due to internal or intrinsic factors as opposed to external or extrinsic forces.

The ability of school leaders to create a professional culture in which teachers strive and grow throughout their careers is an essential ingredient in ensuring quality teaching in all classrooms by dramatically reducing the staggeringly high rate of teacher turnover (Sparks, 2002). Continued professional development for teachers should be a central component of any retention effects. Knowles (1950) points out that it is important for us to understand how the adult learner learns and what motivates him or her. When developing professional development for teachers, Sparks' principles should be considered.

Urban Education, Teaching Children of Poverty

Urban education has its own unique set of problems to contend with in educating children who are economically, linguistically, and ethnically diverse. NCES (1997a) reports that the more students there are in schools that are eligible for free or reduced price lunch, the more likely teachers are to indicate that routine duties and paperwork interfere with the job of teaching. In high-poverty schools, teachers are also more likely to state that student misbehavior interferes with the job of teaching (NCES, 1997b). Students in high poverty areas may bring problems with them to school that make teaching and learning more challenging for teachers, especially, novice teachers who have not had the proper preparation or mentoring to help understand low income children. Poor nutrition, caring for younger family members, irregular sleep habits, frequent moves, and unstable relationships with caregivers may all interfere with

students' abilities to benefit from instruction (NCES, 1997a). To compound these problems, more than half of all students in high poverty middle schools take classes with teachers who did not major or minor in the subject area where they teach (Quality Counts, 2003).

Novice teachers in low income schools with mostly students of color also have lower levels of job satisfaction and report higher levels of complexity in the school environment and state that they have difficulties forming positive relationships with students (Freeman et al., 1999). These teachers seem to be the most dissatisfied. Carter and Larke (1995) report in their study that in most teacher education programs, fewer than 12% of new teachers expressed a willingness to teach in an urban school. Teachers in low-achieving urban schools are likely to express dissatisfaction with their level of participation in making school decisions, indicating an organizational structure that fails to give them opportunities to contribute (Shann, 1988). Children who live in poverty and attend schools deserve the same educational opportunities afforded children in affluent schools.

Researchers such as Martin Haberman, Geneva Gay, Jacqueline Irvine, and A. Wade Boykin have shown that children from poverty and urban schools can be successful. School boards, teachers, administration, and staff need to make urban schools and their children a success story, because the research has proven that it can and has been done all across this nation. Haberman (1995) shows how teachers of children of poverty can become "star" teachers. These are teachers who are successful in teaching children of poverty and urban children. Haberman (1995) describes

characteristics or beliefs leading to behaviors found to be common in “star” teachers of students in poverty. They are: (a) being persistent, (b) promoting learning, (c) using theory and practice, (d) working well with students at risk, (e) having a professional orientation to students, (f) avoiding burnout, and (g) admitting to being fallible. Urban education has its own set of unique problems to contend with such as security issues; equality issues as they relate to race, gender, and resources; parental involvement; and many more. Sometimes teachers in urban schools feel overwhelmed in their environment and decide to leave the school and the profession. However, there are teachers in urban schools who are effective in teaching urban children. Haberman (1995) calls these teachers “star teachers of children of poverty,” because he believes that these teachers have certain traits that make them successful. Haberman (1995) argues that “teachers who quit or fail frequently cause many of their own problems; in other cases they exacerbate the situation needlessly” (p. 3). He stated that these teachers often become involved in confrontations with students or their parents over issues such as discipline, homework, or parental support. However, “star” teachers do not focus directly on these issues, tending instead to approach them particularly and obliquely. These “star” teachers do not succumb to teacher burnout, because they understand the causes and will prevent themselves from falling victim. They are not afraid of showing their fallibility to their students, parents, and administration by admitting that they are not perfect and sometimes make mistakes. They also understand that discipline and classroom management will take care of themselves, if a structured instructional environment is established. Haberman (1995) believes that “star” teachers

of poverty are persistent, have a high sense of teacher efficacy, and take responsibility for educating their students.

Another researcher in the area of multicultural education is Geneva Gay (2000) and her theory, research, and practice in *Culturally Responsive Teaching*. Ladson-Billings (1994) defines culturally responsive teaching as a pedagogy that recognizes the importance of including students' cultural references in all aspects of learning. Gay (2000) defines culturally responsive teaching as using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and performance styles of diverse students to make learning more appropriate and effective for them; it teaches to and through the strengths of these students. Gay argues that culturally responsive teaching is a productive method of teaching diverse ethnic or racial groups. She also argues that culturally responsive teaching is essential in developing strong curriculum that supports student learning. She argues that culturally responsive teaching is using the cultures, experiences, and perspectives of African, Native, Latino, and Asian American students as filters through which to teach them academic knowledge and skills. In doing so, the students will become more interested in learning because they can relate to the material being used in the instructional process. In Gay's (2000) book *Culturally Responsive Teaching*, she explains the concept of culturally responsive teaching and discusses how it can improve the school performance of underachieving students of color. Among the topics she included are the power of teacher caring, the importance of ethnic and cultural diversity in curriculum content, and the relationship between culture and communication.

Irvine and Armento (2001) provides us with techniques, lessons, and strategies that promote culturally responsive teaching in the classrooms. She asserts that any subject or grade levels can incorporate culturally responsive pedagogy in the instructional process. She also believes that teachers are, by nature, reformers, and if given the appropriate professional development in organizational theory, diagnosis, and change, they will do what is right for children. Irvine embraces culturally responsive teaching; however, she does not make excuses or advocate lowering the standards because of the diversity. Irvine (1996) asserts that we can learn valuable lessons from Catholic schools, in that, they are not concerned with social economic status and ethnicity. They expect that every child can learn and will learn. Catholic schools, she states, were rigorous and have high expectations for the students. Public schools, administrators, teachers, staff, and parents should have the high expectations for students in public schools and strategies such as culturally responsive teaching to assist in student achievement and academic success.

This belief is also echoed in Boykin and Ellison (1994) when they advocated fusing educational and cultural empowerment of children through what they called the “Talent Development Model.” This model is unique in that it maximizes students’ academic and social/emotional development through a rigorous curriculum and necessary support, assistance, structure, and appropriate conditions. Neither researcher apologizes for culturally responsive teaching, but rather insists that the course of study be “rigorous” but inclusive of different cultures, races, and ethnic groups.

Teacher Preparation Programs

Teacher preparation programs have long been the cornerstone for educating teachers to enter our schools. These programs have provided prospective teachers with a structured process that brings teachers into the teaching profession over a period of 4 to 5 years. During this time, these prospective teachers learn what teaching is all about and decide whether they want to continue to pursue teaching. They also have the opportunity to explore educational issues such as the history of education, pedagogy, curriculum, instructional strategies, and other educational issues.

Studies have revealed that some of the most common problems that new teachers encounter are reduced when they have had sufficient, over-all preparation prior to assume the role of a teacher (Adams, Hutchinson, & Martray, 1980).

Teacher preparation programs have been challenged over the years in preparing teachers to teach in urban schools because of the shortage of teachers willing to teach in these schools (Carter & Larke, 1995). This challenge is due to concerns about their safety, inadequate facilities, and inadequate instructional supplies and equipment (Carter & Larke, 1995). Carter and Larke's (1995) study called "Preparing the Urban Teacher: Reconceptualizing the Experience," focused on reconceptualizing the traditional teacher preparation program to increase the number of preservice teachers at a predominant European American university, who would choose to teach in an urban school. Their study found that if preservice teachers were given the opportunity to learn, given the support, training, encouragement, early exposure, field experience, support, and supervision from university and school personnel to teach in an urban

school, more candidates might chose to teach in an urban school (Carter & Larke, 1995). The study also found that even with the redesigning of the teacher preparation program and providing the support mentioned above, there is no guarantee that teachers will choose to work in urban schools.

The report called *A Nation at Risk*, published in 1983, concluded that education in the United States was unacceptably weak and identified low standards as one of its causes (Carter, 2003). After this report was issued, standards for students, schools, and universities were implemented. As stated by Carter (2003), implementing high standards was not the problem, but rather how these standards would be used. Will these standards be manipulated, used for political, financial, person or social gain (Carter, 2003)? I would also ask the question, “Will the standards be used for exclusion purposes?” Teacher preparation programs that once had little or no standards for entrance and exiting teacher prep programs, found themselves quickly developing standards, and many states soon followed with their own set of standards. Organizations that hold institutions accountable for preparing teachers such as The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC), and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) may have overlooked the important role that diversity plays in meeting standards (Carter, 2003). They may not have considered the possibility of the standards being biased, lack of cultural relativity, and the lack of multicultural pedagogy for teachers of color. These organizations may have also overlooked another factor in analyzing the high failure rate of African American

candidates on the national certification exam, and that is the lack of support and or resources provided during the certification process. Eighty-nine percent of African American teachers failed the nation certification exam in 1998, and the trend was still prevalent in 2002 (Bond, 2002; Irvine & Fraser, 1998). So in this case, the standards have had an adverse impact on African Americans candidates. These are very discouraging numbers, and not only do they have a negative effect on the number of teachers of color in the teaching profession, but would likely have a negative influence on the decision of an African American person to become a teacher.

Studies have also found that teachers who were employed by school districts who did not have full certification and who did not complete a university teacher preparation program, were less satisfied with their training and job (Darling-Hammond, Hudson, & Kirby, 1989). This study also found that teachers, who had received sufficient training in educational methodology and pedagogy, tend to remain in education at a higher rate than those who did not have the training. In addition, these teachers tend to have problems and overall acclamation in planning curriculum, discipline management, classroom management, and teaching to being a teacher.

According to Hussar (1999), it is estimated that 2.4 million teachers will be needed in the next decade. This enormous need for teachers in the next ten years is the result of the increase in the enrollment and the aging of the baby boomers. A survey of over 1000 recent education graduates was conducted by Harris (1991); 99% believed that all children could learn, and 83% said they were confident they could make a difference in the lives of their students. However, after only one year, 48% of the same

graduates believed all students can learn, and 58% said they wished they had been given more training before entering the classroom. This is an indication that there is a gap between what recent graduates think they are prepared to do and what they are actually prepared to do.

A longitudinal study of 11 institutions conducted by Andrew and Schwab (1995), found that teachers who complete redesigned five-year or traditional four-year programs, entered and stayed in teaching at a much higher rate than alternative certified teachers. Graduates of teacher education programs felt significantly better prepared and more effective than those entering through alternative routes or without traditional preparation (Darling-Hammond, Chung, & Fellow, 2002).

Alternative Certification Programs

Alternative certification programs were developed to help relieve the teacher shortage problem that has been plaguing this country for decades. The aim of alternative certification programs is to attempt to fill the teacher shortage by training individuals who are changing careers to become teachers. The programs target individuals in careers in private industry and military (Darling-Hammond & Dilworth, 1997). There has been research done on the effectiveness of alternatively certified teachers, and the results have been that teachers who attained certification through an alternative route, may lack the adequate pedagogical skills that are traditionally taught and acquired from teacher preparation programs, skills that are essential and relevant to effective teaching. There have also been studies that have inconclusive and sometimes contradictory when it comes to the effectiveness of alternatively certified teachers as

compared to traditionally prepared teachers. However, there is little doubt that alternative certification programs attract individuals who have multiple experiences and who have talent. These programs have made a positive impact on filling teaching vacancies across this nation. In my school district, at the beginning of the 2003-2004 school year, 25% of all teachers hired were either going through an alternative program or had gone through one (Blanson, 2003). This need to hire alternatively certified teachers is more prominent in urban and rural schools than suburban schools because it is harder to recruit and maintain teachers in urban areas, especially in math, science, and special education because of the focus that the United States has placed on the sciences and Americans with disabilities (Berry, 2000). From 1998-1999, approximately 24,000 teachers gained certification through alternative programs (Feistritz & Chester, 2002). Initially, these programs sought teachers in critical need areas, such as math, science, special education and bilingual education. But recently, they accept all areas of secondary and elementary education.

A 1997 NCES study found that 49% of uncertified entrants left the profession within five years, more than triple the 14% of certified entrants who did so (Henke, Chen, Geis, & Knepper, 2000). Both four- and five-year teacher education graduates enter and stay at higher rates than teachers hired through alternative programs that offer only a few weeks of training before recruits are left on their own in classrooms (Darling-Hammond, 2000). This would indicate that student teaching, training, coursework, pedagogy, and content knowledge are all factors in teacher retention, and the lack of these components results in a higher attrition rate for alternatively certified

teachers. The studies that I have seen indicate that the lack of student teaching is a major factor for the high turnover rate among the alternatively certified teachers. Henke et al. (2000) report that teachers who enter the teaching profession through short, alternative certification routes, leave the profession at rates nearly twice as high as those who have had student teaching. Their study also showed that 15% of those teachers who had a student teaching experience left the teaching profession and did not return within four years, compared with 29% of those teachers who did not have a student teaching experience; and 14% of the certified teachers had left by the end of four years, and 49% of those without student teaching had not left. This shows that student teaching is most important the first three to four years of teaching. After that, the attrition rates are about the same for teachers who student taught and those who did not. It also indicates that if alternatively certified teachers feel that they are not adequately trained and prepared, they are more likely to leave the profession and not return at a higher rate than traditionally certified teachers.

Campus Leadership

As mentioned earlier, there are many reasons why teachers chose to remain in the profession. Studies that examined successful retention effects usually identify induction programs, mentoring initiatives, and the principalship as factors in schools success in retaining their teachers (Colley, 2002; Hope, 1999). A strong, supportive, and knowledgeable instructional leader in a school is essential to maintain a high teacher retention rate. In Ingersoll (2001), a study was conducted titled “Teacher Turnover, Teacher Shortage, and Organization of Schools,” which examined the causes

of teacher turnover. It found some interesting results after interviewing exiting teachers. The study shows that 12% of total turnover is contributed to retirement – not as large a number as I would have thought. Layoffs, school closings, and reorganization accounted for 28% of teacher turnover. The largest percentage in this study of 39% was attributed to family or personal reasons. Contrary to popular belief, this study showed that 51% of the teachers interviewed left to pursue other jobs or dissatisfaction. These findings indicated that working conditions and leadership are major factors in teacher attrition. According to Ingersoll (2001), teachers in those two categories most often link their turnover to low salary, lack of support from the school administration, lack of student motivation, student discipline problems, and lack of teacher influence over decision-making.

A second study conducted in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools by Charlotte Advocates for Education (2004), shows the relationship between school leadership and teacher retention. This study identified characteristics and strategies that were shared by school leaders whose campuses had a low teacher turnover rate. According to this study, two traits are mentioned: First, the principals who have been more successful in retaining teachers have characteristics of successful entrepreneurs. The principals were “visionary leaders” able to articulate school goals, diagnose and resolve organizational problems, and synthesize information. They were also committed and passionate about their jobs. Secondly, they were teacher focused. The vast majority of these principals had extensive experience as teachers themselves, and many felt most comfortable in the role of instructional leader even though operational issues tended to dominate their

time. They cited the importance of giving teachers continual feedback and support, involving them in decision-making, creating opportunities for them to work collaboratively, and getting to know them as individuals.

In developing these types of leaders who can hold a teaching staff together, we should remember that it is important to recruit principals who have leadership qualities that do not totally rely on professional development to instill those qualities mentioned. We should build on the strengths they bring to the position. One component of the staff development of these leaders should be on shared decision-making and collaboration with their teachers. The demands on principals today are too great for one person to make the majority of the decisions involved in managing and operating a school. As the campus leader, principals should understand that they must share in the professional growth of their teachers. The professional growth development should be customized for the campus and the teachers. Principals should encourage their teachers to pursue professional growth through staff development, course work, and other opportunities. Principals should also provide additional support for novice teachers and teachers new to their campus. The principal should take every opportunity to assist teachers in developing effective lessons and model teaching practices for them. The principal is the instructional leader for the campus. As such, he/she has a responsibility to ensure that the curriculum that is being used is producing the desired results. Also, campus leaders should constantly encourage teachers to educate themselves on the latest educational research and to become researchers themselves. The focus on student

achievement is here to stay; and as a campus leader, that point must instilled in the teaching staff (CAE, 2004).

Haberman (1999) asserts that an effective principal is able to make his students and staff feel safe and secure and is an excellent communicator. He also states that “star” principals present themselves as the campus leader of all: the teaching staff, the other administrators, counselors, aides, custodians, cafeteria employees, and any other worker on the campus. These principals have legal, reward, coercive, expert, and personal powers, and they do not abuse any of them, using the appropriate one at the appropriate time (Haberman, 1999). They look beyond the use of prescribed methods and teaching, classroom management, and providing support for the teachers. The qualities that principals need to serve constituencies in urban schools may not be there in the beginning, but principals must soon adopt them. These qualities are unifying the staff for the purpose of educating children, building teams that work well together for the common good, and committing to the task until the job is done (Haberman, 1999). If principals assist teachers in their professional development in every way that they can, show interest and appreciation regularly in the teachers, there will be fewer reasons for them to leave their campuses.

Summary

This chapter contains a review of literature on the research of teacher retention and in the factors that affect why they decide to stay or leave the teaching profession or move to another school. Fuller (2002a) reports that over 77% of the increase in the demand for Texas teachers is related to teacher attrition. NCTAF (2003) and Fuller

(2002a) indicated that over 40, 000 Texas certified teachers currently are not employed in Texas public schools. Keeping these numbers in mind, if only one eighth of the 40,000 certified teachers were back in the teaching profession, there would not be a teacher shortage in Texas. We must find answers to this national problem of teacher attrition. This chapter provides insight into the nature of the problem and what has been done by researchers to understand the issues surrounding this phenomenon.

CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY

The District

Aldine Independent School District (ISD) is the 11th largest school district in the state of Texas with a student population of 56,600. The Aldine community has a population of over 300,000, located 15 miles north of downtown Houston, in Southeast Texas. The student ethnic composition of the district is: Hispanic: 60.33%, African American: 31.48%, European American: 5.8%, Asian: 2.25%, and Native American: .09%. Table 1 shows the shift in the district demographics over a 28-year period. The district employs nearly 8,000 people; approximately 4,000 of those are teachers. The following are district campuses: Even Starts Centers, Head Start Centers, EC/PK Campuses, Elementary Campuses, Intermediate Campuses, Middle School Campuses, Ninth Grade Campuses, and Senior High Campuses.

Table 1. Shift in the Aldine Independent School District Demographics Over a 28-Year Period

Ethnicity	1976 Percentages	2004 Percentages
European American	71.9	5.8
African American	14.8	31.5
Hispanic	13.1	60.3
Asian American	0.2	2.3
Native American	0.0	.1

Table 2 shows the composition of the student body as it relates to factors that have an influence on the programs and services that we offer our students. The economically disadvantaged number is the number of students on free and reduced lunch, which is based on family income. The limited English proficiency (LEP) represents the number of students who are not proficient in English. The special education represents the number of students receiving any special education services during the day. The mobility rate is the number of students who moved out of the district during the school year. The attendance rate is the average number of students who attend school throughout the school year.

Table 2. Aldine Independent School District Student Demographics

Category	Percentage
Economically Disadvantaged	74.1
Limited English Proficiency	23.4
Special Education	9.8
Mobility Rate	23.5
Attendance Rate	96.0

Figure 1 shows the student achievement gaps between student groups in reading at the inception of Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) in 1994 and the gradual closing of the gap by the end of TAAS in 2002 (TEA, 2002).

Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) 1994-2002

Reading Accountability Scores Grades 3 – 8 and 10

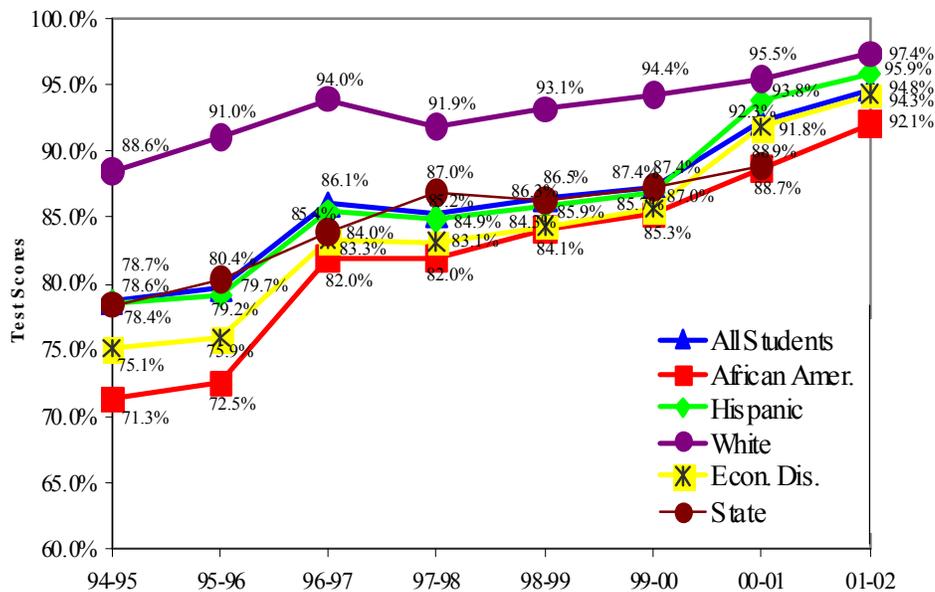


Figure 1. Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) Reading Scores 1994-2002.

Figure 2 shows the students achievement gaps between student groups in math at the inception of Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) in 1994 and the gradual closing of the gap by the end of TAAS in 2002 (TEA, 2002).

Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) 1994-2002 Math Accountability Scores Grades 3 – 8 and 10

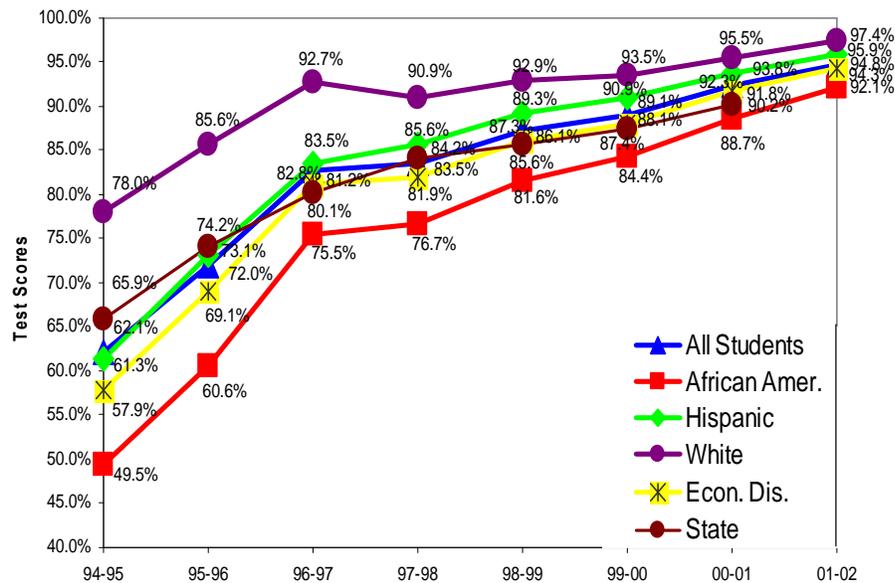


Figure 2. Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) Math Scores 1994-2002.

The district ranks among the state's high-performing school districts based on the standards set by the Texas Education Agency. The district has earned state accountability rating of "recognized" for seven consecutive years since 1996. Aldine is also the most proficient large school district in Texas in educating Latino students, and it is ranked second among large school districts in Texas in educating African American students, according to studies conducted by Texas A&M University and The

University of Texas-Pan American (Meier, Wrinkle, Hawes, & Theobald, 2003; Meier, Wrinkle, & Polinard, 2002).

Aldine ISD is known nationwide for its success in student achievement with urban children, by closing the achievement gaps among its student groups. Seventy-six percent (76%) of the students in the district are on free and reduced lunch; however, since 1996, the district students have preformed at or above the national and state averages on standardized tests.

There are a few other facts about the district that need to be shared. The district has only had three superintendents in 50 years. It has not had a school board member to be defeated in an election in over 46 years. Even though the majority of the student population is made up of students of color, it is still very much a conservative school district. The values and beliefs of this district have not changed over the years, even though the demographics of the students, community, and the school board have.

The people in leadership roles today, including the school board, administration and I, have learned to do things “the Aldine way.” “The Aldine way” is doing it first and not waiting for someone to tell you what to do or how to do it. It is accomplished by home growing the future leaders for the district, which includes school board members, superintendents, campus administrators, central office administrators, and teachers. In this environment, you learn to be competitive and not be satisfied with being second.

The district has a strong commitment to promote from within when it comes to the administration and school members who come from leaders in the community. This

process of selecting future leaders provides continuity, consistency during times of transition, such as retirement of a superintendent and school board members. In 26 years of attending board meetings, I have never witnessed a no vote on any issue. The district is known for hiring quality teachers who work hard and training them to be successful in working with children with various backgrounds.

There are school districts in the Gulf Coast that will hire Aldine teachers without a reference check, without reviewing appraisals, and without a call to the principal for a recommendation. Aldine ISD has built a reputation as a school district where the teachers have to work hard every day; it is a very competitive district in which to work, and it has high expectations of its students and staff. It is also known that if someone is not doing his or her job here, then this person will not survive in this district, and his or her tenure will be short.

Teachers come to Aldine ISD knowing and accepting that they are going to be expected to (a) love every child in their classes; (b) come early and stay late; (c) use benchmark testing every three weeks; (d) modify the instruction to reach every child; (e) teach from the curriculum that has been developed by the district; (f) walk around the classroom to ensure that students are on task; (g) tutor students before, during, and after school; (h) to teach every child at his or her level and to bring them up to grade level by the end of the year; (i) have high expectations and hope for all students, (j) not to use the children's social economic status to make or accept excuses for them not achieving academic success; and (f) accept administrators coming to visit their

classrooms daily. Even with these expectations, the district has a teacher turnover rate that is lower than the national and state averages.

