Teacher Perceptions of Practices Which Impact Job Satisfaction and Retention

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TEACHER PERCEPTIONS ON PRACTICES WHICH IMPACT JOB SATISFACTION AND RETENTION

A Dissertation
presented in fulfillment requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in the Department of Educational Leadership
The University of Mississippi

by

CHIQUETA DANIELS

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ABSTRACT

Identifying teachers’ reasons for leaving the field of education and monitoring retention indicators to address and remedy the problem is critical for school leaders and policymakers in recruiting and retaining high-quality educators. Understanding teachers’ experiences and opinions can facilitate practices and protocols to increase retention. The study aimed to investigate perceptions of successful and departing teachers on school leadership practices, which impact teacher retention in rural public schools in Mississippi. By conducting a research study on teachers’ lived experiences, school leaders can explore options and construct recruitment, mentoring, and collaboration practices to encourage retention, which gives teachers a sense of value and a voice in the process. The qualitative phenomenological approach was used for this study because the subjects’ lived experiences and interpretations were being examined. The responses of the six teachers, who stayed in or left the field of education, provided an understanding of what influenced their decisions. The teachers' responses in this study suggest educational leaders would benefit if they consider the teachers’ perceptions of leadership practices, which can contribute to teacher job satisfaction and retention. As schools explore strategies to increase the retention of teachers, it is important for administrators to understand the relationship between the leadership practice of principals and the decisions of teachers to remain in the school or leave. Most of the teachers express satisfaction with the teacher training, collaboration opportunities, and preparation for dealing with problematic student behaviors,
which have been provided to support their success. If school leaders, educational institutions, and policymakers can identify and eradicate the reasons for quality educators leaving the profession, the educational system would reap tremendous benefits.
DEDICATION

“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13, The New King James Version). I give God all the honor and praise for it was He who gave me the strength and endurance to complete this endeavor. This work is dedicated to my family and friends who consistently supported me throughout its progression. Your tireless encouragement sustained me when my ability to persist wavered. I love you all. Thank you all for insisting I finish what I started and for having the faith that I could. Thank you to my parents, Howard and Gussie Brown, you have always had confidence in me beyond measure. Both of you always know what to say. Thank you to my husband, Daryl, you have always been the wind beneath my wings. I love you. Thank you to my two sons, Daryl Jeremy and Kamron Jacob. You both are my inspiration and the reason I began this journey. Continue to strive for greatness. Keep God first, stay humble, and always have each other’s backs. I am so proud of both of you. May God continue to bless you beyond measure. I cannot wait to see what He has planned for the rest of your lives. I know it will be great. To my siblings, Howard, Jr., Nita, and Tee, your support has kept me focused and grounded. You’ve paved a great road for me to follow. God could not have blessed me with better siblings. I am so proud to be your sister. You all give me so much to live up to. To my accountability partners, your support and faith in me mean more than you will ever know. Lastly, Emily, thank you for sticking with me through the entire process. Your patience and tenacity are unwavering.
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CHAPTER I

Statement of the Problem

Whether it leads to success, mediocrity, or failure, education is the preamble to life and lies within the halls of institutions that impart knowledge. Lining those hallowed hallways are classrooms led by exemplary teachers assigned to mold young minds with knowledge, which leads to the crown jewels: student achievement and success for all. Educators are a crucial component to the success or failure of the educational system, so it is imperative schools are able to retain effective teachers. Thus, educational leaders would benefit from taking into account teachers’ perceptions of leadership practices, which can contribute to teacher job satisfaction and teacher retention. There is a need for a deeper understanding of the relationship between the leadership practice of principals and the decisions of teachers to remain in the school or leave. The aim of this study was to identify strategic protocols and procedures, which improve the retention of teachers, and which enhance teacher efficacy, increase student achievement, and promote stability in the educational field. This research sought to gain insight from the perceptions of both returning and departing teachers on school principals’ practices, which impact teachers’ decisions whether to remain in school or seek employment in another school or profession in rural public schools in Mississippi. Qualitative interviews were conducted and analyzed to identify factors, which influence teachers’ decisions to continue in a school, continue in the teaching profession, or exit the profession altogether.