Purposeful Sample

For this study, in depth interviews with teachers was the method of collecting data. I purposefully selected an urban school that had a low teacher turnover rate. I wanted my study to focus on those teachers because research shows that the turnover rate for teachers begins to drop after five years of experience (Ingersoll, 2001). There was only one condition for this study, and that was that all of the teachers in the study had to have five plus years of teaching experience.

Parker Intermediate School

The site for this study was Parker Intermediate School in Houston, Texas. Parker students have achieved academic success since the opening of the school. Table 3 shows the student achievement of the students at Parker Intermediate School from when it opened in 1994 to the last administration of TAAS in 2002 (TEA, 2002). Parker Intermediate school is six years old, and for the last three years has had a teacher turnover rate of less than 10% (Blanson, 2003). This rate is below the national average of 16%, and substantially lower than other urban schools. Some urban schools have to battle a teacher turnover rate of 50% or higher (Ingersoll, 2001). The state of Texas average for teacher turnover is 15.5%, and the district average is 15% (Fuller, 2002b). Also, this school has been rated “exemplary” or “recognized” for academic achievement by the Texas Education Agency since 1996.

Table 3. Parker Intermediate School's Student Achievement, 1994-2002

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	Campus Change 1996-2002	District Change 1994-2002	State Change 1994-2002
TAAS All Tests Taken										
All Students	79.1%	83.7%	90.3%	84.5%	86.7%	90.3%	90.4%	+11.3%	+36.4%	+29.7%
African American		73.8%	83.9%	80.2%	83.4%	88.3%	88.5%	+22.6%	+47.4%	+43.9%
Hispanic	77.6%	81.6%	91.3%	79.4%	84.1%	88.1%	87.8%	+10.2%	+38.9%	+38.6%
European American	86.5%	91.2%	94.9%	92.6%	93.4%	96.0%	97.4%	+10.9%	+24.8%	+23.1%
Econ Disadvantaged	71.6%	75.8%	87.0%	79.4%	83.1%	87.0%	87.1%	+15.5%	+43.0%	+39.2%
TAAS Reading										
All Students	89.5%	92.4%	94.9%	89.3%	89.7%	91.3%	91.3%	+1.8%	+18.8%	+14.8%
African American		89.2%	92.2%	87.4%	87.1%	90.2%	90.2%	+8.7%	+25.6%	+26.5%
Hispanic	86.5%	90.8%	96.0%	84.6%	85.5%	88.5%	88.2%	+1.7%	+21.1%	+22.0%
European American	94.8%	95.4%	96.6%	95.5%	97.5%	96.6%	97.8%	+3.0%	+11.2%	+9.1%
Econ Disadvantaged	83.1%	88.2%	92.8%	85.5%	86.5%	87.9%	88.2%	+5.1%	+24.6%	+23.1%
TAAS Mathematics										
All Students	83.2%	85.4%	93.0%	91.1%	93.2%	96.8%	97.3%	+14.1%	+38.6%	+32.2%
African American		76.8%	88.2%	88.2%	91.5%	95.9%	96.7%	+24.6%	+49.9%	+48.4%
Hispanic	83.5%	84.3%	92.5%	88.0%	93.3%	96.7%	96.9%	+13.4%	+40.9%	+43.0%
European American	88.9%	91.5%	96.9%	95.2%	94.7%	97.7%	98.9%	+10.0%	+25.4%	+23.2%
Econ Disadvantaged	77.3%	78.7%	90.6%	88.0%	91.8%	96.3%	96.3%	+19.0%	+44.9%	+43.9%
TAAS Writing										
All Students	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+13.2%	+9.7%
African American	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+18.7%	
Hispanic	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+14.8%	+14.1%
European American		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+3.4%	+6.3%
Econ Disadvantaged	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+17.9%	+15.0%
TAAS Social Studies										
All Students	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+30.1%	+17.8%
Annual Dropout Rate (7-12)										
All Students	-	*	*	-	-	-	-	-	-3.1%	-1.8%
African American	*	*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-2.3%	
Hispanic	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-3.3%	-2.8%
European American		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-2.1%	-1.2%
Econ Disadvantaged	-	*	*	-	-	-	-	-	+0.1%	-1.9%

Table 3 (continued)

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	Campus Change 1996-2002	District Change 1994-2002	State Change 1994-2002
Attendance Rate (gr. 1-12)										
All Students	-	95.7%	95.9%	96.1%	96.1%	96.4%	95.9%	-	+1.1%	+0.6%
Campus Student Composition										
African American	29.2%	31.5%	36.5%	36.2%	41.3%	41.5%	42.7%			
Hispanic	22.8%	24.5%	23.6%	26.4%	26.8%	31.6%	33.5%			
European American	44.4%	39.8%	36.7%	32.7%	26.8%	22.9%	20.8%			
Econ Disadvantaged	45.3%	48.6%	52.8%	56.5%	57.3%	58.0%	61.8%			

Parker Intermediate School is named for one of the district's retired school board members, as are many of the district's schools. Parker Intermediate School is located in the northern part of the district and serves fifth and sixth graders. The school has been a state recognized school since its opening in 1994. Parker Intermediate has an enrollment of 970 students with an ethnic composition of: 45% African American, 35% Hispanic, and 18% European American. Parker has a professional staff of 68 people whose composition is: 29.10% Black, 8.91% Hispanic, and 61.99% European American. The demographics of the administrative staff of the school are as follows: the principal was European American; two of the assistant principals were African American and one was European American; and two of the counselors were Hispanic and one was African American.

The target population for this study was teachers with five plus years of teaching experience who were teaching in an urban school. At the time of this study, there were 31 teachers at Parker Intermediate School who fell into the category of five plus years of teaching experience. The 31 teachers were narrowed down by using the following guidelines:

1. Having an ethnically diverse sample that included African Americans, European Americans, and Hispanics.
2. Having a wide range of teaching experience represented in the study. In this study, the experience ranged from 5-33 years of experience.
3. Having a sample that was gender balanced.
4. Having teachers who spent the last five plus years at Parker.

After giving consideration to the above criterion, 13 teachers were identified for the study and agreed to participate. Of the 13 participants, 5 were European American (3 females and 2 males); 5 were African American (4 females and 1 male); and 3 were Hispanics (all females). Table 4 illustrates experience, subject, grade, and other relevant data.

Table 4. Participants' Demographic Information

Participants	Total Experience	Experience at Parker	Grade Taught	Subject Taught	Sex	Black	European American	Hispanic
A	7	3	6	Math	Female		X	X
B	9	7	5	Math	Male		X	
C	5	5	5	Science	Female			X
D	5	5	5	English	Male	X		
E	6	6	5	Deaf Ed	Female		X	
F	26	9	5/6	Bilingual	Female			X
G	18	5	6	ESL	Female			X
H	33	6	6	Social Studies	Female	X		
I	18	9		Science Spec.	Female	X		
J	25	6	6	SPED/ French	Male		X	
K	20	4	5	SPED	Female	X		
L	5	5	6	Social Studies	Female	X		
M	11	9		Comp Tech	Male		X	

Participants were asked to tell me their professional life stories through one-on-one interviews, with my focus being on why they had chosen to remain in an urban school to teach. My research on the professional teaching lives of educators and understanding why they chose to remain and teach in an urban school was a result of being an administrator in the human resources department for my school district. Why teachers leave or remain at a particular school or school district has always been interesting to me. In June 2004, I interviewed two teachers who I knew at other schools to pilot my study. Questions were tested and modified after the pilot study. After the pilot was completed, the two interviews were analyzed and I found that some of the questions that were used did not produce the stories that I had hoped. Therefore, I added, deleted, and revised some of the questions on the questionnaire to make them more thought-provoking. However, I did find that even though the two participants in the pilot study were different in background, race, gender, level of education, and length of experience as a teacher, there were many similarities in the stories that they told about how they became teachers and why they were still teaching in an urban school. These findings helped me begin to think about themes and how they can develop right before one's eyes.

Instrumentation

I was the instrument used for this study. I am also deputy superintendent for Aldine School District, which means that I am second to the superintendent when it comes to chain of command in the district. These teachers or principals do not report directly to me. I am not the teachers' or the administrative team's immediate supervisor

at the school, and I did not hire any of the participants in this study. Most of these teachers had heard my name but did not know my role in the school district. I think that they were more open to me in telling their stories because they felt that I could change the things that they felt needed to be changed. They were not intimidated by me or hesitated to tell me their stories.

One of the characteristics of qualitative research is that the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis. The data is filtered through the interviewer during the interviews and during data analysis. This type of research recognizes the researcher as the instrument and, as such, taking into account the experiences and perspectives of the researcher as valuable and meaningful to the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher is the device for gathering and analyzing data and should use that unique opportunity to create a rich, useful product. But the researcher is also a human and, as such, has limitations. Humans make mistakes, misinterpret data, overlook the real story, and sometimes insert or do not reveal their biases or compensate for them. Merriam (1998) states “the extent to which a researcher has certain personality characteristics and skills necessary for this type of research needs to be assessed, just as a rating scale or survey form would be assessed in other types of research” (pp. 20-21). She states that the researcher should have the following characteristics: (a) a tolerance for ambiguity, (b) sensitivity, and (c) be a good communicator. The ambiguity in qualitative research is that there is lack of structure; therefore, the “instrument or researcher” is allowed to adapt to unexpected or unforeseen events and changes in direction as the study progresses. Sensitivity is the

ability to be intuitive. Merriam (1998) states that the researcher must be sensitive to the context and all of the variables within it, including the physical setting, the people, the overt and covert agendas, and the nonverbal behavior.

The researcher must show sensitivity to the participants and the data gathered. In qualitative research, the researcher or the instrument considers all of the data in its totality before coming to a conclusion about what is really going on. Equally important, is that as the instrument, the researcher must be a good communicator. The researcher must be able to relate to the participants, empathize with the participants, ask good questions, and be an intense listener. It is only by listening “to many individuals and to many points of view that value-resonant social contexts can be fully, equitably, and honorably represented” (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 175). Guba and Lincoln (1989) list characteristics that differentiate the researcher as instruments used in qualitative research as opposed to those of the quantitative research instrument. Those characteristics are well suited for this type of study, because as stated by Lincoln and Guba (1985), human responsive to environmental cues and able to interact with the situation: (a) they have the ability to collect information at multiple levels simultaneously, (b) they are able to perceive situations holistically, (c) they are able to process data as soon as they become available, (d) they can provide immediate feedback and request verification of data, and (e) they can explore atypical or unexpected responses.

Data Collection

Once my study was approved by the IRB, the principal asked all teachers who had five plus years of teaching experience to come to the library. I addressed them and informed them of the study and answered questions they had. All who were interested in participating in the study were given a participant information handout. A one-week grace period was allotted for teachers to return the forms to the principal. Thirteen teachers were selected from the returned forms. At the end of one week, those 13 teachers willing to participate were interviewed individually in their classrooms before or after school, whichever was best for them. The interviews were in-depth and lasted from 45 to 90 minutes.

A structure interview seeks to determine the frequency of pre-conceived kinds of things, while the unstructured interview seeks to find out what kinds of things exist in the first place. It forms a close link with participant observation, in which much data is gathered by informal interviewing; observation is part of the method of in-depth interviewing. (Lofland & Lofland, 1984, p. 157)

Mishler (1986a) argues that interviews do not necessarily lead to narratives; therefore, I used Bell's (1988) approach to help elicit stories from the participants by asking open-ended questions and listening with a minimum of interruptions. In most cases, in-depth interviews are like discussions, with one person being interviewed at a time. These in-depth interviews allowed me to explore my subject in detail and allowed me to probe for feelings about an issue or subject. There are advantages in using in-depth interviews, in that they are ideal for investigating sensitive or things of a personal nature. Of course, there are disadvantages to conducting in-depth interviews as well. One of the major disadvantages of the in-depth interview is that the participants may

begin to feel as if they are under interrogation and begin to feel uncomfortable. To prevent this from happening to a larger degree, the interviewer must establish good rapport and trust with the participants.

This study used a semi-structured interview to acquire data from the participants. The setting was informal, and I asked open-ended questions that were flexible, exploratory, and that were more like a conversation. The interview was my dominant strategy for collection data. Bogdan and Biklen (2003) state that interviews in a qualitative research collect descriptive, detail, and rich data in the subject's own words so that the researcher can develop insight on how subjects interpret some piece of the world. That is my intention in the study of teacher retention. By conducting in-depth interviews, I was able to collect rich and descriptive data that I used in order to understand why these teachers remain in an urban school. It allowed me to gain insight into the teacher motivation to stay at Parker Intermediate School. The interviews were held at the teachers' campus in their classrooms. I believe that by doing in-depth interviews in the teacher's classroom, the atmosphere was non-competitive and there was more time for details and gathering larger amounts of information.

The interviews were audio taped with the permission of the participants. The interviews were more like conversations as opposed to interviews. General probing questions were asked by me. This study included open-ended questions that required the participants to think about and expound on their answers. I wanted stories about their experiences, and they gave them to me. The participants were asked to tell their

professional life stories and how they came to teach and why they have remained in an urban school.

Research Design

The selection of the appropriate research design is critical to the success of any research study. This study used a case study approach within the qualitative design. Merriam (1988) defines a qualitative case study as “an intensive, holistic, description and analysis of an instance, phenomenon, or social unit” (p. 21). Leedy (1997) and Creswell (1994) define qualitative research as an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting, detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting. In this case, that single entity, phenomenon, is “why teachers with five plus years of experience have remained in an urban school.” This design was used because it allowed me to use the experiences of teachers who have been in the profession for years and who understand teachers and the art of teaching. I was able to hear, see, and experience their professional life stories of teaching in an urban school.

According to Merriam (1998), humans are best suited for this type of study, especially because interviewing, observing, and analyzing are activities central to qualitative research. Qualitative research is interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how they make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world (Merriam, 1998). It is research that focuses on the experiences, interpretations, impressions, or motivations of an individual or individuals

and that seeks to describe how people view things and why. It relates to beliefs, attitudes, and changing behaviors.

“A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries are between phenomenon and context is not clearly evident” (Yin, 1994, p. 13). Merriam (1988) defines case study as “an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit” (p. 21). This definition clearly describes the intent and scope of my study. One of the tests of whether a study is a case study is if the phenomenon that is being studied is not intrinsically bounded, then it is not a case study (Merriam, 1988). Merriam also states that one way to assess the boundedness of a topic is to ask whether there is a limit to the number of people involved who could be interviewed or observed. My study is bounded by the number of teachers who meet the criterion to participate in the study.

A qualitative research paradigm method was used in this study because it provided rich, descriptive information to determine the factors that affect the retention of teachers with five plus years of experience in an urban school. This research focused on the narratives of these teachers who shared their professional life stories as teachers with the researcher. A professional life history case study design was selected for this research in order to gain a deep understanding of urban teacher retention. A case study is a detailed examination of one setting, or a single subject, a single depository of documents, or one particular event (Merriam, 1988; Stake, 1994; Yin, 1994). My single

“subject” for this study focuses on factors that will emerge from interviews with the teachers.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, field notes, and other materials that you accumulate to enable one to reveal findings (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Bogdan and Biklen (2003) have provided me with a foundation for understanding qualitative research theoretical framework and different methods that can be utilized for conducting and analyzing this type of research data. Analysis involves working with the data, organizing them, breaking them into manageable units, coding them, synthesizing them, and searching for patterns. Data gathered from the interviews were analyzed using narrative analysis methods as outlined by qualitative researchers such as: (a) Riessman (1993), narrative analysis; (b) Merriam (1998), case study applications; and (c) Bogdan and Biklen (2003), qualitative research theory and methods. Merriam (1998) provided me with the essential characteristics of qualitative research when conducting a case study. The narrative analysis approach dissects the stories that were told to me by the teachers. Narrative analysis was the qualitative research method that was the fundamental scheme for linking individual human actions and events into interrelated aspects of an understandable composite (Polkinghorne, 1988).

Narrative is a first-person account by respondents of their experiences in relation to a particular subject (Polkinghorne, 1988). Polkinghorne also states that narrative analysis assesses how respondents in the course of an interview make sense

of questions and comments in relation to events and actions in their lives. This type of analysis is well suited for this type of study, which is based on identity and subjectivity. At the heart of narrative analysis is the ways in which “humans experience the world” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 2). Narrative analysis takes as its object investigating the story itself (Riessman, 1993). Riessman (1993) argues that narratives are laced with social discourse and power relations, which can change over time, from setting-to-setting, and from audience-to-audience. Riessman (1993) presents actual models of narrative analysis structure approaches in qualitative research. She outlines several different approaches to narrative analysis. The primary approach that I used in this study was the Labov (1972, 1982) structure (Labov & Waletzky, 1967), which she argues that narratives have formal properties and each has ties. The Labovian method, as it is sometimes called, is being used because it proves structure when analyzing the stories so that I could compare the participants’ responses in a uniform format to find patterns between them. I was able to identify commonalities and similarities within their stories and among other participants’ stories. I looked for pattern and usage of certain words, phrases, and the linkage of the stories.

Labov (1972, 1982), Langellier (1989), Labov and Waletzky’s (1967) structure approach assumes that all narratives are stories about a specific past event and they have common perspectives:

1. Abstract – summary of the substance of the narrative.
2. Orientation – time, place, situations, participants.
3. Complicating action – sequence of events.

4. Evaluation – significance and meaning of the action attitude of narrator.
5. Resolution – what happens.
6. Coda – returns the perspective to the present.

Bell's (1988) method of narrative analysis was also used by asking opened-questions and paying close attention to word choice. This method allowed me to link stories together at different points in the participants' narratives. In analyzing the stories that the participants gave in answering: "Tell me stories about why you have remained in an urban school," I have only presented the core narratives to set a clear foundation (Mishler, 1986b). Also, parts of the transcriptions that were not useful were deleted to maintain focus on the core narrative.

By using these two methods of narrative analysis, I linked the commonalities between the participants' stories, and thereby, provided explanations of why they have chosen to remain in an urban school.

Grounded Theory

In order to help understand the participant's stories, I used grounded theory to help analyze their responses. I identified categories and concepts that emerged from the text and linked these concepts into substantive and formal theories (Charmaz, 2000). Being the primary instrument of data collection and analysis, I assumed an inductive stance and worked toward making meaning of the data gathered from the interviews, observations, and conversations with the participants. (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). I looked for new theories to emerge or to be developed from the data collected from the

participants. I sought to find generalizability among the participants' stories in an effort to expose new theories by constant comparison of the participants' stories.

I also collected verbatim transcripts of interviews and read through all of the text (Charmaz, 2000). I began my analysis of the text by proofreading the material and underlining key phrases in the participants' stories. I used a process called "open coding" by which I identified potential themes by giving real examples from the text (Agar, 1996; Bernard, 1994; Bogan & Biklen, 1992; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Lofland & Lofland, 1995; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). I conducted follow-up meetings with the participants if during the data analysis it was warranted. This helped refine my categories and create theoretical sampling (Charmaz, 2000).

Memoing was used to record relationships amongst themes. The three memoing techniques that were used were: (a) code notes, which are those notes that describe the concepts that are being discovered through grounded theory; (b) theory notes, which are notes that the researcher uses when trying to summarize his or her ideas about what is going on in the text; and (c) operational notes, which are notes that are of practical matters (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In an effort to give examples of the grounded theory at the end of the analysis, I displayed segments of the participants' text and verbatim quotes from the transcripts.

Trustworthiness and Credibility

Trustworthiness, "the basic issue in relation to trustworthiness is simple," write Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 268). "How can an inquirer persuade his or her audience (including self) that the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to, worth

taking account of?” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 268). In qualitative research, there are multiple realities that are constructed through the experiences of the informants. There is not absolute truth, only the truth as internalized and seen and revealed by the participants. Lincoln and Guba (1985) list a set of criteria for determining trustworthiness for qualitative research. In an attempt to maintain a rigor within my research, I will use Guba and Lincoln (1989) criteria, which is based on establishing credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability. They also point out that a qualitative study cannot be transferable unless it is credible, and it cannot be credible unless it is dependable. Therefore, it is important that credibility is established first.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) criteria for trustworthiness in a qualitative research include credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability. They ask the question: “How can an inquirer persuade his or her audiences that the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to, worth taking account of?” This is a valid question, and there are several methods that were used to establish trustworthiness. To establish credibility, I used several methods, the first of which was “peer debriefing.” Lincoln and Guba (1985) define peer debriefing as “a process of exposing oneself to disinterested peers in a manner paralleling an analytic session and for the purpose of exploring aspects of the inquiry that might otherwise remain only implicit within the inquirer’s mind” (p. 295). In my study, I used a peer debriefer who was knowledgeable in qualitative research design, but who was outside of my department of curriculum and instruction.

Transferability

To provide for the possibility of transferability of the final analysis of the data to other studies, I ensured that the data presented in the study were “solid descriptive” of the experiences of the teachers (Patton, 1990). I have provided a detailed description of information that readers need to know, such as the participants’ environment, opinions, and perspectives. It is not my intent to imply that this study can be transferred to other situations, but rather to educate readers and allow them to decide for themselves if the study findings are applicable to other situations.

Dependability and Confirmability

To determine dependability and conformability, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that both can be determined through one “properly managed process.” An auditor, who is also a doctoral student, was used to examine the process by which various stages of the study, including analytic techniques, were conducted (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Lincoln and Guba determined whether this process was applicable to the research undertaken and whether it was applied consistently (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To show confirmability, all records, taped interviews, transcripts, notes, discussions, and all other relevant documents relating to this study were maintained by me. Merriam (1988) said it best when she described dependability and confirmability by saying, “Rather than demanding that outsiders get the same results, one wishes outsiders to concur that, given the data collected, the results make sense and they are consistent and dependable” (Merriam, 1988, p. 172).

Member Check

Member check is a process through which respondents verify data and the interpretations thereof (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I went to the source of the information, the teacher, to check my data and the interpretation. The interviews were audio taped and transcribed. Each teacher was sent a copy of the transcripts to review, clarify, validate, authenticate, and to make corrections where appropriate, concerning what they read. After the changes were made, the teachers received an updated transcript. After the findings were made, the participants were given a copy of the findings and given a chance to respond to them.

Limitations of the Study

The study was limited to only one of 65 schools in an urban school district. Therefore, the data gathered was limited to the responses obtained from this single school. The participants in this study were limited to teachers with five plus years of experience. Finally, the study was limited to intermediate school teachers (5th and 6th graders).

Summary

The goal of this chapter was to describe the qualitative research methodologies utilized in the study. The qualitative strategy of a narrative inquiry was employed by me because of the goals for this research project, which was to identify factors that affect the retention of teachers with five plus years of experience in an urban school. I believe that the narrative method using in-depth interviews will reveal the factors that have kept these teachers in their urban school. Details concerning the population

description, pilot study, research design, the data collection strategy, and data analysis strategy and the study limitations were all described.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Introduction

Researchers such as Bruner, Gee, and Mishler argue that using narrative in our everyday lives is the primary way individuals make sense of their experiences (Bruner, 1990; Gee, 1985; Mishler, 1986a). The stories presented are those of 13 teachers who agreed to participate in this study. My intent was to describe their reasons for remaining in an urban school by analyzing their stories. I allowed them to tell me their stories with minimum interruption from me. Before the interviews, I did not know any of the participants. They were only names and numbers on a campus roster that met the criteria for my study. Initially, I was concerned about being able to get them to talk openly to me, but I soon learned that would not be a problem. All of the participants were very open during the 45-90 minute interview. I learned things about these remarkable educators that I believe they did not know themselves. Riessman (1993) stated that, “narrative analysis takes as its object of investigation the story itself” (p. 1) and their many stories.

Throughout the process of the participants telling their stories and during the analysis of their stories, I had to constantly remind myself that as the researcher or investigator, I did not have direct access to other persons’ experiences, only a representation of their stories through talk, text, interaction, and interpretation (Riessman, 1993). Therefore, I had to remember that when the participants were telling me their stories or experiences, they were creating a self, how they wanted me to know

them (Riessman, 1993). I also had to come to an understanding that people will attend to or focus on certain things in their stories and not others, for whatever reason; it is their choice and their right. It is my responsibility to get as much data from the interviews as possible. It was very common to see different selves in the participants' stories. McAdams (1999) states that:

By scripting one's life in such a way that different characters or sub selves take on different roles and attributes, the I is able to express the multiplicity of selfhood within a single story of the self. In this way, especially integrative life stories solve the perennial identity problem of the self's need to be many things and one thing at the same time. (p. 486)

In analyzing the stories that the participants gave in answering the question, "Why have you remained teaching in an urban school?" I only presented the core of the narratives to set a clear foundation (Mishler, 1986b). Parts of the transcriptions were deleted to maintain focus on the core narrative. The Labov (1972) method of transcription by using structural categories was used to show similarities between stories:

1. Abstract – summary of the substance of the narrative.
2. Orientation – time, place, situations, participants.
3. Complicating Action – sequence of events.
4. Evaluation – significance and meaning of the action attitude of narrator.
5. Resolution – what happens.
6. Coda – returns the perspective to the present.

Sarah's Story: A Different World

Sarah's Biography

Sarah is an energetic six-year veteran teacher who was one of the most open and forthrightly speaking people that I interviewed. My first reaction to her was that I would not have to tell her to tell me stories, that it would come naturally. Sarah grew up in Michigan, where she attended public K-12 schools and college. She received her bachelor's degree in special education from Michigan State University in 1997. She began her teaching career in the Aldine School District in 1998, and her present assignment is a deaf education teacher at Parker Intermediate School. Sarah has six years of teaching experience with all of those years in the Aldine School District. I began all of my interviews by asking the same question to all of the participants, and that was "Tell me your story about how you became a teacher and how you became a teacher in Aldine."