While being an educator has been viewed as a career of high regard and prestige, attrition in the field is becoming more frequent (Guarino et al., 2006). Attrition is the reduction in
teaching staff due to resignation, non-renewal, or retirement (Simon & Johnson, 2015). Teacher shortages are exacerbated by districts’ inability to retain teachers, which is becoming a significant issue for the educational system overall. Teacher turnover comes at a fiscal cost to districts and greatly impacts the lives of students. Districts and students can both benefit from future research and policy reforms, which encourage teacher retention (Watlington et al., 2010). As in many facets of life, job satisfaction plays a substantial role in whether or not we pursue a chosen endeavor (Guarino et al., 2006). As a profession, teaching is no exception, and public educational institutions are tasked with recruiting and retaining effective instructors. Conversely, enrollment and graduation statistics for colleges and universities in the United States indicate higher-performing students are not choosing education as a potential career path (Guarino et al., 2006).

In past decades, teaching was labeled as a short-term profession for women prior to marrying, which previously accounted for attrition. However, more recently, survey results indicate turnover rates are rising despite transformations in cultural practices (National Teacher and Principal Survey, n.d.). Additionally, districts with limited resources find it problematic to contend against opposing job industries (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). This significantly impacts low-socioeconomic schools, which lose teachers at a significantly higher rate than those in wealthier areas, and it makes them more vulnerable (Hanushek et al., 2004).

Published every four years, the “Teacher Follow-up Survey” shows the variance of turnover and mobility rates of teachers in the United States from year to year (National Teacher and Principal Survey, n.d.). The 2013 report indicated from 1989 to 2013, the profession was reasonably steady (Di Carlo, 2015). However, beyond the 2013 publication, approximately 21% of inner-city teachers leave the profession each year, which is a significantly higher rate than the
national average, and almost 50% of new teachers quit within their first five years on the job. Attrition hinders the progression of children’s education, and, in addition, it costs the United States over seven billion dollars per year (Boyd et al., 2008).

The lack of effort and support from novice teachers’ building-level leaders, recruitment, and mentors has amplified attrition in the field of education. There are several reasons teachers experience burnout within their first five years in the field, according to Elias (2012). The indicators, which escalate burnout in new teachers, include administrator interference, boredom, and the lack of teacher training, collaboration opportunities, and preparation for dealing with problematic student behaviors. In terms of alleviating new teacher burnout, a one-size-fits-all approach proves ineffective. Beyond the initial induction ceremony, it is crucial for leaders to provide valuable resources and give ongoing support to novice educators (Department for Education, 2018). The types of support needed will vary from one novice teacher to the next. For instance, one teacher may require more assistance with classroom management; meanwhile, another teacher may possess skills, which better manage student behavior, but, on the downside, they struggle with content knowledge. In the cases mentioned above, specific supports would be essential for the success and retention of those new teachers.

During the first three months on the job, novice teachers contemplate whether to leave the field of education altogether, which is alarming (Renard, 2003). Most new educators diligently prepare for their first-year students, and they enter the classroom eager to begin their careers. However, teachers, who choose to resign, commonly cite work overload as their primary deciding factor for leaving the field. While teachers leave the teaching profession at varied intervals in their careers research indicated more than half of teacher attrition occurs early in teachers’ careers and as they reach retirement eligibility (Ingersoll, 2001). Maready (2018) noted
when graphing the attrition rates of teachers by years in the classroom, a U-shaped curve was formed, where up to 50% of teachers leave the teaching profession in the first five years, at which point attrition drops intensely and levels-off until the retirement years. As teachers’ careers approach retirement eligibility, attrition increases dramatically once more (Ingersoll, 2001). According to Maready (2018), this is an indication that once past the first five years of teaching, most teachers remain in the profession until they retire. Maready (2018) also reported according to the Beginning Teacher Longitudinal Study, 17% of teachers left by their fifth year, 15% by their fourth year, and 11% by their third year, indicating an upward trend heading towards the fifth year of teaching. The second wave of the BTLS indicated 92% of teachers with assigned mentors remained in the field as compared to 84% without mentors remaining in the field (Maready, 2018). Experienced teachers report they give themselves more time to make a decision to leave or stay (Department for Education, 2018).

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) help all educators feel connected and empowered, and they provide novice teachers with a platform for obtaining new skills and strategies, which can be implemented in their classrooms (Department for Education 2018). The effectiveness of PLCs determines how collegial support impacts attrition. Collaboration with veterans in the field is beneficial for novice teachers because veterans possess a plethora of knowledge and experience. Professional Learning Communities also allow novice teachers the opportunity to share their skills, which helps them build confidence and gives them a sense of value within the organization. Learning is a two-way endeavor between experienced teachers and those new to the field of education.

Experience serves as a foundation for training and retaining novice teachers. Many teachers enter the profession with a wealth of content knowledge but have limited skills with
strategies for implementing their knowledge. Experienced teachers, however, may possess strategies in best practices and classroom management, which a novice will only learn over time. Unfortunately, countless beginner teachers fail to pursue the profession long enough to acquire strategies and management techniques, and they simply choose other career paths. As teachers become more seasoned, they can gauge their job performance more effectively.

Self-efficacy, a term coined by Bandura (2012), meaning an individual’s belief in their own capabilities, improves with consistent mentoring, coaching, and feedback from both peers and administrators. When asked to enumerate the percentage of ineffective teachers, novice educators responded with an approximation of 27%; however, the actual number is fewer than six percent (Gawel, 1996). The discrepancy is an indication that novice teachers lack confidence in their work. When the measures of efficacy improve, so does practice. When practice improves, so does job satisfaction (Blanchet, 2020). Enhanced skills, which are gained through continued training, practice, and collaboration, contribute to job satisfaction. Teacher retention increases when individuals feel valued and supported. There has been an emphasis on why teachers leave, but Williams (2003) says more emphasis should be placed on what gives teachers the tenacity to persevere.

As districts struggle with the challenge of teacher retention, teacher education programs also have difficulty recruiting potential candidates. Adequately trained teachers from qualified teacher education programs are becoming more of an anomaly than the norm. Amidst the public education crisis is the dwindling efficacy of educating our students. Policymakers and school leaders must recruit and retain effective teachers, which is essential for the success of the educational system. Longevity in teaching careers has been waning for the last decade, and newly hired teachers are not being retained, which is making the predicament even more
catastrophic. Research must be done to determine why individuals pursue careers in teaching and what characteristics are common in these individuals. Once common characteristics are acquired, researchers must uncover the shared characteristics of those who remain dedicated to the field. Following the findings from research on teacher recruitment and retention, policymakers must develop attractive policies for prospective educators (Guarino et al., 2006).

Organizations, including educational institutions, must make decisions and policies driven by labor market trends. Like other job markets, educational institutions depend on the following factors for employment: where can employable workers be found, which workers’ skills will be valuable assets, how will workers be compensated fairly, and what incentives should be made available to keep the market viable. Recent data indicate a market shift, where demand exponentially outweighs supply (Ehrenberg & Smith, 2017). Enrollment in teacher education programs is declining, and attrition and difficulties with teacher recruitment put public education in a precarious state. These simultaneous events emphasize the need for policy overhauls, which focus on the education job market.

An investigation, noted by the supply and demand framework, indicated an opportunity for policymakers and school leaders to focus on the demographics of those entering the field. The study delved into why individuals chose to teach -versus other careers- and why they were willing to incur the opportunity cost. The report noted incentives or rewards would make teaching a more compelling career. The study also mentioned more candidates would be attracted to the field if there were more ways to obtain an alternative teacher certification (Ehrenberg & Smith, 2017).

Also, findings concluded women were more likely to choose teaching as a career, but enrollment for teacher education at institutions of higher learning proceeded to decline. There is
an increase in minority students entering and graduating from teacher education programs; however, the recruitment of minority teachers lags behind minority student enrollment in public educational institutions (Guarino et al., 2006). The findings indicated students, who identify themselves as Asian or Pacific Islander, were least likely to enter the field of education than any other minority group (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). College students with higher aptitudes avoid pursuing degrees in education, which is also revealed in the findings (Guarino et al., 2006).