Sarah's Story 1.0

Abstract

Q: Tell me your story about becoming a teacher, teaching at Parker Intermediate School, and why you have chosen to remain here.

A: I guess I have always felt I wanted to be a teacher since I was younger,

Orientation

and then I went to Michigan State and from Michigan I wanted to go into some sort of special education since my aunt was a teacher and I would visit her class. And they also happened to offer the very first year that I was in Michigan State a program where you could get your bachelor's degree and still teach special education, so I did that and I didn't have to go back and get my master's or anything. I graduated from Michigan State and did my student teaching there in the fifth year.

Complicating Action

While I was there, people from Aldine came to my campus. They were recruiting, and I wanted to try something different. I looked at Arizona and I like the sun, somewhere warmer than Michigan was actually the big pull to get out of that weather.

Resolution/Coda

I wanted to do something different and I knew, my teaching Deaf Ed, if I had wanted to stay in Michigan, I would probably have to go to schools further back from the cities.

Sarah's Story 1.1

Abstract

Q: Why Deaf Ed? There are a lot of special education programs, why deaf education?

A: Because of my aunt,

Orientation

and I visited her quite a few times and I had done some substitute teaching at her class and she is now an administrator.

Complicating Action

So I was always interested in sign language, and I took a class in college and they eventually offered the program, so I thought I might as well do it now so I don't have to go back to school.

Resolution/Coda

So when they recruited down here and they offered me a job at Parker, and I have been here ever since and I am happy with it. I love Parker, but if I wanted to leave teaching where I teach, they only offer it at four schools in Aldine. So if I wanted to leave teaching Deaf Ed, I would have to go to a different district. I live in Conroe School District, and they have a very small, I mean they are a big district, so you offer a lot. If I were to teach in Conroe, I would probably have liked it; I would have to travel to different schools and being like an interim teacher, and I didn't want to do that. I guess that was another pro of why I stayed here.

Sarah's decision to become a teacher was greatly influenced by her aunt who was a teacher. Her decision to become to teacher was partly a result of someone special in her life being a teacher. Becoming a teacher in Aldine was a matter of opportunity presenting itself when a recruiter from the district offered her a job.

Sarah's Story 1.2

Abstract/Orientation

Q: How do you feel about the teaching profession as a whole?

A: I love it. I do. I love my class. I don't know if I want to teach the regular kids.

Complicating Action

If I didn't do what I do, if I didn't teach hearing impaired children, I may have gone to another district.

Resolution/Coda

But these are the kids I have. They are stronger; they are not wild and crazy. Not that they are perfect, but they are not necessarily like a lot of urban areas. So I mean, if they were to get rid of this program here, I would probably look elsewhere.

Sarah's Story 1.3

Abstract

Q: Is there anything else about the school other than the Deaf Ed program that adds to your reason for staying?

Orientation

A: Oh yeah, and I want to stay here. I love my administration here and they are wonderful. They do a good job, so as long as I am happy here, then I want to stay here. I think they are very approachable. It's like, you can go there and ask any of them if you have a problem.

Complicating Action

They also, I don't necessarily have a lot of behavioral problems and when I do, they are very good about nipping it in the bud. From the get go, so that helps....I don't know about other schools,

Resolution/Coda

so I mean I am not saying other schools don't get support from the administration.

It is very evident that administrative support is important to Sarah, and it shows when she talks about them (the administrators) "nipping discipline problems in the bud" and the fact that they respect their time by not keeping them late, and conducting staff development during the day so that they can go home after school to be with their families. These things are obviously very important to Sarah. Sarah used the word "love" a number of times to describe her feelings toward students and administrative staff.

Sarah's Story 1.4

Abstract

My husband works for Aldine,

Complicating Action

at the same school as me.

Resolution/Coda

I mean you can work the hours, that's another reason I have stayed here, because we work at the same school and that's nice. I mean to be able to see him and have lunch or whatever.

Sarah's second and third stories clearly move the dialog to the heart of why she became a teacher and still is a teacher. This is where she explains in greater detail than

before how she feels about her the students. She explains why she is working with deaf education children and the love that she has for them. She makes it very clear that these are her children and administrative team, and they are the reasons why she is teaching and why she is still in Aldine. In story 1.4, she also stated that her husband works with her and they can ride to work together, see each other during the day, and eat lunch together. This convenience is important to Sarah.

Sarah's Story 1.5

Abstract

Q: If there were other places to work, if Conroe had vacancies, 10 or 12 vacancies, would you go?

Complicating Action

A: Pay helps a lot.

Resolution/Coda

I have been offered a special education teaching stipend here in Aldine. Quite a few districts don't do that.

Sarah's Story 1.6

Abstract

Q: You mentioned salary. How do you feel about your compensation package? That's your salary, your insurance, the whole thing. How do you feel about the way you have been compensated?

A: Well, I think the district should pay more, and the fact that we are an urban district that they have to do more than that.

Orientation

They also give a stipend for special education, which we need it; it is very a critical needs area,

Complicating Action

the insurance needs to be a little bit better, I think. It seems to get higher and higher every year. I don't know if it was before I started working here, but it has raised and raised, and I don't know how that equates to all other states. I know in Michigan there was a lot of that included.

Resolution/Coda

So that was nice.

In stories 1.5 and 1.6, Sarah indicates that the “pay helps a lot,” but it is not the most important reason why she is still at Parker. She would like more money and better insurance benefits, but it has not become a problem to the point that it would cause her to leave the school.

Scott's Story: I Am Impressed

Scott's Biography

Scott is an aspiring administrator who is full of energy and ambition. He was ready for me when I walked into the room. He was the second person who I talked to, and my concerns that these teachers would be apprehensive in me interviewing them, vanished. Scott is from Iowa and was educated there also. Scott received his bachelor's degree in elementary education from Iowa State University and his master's degree in educational administration from Prairie View A&M University in 2003. He received his principal certification in 2004. Scott began his teaching experience in 1995 with the Aldine School District teaching 3rd and 4th grade at Sammons Elementary School. He transferred to his present assignment in 1998 as a mathematics teacher at Parker Intermediate School. Scott has nine years of experience in the field of education with all of those years in the Aldine School District.

*Scott's Story 2.0***Abstract**

Q: Tell me about your story, about becoming a teacher, coming to Texas, coming to Parker, and why you are still here at Parker Intermediate School.

A: The reason why I became a teacher is because I pretty much grew into the education profession.

Orientation

My father was an elementary and high school principal, and he is now a superintendent. Both my uncles were high school principals, as well, so they were good role models for me growing up, and I always wanted to get to that path. I always wanted to get into administration.

Complicating Action

So obviously, I had to get into teaching first. So I graduated from Iowa State University in Iowa, and I had an opportunity when I was doing my student teaching to either teach in Des Moines, Iowa, or Houston, Texas. And I thought: well I might as well go to Houston; I knew I didn't want to teach in Des Moines,

Resolution

so I thought why not. So I decided to come down here to Houston, and I student taught in Houston, enjoyed it, and the District offered me a job right away. Obviously, it was a lot more than I would have been offered back in Iowa, and I enjoyed it, and so I stayed and I started out at Sammon Elementary, teaching

Coda

and then Mr. McCanna, who was assistant principal at that time, and he came over to talk and I decided to go to Parker and I have been here for the last 6-7 years. Seven years at Parker.

Scott has teaching in his blood. Many of the people closest to him have been or are educators, such as his father and uncles. He respects the profession and is proud to

be an educator like his family members. Much like Sarah, Scott came to Aldine because he was recruited, and it was an opportunity to begin his teaching career.

Scott's Story 2.1

Abstract

Q: Why have you stayed here for seven years? You could go anywhere with that number of years of experience, any school district, anyone would hire you.

A: But I have really enjoyed my experience here at Parker, and the main reason why I stayed here at Parker for the last 7 years is basically related to the support I get from my administration.

Orientation

Parker has a great administration. Before Mr. McCanna was principal, was Mr. Knipple. I've had the opportunity to, I think, work under two great administrators, two great leaders, and the support that they give you and the professionalism that they showed at the school towards the staff, I think that the main thing is just the campus culture. The culture of our campus, it has really kept me here for all those years,

Complicating Action

and if I were to continue teaching, I honestly don't see myself moving to another location because, you know,

Resolution

I get to know how things operate, and it just gets to be routine for you. You know, you know what to expect, you know how to make it work for you. Maybe its being how things are going to be handled, on the decisions you make with the parents, being with the kids, you get complacent, and you get comfortable with it, and I've enjoyed that and that's the way.

Coda

Like I said, the culture, the campus culture, the way things are done, just the way the school is, the school's set up, the administration, the courses you get, all are important.

Scott's Story 2.2

Abstract/Orientation

Q: Give me some examples; tell me how they support you, in what way.

A: There's always an open door policy with all the administrators.

Complicating Action

If you get into a situation where you might have a complaint from the parents, you might be in a little hot water with some parents, not because of something you set yourself up for or that you did wrong,

Resolution

but they are always going to back you. They are always going to sit down with you, and they are going to tell you, take your side, if you made all the necessary precautions that need to be made with that child, and peer contact, just everything.

Coda

You ask for anything, you get it, if there's something you need, they will find ways to get it for you, and another thing is, the administration staff is, they pay attention to detail here, I think. And that's one thing I really feel is important, and even in my field, in administration, they pay attention to detail.

Scott's Story 2.3

Abstract/Orientation

If somebody needs something, you don't just put it on the backburner and worry about it later.

Complicating Action

Like the time I forgot to contact the parents to tell them that their child was failing,

Resolution

they supported me with the parents by saying that everybody makes mistakes. That meant a lot. If I need something, I ask them. I know and I am confident

and comfortable knowing that I am going to get that or get that support that I need.

Coda

So there's always an open door policy, and they are always just paying attention to the little things, the details, things that are important.

Scott's Story 2.4

Abstract

Q: Put your thinking cap on for a second. When you first started teaching, the first 2 years, as a new teacher, tell me about the support that you got during that time. How do you feel about the support you got?

A: The first time I walked into a classroom, and you have to understand how really, my first year of teaching, how easy it was for me because I had some experience.

Orientation

I had third and fourth grade kids. At this one time, I had 11 kids and honestly a lot people enter that room daily, but I am like "man I have an excellent room, I had all these decorations, I had student taught,

Complicating Action

I really didn't have any clue the first couple of years, I just kind of was one body in the classroom, and I knew my material, but very experimental.

Resolution

I learned this way to teach and I try this and they send you all this stuff and I'll try this and eventually you get comfortable with something that works for you and you keep building on your style every year to the changes and through the way education changes and the way the kids change. But I would say, my first few years, I only worked in one district my whole life so I have nothing to compare to, but I have always had great support from the administration that, one thing, I have been, so from every aspect, from the top of administration all the way down, I forget the name of the lady who worked with me as student teacher coordinator, but my first couple of years she always inner campus mailed me cause we didn't have email then, but it was always, is there anything you need, here's staff development opportunity I feel would help you, I thought

that was impressive. Here's this woman that is making sure things are going fine for me, and she still got a new group of student teachers that she is working on and it just goes to show how those little things help retain you. I really see myself retired here, just because of that support, and as a teacher I would honestly say I would never ever, been anywhere in another district. It don't really matter how they operate, how the administration staff is, but I would have to say that the support you get here is one of the best. And that support equals attention.

Coda

I don't think it has changed from my first day in a classroom to today, as far as support I have gotten from people above me in administrative roles.

Scott's Story 2.5

Abstract/Orientation

Q: You have a lot of latitude delivering the instruction, please explain.

A: You know what you need to do, and when to do it, how to do it, and if not, you are going to hear about it. But you don't want to put yourself in that position to where, and I am not saying it is a...point when you are going to get yelled at and treated like you are being scolded or anything, but it's like you don't want to,

Complicating Action

I don't want to put myself in a position professionally in a point where someone is going to have to say to me "hey listen, you didn't do this and I told you this and you didn't do it." And you know through your upbringing and through your education and professionalism, you know that if something needs to be taken care of, you take care of it.

Resolution

No matter what. You just don't want to put yourself in the position to where they are going to have to say to you "listen." I have worked with Mr. McCanna for all 9 years and I have gotten to a personal level with him. Friendship.

Coda

And I just wouldn't want to put myself in the position to where he would, you know...

*Scott's Story 2.6***Abstract**

Q: Are the expectations here from administration clear?

A: You bet they are clear. You know what you need to do, how you need to do it, and that you need to do it.

Complicating Action

And one of the things they do here is they do a lot of delegating responsibilities. Last week we had a meeting after school, and I can't remember the last time we've done that because once school is over, everybody has certain responsibilities they need to take care of.

Resolution

They take care of business right away. If there's something that the administration needs to deliver to us, we will sit down, we will talk about it, then I will bring that information to the teachers that I have in this courtyard. So I will sit down and talk to them and share with them, but then also, I will use email. After I have shared with them, the same things that we discussed will be emailed to every teacher. So right there they have got two things that they need to know to make sure that they know what they are doing. Or two ways to communicate to make sure they need to know what they are doing, instead of keeping them after school and have them break other plans, because I don't think it is as effective as that because too many times when you get to that situation I have noticed, and sometimes you need it, but here we don't do that. And like I said, that is just because the administration respects the teachers enough to where you know once school is out, yeah you got things you have to do. Sometimes you have to stay because you have to do grades or whatever, but that's part of the job and I think a lot of those things that, and just the small things, why keep us around and sit there and talking for an hour when that can be taken care of during the day. And we, everybody just has that respect for administration to where you are not going to keep us after school, but I got this from my team leader and I got it through email, so I know what I need to do. I know what I have to prepare for tomorrow. I need to have turned in at a certain amount of time. Just like the teacher evaluation cards, the cards that you have to fill out yourself.

Coda

Talk about it with the team leader, team meeting, received on email, so you can respond professionally.

In stories, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, and 2.6, Scott constantly praised and showed gratitude toward the administrative staff for their support. He speaks about the respect that they show him and the staff. He also talks about the wonderful mentor that he had as a new teacher, and the support that she gave him. Scott seems to have had people there for him throughout his career. Support as a teacher is important to Scott as a teacher, because he mentioned it over and over in his stories. In story 2.6, Scott shows that respect for his administration is so strong that he does not want to disappoint them by not doing his job.

Scott's Story 2.7

Abstract

Q: How do you feel about the compensation packages for teachers?

A: Me personally, I think it is great. I think the salary is very compatible.

Orientation

I mean I don't think I can go anywhere in this state and get the amount of money that I get right now and at the level that I am working at, as far as teaching. Because you take my salary.... There are so many opportunities to build on that salary: extended day. I have been doing that every day since I have been a teacher. The longevity pay, opportunity to teach summer school. Every year, no matter what you are making, if you are willing to work for it, you can add another \$5,000-\$6,000 on top of your salary and I have taken advantage of that every time.

Complicating Action

You have to understand that if you are going to be in education and specially teaching, you are never going to be rich;

Resolution

but if you manage your money carefully, you are going to live comfortably. I mean you are working 187 days a year and making what a lot of people make working the whole year.

Coda

You can't complain about it.

Scott's Story 2.8

Abstract/Orientation

The health is great,

Complicating Action

the opportunity from outside to add money, the opportunity to get education, to cash out annuities, the opportunity to do this, do that, and the incentive they give you where depending on attendance how much money they give you.

Resolution

There are just so many ways, and I never had any complaints about health,

Coda

and I am one of those people who get hurt by having insurance because I exercise, I lift weights and I stay healthy. I haven't been sick for you know how long.

Scott's compensation packet is not an issue for him. He feels that he is paid well and feels that there are opportunities for anyone to work extra to earn even more money.

Scott's Story 2.9

Abstract

Q: You mentioned staff development. How do you feel about the staff development for teachers?

A: It's plentiful, but I think a lot of....Are you talking about the district staff development or the staff opportunities that the district provides?

Q: Provides...an example.

A: I think that there are always opportunities for you to get your staff development hours. You need to know it.

Orientation

I just heard the other day about a staff development opportunity for new teachers. They are always posted. They are always telling you here is what is out there. And being in math, I have always taught math, the development opportunities are excellent. Miss Henfield always emails with super Saturday, whatever is out there. And when I said development opportunities, it's at least 2 or 3 a week. At least two emails a week on staff development opportunities. So it is all about, they are just putting there and saying here is what I want you to do.

Complicating Action

But honestly it has been hard for me. I kind of haven't taken up on those opportunities that I have had in the last couple of years because of my schedule. But if you don't get your hours, something is wrong.

Resolution/Coda

I mean all the, like I said, no one can ever come back and say you never offer me this or that or I never knew about that. It doesn't happen here. The program here does a good job, the administration does a good job, skill specialists always hand out stuff, and I am sure that is pretty much district wide so staff development opportunities are excellent, they are plentiful.

Scott feels that the staff development that the district provides is adequate and has been of great use to him. He also used strong adjectives such as excellent and plentiful to describe the staff development opportunities that are offered.

Ashley's Story: Coming Home

Ashley's Biography

When I first met Ashley, she appeared to be shy and timid, but I could sense the strong compassion that she has for her community and her students. I think that she sees herself when she looks at her students. She is teaching children who are from the neighborhood where she grew up and teaching at the same school that she attended. Ashley received her bachelor's degree in history from Baylor University in 1999. She began her teaching career in the Aldine School District in 1999 to her present assignment as social studies teacher at Parker Intermediate School. Ashley has five years of teaching experience with all of those years in the Aldine School District.

Ashley's Story 3.0

Abstract/Orientation

Q: I appreciate your participating in the interview today, and I would like to start off with your telling me your story or stories on becoming a teacher, becoming a teacher at Aldine, and becoming a teacher at Parker, and tell me your story about why you are still here. Why have you remained here?

A: Okay. Actually it is not a complicated story. I am a graduate of Aldine ISD. I attended Conley Elementary and then Sammons Elementary, Middle School, and graduated from here. I had excellent, outstanding teachers.

Complicating Action

My goal was to be a dentist or a child psychologist, and by the time I got to high school, I had some of my best teachers ever and they inspired me to become an educator.

Resolution

So I went to Baylor University and studied education and graduated, and this is where I wanted to come back to because the teachers gave me a lot and I wanted to come back. I know it sounds corny, a lot of people say that, but that

honestly is the truth. I felt blessed to have grown up in this district. I went off to Baylor, which was a fairly difficult school to get into and succeed at. I graduated with a 3.5 GPA. I mean in my first semester I had a 3.5, and I owe it to my parents and the education I got here.

Coda

So when I graduated, I wanted to come back and kind of lay out that same foundation for another group of people. I felt that I wanted to give that back, so that is why I am here.

Ashley's Story 3.1

Abstract/Orientation

As for staying here...I think I always wanted to teach high school. I thought that was what I wanted to do, and so I interviewed at McArthur. I had interviews set up at some other places,

Complicating Action

and because I had such a strong relationship with the teachers at Nimitz. And they were saying that coming back to Nimitz was the best thing for me because this is where I lived and it might be difficult, a difficult transition,

Resolution

and so I went and interviewed in some of the high schools and I came here and ah... this was something completely different for me because I student taught ninth, tenth, and eleventh grades. I just never thought I could work with children this young, but Mr. McCanna made me feel very comfortable and Mrs. Brown. From the very first interview, she was wonderful, and I knew I would be working with her Then I went, and some people told me that I was too young to work in high school and that that might be a problem and so ultimately, after discussing with my parents and talking with my old teachers who later became my mentors, I thought this might be something different to try, something a little bit different. And I knew afterwards I was there and if it didn't work out that I had to go and be some place where I felt more comfortable.

Coda

So I got here and I love it. I love the kids at this level, and it is nice to know that I am a partner, that within the community itself, I am a part of helping them

figure out who it is that they are and who they are not. In high school, a lot of people already know, but here they are trying to figure that out.

Ashley reflects on growing up in the Aldine community and how the teachers that she had affected her life in a positive manner. She tells stories about giving back to the community in which she grew up, by becoming a teacher. She also tells stories about the encouragement that she got from her principal and how he made her feel comfortable when she first arrived at school. Ashley also used an interesting word, “wonderful,” to describe the support that she receives from the administrative staff. She also talks about the love that she has for her students.

Ashley’s Story 3.2

Abstract

Q: You mentioned about earning a decent salary. How do you feel about your compensation package?

Orientation

A: I am very frustrated with my salary is what it is, teachers feel guilty to complain about salary.

Complicating Action

But honestly, I’ve been working for five years, as of next year if I figured it correctly, I still may not make \$40,000. If I do I’ll just be a little over. And that’s frustrating when you’ve got people who started their careers two years ago and two years to make \$7000 and it has taken me five to make an \$8000 increase and that’s frustrating. That’s you know, that’s difficult when you think about going through college. To me it is a little better than I do and that’s hard. Being a woman, you don’t have
It’s hard that this is not a career that you retire with.

Resolution/Coda

You can be here for 35 years and even then you better have something else.

*Ashley's Story 3.3***Abstract/Orientation**

Q: When you look back five, six years when you first began teaching, how do you feel about the module of the teaching program in elementary program, induction academy, the support that you got that first year? How do you feel about that?

A: I had to make my mentor mentor me. He wasn't excited about doing it.

Complicating Action

He didn't want to do it, but I was the one who every single day I had teaching experience,

Resolution

so I kind of forced him to do that, and over time he enjoyed doing that because I made him do it.

Coda

But I actually had an outstanding first year. I really did. I absolutely loved my students.

*Ashley's Story 3.4***Abstract**

Q: Is there anything else you want to add as far as why you are still here. Do you feel that you have given me all the reasons that you can?

A: Yes, as far as being here. If I left, it wouldn't be because of Parker. District wide there are still things that might cause me to leave.

Q: But are you here because of Parker. I know what you are saying. If you left it wouldn't be because you dislike the school, but you are here. You are staying here. Why?

Complicating Action

A: Am I staying here because of Parker? To be honest with you, I am not sure why.

Resolution

I know that this is the best place for me right now. I know that this is better than some other places because I hear about it all the time, and I absolutely love it here. But am I...I feel like I am here in Parker because its Aldine...I want to give back to Aldine, and this is the best place for me to do it.

Coda

These are the kids that are walking the same footsteps that I did. They are going to have the same teachers that I had. The counselor Tomlin when I was there, so that's why I am here, because I really love teaching those children who are in my neighborhood... and I am giving back to my community and I think that's why I am here.

Ashley is an interesting person; she does not think that she is paid enough to have one of the most important jobs in the country. She did not have a very good mentor when she became a teacher, but somehow she got what she needed anyway. She also made it clear that the issues that she has with the profession are not issues with Parker Intermediate. She even said that if she left the profession, it would not be because of Parker; she loves the school. She mentions, again, that she wants to give back to the Aldine community.

Marcus' Story: A Dream Comes True

Marcus' Biography

Marcus looked like a teacher when he walked in the door. He had papers that he had graded the night before under one arm and books under the other arm. He had a smile that lasted the entire interview. It was clear to me that he felt honored to be a teacher and took his responsibilities seriously. Marcus received his bachelor's degree in business administration from Prairie View A&M University in 1989. Marcus began his teaching experience in 2000 in the Aldine School District and was assigned to his

present position as reading teacher at Parker Intermediate School. He has five years of experience in the field of education with all of those years in the Aldine School District.

Marcus' Story 4.0

Abstract

Q: Okay, Marcus, if you can tell me why...tell me your story about becoming a teacher, why you became a teacher, how you became a teacher here, how you feel about teaching. Just kind of tell me your story, why are you here at Parker Intermediate?

A: Well, I've always wanted to be a teacher. I just haven't really had the door open to me until about a couple of years ago. And when that door opened, I went through it.

Orientation

I have been here for five years now, and the staff here is great, administration is great here, and that's why I am continuing to stay here. I love all the students, all the kids. I love to see them progress, go to the next level. There's been a lot to keep me going, they keep me going. My daughter is also in the school, and she keeps me going.

Complicating Action

It's difficult to explain how coming through an alternative certification program here, I started off in the district permit program, then after that, through their ACP program and from there things here have been great.

Resolution

Staying in school keeps me focused.

Coda

It helps that I am here... my colleagues my team lead keep me going. That's pretty much it.

Marcus mentioned in his opening statement, as did other participants, that he always wanted to be a teacher, and when the opportunity presented itself through an alternative certification program, he took it.

Marcus' Story 4.1

Abstract/Orientation

Q: You mentioned about the administration being great. Tell me what you mean by that.

A: Well, they are very supportive.

Complicating Action

Q: What do you mean by that?

A: If there's a problem, they pretty much look for you to decide.

Resolution

They discuss it with you and give you some pointers on ways, especially when you don't know. When I first came here, I had all kinds of support. I still have that support now, but it is not seen as it was at the beginning.

Coda

You can always go to them and say there's uhm... talk to them whenever you have a problem. Or just to talk to them period. Just to get ideas and

Marcus' Story 4.2

Abstract/Orientation

Q: You mentioned about the staff that is great. Now what did you mean about that?

A: The staff itself, my colleagues, we all work together as a team. It's a team effort here.

Complicating Action

If I have a problem within my area, well, I go to my coordinator or we all work together.

Resolution

We each talk about what... and then not only in our meetings, there are also other meetings within the courtyard, and we meet with a group of teachers here. It's a team effort here.

Coda

That's why I like being here.

Marcus' Story 4.3

Abstract/Orientation

Q: You mentioned support as a new teacher. How do you feel about the new teacher orientation program when you first started, your first couple of years?

A: It was excellent. I had a very experienced teacher.

Complicating Action

She would stop by everyday pretty much and if I had any problems,

Resolution

I would go directly to her. She taught me a lot. She taught me how to deal with kids whenever I had problems. She taught me pretty much how to handle parents in case I ever had any problems with them.

Coda

She was there for me and in return, you know, here I give back.

In these stories, the reoccurring themes are: administrative support, by having an open-door policy; (b) teamwork, by working together as a team to solve problems; and (c) staff support, by being able to go to someone on your team to get help.

*Marcus' Story 4.4***Abstract/Orientation**

Q: Tell me about your compensation package. How do you feel about that? Salary, benefits, incentives, those kinds of things. How do you feel about them?

A: It's adequate,

Complicating Action

of course, you always feel you could have more, but you know. I basically go with the flow pretty much.

Resolution/Coda

I would say it's adequate. It's okay, it could be better.

Marcus, like the other participants, indicates that compensation is important but feels that it is competitive and is not the reason why he is still here.

*Marcus' Story 4.5***Abstract/Orientation**

Q: So if I ask you the question again, why Parker, with five years of experience, this will be your fifth year in about 30 days or so, any district in this town will hire a teacher with four years of experience right off the bat, particularly a teacher from Aldine. Just fill out the application, you've got the job. Because at that point, you have grown out of the new teacher stage, you are productive, you feel good about what's going on, every district wants you. Why are you still here? Why do you choose to remain at Parker?

A: There's no reason for me to go anywhere else.

Complicating Action

If I am happy where I am, if I am satisfied where I am.

Resolution

There's a lot of teacher support here and that's mainly why I am here. With administration backing me, you have that support; you have all kinds of support here.

Coda

Why go anywhere?

Marcus' Story 4.6

Orientation

Q: What about staff development? How do you feel about staff development that is offered here and in the district? It is adequate for what you need?

A: Staff development? It's adequate,

Complicating Action

but is not seen as much, I don't think, as much as I did when I first started, you know, because of cutbacks or whatever,

Resolution/Coda

but... it's adequate, if I need a refresher course, you know. It's always there. It's always on line...

Marcus said it all when he said, "Why go anywhere?" If there is not a problem, why go somewhere else? Again, staff development is important to Marcus, but is not what is keeping him at Parker Intermediate School. Marcus also used "excellent" to describe the support that he has received from the administration and the mentor teacher that he had his first year.

Amy's Story: Becoming Part of the Solution

Amy's Biography

When I met Amy after rescheduling three times, she greeted me with a warm smile and thanked me for including her in my research. She has young children, and I have found that teachers who have school-age children seem to have a special rapport with their classes, and she was no exception.

Amy's Story 5.0

Abstract

Q: If you can just kind of tell me the story of how you became a teacher, how you became a teacher in Aldine, how you became a teacher at Parker.

A: I became a teacher I guess after my third child,

Orientation

I was married. After my child was born, I worked in a bank, and they convinced me to go to college, got remarried, had another child. Based on my parents as a stay at home mom... and I were volunteering at the elementary school.

Complicating Action

Every spring, I volunteered up there, got involved with the kids, enjoyed it, and decided to go back to school,

Resolution/Coda

for four years, part time,

Amy's Story 5.1

Abstract/Orientation

I had my youngest just starting pre-school, and then after I started, I didn't have much time then, my youngest son was in first grade.

Complicating Action

He was definitely gifted and talented. He was reading and doing math on a second grade level, and basically, he was bored in school and getting into trouble, and I talked to them and they said we don't have anything; we don't start anything until third grade.

Resolution/Coda

We had some friends that had kids in Aldine; her kids went to the magnet schools. She taught in the district, and she knew all these were the same reasons, but the other reasons they went there was because of the stronger programs. So I decided to switch the second half of my student teaching at Aldine because I didn't know if I would be able to move and I wanted to see, so if I could get a job in Aldine and also I went to a job fair. Aldine is very far for me to go already.

Amy's Story 5.2

Abstract

I had taken my exit in February before I had graduated and passed so I was hireable before I even graduated college so that helped a lot.

Orientation

Any teacher that already has their exit behind them I know they get picked up really quick. So I did my second half of student teaching at Calvert, and I was impressed. I did observations of different schools so when I graduated, basically I came here.

Complicating Action

They gave me a contract and I said I wanted fifth-eight grade math. That's what I had studied, that's my favorite subject, I love math, and that was what I wanted to teach.

Resolution/Coda

I got a job at Dunn Elementary school, and I really liked it there, and I was there for four years, and my son came here in fifth grade,

*Amy's Story 5.3***Abstract/Orientation**

and I met Jeff. I met Jeff and I talked to my neighbor, Gale Nailer and she told Jeff about me.

Complicating Action

I really don't like driving and I have to get on the freeway...

Resolution/Coda

He was wonderful to work for. So Gale mentioned something to Jeff about being interested if he had a math position. He approached me and said, "I heard you are interested. You've got to request a transfer." So I did that and got a job and I came here, and

*Amy's Story 5.4***Abstract/Orientation**

I loved it. I had a lot of friends, but I said, I don't like to drive so my first year here was tough.

Complicating Action

And I almost went back. I was put on a team and at that point I was on my fifth year of teaching, I was put on a team of all new teachers for the first and second years. Through the alternative certification and that was rough. It was really rough. I was really upset back then.

Resolution/Coda

Last year, I was teaching sixth grade. I've got teachers on the team that are experienced. We have two new teachers on the team, one came from a different area and she was really narrow-minded and the other one was old school, but you don't know what it's like in the classroom, but this year has been really... I've enjoyed it this year.

*Amy's Story 5.5***Abstract/Orientation**

Q: Now, tell me why you are still here?

Complicating Action

A: Because I like teaching and it's close.

Q: But what part of town do you live?

Resolution

A: I live in Woodcreek subdivision, which is just a half a mile away.

Q: Tell me about how you feel about teaching, as a profession.

*Amy's Story 5.6***Abstract/Orientation**

A: I love teaching.

Complicating Action

I mean I was in business so... yeah.. it's a lot more work. My husband and I go around and around. He thinks it's a piece of cake, you know...oh you get the summer off.

Resolution/Coda

I need the summer off.

Amy's first six stories are unique in that they are mainly centered on her own children and the desire that she had to ensure that they were well educated. She wanted them to be challenged and decided to become a part of the solution to her son's problem, by becoming a teacher. She loves her schools, the teaching profession, and the people that she works with, but she has remained at Parker because of the strong

instructional programs that her son is in and the proximity of the school to her house, which is a half a mile from the school.

Amy's Story 5.7

Abstract/Orientation

Q: How long have you been here?

A: This is my fifth year.

Q: So you are pretty familiar with the staff. You know just about anybody. Are there any common beliefs or, you know, that you guys share at the school that you know of?

Complicating Action

A: I think ... We want a little bit more support, especially when it comes to discipline. Oh, you won't believe, these kids tell me everything. They will tell me everything. Oh, there's this about this teacher and that teacher and I think that's not right.

Resolution/Coda

I mean because I listen to them and I don't scream at them, but I try to make it so that they can see what they are doing. Oldest one is off at school, my youngest was 14, he's a teen so you know, I know how to relate.

Amy's Story 5.7

Abstract

Q: Tell me a story or a situation about the discipline. You said you feel that it could be a little stronger. Tell me something that happened.

A: Okay, just the other day, for instance we had a student suspended.

Orientation

He had been in class...you know, another thing is that I don't know if I can pinpoint this, and saying that, they kind of make this a routine. Cause they know that's the way to create routine, and they are very consistent in the routine so it helps a lot.

Complicating Action

Talking and I said something and she said I never said that and they think, arguing with the teacher even though she was never pinpointed, and being disrespectful, and this is a student that has been in trouble, she was always in trouble.

Resolution

I don't think she needed to be pushed. Then, she's going around and telling about all the other problems, and to me she should have been taken out. She's a student that has failed every class anyway, it's not that she's gonna miss anything. You know, in fact I have referred her to special ed, you know, she has failed the year, and to me it is not like she is not losing anything by being pulled out. That's just one incident

Q: Because she's already been warned?

A: Yes.

Coda

That's something that I don't think, because what the message that was given to her is that oh, well, got my hands tied...

Student discipline is important to Amy; she feels that disrespectful students should not be in the classroom and take valuable instructional time away from the students who want to learn. She has an understanding that nothing is perfect, and her concerns about discipline are still not a reason to leave Parker.

Amy's Story 5.8

Abstract/Orientation

Q: Talk to me about the leadership, and that includes the principal, assistant principal, counselors. Tell me how you feel about the leadership?

A: Favoritism. I've seen that. It's gotten better.

Complicating Action

Q: What do you mean by favoritism?

A: You can see that no matter how hard you work, you don't get any recognition. There are teachers that will come in, you know, at 8:15 and leave at 4:15 but they are buddies with somebody, so you know, they are...It's the interactions that you can see.

Resolution/Coda

You know, certain people can get away with or get what they need and others can't.

Amy's Story 5.9

Abstract

Q: Do you feel that you are appreciated as part of the staff or is that part of what you just told me?

A: Yes and no. How do you explain that? Well, I don't know.

Orientation

I have been told by all teachers that I am the best Math teacher around, you know. My scores are good, last year I think I had the highest on this campus, higher than any average of any school. I have 89% pass on the state test...so my numbers were really, really high, but I also tutor two days a week. whether they fail, whether they need help and I take time. I will take about 10 to 15 kids per day

Complicating Action

cause I, and you know, you go to other teachers that sit around with 2 or 3 kids and they are making up work. That gets kind of frustrating. I brought that to attention of some people and I got my hands shot. If you understand what I am saying, because one of these people have to stay, okay...so they say we are so lucky to have you blah, blah, blah.... But then in turn I get yelled out for pointing out something and it's just, it feels...you know like hey, well I get paid the same thing and I am working twice as hard.

Resolution/Coda

Maybe that's the kind of personality I am. That's...my drive is in education, just teaching the curriculum and yet... I was brought up in that type, that's the way I was brought up. You know, you have a job, this is your job, you do your job, and you give it your best. I have given it my best to the children to be successful what they do with it I have no control of, but the thing is that other teachers are sitting there doing nothing and they are getting, you know...

Q: Getting recognition?

A: Right, and what a great person they are, and I'll get called in on little stuff, does that make sense?

Amy feels that she works hard and in her opinion, other teachers do not. She does extra, but is not recognized for that. She sees teachers coming late and leaving early, while she is giving it her all. This is frustrating to Amy; however, she does admit that it just could be her personality.

Amy's Story 5.10

Abstract

Q: Tell me about how you feel about your compensation package?

A: I'm in teaching because I like it not because I'm getting paid any money.

Orientation

When I left banking in 1990, I was making as much as a six year does today (laughs) and I had five years of experience, I had been in banking for a while and I was upstairs, you know, computer work and customer service.

Complicating Action

I am not in it for the money, but I feel sometimes that it would be nice to be appreciated and get a little bit more you know. I know that compensation, the benefits that these people get.

Resolution/Coda

It's because I stuck in and worked with these kids and they got these scores, and other people are getting a lot more money because they've got grades.

Critical needs supplements are paid to teachers who teach in areas such as math, science, and reading, but it begins at 7th grade. Amy feels that the compensation is unfair because as an intermediate school teacher, teaching 6th grade math, she is preparing the students with a strong foundation to be successful when they get to the 7th grade. But the 7th grade teachers are being rewarded for the work that she has done.

Amy's Story 5.11

Abstract/Orientation

Q: Tell me about the new teacher orientation program your first year here?

A: My first year here, in fact I mentored somebody else

Q: Your first year in education?

A: Oh, okay, my first year I was given a mentor. She was a math teacher on the second team in another grade level. Basically my mentor was my team leader, the one that's coming here. She would check in, and could come in and check on me. She wasn't paid to be my mentor or anything like that.

Complicating Action

I didn't know my lesson plans, the benchmarks that I was given. Basically, she didn't do anything.

Resolution/Coda

If anybody asked me who was my mentor, who I learned the most from, I would say my team leader back then.

Q: Who is a good friend of yours now?

A: Yeah, well that's another story.

*Amy's Story 5.12***Abstract**

Q: How do you feel about some of the accomplishments of the kids?

A: We have some advanced courses here at the school. We are always at the top on the state tests.

Orientation

My list is up there, uh, they were surprised that my son, scored as high as he did. Cause he was like the second highest last year in the TAAS, not the TEKS, the SATs. He had 1050 on second grade SATs last year

Q: Amazing!

A: Yeah, oh, he has already gotten all these letters from the universities. To see some of these kids, that made me feel good.

Complicating Action

We did a program where we had all the students that had never passed before or had been sent to special ed because they were too low. They had come down, she had some stay homers, and I had some stay homes, and we had about 15 kids each,

Resolution

we got Math and Science to rise. Basically just doing math and science all scores increased. These were students who had never ever passed the test. I only had only two to fail and that to me...

Coda

I told these kids I was proud of them. Of course, I had a lot more fun, it was a smaller group, and that was just really nice.

*Amy's Story 5.13***Abstract/Orientation**

Q: How much latitude do you have in delivering your instruction?

A: Oh, they never question what I teach because my scores are good.

Complicating Action

He has never questioned what I teach or...you know.

Resolution/Coda

He knows, my lesson plans, my lesson plans come off the benchmark, come crunch time, and I work at what the kids need.

Q: Staff development? How do you feel about the staff development that is offered?

A: (Laughs) I'm sorry, I really haven't gotten anything out of it. I don't feel comfortable talking about it. I don't do it. I find that I don't have time for that. I got to give to the kids what they are going to understand so I really don't have time to be able to...I wouldn't mind teaching.

Q: How do you feel about the people you work with?

A: I love them. As a general rule, I'm feeling a lot more comfortable.

As a new teacher, Amy did not have a great mentor teacher who was assigned to her; however, she did have a mentor in her team leader who would explain things to her, such as benchmarks, lesson plans, and just check on her. The support that she got from her team leader was great. She is very pleased with the latitude that she has in delivering the instruction in her classroom. She does use the word "love" to describe how she feels about the people with whom she works.

Amy's Story 5.15

Abstract/Orientation

Q: Last question and I'm going to go back to the first question. You mentioned that you are close to home and that's why you are here and I don't what to...but there's got to be more. Tell me if there's anything else that keeps you here, because you could go back to Stelvik? You could go to another school.

A: I've thought about that. First of all, I wouldn't go back to Stelhik, Right now because I got my girlfriend to come over here, I got my girlfriend here.

Complicating Action

I don't like chance.

Resolution

One of the reasons I came here is because it's close, and the year that I left, I was supposed to be teaching social studies. So that was one of the reasons, because I really enjoyed working for him, and I enjoyed the people there. I promised my son I would be here for sixth grade, cause as smart as he is, he is all boy and he loves to run, and he's in a lot of trouble and I have thought about it and now my girlfriend's coming over here and I have gotten pretty comfortable. One of the reasons I would like to go to the middle school is maybe because I couldn't teach and that would be one of the reasons I would want to go off to and I am a strong disciplinarian. I don't let the kids get under my skin. So basically you know, and I have come this year, and I told my girlfriend it's not so bad here. I hear about what it's like in other places and I kind of oh well. I know my very first year at (Stelhik) I hated it there. And I figured my son is going to Aldine, and I want to move to Aldine, so we moved and all of that, but that was last year, but now I'm comfortable here and I think, I don't think we hit it off the first year, but this year it seems like, but this year, I don't think he likes my outspokenness.

Coda

I don't think he likes people to tell him what they think or say and I'm like that.

Amy has remained at Parker because it is close to her home, the commitment that she made to her child to stay there as long as he is there, and her girlfriend is coming to teach next year.

Mary's Story: Teaching Is in My Blood

Mary's (Marian) Biography

Marian (Mary) is one of those mid-westerners who came down to Texas just to teach for a couple of years, get the experience, and go back home to get a job. Well,

two things happened: the job market for teachers was bad due to the surplus of teachers, and she married a Texan and had a baby. Marian (Mary) received her bachelor's degree in elementary education from Central Michigan State University in 1986. She began her teaching career in the Aldine School District in 1986 teaching special education at Conley Elementary School. She transferred to Calvert Elementary School in 1992 as a special education teacher and moved into her current position as an ESL teacher at Parker Intermediate School in 1999. Mary has 18 years of teaching experience with all of those years in the Aldine School District.

Mary's Story 6.0

Abstract/Orientation

Q: Thank you, Mary, for agreeing to meet with me today. Can you please tell me your story on becoming a teacher, how you became a teacher here in Aldine and here at Parker?

A: My father was a teacher, principal, and superintendent. When I was little, even before I went to school, my father opened a school, and I would visit the school and classroom. I like the chalkboards and even before I went to school, I wanted to be a teacher. I have always wanted to be a teacher. There was nothing else I wanted to be. I lived my whole life wanting to be a teacher.

Complicating Action

When I was in high school, there was an elementary school next door. After school I would go over and visit the 5th grade class to help the teacher, and my senior year I visited a special education class and I got to teach and make up units. I got a lot of experience and my dad helped a lot.

Resolution/Coda

I went to Central Michigan University. I knew I wanted to be a teacher and this was like the teacher college in Michigan, and I majored in Special Education and bilingual was my minor.

Mary's father was an educator. Many of the other participants in this study have also indicated that they had relatives who were or had been in education. She also knew at an early age that she wanted to be a teacher and never considered anything else.

Mary's Story 6.1

Abstract

After college, I came to Houston Independent School District. They had a program that was horrible. I taught at two schools, and every teacher I talked to was afraid of the principals, and the principals were mean.

Orientation

So I knew I didn't want to teach at HISD, but I loved Houston. Coming from a small town, I thought I had hit it big time. I loved it. I interviewed at Cy-Fair, and it looked like the college I attended. The football stadium looked like my college stadium.

Complicating Action

I interviewed at a lot of different districts. My mom and dad were getting a divorce at the time, and I had no place to return to, and I wanted to stay in Houston, so I had to get a job.

Resolution

I interviewed at Cy-Fair, Spring Branch, and Aldine. Carrie Durley sent me to Conley. The principal was busy, so I interviewed with the diagnostician, and we laughed because I had a flat, and they offered me the job in Resource.

Coda

I took that job. Then, I taught at Conley for a while. Then, they built Calvert, and it was closer to the babysitter. We were having lots of kids, maybe I will transferred.

This is where Aldine comes in to play. Mary wanted to get away from her old school and an opportunity presented itself by way of a job offer by a Human Resource Director in Aldine School District, and she took it.

*Mary's Story 6.2***Abstract/Orientation**

Q: Why are you still here?

A: Well, one thing my kids, I have a tenth grader at Teague Middle School, now. It's nice here, and the nature of the job is good teaching ESL.

Complicating Action

I have had some discipline problems,

Resolution

but overall it's good with ESL. When I call the parents, they believe me and that makes it nice. I really like what I do. I know when I get frustrated with my boys, my mom says, "Not everybody likes school like you do." That's true, Mr. Blanson.

Coda

I like what I do and I know I can kind of pick and choose what I do.

Q: Tell me about the location, the convenience?

A: I live in Foxwood, about 15 minutes. Great.

*Mary's Story 6.3***Abstract/Orientation**

Q: Last question. I want to end with the question I opened up with: "Why are you still here?" With your experience, you can go anywhere and get a job. Just say you worked in Aldine. But you choose to stay here. Why?

A: I love it, because I'm happy. Everything is going well, and I am respected.

Complicating Action

When I was leaving Calvert, I was asked not to leave.

Resolution/Coda

I always have a positive attitude about everything. I like change. If they want me to change, cool, I will change. I really like teaching ESL. I'm happy.

Mary's Story 6.4

Abstract/Orientation

Q: School climate, when you walk into this building, every school you immediately know? What do you think the school climate is like here?

A: I think it's great here. I think it's positive when you walk into the teacher's lounge. Everyone says "hi" to you.

Complicating Action

I've never heard people talk about others, which I am not in to that so I wouldn't know if people do.

Resolution/Coda

We are very helpful with each other.

Mary's Story 6.5

Abstract/Orientation

Q: How do you feel about the accomplishment of your kids? Do they do well on standardized tests? Does a light bulb come on?

A: I love it. I can't wait to get the scores back.

Complicating Action

I was worried about the scores, and I got out the old practice tests and made them do them.

Resolution/Coda

There are a few that I know will not pass the test. I can tell when they learn something.

Q: How can you tell?

A: You can see. You can tell when they are not learning – the look. When they are answering, they answer questions eye contact. I can tell.

Mary has a son who is nearby in another Aldine school and she can check on him, and she knows what the instruction programs are in Aldine. Parker Intermediate School is less than 15 minutes from where she lives. She also likes teaching ESL students. She states that she “loves” the school, and she is happy and respected. She feels that the staff work as a team and they are helpful to each other. She “loves” the accomplishments of her students. She can see it in their eyes.

Mary’s Story 6.6

Abstract/Orientation

Q: You mentioned about the discipline management and think in terms of the entire administration. How do you think it is being handled?

A: For me, it is effective.

Complicating Action

I went to a thing where teachers were griping about their schools. They feel like they cannot send kids to the office, and I was so surprised because that does not happen here. Now, some feel here that when they send a kid to the office, nothing happens and I was surprised.

Resolution/Coda

Even though I am in ESL, but then I also wonder if they know that the teachers who don’t have any discipline problems and they get more assistance with the consequences, then those who they know need a little more assistance.

Q: Do you feel appreciated by the administration here? Give me an example. If you don’t, tell me why you don’t feel appreciated and what they can do?

A: I feel appreciated here. I think they know I work hard with the kids.

Complicating Action

I think every time Mr. McCanna comes into my room, I am at the computer taking attendance. I wish he would come in when I am teaching.

Resolution

But Kim comes in and she sees me teaching, and one day during my conference period, I had students in here and Mr. McCanna walked in and I told him that they had not done their homework, and I was making them do their home work. He stated that's why you are a very good teacher.

Coda

I translate a lot for the nurse and I know they appreciate that.

Mary's Story 6.7

Abstract/Orientation

Q: Tell me about the leadership here? The principal, assistant principal, counselor, all people who are in a leadership role here.

A: I think Mr. McCanna makes it really clear. I really love it when he says school isn't the #1 priority, family is. I feel my family can be my #1 priority.

Complicating Action

I also know that his goals are for kids to be successful – to pass the TAAS test. He makes it clear.

Resolution/Coda

Mrs. Harvey is principal over ESL and this courtyard. She is great with whatever suggestions we have. The principal is totally with me. She asks me, "What do you want to do with this child?" I feel they are very supportive with me.

Mary's Story 6.8

Abstract/Orientation

Q: How much latitude do you have when you are delivering your instruction?

A: I have a lot of latitude. I follow the benchmarks, ESL supplement.

Complicating Action

I really try hard to stay on with the Math although it is hard.

Resolution

I teach a lab class, and I can do whatever I want in that class. If I teach math in lab, it hard because the students rarely speak English, but reading I can choose what I want.

Coda

I get to help the kids work on level.

Mary thinks that the discipline management program in the school is effective at Parker Intermediate School and is surprised that at other schools there are teachers who may have discipline problems in their classrooms. She knows that the administrative staff knows what she does and appreciates her by visiting her classroom and telling her that she is a good teacher.

Mary's Story 6.9

Abstract/Orientation

Q: How do you feel about your compensation package, salary, insurance, etc.?

A: Oh, I think the insurance is terrible. In fact, I dropped my husband because he is self-employed. It was cheaper to get a private insurance.

Complicating Action

In fact, I may drop my boys and put them in private insurance. My salary is good; of course, everyone wants more money. Even my husband states that I should go back to school to become a principal for more money.

Resolution

I don't want to be a principal; my brother is a principal. I like the classroom. That's what I want to do.

Coda

To change districts for more money, that would not be a reason for me to change.

Mary feels that the insurance is too expensive, but feels that the salary is good.

She never mentioned that the cost of insurance is a problem for her.

Mary's Story 6.10

Abstract/Orientation

Q: Tell me your feelings on staff development?

A: I really don't like it.

Complicating Action

I feel we need more work days. Most of us come in the summer, because you can't get ready in one day.

Resolution

I think it has gotten better over the years, but still I would rather have more workdays. Staff development during the year, the ones before Christmas can be useful in the classroom.

Coda

I wish we had more work days than staff development.

Mary thinks that the staff development is a waste of time and would prefer to have more work days in her classroom.

Gwendolyn's Story: Service to Mankind

Gwendolyn's Biography

Gwendolyn is a veteran teacher who has a love for children and is willing to do her part to help them succeed. She is very professional looking and carries herself in a serious manner. Gwendolyn received her bachelor's degree in history from Sam Houston State University in 1970 and her master's degree in education from Texas Southern University in 1976. She began her teaching experience in Houston Independent School District in 1970 teaching history. She became a supervising teacher in 1988 with Brenham Independent School District and moved to her present position as social studies teacher at Parker Intermediate School in 1998. Gwendolyn has 34 years of teaching experience with 6 of those years in the Aldine School District.

Gwendolyn's Story 7.0

Abstract

Q: I would like for you to tell me your story about how you became a teacher, how you became a teacher here at Aldine and at Parker, and why are you still teaching here at Parker?

A: Well, I became a teacher because I was kind of interested in public students and, I was concerned about the welfare of our youngest

Orientation

But this is the critical age, all ages are critical, but here, the reason I selected middle school, was so I love making a difference in a child's life.

Complicating Action

I selected to come to Aldine. I had worked in several districts, but in returning to Houston, I selected to come to Aldine because of the focus that they have on children.

Resolution/Coda

They are about the children, they are working for the children, they are looking at each person as an individual, and it should be about the child first.

*Gwendolyn's Story 7.1***Abstract**

Q: How did you decide, when did you decide that teaching was what you wanted to do?