Careers in education allow additional time for family and for contribution to society, and findings suggest these psychological and family factors encourage individuals to choose teaching careers. On the other hand, safety concerns, low wages, and the lack of advancement opportunities discourage individuals from pursuing education. Non-teacher respondents admitted they would consider pursuing a career in education if they were allowed to teach without attaining more education, if students were well-behaved, and if teaching salaries were more competitive with other entry-level careers, which require the same level of education. Also, non-teacher respondents state the importance of job advancement and pay raises, which education careers do not satisfy. Men indicated compensation and prestige as motivating factors for selecting a career; however, women reported that child-rearing opportunities and vacation time were more important factors when considering a career. Intrinsic factors for both genders included the contribution to the betterment of society and autonomy. All respondents agreed better working conditions and higher compensation would boost minority recruitment and retention outcomes (Guarino et al., 2006).

To remedy the teaching attrition predicament, there must be a balance of relevant data to adequately examine trends, analyze the rationale of trends, and find contemporary examples of
feasible resolutions, including policy reform and economic implications. Additionally, decision-makers must use modern labor economics to address inequalities in representation, healthcare policies, and human factors, which include labor-replacing technologies. The social impacts of labor market behavior indicate the need for practical application shifts, which allows exploration of human factor motivation and policy changes required to attract and retain workers (Ehrenberg & Smith, 2017). Migration phenomenon, a term coined by Ingersoll (2003), is the movement of teachers from one school to another or from one district to another, without leaving the field altogether. Sometimes the moves are involuntary or situational; however, the phenomenon further exacerbates teacher shortage (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003).

Research on how to retain high-quality educators is at the forefront of educational platforms, and data indicate a growing need to recruit, retain, and adequately train teachers if schools are to provide equal access to quality educational experiences. Since there is a need for review and further study of infrastructural shifts in teacher recruitment and retention, this study sought to address the reasons teachers choose education as a career, which teachers stay the course and which teachers leave within the first few years, motivation factors behind those who stay, and what recruitment practices are effective. The study supplements documented research to provide policymakers and educational leaders with comprehensive accounts from former and current practitioners. The study, moreover, offers authentic accounts of 6 individuals’ experiences in which they perceive impacted decisions to leave or stay in the field. Probing interview questions allowed teachers to provide nonconsequential versions of their experiences, which they would otherwise have been apprehensive to reveal. Although the interviews were inadvertently similar, each person’s interpretation was as diverse as the author’s, which provided empirical documentation that can be applied in future recruitment and retention decision-making
processes (Korbey, 2017). References to the theoretical frameworks of Maslow, Bandura, and Guarino were utilized to further substantiate the findings.

This study adds to the body of educational research, which remains deficient in qualitative studies. Deficiencies in past research may exist because various studies were conducted with little to no input from teachers’ personal experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Various quantitative studies have been completed, which enumerate factors such as academic trends, teacher quality, and leadership attributes. However, in research, there are considerably fewer studies on qualitative teacher perspectives of attrition, which leaves gaps and gives opportunities for discovery. Teachers’ perceptions of whether to leave or stay in the profession have often been overlooked in past studies. However, this study provides an extensive look into the human factors behind teacher retention. This research examines the collected data, which can be utilized for further research on teacher job satisfaction and teacher decisions to remain in the field of education. The author sought phenomena in the data to provide an understanding of attrition from teachers’ viewpoints. Gathering teacher perceptions through interviews provided insight into the human experience of teachers making employment decisions.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this study was to gain insight from the perceptions of both returning and departing teachers on school principals’ practices, which impact teacher retention in rural public schools in Mississippi. This research study was intended to delve into the reasons behind attrition, the effects of attrition in the field of education, and strategies for the eradication of attrition. This study was conducted to convey the thoughts of two diverse groups of teachers: those who remain in the field beyond the first five years and those who choose to leave within
the first five years. In an effort to develop an understanding of why teachers continue or concede, this research study supplements research previously documented on the subject of teacher retention, such as Aaronson (1999), Duyar (2013), Guarino (2006), Hendricks-Harris (2012), and the National Education Association (2021).