A: Well, I started off in the medical field. I was going to medical school,

Complicating Action

and I had four friends that were education majors, and then some of them had difficulty in their education.

Resolution/Coda

I changed my major to education because of my friends having problems in school. I have a theory about it, and this is: when I decided that I will become a teacher and that maybe down the line I can go for the medical schooling, but that did not happen.

*Gwendolyn's Story 7.2***Abstract/Orientation**

I fell in love with the field of education and the children and the people. I like teaching and seeing the light bulb go off in my students. We, as educators, we as administrators of this school district, we have to look at the children.

Complicating Action

We have to make sure that they don't become a part of the statistics that we have in our country today.

Resolution/Coda

There are educators in my family. Of six siblings, I am the second oldest of six. I have a sister who is a physical education instructor, she is LCC, she has finished her second year in administration, and she is working on her

certification to become a principal. I have seven nieces who have finished their masters and they are looking to go into education and counseling. And they are excited about this, so my family said that out of all the siblings, they think that I was supposed to be in education because I have a strong love for children and this is true, and I really care about the kids.

Gwendolyn's Story 7.3

Abstract

Coming to Parker Intermediate School I had interviewed with Aldine and I selected to come here.

Orientation

When I first interviewed and I spoke to the principal and this was about six years ago, I thought there was a feeling of welcome, a feeling, an impression it was for to help the students and that the principal and the staff.

Resolution/Coda

I made a selection to stay here at Parker. I'm still here because I love talking to the students, assistant, administrative, the staff as a whole. Over the years, they've had changes in my team, and the original ones here six years ago are not here today. As people come and go, we have developed a support base, and the support base is always first about the child. Always about the child.

Gwendolyn looks at teaching as something that she had to do. She states that she "wants to make a difference in the lives of young people" by educating them. She did not mention that she had relatives who were teachers, but she decided to change her major to education because some of her friends were having problems in college, and she wanted to help them. By becoming a teacher, she could learn how to help them. She came to Aldine because the district philosophy of education and hers were aligned. She was impressed with the principal at Parker Intermediate School and accepted the job and has enjoyed her stay.

Gwendolyn's Story 7.4

Abstract/Orientation

Discipline is very important here, so we work on discipline very hard, and this is another reason that I have stayed at Parker.

Complicating Action

The fact that disruption in the classroom that interferes with learning, that interferes with the child, that interferes with education environment as a whole,

Resolution/Coda

and if I have to go past that child and past that parent, and talk to the principal, there's support there. There's support for the team. Because we, as a team, we bring that child as a team. We have our own support system. Support system, resource system, technology system, the teachers as a whole working together, not just in certain areas.

The theme of the administrative staff having an "open door policy" was mentioned several times by Gwen. She feels that she can talk to the counselors and the administrative staff about problems that she may have. She also used "support" a number of times to describe the administrative staff. She is happy with the administrators because one of the ways that they support her is by taking care of discipline problems that she sends them.

Gwendolyn's Story 7.5

Abstract/Orientation

Q: Tell me about the relationship between you and the administrative staff here. What type of relationship do you guys have? Counselors, principal, all the staff...

A: Well, the counselors here, we have two counselors here. We talk to the counselors if we have problems with the children after we have talked to the children and the parents. The counselor can talk to the children. They can reach that child.

Complicating Action

Sometimes you have to focus on the child problem and maybe the child will open up to them a little more.

Resolution/Coda

We have a very open relationship with the administrator, but it is definitely about the children. They want the best. So the counselors come in, and they work with them for a while. We redirect behavior if it's not acceptable. We redirect them if they are failing academically, talk to the parents if there are home issues.

Gwendolyn's Story 7.6

Abstract/Orientation

The Administrative staff, I am very happy with them...

Complicating Action

I will go to speak to them if there is a behavior issue, and I feel that the child should not be in the classroom. I'll talk to the principal, and I will say to the administrator that this is why I will not accept that child back into my classroom.

Resolution/Coda

The principal will say, "We will go with you." They will go with me, they will work with me, they will work with my team, and we want that child to move forward. I will talk to them about the issues. If the issues concern how the parents feel about me, I will appreciate it if they just open up and let me know about it. And, it is just an open-door policy. We can talk about the issues, about the students, you can give suggestions.

Gwendolyn's Story 7.7

Abstract/Orientation

Q: Can you give me an example of a situation where there was an issue and the principal or the administrative staff worked through it. Give me an example of the support that you got.

A: There was a student and the student said that something had been addressed, something had been found by the teacher on my team, about several students and this is not the case.

Complicating Action

The parents found out that what was taking place was not what the child had said. The parents came in and they are optimistic, the parents were welcomed, the parents even apologized.

Resolution

The principal said, “But however, in the meantime, you can email us.” The teachers were emailed and one thing that the principal asked was that we operate as a team. Okay, let’s bring that child in, one-on-one, but we wanted the child to know that this is not supposed to be a every week, every day thing.

Coda

We talk to the parents and let the parents know that the teachers are here and we are here not about the problem, but about responding to the problem and the needs of the children.

Gwendolyn’s Story 7.8

Abstract/Orientation

Q: How do you feel about your compensation, salary?

A: Well, my thing is that I feel that it is about the child. I have been teaching for a while and I feel...I don’t take it as anything real negative, but I see teachers coming here every day to teach children. They are here every day for the betterment of the child, for that child to be successful.

Complicating Action

I think there needs to be recognition for people from the administrative staff, we need to be compensated from the higher level office, because we are the backbone, we are the backbone... And this is not to be negative, but the fact that many people are trying for another position in the district.

Resolution/Coda

I come to work and I get a paycheck, but I am about education.

Compensation as more money would be great, but some teachers come for the paycheck only. However, that is not her reason for staying at Parker.

Gwendolyn's Story 7.9

Abstract

Q: I don't think there's anything wrong with that. Tell me about staff development and the new teacher program. What's your opinion about staff development and the new teacher induction program?

A: I am going to talk about new teachers first, because when I came in six years ago, I thought the new teacher program was awesome.

Complicating Action

When I came in, they had a welcome program and a new teacher workshop to familiarize them with the district with the programs.

Resolution/Coda

They gave you a creative workshop for practical learning for students and administrative issues. They allowed us to learn about technology. There was a technology workshop. One of the programs that we had, they even had a welcome session to make you comfortable.

Gwendolyn's Story 7.10

Abstract/Orientation

Staff development. Staff development is awesome. Every year that I have been here, I have been to many workshops and they are awesome. They have community workshops, math workshops for technology, to help teachers with behavior issues and I think all teachers should take a behavior or management workshop from time-to-time.

Complicating Action

We need to see the different approaches. It doesn't mean our approach is wrong, but it does mean that we need to look at other approaches.

Resolution/Coda

They have diversity workshops. They have it at different times during the school year, during the summer, after school that people can go, and there are also different ones about administrative things that you can go to.

Gwen thinks that the new teacher induction program was great, and the staff development program is “awesome” and very useful to her.

Juergen’s Story: A Different World

Juergen’s Biography

Juergen is a German exchange teacher who worked at Parker Intermediate School for two years, went back to Germany because the program ended and returned back to Parker the next year. Juergen received his bachelor’s degree in special education from Justus-Uebig University Gessen in Germany in 1974 and his master’s degree in special education from the same university in 1976. Juergen began his teaching experience in 1977 in Germany and became a principal in 1987. He came to the United States in 1997 as part of an exchange program and was employed at Parker Intermediate School as special education teacher in the Aldine School District. Juergen returned to his home country in 2000 and resumed his teaching career. In 2001, he returned to the Houston area and the Aldine School District to his present position as special education teacher at Parker Intermediate School. He has 25 years of experience in the field of education with 6 of those years in the Aldine School District.

Juergen’s Story 8.0

Abstract/Orientation

Q: Could you tell me how you became a teacher and how you became a teacher in Aldine ISD and how you migrated to Parker and why you are still here?

A: Well, when I finished high school, I didn't know what to do and my high school teacher recommended administrative technology,

Complicating Action

but I had no idea what that was, and during that time, I developed the idea that I wanted to become a teacher because I worked with, not disadvantaged young people, but people who had moved from some rough areas in the city and lived in a home for youth.

Resolution

That kind of shaped the idea that I wanted to become a teacher. The next step was to decide what I wanted to teach, and I went to school in a different state because my state did not offer the program I wanted to take.

Coda

And that's how I came to teach.

Juergen's Story 8.1

Abstract/Orientation

Q: And your transition to Parker? Why did you come here and why are you still here?

A: At first I stayed in a program which I graduated from the university in Germany. I worked as a teacher for a while, then I became a principal, and then I was an administrator and teacher because in Germany you can be a principal and teacher at the same time and I couldn't do both.

Complicating Action

I wanted to focus on one thing so I decided to become a teacher again and moved to a remote area then, as a civil servant in Germany, you don't have much of an opportunity to decide where you want to go. So one way to get away from there was to become something totally different, and

Resolution

I read about this exchange program at Aldine and was hired and that was my opportunity. I spent two years here at Parker and there was no question at that time that I would stay at Parker.

Coda

First of all because I like the school and the program here, and second because it would not have made much sense to go to a different school and after a year or two and then back to Germany, and the main reason I think I stayed here is because of the administration and staff. The administration, everyone around, everyone is very supportive of technology.

Juergen's Story 8.2

Abstract/Orientation

Q: Give me an example of how the administration or the staff has supported you in this country.

A: For example, after the first year, at the end of the year, I felt that well...I wasn't used to teaching one year only. In Germany I used to have to teach three or four five years in a row.

Complicating Action

So I asked the principal at that time, "Why don't you let me teach the sixth grade?" and they said "Yes."

Resolution

First of all, she tried very hard and successfully to get on a personal level, celebrating birthdays for everybody, and attending every grade level meeting. And that's a very important factor in an intermediate school, I think, that as the professional level is concerned, she was very supportive of any kind of ideas that we had. She was very open; she was what we were trying to do.

Coda

And she considers and takes into consideration ideas.

Juergen's Story 8.3

Abstract

Q: How do you feel about the teaching profession as a whole?

A: Well, if I had to choose again, I think I wouldn't choose anything else.

Orientation

On a daily basis I know there are days that I am not feeling great, but I figure that's the same in any profession and overall I had never,

Complicating Action

I wouldn't say never, but hardly ever, been so unhappy that I said, "I don't want to go to school today. I don't want to go to work."

Resolution

It's not an issue. And even with the most challenging kids, sometimes, I am very motivated to try a little bit harder. And, even though the people, some kids, some are struggling and sometimes you have argumentative kids, you need to correct them, you think that they don't understand you but they do. You have to learn to deal with them; you have to learn not to take them seriously, well seriously, yes, but not personally.

Coda

And this is the situation and overall you have to deal with. Not right away, but years later they will remember the teacher, or something that you said.

Juergen decided that he wanted to become a teacher because one of his teachers recommended teaching to him. He wanted to work with disadvantaged children. He had to make a choice between the business world and teaching, and he chose teaching. An opportunity presented itself to teach in the United States through the German exchange program and he took it.

Juergen's Story 8.4

Abstract

Q: Do you have an example?

A: Yes, definitely. There was ... a couple of years ago, we had a family in the cafeteria, and I met the dad of the student I had a few years ago and he said a nice thing to me:

Complicating Action

He said, “My son is doing great and he always talks to me about how you made a difference in his life.”

Resolution/Coda

Well, I hope he didn’t just say it to please me, but I had a good relationship with that young man and he was a great student and I was very happy to hear that.

He also states that the administrative staff at Parker Intermediate School is supportive of the teachers. He is proud of being a teacher, and if he had to do it all over again, he would.

Juergen’s Story 8.5

Abstract/Orientation

Q: Tell me about the academic instruction of program. How do you feel about it?

A: One thing I really admired when I was in Germany and definitely that one year, I talked about the way the special needs children are served here. I think that’s excellent. I like the idea of people, the way they approach special needs population, and I especially like the fact that up to a certain extent here, they can participate in activities like everybody else. So I really enjoy and I think it is a good program that Aldine has,

Complicating Action

except for a few kids that we have here that can’t keep up with the regular kids, and there is something missing there, and I ...uhm... a couple of months ago, I went to this meeting with the parents, administration, and teachers and the different program here in Aldine, and I felt that that was something that a lot of people have in common. Put them in an environment that is very difficult.

Resolution

But as I understand, the program is trying to find a way to reinforce inclusion, and I think that is a good idea. Not in the classroom but offering them

something that is a little different. Another thing and that's a reason why I like to work here, I feel is the population mix.

Coda

That is America to me. I know that other places, I've talked to other people, they roll their eyes or they think a certain way, but the way the system is amazes me. It's great.

Juergen's Story 8.6

Abstract

Q: How about the discipline plan here?

A: I don't really get too much information about what's going on with every individual child. I know when I have a problem. I get the support of the administration in one way or another.

Complicating Action

When I write somebody up or send the kid to the office, it does not mean that I want that kid to be severely punished or anything,

Resolution/Coda

I just want that kid to know that there are certain limits and you can't go beyond that. And most of the times, detention hall is for the kids and that's not really what I want. On the other hand, I do understand why they send them, but the fact is, there is one way to do it and for some kids it's okay. They sit in there and they, I guess for them it is a relief for them not to be detention hall. They have time to reflect and decide to do the right thing. But other kids, especially when there is a lot of disruption, and it doesn't help them solve the problem. So I have a different experience about that. But the administrators have a handle on discipline at this school. They are very supportive of what we, the teachers, are trying to do. Just looking around, walking around here, the staff that maintains the campus is amazing. I love those people. I love the way they work and how they work with the kids in the cafeteria. It's a very positive and warm climate.

Juergen's Story 8.7

Abstract

Q: Do you have expectations of the principal, administration, staff? Do they have expectations of you? Do you know the expectations of the administration and if you do, are your expectations met of them?

A: Yes. There are definitely expectations.

Complicating Action

They have very high expectation of everything, of everything I teach and every single student and the objective of the administration is to be a very good, and I know that the people in America have expectations,

Resolution

and I think that's the right thing to do and it's for the best and the expectations the administration has and most of the teachers I think everybody knows the expectation is there and I see everybody working hard to educate the students, and we have the responsibility to communicate these expectations with the administrative program.

Coda

I know that at some schools, the relationship between the administration and the staff is not nearly as good as here, and I think it has something to do with the way the administrators communicate with the staff.

Juergen likes the instructional programs at the school and feels that at the school he has a lot of latitude in delivering the instruction in his classroom. The administrative staff handles disciplinary problems effectively.

Juergen's Story 8.8

Abstract/Orientation

Q: How do you feel about your compensation package? Salary, benefits...

A: Well, I try to not think about it, but I guess its okay.

Complicating Action

I don't know. As far as salary is concerned, I mean I don't make a fortune,

Resolution

but I never intended to as a teacher. So it's okay. Well, right now...I used to live in Montrose. Now I live in Garden Oaks, and so it takes me like 20-25 minutes.

Juergen knows, like the other teachers that I have interviewed, that he will never get rich teaching and would like to have more money, but he is not unhappy about his salary. He also lives relatively close to the school. He has remained at Parker because of the programs and the people and the support that he gets.

Juergen's Story 8.9

Abstract/Orientation

Q: Tell me about the support system your first year. The induction program and all that.

A: Of course, I was in a special situation because

Complicating Action

I came from Germany, and I had to learn and everything was different here.

Resolution/Coda

I had a mentor and she helped me a lot. Absolutely. And other staff members too. And so it was... she taught me about the program and the daily routine. That's the most important thing at the beginning which you need to learn very fast. How to do the paperwork because after three weeks they are supposed to have grades and I have no grades. That would be a problem.

Juergen's Story 8.10

Abstract/Orientation

Q: What about staff development? What do you think about the staff development that the school offers?

A: Well, the school offers staff development that is aligned with the district, and some of the district staff development I really enjoy, and

Complicating Action

some I thought were not so efficient. When you go to another high school with other teachers you don't know, sometimes I felt that the information that is being thrown at us, do this, do that, do that, do that... and you take it home and you put it in a file and you put it away.

Resolution/Coda

And staff development to me needs to involve a little bit more discussion. And when we have it here, there is more so...

Juergen had a mentor when he came to Aldine who was very helpful, and he felt that the mentor and new teacher induction program are important to a new teacher's success. He enjoys the staff development that the district offers, but feels that the teachers need to have more input in the development of the sessions.

Juergen's Story 8.11

Abstract/Orientation

Q: How much latitude do you have in delivering the instruction to your classroom?

A: As a resource teacher, sure there is a benchmark, and I've always asked the student to try to reach them where they are, not where they...uhm...where they should be. That is very important to me and it's a big deal,

Complicating Action

but I think teachers need to have the responsibility and the freedom to adjust to their class. Each class is different and even if I teach the same subject six times a day, each group has a different demand and each group needs a different approach,

Resolution/Coda

and I need to be able to have the freedom to change things around. I understand that it is necessary to have a very rigid benchmark and teach, but sometimes I feel that it would be better if teachers had more opportunity to step aside from the benchmark.

Juergen's Story 8.12

Abstract

Q: Is there anything else you want to tell me on the reason why you are still here? I know why you came here. But why are you still here?

A: Well, I came here and feel comfortable here,

Complicating Action

and when I left, I was told that I could come back, that there would be a spot for me and there was no question that I wanted to come back because I like it here.

Resolution/Coda

And because I was welcomed and because of the people. Because most of the people stay here.

Laura's Story: The Professional

Laura's Biography

Laura has been around for a while and you can tell it. She is experienced and gave me the impression that she can handle any situation when it comes to instruction, student discipline, and working with people. Laura received her bachelor's degree in elementary education from Sam Houston State University in 1978 and her master's

degree in elementary education from Stephen F. Austin State University in 1988. She began her teaching career in the Aldine School District in 1978 teaching second grade at Worsham Elementary School. She moved to Temple, Texas, in 1983 and gained employment with Temple Independent School District teaching bilingual education. Laura returned to the Houston area the following school year and to the Aldine School District. She moved into her current position as bilingual teacher at Parker Intermediate School in 1995. Laura has 26 years of teaching experience with 25 of those years in the Aldine School District.

Laura's Story 9.0

Abstract

Q: Can you start off by telling me your story on how you became a teacher, how you became a teacher here in Aldine, how you became a teacher at Parker, and why are you still here? And tell me what other stories about why you are still here at Parker Intermediate School.

A: Okay, it's been a long road. Twenty-six years to be exact, in bilingual education.

Orientation

I went to Sam Houston State University. I didn't know what direction I was going like any other student attending school. So I went to school. Didn't really know that much Spanish, and I had a professor and the professor talked to me at the end of my fourth year in college and about teaching bilingual education.

Complicating Action

Twenty-five years ago there was no bilingual head start, and they were needing bilingual teachers. So he said there was a great demand for bilingual teachers.

Resolution/Coda

So then I decided the last two years I was in college that I was going to do bilingual education. I did. I did my student teaching with Aldine because at that time Sam Houston and them were working together.

Laura's journey to become a teacher was due partly to the counsel of one of her college professors. The opportunity presented itself to work in Aldine after she finished her student teaching, and she took advantage of the new bilingual program that had just begun in the district.

Laura's Story 9.1

Abstract/Orientation

Q: How do you feel about the teaching profession?

A: Me, personally, for myself, I love it. You mean in general, about other teachers or just myself?

Q: Yourself.

A: Oh, yeah. I think it's probably the best thing for me. I like it.

Complicating Action

Mr. Worsham asked me to stay on, so I stayed there for 17 years. I stayed there for 17 years.

Resolution

Then Parker was built, and it was in the area where we wanted to buy a new home, in Woodcreek subdivision, that is a mile from where we wanted to buy another home.

Q: An why are you still here at Parker?

A: Well, mainly because of location, and then location is just about two minutes from where I live. All my children attended all the Aldine schools. It's close by. The high school is close by. My husband works with an oil factory, or store, or whatever, so it's all very convenient for us and not only that, I really

like the school district. I like this age group, I like the bilingual group. It's a small number right now, and I really enjoy that.

Coda

So I said, well, now is my time. So I got a job here teaching Spanish as an elective. So I taught Spanish as an elective for 4 years and then bilingual program... They have treated me very nicely. They are very good about everything. No problems... you know. I like it here, I like the teachers, and I like the administration.

Laura's Story 9.2

Q: Last question and I've asked you a lot of the same stuff, but so how do you feel about being at Parker? Why are you still here? Is there anything that you haven't told me about why you are still here?

Abstract/Orientation

A: I'm very comfortable here with my co-workers. I get along with all of them. I mean I'm not buddy-buddy with any of them. You know, I do my work, I leave. You know... I'm comfortable, there's never been a really to not get along with them, not that I would leave, but I never know. You know, I get along with a lot of people.

Complicating Action

There are some people that are very conservative – very, very conservative about everything that's negative, but I would because of the person, I'm not like that. I get along with everybody.

Resolution/Coda

So that's why I'm still here. I guess, and I like it here. I like the kids. I like the bilingual kids. I like the program.

Laura's Story 9.3

Abstract

Q: You talked briefly about the principal. Tell me about the leadership here. How do you feel about the leadership, the principal, and assistant principals?

A: The principal is very supportive of the teachers. I think he wants the respect of the students. He's doing well.

A: Can you tell me a story him giving support to teachers?

Complicating Action

A: There was a student who was acting up in class and I sent him to the office and told the principal that I wanted him removed for the rest of the day from my class.

Resolution/Coda

So he supported me and the kid did not come back for the rest of the day, but returned the next day as I wanted. It is amazing how he handles children, all of the assistant principals.

Laura's Story 9.4

Abstract/Orientation

Q: Can you think of a situation where you said to yourself, "If only the principals were here, they would realize what I am going through or what is happening." Can you give me an example of one of those situations?

A: Sure, just in about every class period. Like when someone is misbehaving and you know...from a long time ago when you were taking that class, they would say I will be with you in just a second and you go back to teaching and in the meanwhile you still have that problem. So that kind of thing, you know, so now what do you do?

Complicating Action

You have to stop, you have to say, now look, it stops you from teaching. They can see what is really going on and they do, I'm sure they do.

Resolution/Coda

They have been in the classroom, but I know that in our profession we have to be there. It's not so bad with my classroom. I love what I am doing, teaching the bilingual kids. But other bilingual schools, they are going to have 25 or 30 students. Aldine now is more leaning towards Hispanics in a big way.

Laura came to Parker because it was near where she wanted to live, in Woodcreek subdivision, which is less than a mile from the school. She has remained at Parker because of the proximity to her house and the people that she works with, including the administrative staff who treat her very good. She also likes the group that she works with, and she feels that the principal supports her, which is a constant theme that I have seen throughout this research project.

Laura's Story 9.5

Abstract/Orientation

Q: How do you feel about your compensation package?

A: I think it's good because I get a pretty good base salary. The whole thing? It's good. I don't have any kinds of problems with it.

Complicating Action

I guess after 26 years if I was making about \$400,000 a year and then I retired. This was sales, high-end quality sales.

Resolution/Coda

But as far as the package, I think Aldine has probably caught up with everybody else. And insurance, they have what we need. Salary for Laura is good and definitely no reason to leave the school.

Laura's Story 9.6

Abstract/Orientation

Q: Tell me about the novice teachers' program. Of course, just from what you see coming in. Do you think the program is supported enough?

A: I'll tell you what, nowadays these new teachers are young teachers, and I don't see how I, maybe I was or maybe I was a little more responsible.

Complicating Action

These people coming in are scared. These kids are eating them up.

Resolution/Coda

They need to maybe do more internships, you know. But as far as internships and all, you give them something and they have to take it from there.

Laura's Story 9.7

Abstract/Orientation

Q: But once you started working, was there any support system in place?

A: Oh gosh, no.

Complicating Action

For the maybe next two years I had none, and the lessons that I did, I don't know if they or not. But like I said, these are young people coming into the profession, and we really need to really work with them about it.

Resolution/Coda

This is the profession and they need to stay with it.

Laura's Story 9.8

Abstract/Orientation

Q: Staff development. How about staff development?

A: I think its good. You need it, especially, I mean, I've taken, oh my gosh, if you open that closet, all the staff development I've ever had, everywhere, anywhere.

Complicating Action

I have some I probably need to get rid of. But I tell you what, I go back to it, I go back to my files, I'll look at something and I'll say, "Oh, this is something different. Usually some things have changed."

Resolution/Coda

I think that from staff development, you can get ideas. It might be just one sometimes, but it's there.

When Laura became a teacher, there were not new teacher programs, but she still feels that it is important that these programs exist and be available to the new teachers.

Laura's Story 9.9

Abstract

Q: How do you feel about the level of latitude or do you have latitude? Give me an example of the latitude that you have in your classroom.

A: You mean to come up with, oh yeah. I have a lot,

Complicating Action

I think we have too many benchmarks. I think we have way too many. I think we should not really be left alone because we definitely need a school to teach a child. And latitude? I don't feel, I don't feel like I have covered all the benchmarks because there are so many.

Resolution

But I can only do what I can do. And these kids, you can't give them a lot of objectives. You can give them maybe one objective to do and then you have to work from that.

Coda

So as far as latitude, I do what I am going to do. I am sorry, I know that I have been teaching a long time and I know you can't give these kids too much. As far as latitude, it's confusing because I am going to do what I have to do in the classroom.

Even though, Laura feels that there are too many benchmarks and red tape in education today, she does feel that she has the latitude that she needs to be an effective teacher.

Stacy's Story: Education Chose Me

Stacy's Biography

Stacy is an outgoing young lady who is clearly the type of teacher that one wants to teach one's child. She is a very positive person who does not let anything bother her. She loves what she is doing and it shows. Stacy received her bachelor's degree in elementary education from Sam Houston State University in 1998. She began her teaching career in the Aldine School District in 1999 and her current position is science teacher at Parker Intermediate School. Stacy has five years of teaching experience with all of those years in the Aldine School District.

Stacy's Story 10.0

Abstract

Q: Stacy, thank you for participating. Could you tell me your story about how you became a teacher, how you became a teacher at Aldine, how you became a teacher here at Parker Intermediate, and why are you still here? Just kind of tell me why you got into the teaching field.

A: Okay, I graduated from Spring High School and didn't know what I wanted to do.

Orientation

I knew for sure I wanted to go to college, but didn't really know what I wanted to do. So I started and for my two years in Sam Houston I didn't know what I wanted to do. But I worked at the YMCA, and they had a program working with Aldine kids, so I chose education, but I guess it chose me. So because of YMCA, the YMCA after school program, was really the reason I wanted to become a school teacher. I liked the school,

Complicating Action

then when I finished I had a job there, and I was impressed about Aldine,

Resolution/Coda

so I interviewed and there was an opening at Parker, which is very close to me, and it was teaching social studies, which was what I had done, I specialized in, so it just kind of all sort of fit and I came here and I enjoy the school.

Stacy's Story 10.1

Abstract/Orientation

Q: And why are you still here? You have five years of experience and have been an Aldine teacher. Any school in the state of Texas would hire you because of the district education and because you are experienced now. Why are you still here?

A: I think I am here because my family is close and my parents live in Woodcreek and I live Foxwood.

Complicating Action

I think when you finish college you kind of leave all your best friends behind. You kind of just all go off in different directions,

Resolution/Coda

but I came here and I immediately made new friends, so now my very best friends are here. So this is my second family and leaving them right now would be like leaving my second family.

Stacy's Story 10.2

Abstract/Orientation

Q: Can you give me an example of a situation when you felt supported by the administrative staff, whether it was a problem with a co-worker or parent, or something?

A: If it's staff development you have to go through, he helps get you there. Parent wise, there's always a case of support.

Complicating Action

Let's say you have two students in a classroom, and these kids need to be separated. It's immediate. Last year, I had 24 students and he said okay. Let's split them up, you know, that kind of support.

Resolution

He recognizes the problem instead of saying just deal with it. So that kind of support, they see things from the teacher's perspective.

Coda

I think sometimes, sometimes administrators give the message that they have been there so long and they are so tied up with administrative stuff that they forget sometimes the teachers have problems too.

Stacy's Story 10.3

Abstract/Orientation

Q: Tell me about the leadership here and the relationship with them.

A: I think we have a great leadership team.

Complicating Action

I think for the most part the leadership has been about the kids, population.

Resolution/Coda

I am very good friends with them, so they are very good about not mixing friendly and the job.

Stacy's Story 10.4

Abstract/Orientation

Q: Last question for you and I'll end it with the same question I started with. Why are you still here? Are there any reasons that you have not told me about?

A: I think that the reason why I am still here is because of the atmosphere right now.

Complicating Action

My friends are here.

Resolution/Coda

I am happy with the school. I am happy with the administration. That's why there are so many people still here. Maybe for the same reasons. Maybe they had a knack for hiring people who would stay here right out of college. Maybe he looked for something, I don't know.

Stacy stated that education chose her, while working at the YMCA. The window of opportunity presented itself when she was offered a teaching a position at Parker, and she, like the others, took it. Again, in Stacy's situation, when asked "Why are you still at Parker?" she stated that it was close to her home and to her parents' home. But she also states that she has friends at Parker, and it would be difficult to leave her friends at Parker, because she considers the people there her family. She talks about the support that she gets from the administrative staff.

*Stacy's Story 10.5***Abstract/Orientation**

Q: How do you feel about the teaching profession?

A: Some days it, of course, is more rewarding, and

Complicating Action

then some days you want to pull your hair out;

Resolution

but at the end of the day, the end of the week, the end of the year, I feel that satisfaction. I don't think about leaving. I hear people say, "Oh, I can't do this anymore," but even after five years, I still want to do it.

Coda

And usually after three years, they, you know, I've never got that feeling.

Stacy's Story 10.6

Abstract/Orientation

Q: Tell me an example of a situation of how one day you really want to give up, and another day you feel just proud of being a teacher.

A: I think the days that you really want to give it up are maybe, like Thursday a teacher just could give her lesson. You think they are all going to behave and of course they are not, you know, one of those first-year teachers,

Complicating Action

and they have no clue what you are talking about, and you have these expectations of just teaching this great lesson, and the kids completely do not understand what you are saying. So you think you are a failure, you think why am I doing this, what did I do, you want to give up.

Resolution/Coda

But then you have days when a kid comes up to you and says I love you or you know, wow, I never knew that before. And you think this is worth it. The love and caring heart that Stacy has for her students shows in the story.

Stacy's Story 10.7

Abstract/Orientation

Q: Your compensation package. How do you feel about that?

A: Sometimes I think it's fair and then sometimes other teachers talk to me and influence me and try to convince me that it's not fair.

Complicating Action

So it's something I go back and forth on. I think that as far as, but then you have to, you are not getting as much as and that's not fair. You know, and then you have to say, maybe if I was in special education everything is not always fair. If I am not happy I can either move up, get myself certified to teach something else, or move out,

Resolution/Coda

sign a contract to get paid this much, so if I don't like it move on, change it. That's my philosophy, but not everyone has that, they just sit there and complain and complain. Well do something about it, don't just sit there and complain.

Salary is not the reason why Stacy has remained at Parker. She realizes that she could make more money if she wants to, but the money is not that important to her, for her to move out of her school.

Stacy's Story 10.8

Abstract/Orientation

Q: Let's go back to your first year. Talk to me about the novice teacher program or the new teacher program, your first year, the whole system. Tell me about how you felt.

A: When I came here in January, I was a new teacher, and there was a small number of students I had that year.

Complicating Action

But I was very well supported and I enjoyed my stay and I had a mentor. Actually I had three. I had a mentor that was ... and I had a friend who had a social studies mentor. So I felt great immediately.

Resolution/Coda

People sat down with me, helped write my lesson plans, explained the students to me because they had already had them for half the school year.

Stacy's Story 10.9

Abstract/Orientation

Q: The staff development. How do you feel about that? And is it important or not?

A: I think it is important. I think the district holds professional development at the beginning of the year,

Complicating Action

which some years are very good and some years I don't get as much from it as I have in the past.

Resolution

The one about registering online, I think that was very good and I think that was very helpful to me. I think some years they have been more helpful than others.

Coda

But the years that they are not, maybe they are helpful to someone else.

New teacher orientation and staff development are important to Stacy and was of great value to her as a new teacher and after five years.

Nicholas' Story: The Businessman*Nicholas' Biography*

Nicholas did not look like a teacher. He appeared to be more of a banker or a salesman. My instincts were right. Nicholas told me that he worked in the business world before he became a teacher. Nicholas received his bachelor's degree in elementary education in 1993. He began his teaching career in 1993 with the Aldine School District and was assigned to teach fifth grade science at Escamilla Intermediate School. He transferred to his current position as technology specialist at Parker Intermediate School in 1995. Nicholas has 11 years of experience in the field of education with all of those years in the Aldine School District.

*Nicholas' Story 11.0***Abstract/Orientation**

Q: Nicholas, if you would, just tell me the story about how you became a teacher, how you became a teacher at Aldine, how you became a teacher here at Parker, and why are you still here?

A: I went to a couple of colleges in Ohio. My father was a high school counselor, and

Complicating Action

it took me a couple of years in college to find out that I wanted to be a teacher. So after graduating from college,

Resolution

I went to a job fair in Ohio. I applied and I've been here ever since. This is my seventh year. I wanted to become a teacher, I wanted to impact children, and I wanted job security. I knew that as an educator you get retirement, so it was mostly for job security.

Coda

You can always find a job.

*Nicholas' Story 11.1***Abstract/Orientation**

Q: Why are you still here at Parker?

A: My first year down here, I went to that intermediate school that had just opened, then Parker, and they hired me, and the reason I am still here is because I enjoy being a technology teacher. I know that I could be a tech teacher at other schools, but you get the support that you need here. Support from the principal when you need something or need to do something.

Complicating Action

Everyday is different. I am either working with students, I'm working with teachers, and the administration. Every day is different. I have plans to do things the next day, but that can change. That's what I like about it.

Resolution/Coda

For one, I'm still a teacher, well financially working, my contract says 92 days. My job keeps me fairly happy, cause I enjoy it.

Nicholas' Story 11.2

Abstract/Orientation

Q: Tell me about the leadership, the principal, assistant principal.

A: Starting off, it's a friendly school. Mr. McCanna has done an excellent job, as far as discipline and everything else, he's done an excellent job. He cares about the kids. He cares about the teachers.

Q: Think about a while ago, the novice teacher program, the mentoring program. Your first year. Tell me about that.

A: In the first year, I was not a good teacher.

Complicating Action

There are so many things that I look back and I think how did I do that?

Resolution/Coda

It would be good to have a pre-service year. I got a lot of support from my mentor. I could have been more effective. To be actually in the classroom watching someone else, how they are managing the class, that would have been more effective.

Nicholas' Story 11.3

Abstract/Orientation

Q: Professional development at the campus. How do you feel about that?

A: It is very important, sometimes yes, sometimes no. I know that there are teachers that like staff development, and I know what happens when someone actually has staff development throughout the year.

Complicating Action

Learning something that day from what you heard only once for the rest of the year, sometimes it is probably not going to work.

Resolution/Coda

I don't know what staff development we could use that would benefit teachers.

Nicholas' Story 11.0

Abstract/Orientation

Q: The last question will be the same question I started with. Is there anything unique about this school? I mean, you have eight years of experience? All right, 11 years of experience. You could go anywhere. Any school district would hire you from Aldine, particularly with your years of experience. You are at the point where you could get a job anywhere. Why are you still here?

A: I like my job, and I had an opportunity three or four years ago to go to Conroe.

Complicating Action

But the job was not what I wanted. I like Parker. I like the work dealing with the administration and the staff. I like that.

Resolution/Coda

So I can teach here, other anywhere, but I am supported here at Parker, but the job keeps me here.

Nicholas's story of how he became a teacher is familiar; his father was a school counselor. But for the first time during the interviews, this participant stated that job security was a factor in becoming a teacher. He has remained at Parker because of the support that he gets from the principal. He describes his principal leadership as caring – caring about the students and the teachers. Teacher induction programs and staff development seem to have had little to no effect on him remaining at Parker.

Cynthia's Story: Expecting and Getting the Best

Cynthia's Biography

Cynthia is an experienced teacher who has been influenced greatly by the teachers that she has had over the years. She is stern in her belief that children can and will learn, if the expectations for them are high, and if teachers care and do not give up on them. Cynthia received her bachelor's degree in elementary education from Prairie View A&M University in 1981. She began her teaching career in North Forest Independent School District in 1986 teaching fourth grade at Halliard Elementary School. She joined The Catholic Diocese of Galveston in 1987 and was assigned to teach second grade. Cynthia returned to public teaching in 1994 with North Forest Independent School District teaching at the elementary level and moved to her present position as a science teacher at Parker Intermediate School in 1995. Cynthia has 18 years of teaching experience with 9 of those years in the Aldine School District.

Cynthia's Story 12.0

Abstract

Q: My first question: Tell me the story about how you became a teacher and how you became a teacher at Parker and why are you still here?

A: I became a teacher because I had great teachers growing up.

Orientation

I had three first cousins who taught, and one of them influenced me to become a teacher. Because of her teaching style, I felt I could help kids. To get the best out of you and that's what did it for me. She got the best out of me.

Q: What was her teaching style?

Complicating Action

A: If you didn't know the answer she would not give it to you. She would make you think and pull it out of you. I thought that was great. That's what she did for me.

Q: Give me an example of what she did.

A: For example, math problems, she would give you the formula. After she had explained it and if you still didn't get it, you had to work the formula out.

Resolution/Coda

If you still didn't get it, she would give you examples. But she would not work it out for you. She would tell you to think about it this way, and you had to come up with the answer.

Cynthia's Story 12.1

Abstract/Orientation

Q: How did you get here at Parker? Tell me about your migration and why are you still here?

A: How did I get here at Parker?

Complicating Action

Well, I had four kids in Aldine district, and I decided to come here to be close to them.

Resolution/Coda

I love the environment of the school, our students, and the diversity here.

Cynthia's Story 12.2

Abstract/Orientation

Q: How do you feel about the teaching profession as a whole?

A: I feel that if you are in a teaching position, you have an upper hand and influence on the students, and I feel that all students can learn if the teachers

give them their all. So if you give the respect, the students they will respect you and want to learn.

Q: Can you give me an example of that happening in one of your classes?

Complicating Action

A: Yes, I taught science for nine years here at Parker and I had a student to tell me:

Resolution/Coda

“Mrs. McKibben, I appreciate what you have done for me this year.” He said, “You made us think for ourselves, and you did not give us the answers, and I appreciate that.”

Cynthia’s Story 12.3

Abstract/Orientation

Q: You talked briefly about the principal. Tell me about the entire leadership of this building.

A: I think we have some great leaders.

Q: What do you mean? Why would you say that?

Complicating Action

A: They are always willing to help the teachers in any way that they need.

Resolution/Coda

If the students do not have supplies, they will go into their office and get what they need.

Cynthia’s Story 12.4

Abstract/Orientation

Q: Tell me about your compensation package. How do you feel about your salary and compensation package in this district?

A: How do I feel about my salary? It’s okay.

Q: So you separated the district from salary across the country, do you think the teachers are paid enough? This is a global question.

Complicating Action

A: Absolutely not. I don't think teachers are paid enough for the amount of time that they put in the day. As a teacher your work is never done.

Resolution/Coda

I am here at 7:00 a.m. and sometimes I don't leave until 7:00 p.m.

Cynthia's stories focused on the teachers that she had as a student and the influence that they had on her. She became a teacher because of them, which was a very common theme that was prevalent throughout most of the participants' stories. She has remained at Parker because it is close to home, and she likes the administration and the support that they give, along with the latitude that she has in delivering instruction. She loves the school environment and the students. Those seem to be the most important factors for her retention at Parker.

Gail's Story: I Found My Place in Life

Gail's Biography

Gail is one of these teachers who became discouraged with working in the business world and decided to become a teacher. However, one could never tell that she did not major in education and had not been a teacher her entire career. Gail received her bachelor's degree in speech from State University College-Brockport in 1979 and her master's degree in reading and language arts education from the University of Houston in 1987. She began her teaching experience in the Aldine School District in April of 1984 teaching English at Teague Middle School. She

transferred to Orange Grove Elementary School as an assistant principal in 1997 and moved to her present position as special education teacher at Parker Intermediate School in 2000. Gail has 20 years of teaching experience with all of those years in the Aldine School District.

Gail's Story 13.0

Abstract

Q: Gail, if you could tell me your story: How you became a teacher, how you became a teacher in Aldine and here at Parker, and why are you still here? With your years of experience, you could go anywhere.

A: I became a teacher after being discouraged with the job market.

Orientation

My degree is in broadcasting, and I come from a long line of teachers, and I vowed that teaching was something that I did not want to do. I worked in broadcasting, and it just was not for me. However, my mother did say to get a teaching certificate as something to fall back on. The interesting thing was prior to, during that interval between retail when I would come to a building as a substitute, the principal would ask me to stay, and I would tell him no, that I only do this one day a week.

Complicating Action

When I came to Houston, the market was so vast, and I didn't understand it. Out of all things, I became a leasing agent. At that time, one of the central office people, Ralph Goodman, was in between buying a home and he leased an apartment. Every time he would come in and we would talk. One day he came by and said that each time we talk we had the same conversation. "I can tell you don't like working here, so here is your application to Aldine." So it got to the point that I literally knew the central office number by memory. I was rolling in applicants from Mississippi coming to get a job, and I finally said what's wrong with this picture. So when he came in to pay his rent, and I told him that the application he had given me was filled out and in the apartment. At that time, New York State had a shortage of special education teachers, and they were literally railroaded into getting their certifications, so I had a fresh 12 hours in a master's in special education.

Resolution/Coda

So I went to Sue Wooten at Teague, and at that time, that's all she had available was a Special Education Aide. So I took it and I didn't think I would have that type of patience of job working with students. So I began to say, "Look, I am a certified teacher." In the month of April of that year, one teacher went out on maternity leave, and she was out for six weeks, and I did that and that's was my start. I did that for three years, and at that time, the career ladder came out and I had to enter the master's program and had to be certified in what I was teaching.

Gail's Story 13.1

Abstract/Orientation

So the money is there and the motivation is there. I feel that Sue Wooten, Ken Knippel, and Jeff McCanna, those three people respected what I did. The best compliment I had was when Ken told me that when my kids finish with you they don't need another English teacher. Anything else they get is like icing on the cake and polish on the brass.

Complicating Action

The flip side of this is, and Archie you know that I am still glad that it happened, and I'm not bitter but to be in a different setting and doing things in a totally different way, I had to say what am I doing different? I am still the same person.

Resolution/Coda

Sometimes you need that experience so you can help. So to be truthful is something that I had never planned to do, but it turned out to be what I was meant to do.

Gail's Story 13.2

Abstract/Orientation

Q: The salary is good and you can get the same salary at Stehlik. So why are you still here?

A: Because of the administration, I support it 100%.

Q: Give me an example of what you mean by respect and support?

Complicating Action

A: There are things that may happen that like with a parent and they may give me a scenario that may be a ear shock of something that may have happened. My classroom aide may have to go and cover a class, and she comes back and tells me something that has happened and I ask her, “Did you send that kid to the office?” That’s something you don’t want to come back.

Resolution/Coda

The administration knows that I am going to be supportive. Sometimes you have those sideline conversations whereas people are not supportive and don’t understand why things are done a certain way. The bottom line is that I am going to do my job, and I am going to do it well. It’s not one of those situations as to where you might have to second guess.

Gail’s Story 13.3

Abstract/Orientation

Q: When you look at staff development here at Parker, you have 5 or 6 days. How do you feel about the staff development here?

A: Staff development is good, but it could be better.

Complicating Action

Three years ago when we started the changing behavior, we do not understand the children that we are dealing with. When we started the year, we don’t have time to do much, so if they want me to understand or do something, you need to sit me down and instruct me.

Resolution/Coda

New Jersey is so successful not is because now you understand what they are feeling. We have to go about what we are doing in a different fashion and when we find the things that work, utilize it.

Administrative support was the basis for Gail remaining at Parker Intermediate

School to teach.

Analysis

I will admit that after the tapes had been transcribed, I still did not know what to analyze and what to discard. I had so much more data from the participants' stories and did not know what to do with all of it. My next step was to find a model to use to analyze a massive amount of data that I had collected. In order to analyze the stories of the participants, I used the narrative framework, which allowed me to see stories in a holistic view. It also allowed me to examine them thoroughly and allowed me to understand what was important to the participants in their professional lives that would cause them to remain at an urban school.

The qualitative research approach using narratives as a method to gather data has proven to be a valuable tool in gaining insight into the professional lives of the teachers at Parker Intermediate School. I used the narrative approach in order to find the voices of the participants in a particular time, setting, and place (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). A case study approach was used in this research project in order to obtain descriptive knowledge about why these teachers remain in an urban school (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982).

In-depth interviews were the method used to gather the stories of the teachers. By combining the narrative inquiry methodology and the case study approach, it allowed me to acquire multiple perspectives in understanding why these teachers remain in this urban school. In my analysis of the participants' stories, I reduced their stories to sets of common elements that revealed a set of themes. This model also allowed me to use all parts of the narratives that played a valuable role in their stories.

The Labov model structure was extremely useful to me in developing a system of structuring the participants' stories to be analyzed. Common themes emerged from using this method of structuring the stories. The Labov (1972) model structure consists of the following:

1. Abstract – summary of the substance of the narrative.
2. Orientation – time, place, situations, participants.
3. Complicating Action – sequence of events.
4. Evaluation – significance and meaning of the action attitude of narrator.
5. Resolution – what happens.
6. Coda – returns the perspective to the present.

I also used Bell's (1988) method by presenting only the core of the narrative – the things that are relevant, once the Labov (1972) method of transcription and structure categories were used to construct the text. Open-ended interview questions were used along with probing follow-up questions by me to get clarification on statements that the participants made. It also allowed them to feel free to tell their stories. Bell's (1988) approach also helped analyze the participants' stories by linking them together at different points in their narratives. Bell's approach helped show why the teachers have decided to remain in the teaching profession.

Information for this study was obtained as a result of one-on-one interviews with 13 teachers at Parker Intermediate School. These teachers had experience ranging from 5-33 years of service. The purpose of this study was to identify factors that influence teachers with five plus years of experience in an urban school to remain in

their school. A number of themes emerged from the interviews that will be discussed later in this chapter. The second purpose of this research study was to answer the following research questions:

1. What reasons do teachers with five or more years of experience attribute to their retention at their urban school?
2. How do the characteristics of the leadership influence teacher retention?
3. What role does mentoring play in teacher retention?
4. What role does development play in teacher retention?

Coherence was an area of concern when reading and analyzing the participants' stories also. According to Linde (1993) coherence is "a property of text; it derives from the relations that the parts of a text bear to one another and to the whole text, as well as from the relation that the text bears to other texts of its type" (p. 12). Therefore, I read each and every line of the narratives to be able to find coherence of their stories. There were times when stories and parts of the participants' stories did not adhere to basic coherence; but for the most part, their stories naturally flowed. Even though all of the participants were vastly different from each other; with different stories on why they are still teaching at Parker Intermediate School, they all gave very similar reasons for staying. There were many themes that were revealed after analyzing the narratives.

Grounded theory was my foundation in developing theories on why these teachers have remained at Parker Intermediate School. Grounded theory is a method for developing theory that is grounded in data systematically gathered and analyzed (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). During my research, collection of data, and during the

analysis phase, theories developed, which is the whole purpose of grounded theory.

These new theories consisted of a set of plausible relationships proposed among concepts and sets of concepts (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). There are certain characteristics of a grounded theory that I had to be cognizant of as I conducted the analysis, and that was that grounded theory, which is inductively derived from the phenomenon that it represents, must meet four central criteria: fit, understanding, generality, and control (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Strauss and Corbin (1990) state that: (a) *fit* entails the theory fits the substantive data, (b) *understanding* entails that the theory be comprehensible to all involved in the area of study, (c) *generality* entails the theory is applicable in a variety of contexts, and *control* implies that the theory should provide control with regard to action toward the phenomenon.

This chapter identified the similarities of the stories that the 13 participants told me about the reasons why they have chosen to remain teaching in an urban school. As mentioned in Chapter III, I used the in-depth interview technique and the participants were asked open-ended questions, followed by probing follow-up questions when clarification was needed.

Results

The purpose of the study was to contribute to the body of knowledge by identifying factors that influence teachers with five plus years of experience in an urban school to remain teachers in their schools. These identifying factors and understanding these factors will allow school administrators, universities, and policymakers to implement strategies that will reduce teacher turnover.

This section of my research contains the findings and results of analyzing the participants' stories. The results are organized by the themes that emerged during the analysis of the data. There were many themes that emerged from the participants' narratives. However, the major themes that emerged are shown in Figure 3: *making a difference*, *no reason to leave* and *administrative support*. These themes are reported by categories with supporting themes that further support the main theme. The themes identified, will also help answer the research questions. Each of these themes is discussed in detail in this chapter and is illustrated in Figure 3.

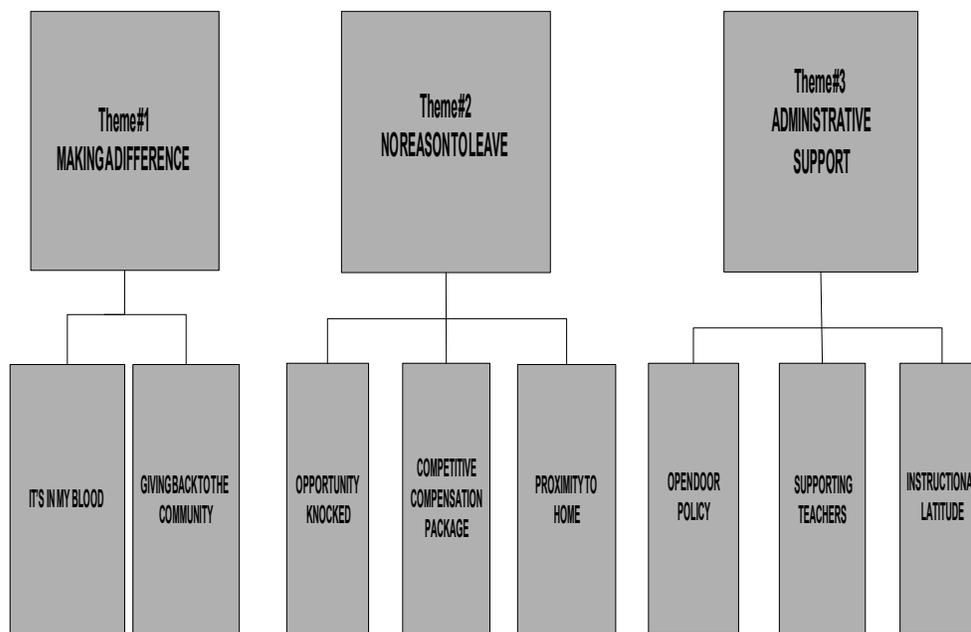


Figure 3. Emerging Themes.