The teacher shortage is one of the most critical problems faced by the field of education. In the last decade, the need for certified teachers has increased almost exponentially. The growing teacher shortage is exacerbated by teachers who decide to leave the profession, which is mostly due to job dissatisfaction. Teachers who find satisfaction in their careers remain dedicated to the profession, become masters of their craft, and ultimately make schools and districts more effective and efficient. Exceptional educational institutions depend on high-quality teachers in order to function efficiently. High teacher turnover causes many burdens to school districts; thus, job satisfaction and retention are essential for preventing turnover.

Our school districts are faced with unique challenges in the twenty-first century. The national education system is designed to provide high-quality education, but providing such education requires effective educators. Since teachers are an integral part of the educational system, districts spend a lion’s share of their time on staffing and recruitment activities. As the number of students continually increases, there is more pressure placed on these facets of district operations.

There are fewer teacher candidates for post-secondary education entering the pool of prospects. When this crisis is coupled with the ever-tightening by the purse-string holders in congress, an ominous brew begins to form. Fewer teacher candidates, less financial backing, and other appealing career options have educational recruiters scrambling for solutions, and these solutions may be found through extensive research. Some educational leaders in the field have
started researching the problem, which exists in the area of teacher recruitment and retention as a means to inform policymakers, who make decisions concerning educational funding. It is the hope of these researchers to find ways to lessen the gap between the need for educators and the depth and breadth of the candidate pool (Guarino et al., 2006).

**Research Questions**

In order to achieve the purpose of this study, the research sought answers to a central question, followed by three sub-questions. The central question was: What are the perceptions of both returning and departing teachers on school leadership practices which impact teacher retention in rural public schools in Mississippi? The following sub-questions contributed to answering the central question:

1. How do the participating current and former teachers describe the impact of their principal’s support of quality mentoring practices on decisions to stay in or leave the profession?

2. How do the participating current and former teachers describe the impact of their principal’s support of quality teacher collaboration on decisions to stay in or leave the profession?

3. How do the participating current and former teachers describe the impact of their principal’s support of a quality school culture on decisions to stay in or leave the profession?

**Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study is while being an educator has long been viewed as an appealing career, attrition in the field is at a crisis level (Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, Carver-Thomas, 2019). Public elementary and secondary schools are finding it difficult to recruit and
retain high-quality educators. Attrition in education has been amplified by novice teachers’ negative views on their experiences. If school leaders, educational institutions, and policymakers can identify and eradicate the reasons for quality educators leaving the profession, the educational system would reap tremendous benefits. The aim of this study was to identify strategic protocols and procedures, which improve the retention of teachers, who enhance teacher efficacy, increase student achievement, and promote stability in the educational field. Schools, which cannot retain high-quality teachers, note negative effects on overall academic achievement. Also, when high-quality teachers are not retained, schools tend to hire individuals with alternate certifications, who are not as qualified. In most cases, alternately certified teachers experience additional issues with obtaining credentials to stay long-term.

Limitations of the Study

1. The study was limited to interviews of only six teachers, providing a narrow representation of opinions, which could be subject to personal bias that has nothing to do with educational environmental factors.

2. The interviews were conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, which limited face-to-face access to interviewees. However, experiences discussed were prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

3. There was no control over whether interviewees answered questions honestly.

Research Definitions

1. Attractive - in terms of the desirability of compensation including salary, benefits, working conditions, and personal satisfaction (Guarino et al., 2006).

2. Attrition - the reduction in teaching staff due to resignation, non-renewal, or retirement which is contradictory to the complete loss of a teaching unit or position due to reduction
in student enrollment (Simon & Johnson, 2015).

3. Dissatisfiers (Hygiene Factors) - have to do with a person’s relationship to the context or environment in which she or he performs the job. The dissatisfiers relate to the situation in which the person does what he or she does (Gawel, 1996).