Theme 1 – Making a Difference

The first theme that I will discuss that emerged from my research is *Making a difference in the lives of children*. These teachers feel that they can and do make a

difference in the lives of the children that they teach. They see the difference each three weeks during benchmark testing and each year when the results of the state and national tests are reported. These teachers see it in the eyes of their students when they grasp a new concept, or when the teacher smiles at the students and students smile back at the teacher, or in the students' faces when praised by the teachers. Parker students have consistently performed at or above grade level on standardized tests. The teachers are proud of their students and believe that the students can achieve academic success. These teachers understand that they can not change the home life of their students, but they can provide them with a learning environment that is caring, safe, and positive. One teacher said the following about her deaf education class:

I love it. I love my class. I don't know if I want to teach the regular kids. If I did not do what I do, if I did not teach hearing impaired children, I may have gone to another district.

Another teacher made the following comment:

So when I graduated I wanted to come back and kind of lay out the same foundation for another group of people that my teachers did for me. I felt that I wanted to give back, so that is why I am here.

Nearly all of the participants in this study had a strong desire to become a teacher at an early age. They seem to have a similar personal altruistic characteristic, which is to educate young people. They believe that teaching is important to our society and are committed to their vocation. They receive personal and professional satisfaction that comes from being a teacher (Chapman, 1988; Marso & Pigge, 1986). In Sarah's story, she states that she wanted to become a teacher special education teacher since she was a little girl. Her sentiments are repeated in other stories that she

shared with me when she said, “I love my class.” She also states that, “I know my class likes me,” which shows the closeness that she has with her students.

In one of Scott’s stories, he stated:

My father was an elementary and high school principal and he is now a superintendent. Both my uncles were high school principals, as well, so they were good role models for me growing up and I always wanted to get to that path.

The vast majority of the participants had similar stories to tell about how a relative or someone close to them, such as a teacher, influenced them to become a teacher. They feel that this is where they belong at this point in their lives. They are the type of teachers who we recruit, and it is no surprise that they have these beliefs and a sense of giving back to the community, because the district would not hire or retain them if they did not have these qualities.

Theme 2 – No Reason to Leave

The vast majority of the teachers in this study stated that there was no reason for them to leave Parker Intermediate School. They indicated that there was nothing negative or problematic enough at the school that would cause them to leave. They felt that they were respected as professionals by the administrative team and their peers. They did not say that everything was perfect at the school, but they could manage the issues that they had. I want to make it clear that these teachers were among the highest rated teachers on their appraisals in their building. These were not the teachers who could not go anywhere else and teach. Any school district in the area would hire these teachers just based on Aldine’s reputation.

The teachers in this study indicated that they were close to home. Several of the teachers live less than a mile from the school, and the majority live less than four miles away. It was surprising to the researcher that in this study, a number of teachers stated that proximity to home was a factor in them remaining at Parker Intermediate School. Research has shown that teachers who teach in a urban school generally do not live in the community; but this is not the case in Aldine ISD. There are communities in this district with \$30,000 homes that are next to \$200,000 homes. Our teachers live in all of Aldine's communities. There are many attractive communities in the district and our staff wants to live close to work. The reason for this, I believe, is that the district has a large number of teachers who graduated from the district and have come back to teach because this is where they are from. They came home to teach in their community. Their parents and friends are still in the community. Many of our bilingual teachers are a product of our "grow your own program" for teachers' aides, who are community people. If they remained in the community receiving aide salary, they might move to another Aldine community when they made teacher salary. Teachers who work and live in the district have a different perception of the Aldine community than someone who does not live there or the general public. For instance, there is a perception that the Greenspoint area, which has had its ups and downs over the years, is run down and dangerous. The fact is that the Greenspoint area is one of the safest areas in Houston, according to statistics, even safer than the high rent district of the Galleria. Parker Intermediate school is located next to Woodcreek subdivision, which is in the northern section of the district, with homes ranging from \$125,000-\$250,000. Pang, Rivera, and

Mora (1999) identified nine Fundamentals Beliefs of Caring-Centered Multicultural Education that might also help explain this phenomenon. They argue that when teachers teach from a caring perspective, they feel a part of the community and share life experiences by participating in the community where they live.

One of the teachers whose husband works at the same school stated: “My husband works at the same school, also. Therefore, we can ride to work together, eat lunch together, and that is important to me.”

Salary was not the most important factor that has kept these teachers at Parker Intermediate School, which is in line with what the research shows. One teacher said “pay helps, but that won’t keep you.” Several teachers feel that the compensation package is fair. Even those teachers like Ashley, who seemed to be angry about the salary when she said: “I am frustrated with my salary, teachers feel guilty to complain about salary,” seem to be able to separate the support that they get from the administrative staff at Parker Intermediate School, from the national problem of inadequate teacher salaries. For these teachers, the salary issue is not to the point where they would inconvenience themselves by going to another school. Most teachers indicated that benefits were important, but were not the major reason why they had remained at Parker. Also, the majority of teachers had an opportunity to work closer to home, and they took advantage of that opportunity.

I found that being close to home and their children was an important factor in teachers remaining at Parker. There was a sense of “I have no reason to leave Parker,” as one teacher stated it. I found that these things would not be any better in another

school, so why so somewhere else? It is my feeling that there were not enough bad things that were happening at the school, or even the profession that would not be the same somewhere else. However, these teachers did not feel trapped staying at Parker. They generally respected and liked the people that they worked with and enjoyed coming to work.

Theme 3 – Administrative Support

By far, the theme that emerged from this study that had the greatest impact on why these teachers remain at Parker Intermediate was the support that they get from the administrative team, which includes the principal, assistant principals, counselors, and diagnostician. All of the teachers reported that they received various types of administrative support. They indicated that administrative support was a factor in them remaining at the school. These teachers know that although the district and Parker Intermediate School expect a lot from them, they have the support of both entities in assisting them in achieving student academic success. This theme is one that I have chosen to expound on the most because it is an area that schools and central office administrators can benefit from, because this is one area in which they have control. With a thorough understanding of the issues surrounding teacher retention, they can implement strategies that will improve teacher retention on their campuses.

Administrative support was the major reason the teachers at Parker Intermediate School remain at this urban school. The word “support” was a common term used throughout the interviews and stories that the teachers told. Administrative support manifested itself in many forms during their narratives.

Teachers reported that they received administrative support from their administrative team, which included the principal, assistant principal, counselor, and diagnostician in various ways. The definition of administrative support varied slightly from teacher to teacher. Even though the administrative team had changed over the last five years, the teachers did not make a distinction between one administration and another when telling their stories about administrative support. An example of this was provided by one teacher when he said:

Parker has a great administration. Before Mr. McCanna was principal, was Mr. Knipple. I have had the opportunity to, I think, work under two great administrators, two great leaders, and the support that they give you and the professionalism that they showed at the school towards the staff, is the culture here. It has really kept me here for all those years.

This teacher sums it up in that statement; it is the culture that the administration has created that has made him stay at Parker. That culture seems to be planted firmly and can withstand a change in administration.

Administrative support was also measured by some teachers by the support that they got when they were in the wrong with a parent, staff member, or an administrator, and the principal came to their rescue. One teacher gave an example of support in the following way:

If you get into a situation where you might have a complaint from the parents, you might be in a little hot water with some parent, not because of something you set up for, or something you did wrong, but they always are going to back you.

Another interesting finding was that these teachers did not expect the administration to overlook the thing that they did wrong, but the support came in the form of how the administration handled the situation. These teachers felt respected as a

person and as a professional by their administrative team and their peers, which was very important to them.

Another teacher said: “They are always going to sit down with you, and they are going to take your side if you are right, but tell you where you were wrong also.” Another teacher defines support in terms of getting the necessary resources from the administration that they need for their classroom. This teacher said: “You ask for anything, you get it. If there’s something you need, they will find ways to get it for you.” Then another teacher described support in the following manner: “If there is a problem, they pretty much look for you to decide. They discuss it with you, and give some pointers on ways, especially when you don’t know.”

Even when teachers did not feel supported in one area, they still felt that they had enough support from the administration in other areas to counter that lack of support that they felt. Here is what one teacher said: “I think . . .we want little bit more support, especially when it comes to discipline.” But this same teacher goes on to say in another story that: “They kind of make discipline a routine. Cause they know that’s the way to create routine, and they are very consistent in the routine, so it helps a lot.” This illustrates that this teacher did not expect the administration to be perfect, but the good outweighs the bad.

A major form of support that the teachers stated that was important to them and was a factor in them remaining at Parker Intermediate School was the support that they received from the administration when it came to student discipline. An example of this type of administrative support was given by a teacher when she said:

I will go to speak to them if there is a behavior issue and I feel that the child should not stay in the classroom. I'll talk to the principal and I will say to the administrator that this is why I will not accept that child back into my classroom. The principal will say we will go with you. They will go with me, they will work with me, they will work with my team, and we all want the child to move forward.

It became evident that these teachers felt that their administrators handle discipline issues and not just give lip service to it. Another teacher measures support in terms of how the principal interact with her, and the perspective that the principal has on the things that are important in life. This teacher states that: "I think Mr. McCanna makes it very clear. I love it when he says school is not the number one priority, family is." This principal does not have faculty meetings after school; they are during the day, during the planning period, and while teachers are still on duty. He wants teachers to go home to their families at the end of the school day and not to stay for a meeting that could have been held, with proper planning and cooperation, during the regular school day.

Another teacher defines support in being fair in how their students are distributed among teachers, by telling the following story:

Stacy's Story 10.2

Abstract/Orientation

Q: Can you give me an example of a situation when you felt supported by the administrative staff, whether it was a problem with a co-worker or parent, or something?

A: If it's staff development you have to go through, he helps get you there. Parent wise, there's always a case of support.

Complicating Action

Let's say you have two students in a classroom, and these kids need to be separated. It's immediate. Last year, I had 24 students and he said okay. Let's split them up, you know, that kind of support.

Resolution

He recognizes the problem instead of saying just deal with it. So that kind of support, they see things from the teacher's perspective.

Coda

I think sometimes, sometimes administrators give the message that they have been there so long and they are so tied up with administrative stuff that they forget sometimes the teachers have problems too.

The following stories are other examples how teachers have defined

administrative support:

Scott's Story 2.10

Abstract/Orientation

I had a student who was disrespectful in the classroom, and I had used all the appropriate measures needed before administrative intervention was to take place.

Complicating Action

I sent the student to the office,

Resolution/Coda

and the assistant principal in charge took care of the situation for me by disciplining the student in accordance to the student handbook. That was expected, but the administrative staff went above that. They continued to monitor the students' progress much after the incident had taken place making sure the student was following all school rules, all the time. Since the administrative staff took the time to follow up on the situation and stayed with it, I was able to build a positive relationship with the student, benefiting all involved.

*Scott's Story 2.11***Abstract/Orientation**

After identifying a group of at-risk children in my courtyard, we implemented a tutorial schedule to offer additional time for these students to enhance their skills.

Complicating Action

A lot of growth was taking place, but many of the children were in need of additional help but did not qualify for special education. I asked the principal what other steps could be taken with our cooperative work.

Resolution/Coda

We developed an extra tutoring time during lunch called "Lunch Crunch" where the principals tutored my students on the stage after they finished eating. Not only did this show the children that everybody was genuinely concerned with their progress, but also gave them the extra one-on-one attention to help them be successful academically.

*Juergen's Story 8.13***Abstract/Orientation**

In 1997, I came to Houston to work for Aldine ISD at Parker Intermediate School. My first assignment was to teach reading and language arts in a 5th grade resource room.

Complicating Action

It seemed unusual to me to only work with my students for one year and, therefore, approached the administration with the idea of following the children into the sixth grade.

Resolution/Coda

My primary focus was on maintaining continuity and consistency which I thought was especially important when educating children with special needs. Parker's principal was open to my suggestion and supported me.

*Juergen's Story 8.14***Abstract/Orientation**

At the end of my second year at Parker Intermediate School and in the teacher exchange program (STEPS), which had brought me to Houston,

Complicating Action

I decided to pursue the idea of trying to permanently stay in the United States of America.

Resolution/Coda

My principal showed support by assuring me that there would be a job for me at his school and by providing a job description as a special education classroom teacher as part of the requirements of the process of filing a Petition for Alien Worker, National Interest Waiver, with the INS.

*Juergen's Story 8.15***Abstract/Orientation**

Parker Intermediate's French program was threatened when the French teacher left the school in 2003. I saw a window of opportunity opening wide. I had lived in France and studied French at the University of Gießen in Germany.

Complicating Action

I had taught French in Germany and realized that offering to teach French at Parker would help continue the program, but also give me the chance to step-by-step transition from working with children with special needs to teaching foreign languages.

Resolution/Coda

My principal supported my intentions. During the 2003/2004 school year, I continued to teach content mastery, but was at the same time given the opportunity to experience the joy of encouraging students to learn French. When I decided in 2004 to leave Parker in order to start the new French program at Wilson Academy, my principal was instrumental in arranging an interview with the principal of that school ahead of the District Job Fair. He never left any doubt about wanting to keep me at Parker, but articulated his understanding that I had other ambitions.

*Cynthia's Story 2.6***Abstract/Orientation**

Coming up with new and effective ways to teach children are an ever-learning process. You always want your children to be motivated and excited about every learning endeavor.

Complicating Action

However, there are times when certain subjects just fail to bring the excitement you are after. One of the things that have become grossly routine for the children is learning how plants grow. With all of the knowledge that can be learned through other avenues in regards to plant growth, the traditional classroom just doesn't "do it" anymore. What is the best way to teach a child how things grow? Let them see it first hand.

Resolution

My students were able to witness plant growth in the most rewarding way. Mr. McCanna gave us permission to build a garden behind the school. Talk about hands-on experience. The students were excited to be able to watch their garden flourish.

Coda

It was a far cry from watching a bean grow in a Styrofoam cup.

*Cynthia's Story 12.7***Abstract**

Being a science teacher can be a very challenging role, especially since the field is constantly growing.

Orientation

Things we never thought possible before, are now coming to fruition.

Complicating Action

Having said that, it become a constant challenge trying to keep up-to-date on all the newest information and then trying to teach it to the children.

Resolution

Mr. McCanna has afforded me the opportunity to attend many conferences, workshops, and training programs to ensure that I get all of the necessary information I need to be the most effective in my classroom. I also had the opportunity to conduct several training workshops. These events were not always local, which meant I had travel out of town to participate. Mr. McCanna encouraged me attend the workshops no matter where they were. I always had his support as well as the rest of the administration.

Coda

Outside of the children, having the support I had made teaching worthwhile.

Cynthia's Story 12.8

Abstract/Orientation

I have been in the classroom for over 15 years. I have taught many subjects as well as many grades. For one reason or another, science has always held a special place in my heart. I'm not sure whether the bond with science is stemmed from having helped my own children with their science fair projects year after year, or from the thrill of just trying to keep my students motivated to learn science. One thing is for certain, I enjoy it to the utmost.

Complicating Action

I don't think I would have ever taken the chance to move out of the classroom

Resolution

had Mr. McCanna not told me how much he believed in me. The love I have for the sciences is what sparked Mr. McCanna to encourage me to take the position I currently have. It explained to me how much I would be helping more children learn if I accepted the position.

Coda

So with his support and constant motivation, I am happy to say that the move has been wonderful.

*Laura's Story 9.10***Abstract/Orientation**

This story may be small in statute, but grand in the end results for the situation. Briefly, one of my assistant principals assisted me in reaching a student

Complicating Action

with whom was having difficulties at home, at school, and with himself.

Resolution

Together with her support and this student's needs, she allowed me to go over and beyond with him during school events (when he should have been in certain classes), and extracurricular activities.

Coda

She supported me in my decisions I had set for him.

*Laura's Story 9.11***Abstract/Orientation**

At the expansion of the bilingual program to 5th and 6th graders a few years ago, I, as an instructor in the program, was very low on resources.

Complicating Action

I had practically nothing to support me in my instruction bilingually.

Resolution

Thus, another supportive plus for my administrative staff, was to adhere to several of the bilingual conferences and workshops I wished to attend to receive information and materials was granted.

Coda

They worked very diligently to answer my questions about the program as well.

When analyzing these stories side-by-side using the Labov (1972) structure, you can see the linkage between the stories of individuals and between other participants' stories (Bell, 1988). One can clearly see that these are great examples of administrative support in various degrees, but you also see the similarities in the stories when it comes to the personal and professional sides of the administrative team.

In Juergen's stories, you can see that the first story that he tells is about the professional support that he received from the principal, but the second and third stories are more on a personal level, on how the principal helped him achieve his personal goals. You can see the same pattern in Scott's, Stacy's and Cynthia's stories, where the principal is giving support and on a personal and professional level.

Gee (1985, 1986, 1991) argued that stanzas are a universal unit in planning speech. When the participants' stories are viewed in stanza form, as Gee (1985) suggested, the first part of the stories is an explanation of how they feel about whatever the issue is.

Later in the narrative, one can sense the conflict to come, and at the end, the principal comes to the rescue. There is a certain poetic feature about the way they tell their stories. Josselson (1996) argued that "although we recognize that our hypotheses and conclusions about people originate in our own complex conceptual processes, we often lose sight of the additional authority our words and ideas carry when transferred to the permanence of print" (p. 61).

I left in tact the participants' stories the way they told them to me. It was very important to me to not change or correct spelling. The use of strong phrases such as

administrative support, giving back to the community, and no reason to leave came through clearly throughout the participants' stories. At a deeper level, the participants' non unitary selves are competing to be seen and heard. They are struggling to present to me the "strong, independent, and confident self," and later in their stories, they present the, "I need the help of others (administrators) self." The non-unitary self means that we are complex beings that have a need for multiple selves that help explain lived experiences and are revealed to us and others through our narratives. Clark (1997) said it best when she said, "We make sense of our experience through the construction of narratives and the process. We also construct or present a self for ourselves and for others" (p. 109). There were many selves presented in the participants' narratives, but the two mentioned above were the ones that were consistent throughout the participants' stories.

Selves Presented in Participants' Narratives

Strong, Independent, and Confident Self

In the majority of the participants' stories, they wanted me to understand that they were competent in their skills and abilities. They wanted me to know that their classroom was their domain and that they were professionals and were in control.

I Need the Help of Others (Administrators) Self

These same teachers told stories of the need for support and how their administrators came through when they needed them to. They wanted me to know that there were and are times that they and other teachers need support, what way that they define it.

It appears that these teachers want to work for someone who respects them and will help them become a better teacher and professional. It has been shown in this study that administrative support is an essential component in teacher retention.

Instructional Latitude

Another area of support that the teachers indicated was being given the latitude by the administration to deliver the instruction in their class the way that they saw fit, as long as the results were positive. The majority of the teachers stated that they had the freedom to teach the way that would best benefit their students, and that seems to be very important to them. When asked how much latitude you have in delivering instruction in your classroom, one teacher replied “Oh, they never question what I teach because my scores are good. He has never questioned what I teach.” Being able to teach in an environment where everything that a teacher does is not scripted, outlined, or prepared, is important to these teachers. Not having someone constantly in their classroom to monitoring how the teacher is teaching is a factor in why these teachers have decided to stay in this urban school.

Open-Door Policy

The other way the teachers measured administrative support was through having an “open-door policy,” which means being able to go to their office with a problem and getting advice and directions. A teacher said: “We can talk about the issues, about the students, you can give suggestions.” When asked to give me a story that involved the open door policy, this is what one teacher said:

Gwendolyn's Story 7.7

Abstract/Orientation

Q: Can you give me an example of a situation where there was an issue and the principal or the administrative staff worked through it. Give me an example of the support that you got.

A: There was a student and the student said that something had been addressed, something had been found by the teacher on my team, about several students and this is not the case.

Complicating Action

The parents found out that what was taking place was not what the child had said. The parents came in and they are optimistic, the parents were welcomed, the parents even apologized.

Resolution

The principal said, "But however, in the meantime, you can email us." The teachers were emailed and one thing that the principal asked was that we operate as a team. Okay, let's bring that child in, one-on-one, but we wanted the child to know that this is not supposed to be a every week, every day thing.

Coda

We talk to the parents and let the parents know that the teachers are here and we are here not about the problem, but about responding to the problem and the needs of the children.

Research Questions

Research Question #1

What reasons do teachers with five or more years of experience attribute to their retention in the profession?

The teachers in this research study seem to have a positive attitude toward their working conditions, their students, co-workers, and the support they get from their administrative team. They have remained in the teaching profession in an urban school

for a number of reasons as identified in the following themes: (a) making a difference, (b) no reason to leave, and (c) administrative support. There were a number of supporting themes that were identified also, they were; (a) the opportunity to teach was given to them when their options were limited; (b) the proximity of the school to where they live is another reason why they have remained; (c) the benefit package was important, but not the number one reason why they are staying, which is consistent with the research; (d) service to the community or society; and (e) a strong love for children and the pride that comes with helping them succeed.

Research Question #2

How do the characteristics of the leadership influence their reasons for staying in the profession?

Being able to relate to teachers on a personal and professional level has a major influence on teacher retention. Having a concern for others and carrying one's self in a professional manner, are characteristics that the leadership should exhibit if they are going to have a positive influence on teacher retention. Being a professional and understanding, allows teachers to vent when they have issues and concerns. These teachers do not feel threatened when they challenged the administration or approached them with new ideas. As one teacher said: "You know that they have been there by the way they run the school." Teachers want to work for someone who has high expectations, but also someone who will tell them when they are doing a good job and constructive criticism when they need to improve.

Research Question #3

How does mentoring play a role in teacher retention?

The teachers in this study did not indicate that mentoring played a significant role in them remaining at their school. All of the teachers believed that a strong mentoring program was important and necessary for new teachers, but none said that they were still there because of, or the lack of, a mentoring program. This research question is expounded on more in Chapter V.

Research Question #4

How does professional development play a role in teacher retention?

None of the teachers in this study indicated that professional development was a factor in them remaining at Parker Intermediate School. In fact, a number of them stated that it was a waste of time and resources, because they were being talked to as opposed to being an integral part of the planning, developing, and implementation of the training. In general, they believe that professional development is important, but should be relevant to their needs. The question is expounded on more in Chapter V.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary

The teacher retention issue was not created overnight and will not be resolved in a short period of time. This topic has been researched and talked about for years. Having a high teacher retention rate is a vital part of the process of educating our youth. A stable teaching staff provides consistency, continuity, and stability, which help foster a strong instructional program. This nation is facing a teacher turnover rate of over 16.5% and as high as 50% in hard-to-fill urban schools (Ingersoll, 2001).

The data that identified the factors that influence a teacher's decision to remain in an urban school were compiled and analyzed. Several themes emerged from the analysis. Data analysis answered all four of the research questions. The analysis revealed the answer to the four research questions.

The first research question that was answered was: What reasons do teachers with five or more years of experience attribute to their retention in the profession? The data analysis revealed that those teachers with five or more years of experience attributed the following for their reasons for remaining in the profession:

- They believe that they do make a difference in the lives of children.
- They have a supportive administrative team.
- There is no reason for them to leave their school.

The second research question was: How do the characteristics of the leadership influence their reasons for staying in the profession? This study reveals that there are

certain characteristics of leadership that influence teachers' reasons for staying in the profession, which include caring and being open and professional.

The third research question was: How does mentoring play a role in teacher retention? This study revealed that mentoring does not play a significant role in teacher retention of these teachers who had five plus years of experience. Mentoring is usually associated with beginning teachers and is usually a part of the induction program for novice teachers. Odell and Ferraro (2000) report that novice teachers have a different set of needs than those of experienced teachers. Because these teachers have five plus years of experience in education, they may view mentoring as less important than they would have at the end of their first year of teaching. All of the participants felt that mentoring was important for a novice teacher. State law requires that every new teacher is assigned a mentor for the first year. All of these teachers had someone formally assigned to them as a mentor, but it did not always work the way it was supposed to. In a number of cases, either the mentor gave little to no support or the chemistry between them was not there. But in every case where this happened, the teacher found someone else in the building, and in one case, another building to act as an informal mentor. One teacher even stated that the principal was his mentor.

The fourth and final research question was: How does professional development play a role in teacher retention? This study revealed that professional development plays an insignificant role in teacher retention. However, all of the teachers in the study believed that professional development was very important. After 5 to 33 years of experience in the profession, these teachers felt that the professional

development should be relevant to their needs and the needs of their students. They thought that it would be a waste of time, money, and resources if it were not. In general, they felt that their campus staff development served their needs. Any staff development should be data driven. The days of central administration or the schools using canned or off-the-shelf staff development programs are gone and will never return to this district. With all of the data that is available to us today, there is no reason not to use it to help develop our teachers. We use the test data to identify the strengths and weaknesses in our programs. Once those strengths and weaknesses are identified, creating staff development and interventions for teachers and students can begin. Schools have different needs; the needs at schools on the west side of our district may not have the same needs as the east side of the district. That's why the data play a major role in staff development, because it will identify those needs.

In Adine ISD, all of our schools have learning communities. These learning communities may be called different things from campus-to-campus, but they all have the same goals and focus, and that is continued development of the educator through continuous education. Teachers are always involved in developing, implementation, and evaluation of all professional development from district and campus levels. We require the teachers to help develop the campus and district staff development programs each year. The only mandate is that they must consider the data in developing the programs. I know that too much data can be overwhelming for teachers and administrators. We have supported the campuses by creating a research and evaluation department at the central office level and skill specialists at the campus

level. The research and evaluation department's role is to support the campus by disaggregating the data for all sources and presenting it in forms that are easy and useful to the campuses.

Once received by the campuses, these reports are disaggregated again by the campus administrator and the skill specialists and then are passed on to the teachers and department heads. Campus administrators and teachers only get the data that they need. That is the beginning of the staff development for the following year. The staff development always has components for these teachers who are in need of assistance when the data show that there are major gaps in student achievement between teachers on the same team, grade level, or the same subject level. This information does not just come at the end of the year when the majority of the assessments are done. We use three weeks benchmarking to measure students' progress. This allows us to identify problems, make adjustments in staff development and instructional strategies before the major assessments.

To reiterate, the purpose of this study was to determine what factors influence teachers' decisions to remain in urban schools. After reviewing the literature, conducting the study, and analyzing the data, the following conclusions have been determined. The major factors that influence teacher retention are:

- Administrative support for the teachers.
- Whether teachers feel that they are making a difference in the lives of children.

- Whether teachers are generally happy with their schools and/or districts and have no reason to leave.

This study began with the participants' stories that revealed some surprising findings. All of the participants had different ways of telling their stories and different areas that they chose to focus on in telling them. The majority of the stories had common themes that were identified. In general, the teachers at Parker Intermediate School are happy with their campus because they feel that they do make a difference in the lives of children, they get support from the administrative staff, and they do not have any reason to go anywhere else. Not all of the participants were happy about all aspects of the school. Some thought that the discipline was too lenient and some thought that the district's benchmarks were too intrusive; but they all were able to separate their concerns or problems with the system from the school and the people in the school. All the teachers defined administrative support based on their personal experiences. They felt that their administrators took time out of their busy schedules to come by their classroom just to say, "Thanks for doing a good job," or to say, "You are doing a great job." These teachers truly felt appreciated by the administrative staff. Teachers and administrators worked together was the impression these teachers gave me. These teachers seem to have been destined to become educators, even before they recognized it. Almost all of them had someone special in their lives who had influenced them to become a teacher, either a relative or a current or former educator. It was also clear that the personality and the communication skills of the principal were a major factor in these teachers remaining to teach in this urban school.

A Unique District

This case study focused on one very unique school in a very unique school district. Therefore, I will take this opportunity in this section to share the philosophy of the district. All 26 years of my professional career have been spent in this district, which is not uncommon for this district. It does not mean that I have been shielded from the rest of the education community; it has been just the opposite. Even with a student population of over 56,000 and growing, the district still operates as though there were only 25,000 students, as it was when I came 26 years ago. The superintendent is still the instructional leader. She leads every instructional initiative, monitors every instructional program, and presides over district coordinating committees.

The open door policy that I talked about is a way of life in Aldine ISD. Anyone can stop by the superintendent's office or the deputy superintendent's office to share their concerns with them without an appointment. All of the district employees know that they have this privilege. Only 3% of the district budget is for administrative costs, and for years, that number was even lower than that. That is because there is not a layer of bureaucrats in this system. For example, I am the deputy superintendent and my responsibilities include (a) oversight and managing, (b) Human Resources, which consumes approximately 60% of my day, (c) benefits department, (d) transportation, (e) child nutrition services, (f) central receiving, (g) maintenance, (h) building and properties, (i) construction, (j) the operation part of athletics, and (k) other special projects at any given time. In districts much smaller than ours, there would be at least

three people doing my job. But because this has been the culture and philosophy of the district, it does not seem unfair or asking too much. We all accept it because it the Aldine way, which has grown to be a part of us.

Keeping the administrative bureaucracy low, keeps the administration on the campus and central office in touch with the needs of the students and teachers. The superintendent and her cabinet are active participants in the staff development, and when we are not presenting the program, we are a part of the learning community just like everybody else. Our families and friends know and understand that – that is the way it is in Aldine ISD. Our district financial resources are funneled into the classrooms by way of supplies, teachers' salaries, or facility improvements. It is this district's belief that in areas where we can, the district should operate like a business, be efficient, and produce a product that is acceptable to the public. During the fall of 2004, Harvard University School of Business, not the college of education, sent a team of professors to study the district business practices as it related to educating students.

As I mentioned earlier, one of my responsibilities as deputy superintendent is to set the direction for human resources functions. For the last 11 years, I have managed the human resources department as a business. I have taken the best industry has to offer and have combined it with the best education has to offer. It has been my belief that we do not just compete with other school districts for teachers, but also with Exxon for the science teachers, NASA for mathematics teachers, and Hewlett Packard for the computer literacy teachers. Therefore, we developed a comprehensive marketing plan that keeps those challenges in mind. This marketing plan began with

the teacher shortage, but that there were thousands of teachers who were at home not using their teachers' certifications, thousands in other school districts, and thousands who were not teachers now, but who would become teachers if they knew who we were and our story.

This marketing plan is based on the contention that recruiting, training, and retaining teachers is a year round task. No longer can we place all of our hopes in spring time recruiting, or by applicants applying for teaching positions through word-of-mouth. Our marketing plan is proactive, aggressive, and is designed to deliver eight applicants for each vacancy that the district has.

With the new federal mandates to leave no child behind, there's one constant for school districts: To recruit and retain the very best teachers. To this end, a large urban district, who is considered a leader in education, having been named one of five national finalists for The Broad Prize for Urban Education in 2004 and again in 2005, has implemented a strong teacher recruitment program that includes growing its own teachers from the paraprofessional ranks. It includes traveling nationally and internationally to areas where there are high numbers of teachers available for employment. This district, in turn, has revolutionized teacher recruitment by the marketing strategies employed and by making a presence in nearly 200 teacher job fair venues each year. We could fill our vacancies without an aggressive recruiting campaign; however, the rich ethnic and cultural diversity among our staff that we have today would not exist if we did not market the district the way we do. As a result, this

district seeks those teacher candidates who have a passion for the teaching profession, which results in positive learning outcomes for children.

Recruitment and Retention

It is my responsibility to ensure that I meet the hiring need of this growing district that hires on average 650 classroom teachers per year. In order for the district to continue to bring in the best teachers, we have developed an annual marketing plan that is comprised of designating the teacher job fairs that will be visited throughout the school year, as well as, the advertising campaigns that will accompany each marketing component, which includes newspaper advertisements, radio commercials, outdoor billboard advertising, and website banner advertising.

Each year, Aldine ISD participates in over 200 teacher recruitment venues, such as teacher job fairs, weekend presentations, weekend interviews, and university visits for student teacher recruitment. The job fairs selected are primarily those with whom the district has university partnerships, or identified universities that produce the largest number of teachers annually. The weekend interviews are conducted when teachers are available to interview and in cities that have a large surplus of teachers but few job prospects available to them.

Interviews are conducted at these job fairs, and based on the outcome of the interview, contract offers are extended on the site. Those applicants who express a desire to teach in Aldine ISD by accepting the offer, are placed in a pool known as subject to assignment list, which ultimately becomes a source for principals to access in filling teacher vacancies.

The district also reaches out to various out-of-state and local communities by conducting weekend presentations. The individuals targeted are those who may be changing careers and may be interested in pursuing teaching as a profession and teacher candidates who are seeking relocation. At identified cities throughout the country, two-hour presentations are held in large group format on the requirements of becoming a teacher in Texas and alternative certification programs. The certification requirements for out-of-state teacher candidates are also presented. The audiences for these presentations are respondents to the newspaper advertisements that were published in the area's newspaper markets two weeks prior to the presentation date.

At the conclusion of each presentation, each participant is provided with information on how to pursue admittance to an alternative certification program and with a promise that the district shall return several months later to interview those who have followed through with the suggested program. At these interviews, decisions are made by the recruiter as whether to (a) offer a letter of intent, (b) invite the participant to the private district job fair, or (c) invite the participant to interview at campuses – all of which are based on interview outcome.

Another innovative way of teacher recruitment is through our pool of student teachers. Aldine Independent School District has formed a number of university partnerships for this very purpose. This concept began 17 years ago with local and out-of-state universities by guaranteeing employment to student teachers upon successful completion of student teaching experience. This initiative has grown immensely over the years. From what was once considered a seasonal effort with 12 universities, has

become a year round program that includes 25 universities. We have built strong relationships and rapport with these universities that produces 60+ student teachers each semester. The retention rate for the district student teachers is 95% after the first year, because they have been trained in the Aldine way.

Teacher recruitment begins with the planting of seeds at an early stage as a common practice. Two new programs designed to grow teachers began six years ago. The first program is where our own high school students are the beneficiaries and results in a win-win for the district and the students. One of the strategies involves the presenting of teacher contracts to graduating seniors of the future teacher organization at each district senior high school. These students are honored at a banquet where the district superintendent presents each senior with a teaching contract that will become valid at the end of the expected college graduation date provided they pursue an undergraduate degree in teacher education.

The second “grow your own” program involves presenting teaching contracts to the top 10% of graduating seniors from each high school in the district, which is approximately 250 contracts issued annually. These students receive their teachers’ contracts at an awards ceremony. These contracts are also valid at the end of the students’ college graduation dates with the same stipulation. This marketing tool has proven to be an effective recruiting instrument for this district.

The concept of “growing-your-own” teachers in Aldine ISD has been in existence in this district since the early 1990s. Since that time, this district has offered competitive scholarships to currently employed paraprofessionals who have a desire to

become a bilingual and English as a second language classroom teachers. The district provides funding for tuition, books, and all necessary fees, *and* provides a full-time salary with a work week requirement of 20 hours. Upon the completion of the undergraduate degree and full teacher certification, the scholarship employee is obligated to three years of teaching service to the district. The retention rate of teachers who were part of this program is 98% over the first three years after completing the program. Due to the continuing success of this scholarship program and the recognized need to recruit teachers in critical needs areas (reading, mathematics, science) at the intermediate and middle school levels, the district added a second “grow-your-own” scholarship program targeting these teaching areas.

The district recognizes that in order to *retain* the teachers who have been recruited, a support system must be in place. This support system begins with relocation assistance, new teacher induction, mentorship, and employee benefits. The new teachers’ academy is offered to all teachers new to the district regardless of whether they are new to the teaching profession or new to the district. All new professional employees are encouraged to attend the academy that is held a week prior to the first contract day. At this two-and-a-half day academy, teachers can expect top-notch training on everything they ever wanted to know about the district, teaching, and curriculum.

The second component of teacher retention is the mentorship program. This district provides a mentor for all first-year teachers to help ensure success in the classroom and the acquisition of a positive first-year experience. Veteran classroom

teachers new to the district are provided a teacher buddy to help transition to a new district. A campus mentor coordinator oversees the mentorship campus at each district school and works hard to make new teachers feel welcome, secure, and part of a team. The mentorship program is a non-negotiable initiative.

The third component for teacher retention is employee benefits. Our school board of trustees has directed us to ensure that our teachers' salaries and compensation packages are in the top 25% in the market. The district pays a competitive salary that is comparable to neighboring school districts, but differs in that we pay a critical needs supplement up to \$3500 to all certified teachers who teach in a critical needs teaching field (bilingual, ESL, mathematics, science, reading). Furthermore, teachers who teach in a critical needs area under permit receive reimbursement up to \$500 per semester, with a total of up to \$2500 for taking college coursework leading to certification in a critical needs area. Employees who successfully complete an Alternative Certification Program leading to teacher certification in a critical teaching area also receive financial assistance up to \$2500. For new teachers, a benefit that draws attention is the possibility of certain school loans being reduced by a defined percentage for each year of service in the district for teaching in a title one school district.

In addition, longevity pay is earned at a rate of \$100 a year for each of service with district for up to \$2000. Incentive pay for teachers for student academic achievement on their campus is provided to teachers who work at campuses whose students meet or exceed learning standards as prescribed nationally and by the state.

The district offers medical, disability, dental, and life insurance by contributing a fixed amount towards the cost of each employee's medical insurance premium. The annual contribution made to medical insurance exceeds \$2700 a year per employee. Retirement savings is important to many employees; therefore, a fully district-funded retirement savings matching plan for employees who have excellent attendance or perfect attendance is in place. Employees with school-aged children can begin planning for college by participating in two payroll deducted college savings plans on an after-tax basis; the earnings are tax-deferred.

Technology is virtually at the fingertips of every teacher, while training programs are developed by and for teachers. In addition, this district has clear goals and guidelines to help teachers with curriculum design by providing a framework for delivery of instruction. The district further believes it is important for all administrators, teachers, students, and parents to have an understanding of what each student is expected to learn at specific intervals during the academic year; therefore, curricular program directors and classroom teachers have collaborated to produce the district's benchmark targets. These targets document specific skills that the students must acquire at certain grade levels. This takes the guesswork out of what is to be taught. The blueprint is provided while professional staff development is ongoing.

Job-sharing with principal's approval is an often sought benefit by those classroom teachers who seek a flexible schedule and want a balance between family matters and career. Furthermore, employees who reside outside of the district's

boundaries may enroll their children in an Aldine school nearest to their place of employment and are also eligible to enroll their child in the employee daycare.

Recommendations

Having said those things about Aldine ISD, it should help the reader understand the nature of my recommendations. We have adopted many procedures that businesses use to improve, such as developing a district plan and keeping a scorecard. The district improvement plan is developed with goals and objectives and a road map on how to get there over a 1-5 year period. Each quarter, the superintendent's cabinet has a scorecard meeting to record our progress. If student achievement is headed in the right direction, we reinforce the effects; if student achievement is not headed in the right direction, we identify the root cause and revise the improvement plan and redirect ours and the campuses' effects. The quarterly scorecards give us valuable information about what we are doing across this district at a glance; which also gives us time to make adjustments in teaching strategies, resources, curriculum, personnel and instruction. As deputy superintendent and the researcher for this study, I make the following recommendations based on my research and my knowledge of what has worked in my school district:

- *Principals should learn to empower teachers.* Empowering teachers means allowing them to be a part of the decision-making process on the campus. Schools are going to be more successful if teachers are involved in planning for the needs of their students and them as professionals. Principals must shift in their paradigm, by moving to decentralize the power on the campus.

Assistant principals should be more involved in the instructional programs on the campus and not used solely as disciplinarians to control student behavior. The role of a principal has become too demanding and involved, and the duties have become too great for one person to make all of the decisions. That type of dictator leadership has proven to be ineffective and counter-productive in improving student achievement and school climate. Information should flow to and from teachers – not just to teachers without their input.

- *Administrators should become more supportive of their staff by identifying those things that teachers deem important to them.* Administrative support means different things to different people, as can be seen in this research project. Principals should know personally each of their staff members' strengths and weaknesses. They should make themselves and the campuses' resources available to help support the teachers' needs. The principal should know if teachers have a special needs child at home, if teachers have a preference of meeting in the morning or evening, what percent of the staff is attending graduate school, what staff members need access to the building on Saturday. The principal should know as much as possible about his or her staff in order to better support their needs. Administrative support should include the administrative team being able to relate to teachers and their needs and creating an atmosphere that will promote the teacher feeling safe to make mistakes. We should empower teachers to become researchers

and lifelong learners. We should encourage them to research best practices for themselves and to use the data to assist them in the instructional process. They should be supported through training in collaborating with their peers across content areas, lessons, thoughts, and ideas. We should assign our very best master teachers as mentors to novice teachers. This will allow experienced teachers to share their knowledge and experiences in the classroom with less experienced teachers. We should provide internet capacity for all classrooms to assist teachers in their collaboration and research.

- *District administrators, from the campus level to the central office level, should be required to learn techniques on how to effectively listen to their teachers and develop strong people skills.*

Teachers' opinions should be listened to and respected by the principal. They are the closest to the students and can supply valuable insight into how to best serve the needs of the students. Teachers should feel that if they have any issues with discipline, instructional strategies, parents, co-workers, or special needs students, they should feel that they have a principal who will give them guidance and direction into how to resolve it and not feel intimidated when they walk into the principal's office to seek help.

- *School districts' central administration and school principals should develop a hiring and transfer plan that will place teachers closer to home.*

It was surprising to the researcher that in this study, a number of teachers stated that proximity to home was a factor in them remaining at Parker Intermediate School. Research has shown that teachers who teach in an urban school generally do not live in the community; but this is not the case in Aldine ISD. There are communities in this district with \$30,000 homes that are next to \$200,000 homes. Our teachers live in all of Aldine's communities. There are many attractive communities in the district and our staff wants to live close to work. The reason for this, I believe, is that the district has a large number of teachers who graduated from the district and have come back to teach because this is their home. They came home to teach in their community. Their parents and friends are still in the community. Many of our bilingual teachers are a product of our "grow your own program" for teachers' aides, who are community people. If they remained in the community receiving aide salary, they might move to another Aldine community when they made teacher salary. Teachers who work and live in the district have a different perception of the Aldine community than someone who does not live there or the general public. For instance, there is a perception that the Greenspoint area, which has had its ups and downs over the years, is run down and dangerous. The fact is that the Greenspoint area is one of the safest areas in Houston, according to statistics, even safer than the high rent district of the Galleria. Parker Intermediate school is located next to Woodcreek subdivision, which is in

the northern section of the district, with homes ranging from \$125,000-\$250,000.

Pang et al. (1999) identified nine Fundamentals Beliefs of Caring-Centered Multicultural Education that might also help explain this phenomenon. They argue that when teachers teach from a caring perspective, they feel a part of the community and share life experiences by participating in the community where they live.

Noddings (1992) argues that moral education from the care perspective has four components, with the first being *modeling*, which is showing in our behavior what it means to care. The second component is *dialogue* about caring, which involves engaging the students in the dialogue about caring. The third component is *practice*, which involves teachers and students participating in caring with acts with each other, so that they can see the difficulties and rewards of their work. The fourth component is *confirmation*, which is an act of affirming and encouraging the best in others. The teachers in this study all had strong caring characteristics, and they told stories of modeling, dialoguing, practicing, and confirmation with their students.

Recommendations for Further Studies

This case study of teacher retention at one urban intermediate school has produced valuable data that will be useful to practitioners. The findings and conclusions from the study provide the basis for several directions for future research. The findings suggest that experienced teachers have different needs and are motivated differently from novice teachers. Broader studies are recommended in the following areas:

- Conduct a similar study with elementary, middle, and high school teachers.
- Examine a campus with a high turnover rate.
- Conduct a similar study at suburban school.
- Use a quantitative method to conduct a similar study.

Conclusion

This study confirms the findings of researchers who identified administrative support as a major factor in teacher retention. If schools, particularly urban schools, are going to meet the federally mandated gains in student achievement under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, teacher retention should be an essential component of their strategy in achieving this goal. Administrative support must be a part of that strategy if there is going to be success in this area. Administrators must identify and understand the factors that influence teacher retention and work toward learning new ways to positively influence this national problem. School administrators and education entities must examine themselves as administrators, look at the school environment, and identify the factors that motivate teachers to remain in their own campuses. They should also be cognizant of the factors that they can change that will increase teacher retention and go about changing them. The principal must be able to provide multiple forms of teacher support if the teacher retention issue is going to be seriously addressed.

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APPENDIX A
ADMINISTRATOR CONSENT FORM

ADMINISTRATOR CONSENT FORM

In order to complete the requirements for a Doctorate in Teaching, Learning, and Culture Studies at Texas A&M University at College Station, Texas, I am anticipating the pursuit of a qualitative study. The title of the study is *A Case Study of Teacher Retention at One Urban School District*. This study will provide three research hours to his degree. The study will be composed of 12 teachers from Parker Intermediate School. The study will entail the interviewing of staff members and an analysis of the themes found in the interviews.

This study will explore the factors that affect the retention of teachers with 5 years or more of experience in an urban school with a turnover rate that is below average. Research shows that school systems will continue to face the rapidly growing teacher shortage over the next ten years. Therefore, it would be prudent for institutions that prepare teachers to understand why teachers stay in urban schools. This research will guide program development, incentives, and the creation of environments that can be duplicated in other schools.

The investigator is requesting my permission to conduct the study at Parker Intermediate School. The proposed study will be conducted during the spring of 2004. Interviewer's guides will be used as questionnaires for participants and will take approximately 30 minutes before, after school, or based on the availability of these employees in the best interests of daily school procedures. Since this is a qualitative research study, the interview will be audio taped.

I have been assured that the data generated will be kept confidential by not identifying the participants by their names. Also, names will not be used in any publication. The data will be used only to assist in reducing teacher turnover rate. The study will likewise identify variables that may affect teacher turnover.

I have been asked to grant permission for the study to be conducted at Parker Intermediate School. The investigator feels that the results will be helpful to both staffs and students.

Upon request, the investigator will be happy to provide me with a copy of the study, which may be of some benefit to the school and the school district.

If I have any questions or concerns, I may contact Mr. Blanson at 281-821-2451 (ablanson@aldine.k12.tx.us) or Dr. Norvella Carter, chairperson and professor of Teaching, Learning, and Culture at Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas, at 979-845-3802 (ncarter@tamu.edu).

Page 1 of 2

Initial _____ Date _____

This study has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board, Human Subjects in Research, Texas A&M University. For research-related problems or questions regarding subjects' rights, the Institutional Review Board may be contacted through Dr. Michael W. Buckley, Director of Research Compliance, Office of the Vice President for Research at 979-845-8585 (mwbuckley@tamu.edu).

Only my committee and I will have access to the information contained in this study. Only my committee, Dr. Carter, and I will have access to such tapes and they will be kept by the investigator for one year before being destroyed.

I also understand that there are no risks or benefits from participating in this study.

I have read and understand the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction. I have been given a copy of this consent form.

___ Yes, I give consent for the campus and staff at Parker Intermediate School to participate in the proposed study which involves interviews for research purposes.

___ No, I do not give consent for the campus and staff at Parker Intermediate School to participate in the proposed study which involves interviews for research purposes.

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Investigator

Date

APPENDIX B
TEACHER'S INFORMED CONSENT

TEACHER'S INFORMED CONSENT

In order to complete the requirements for a Doctorate in Teaching, Learning, and Culture Studies at Texas A&M University of College Station, Texas, I am anticipating the pursuit of a qualitative study. The title of the study is *A Case Study of Teacher Retention at One Urban School District*. This study will provide three research hours to his degree. The study will be composed of 15 teachers from Parker Intermediate School. The study will entail the interviewing of teachers and an analysis of the themes found in the interviews.

The investigator would prefer to utilize an audiotape in his interviews; however, this will only be an option and I may decline to be recorded. Only my committee, Dr. Carter, and I will have access to such tapes, and they will be kept by the investigator for one year before being destroyed.

I have been assured that the data generated will be kept confidential by not identifying the participants by their names. I have also been assured our names will not be used in any publication. The data will be used only to assist in reducing teacher turnover rate. The study will likewise identify variables that may affect teacher turnover.

I have been asked my permission to participate in this study. The proposed study will be conducted during the spring of 2004. Interviewer's guides will be used as an interview tool and will take approximately 30 minutes before, after school, or based on my availability in the best interests of daily school procedures.

The investigator assures me that the data generated will be kept confidential and not be used in any publication. The study will likewise identify variables that may affect staff's discipline management. No one at Parker Intermediate School will know what I have said in the interviews; however, the school administration will receive an anonymous summary of the data generated by all of the participants. My participation is voluntary. However, should I decide to withdraw, at no time will my employee status be affected.

If I have any questions or concerns, I may contact Mr. Blanson at 281-821-2451 (ablanson@aldine.k12.tx.us) or Dr. Norvella Carter, chairperson and professor of Teaching, Learning, and Culture at Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas, at 979-845-3802 (ncarter@tamu.edu).

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Initial _____ Date _____

This research study has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board, Human Subjects in Research, Texas A&M University. For research-related problems or questions regarding subjects' rights, the Institutional Review Board may be contacted through Dr. Michael W. Buckley, Director of Research Compliance, Office of the Vice President for Research at 979-845-8585 (mwbuckley@tamu.edu). Only my committee, Dr. Carter, and I will have access to the information contained in this study.

I also understand that there are no risks or benefits from participating in this study.

I have read and understand the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. There are no benefits to my participating in this research. I also understand that recording will be used upon my approval.

I have been given a copy of this consent form.

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Investigator

Date

APPENDIX C
INTERVIEWER'S GUIDE FOR TEACHERS

INTERVIEWER'S GUIDE FOR TEACHERS

This Qualitative study will use the narrative techniques to gather and analyze data. Narrative analysis uses story telling, which takes as its object of investigation the story itself. The investigator will ask the participants to tell their story of becoming and being a teacher. The investigator will ask follow up questions to clarify and understand answers. Only my committee, Dr. Carter, and I will have access to the information contained in this study.

Some of the questions that will be asked of the participants will be:

1. Tell me your story about becoming a teacher, coming to teach in Aldine, and your story about remaining here at Parker Intermediate School.
2. How do you feel about the teaching profession?
3. What shared beliefs are there among the staff?
4. How do you feel about the academics and instruction here at Parker Intermediate?
5. Tell me about the children at Parker Intermediate School.
6. How do your students feel about you?
7. Tell me about the effectiveness of the student discipline management plan.
8. Tell me about the school climate.
9. Tell me about your physical work environment.
10. Describe the physical appearance of the building.
11. Describe the supply line from the school to your classroom.
12. How do you feel about the number of classes that you teach?
13. How do you feel about your class size?
14. What are your contributions to the school and to the students at Parker Intermediate School?
15. Tell me about the leadership at Parker Intermediate School.

16. How do the staff, administration, students, and parents show appreciation to you?
17. Tell me about the support that you get from the administrative staff.
18. What are the expectations that the administration has for teachers?
19. What are your expectations of the administration, and are they met?
20. Describe your relationship with the administrative and teaching staff.
21. How do you feel about your compensation package (salary, health benefits, retirement benefits, etc.) provided to you by the district?
22. Describe the availability and the use of technology in your school.
23. How are race differences handled at the school among students and staff?
24. How are gender differences handled at the school among students and staff?
25. Tell me about your commute from home to the school.
26. Tell me about the community which surrounds the school.
27. Tell me about the support that you got as a novice teacher?
28. Tell me about the parental involvement and support that you get at your school.
29. Tell me about the amount of paper work you have to do and how you feel about it.
30. Explain the safety and security measures for you and your belongings at your school.
31. How do you feel about coming to work?
32. How do you feel about the accomplishments of your kids?
33. How much latitude do you have in delivering your lesson?
34. Tell me about the staff development at this school and in the district.

VITA

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EDUCATION

- | | |
|------|--|
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This dissertation was typed and edited by Marilyn M. Oliva at Action Ink, Inc.