4. esprit de corps - a feeling of pride, fellowship, and common loyalty shared by the members of a particular group (Rolewski, 2019).

5. Labor Markets - the market that allocates workers to jobs and coordinates employment decisions (Ehrenberg & Smith, 2017).


7. Locus of control - is a psychological concept, which refers to how strongly people believe they have control over the situations and experiences that affect their lives (The Glossary of Education Reform, 2013).

8. Migration phenomenon - is a term coined by Ingersoll (2003), which is the movement of teachers from one school to another or from one district to another.

9. Movers - teachers who transferred from one school to another (DiCarlo, 2015).

10. Observational learning - learning and mimicking behavior through watching another’s actions (Cherry, 2021).

11. Opportunity costs - when individuals lose the opportunity to experience rewards of other careers by choosing to teach (Ehrenberg & Smith, 2017).

12. Perceived self-efficacy - is defined as people’s judgment of their capability to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances Bandura, A. (2012).
13. Satisfiers (Motivators) - describe a person’s relationship with what she or he does, many related to the tasks being performed. The satisfiers relate to a person’s actions (Gawel, 1996).

14. Stayers - teachers who remained at the same school (DiCarlo, 2015).

15. Strategic Retention - is defined as the retention of effective teachers coupled with the non-retention of ineffective teachers (Grissom & Bartanen, 2018).

16. Teacher burnout - the state of physical and emotional depletion resulting from conditions of work. (Freudenberger, 1974).

17. The “cost of an education” - has been qualified and quantified by contemplating the economical, societal, psychological, and emotional costs of formal knowledge, or lack thereof, (Sorensen & Ladd, 2020).

18. Triangulation - refers to the use of multiple methods or data sources in qualitative research to develop a comprehensive understanding of phenomena. Triangulation also has been viewed as a qualitative research strategy to test validity through the convergence of information from different sources (Patton, 1999).

19. Turnover - refers to the change in the number of teachers from one year to the next in a particular school setting (DiCarlo, 2015).

**Summary of Chapter 1**

Teacher retention is one of the most difficult tasks faced by districts, schools, and administrators. Chapter one explains the study’s purpose, the significance of the study, the research questions, and the definition of terms from the literature. Chapter two is an overview of existing research on the topic of teacher retention, and it includes historical background, current research, theories, and effective practices relevant to the study of teachers’ decisions to stay in or
leave the field of education. Chapter three outlines the study’s research questions, research
design, participant population, data collection procedures, and a description of how data would
be analyzed. Chapter four discusses the themes and the results of the collected data and clarifies
the connotations. Chapter five presents the findings of the data, the conclusion of the research
study, and the recommendations for further study.
CHAPTER II

Literature Review

Introduction

The literature review presents an overview of existing research on teacher retention. The intent of this literature review is to identify trends for the causes of job dissatisfaction, explore the importance of teacher job satisfaction, and identify effective strategies to retain exemplary teachers. While teacher demand and teacher shortages are an ongoing crisis, schools are still accountable for providing students with a high-quality education. It is imperative for school leaders to retain effective teachers to meet state and federal guidelines in terms of student achievement and success.

Thus, school leaders must locate the causes behind job dissatisfaction among teachers to amend attrition issues. Lack of mentoring, lack of support, and low wages contribute to overall teacher job dissatisfaction. Within their first few years, new teachers find it difficult to adjust to the intense demands and stress of accountability of the job, and without proper mentorship and wisdom, new teachers struggle to perform the same duties as veteran teachers. When teachers lack the necessary support from their peers and leadership, they are more likely to be dissatisfied with their work environment. Low salaries, which are also non-competitive, hinder prospective candidates from pursuing an educational career, and it makes other careers in the job market more appealing to those seeking to leave the teaching profession.

Student achievement is negatively impacted when effective teachers are not retained. Teacher turnover creates disparities in instruction for students, and it hinders student
achievement and the ability for students to pursue higher educational opportunities. Students, who are taught by a consistent teacher cohort, have higher academic achievement than students, who experience a high teacher turnover (Sorensen & Ladd, 2020). Teaching high-stakes subject area classes is a major deterrent for recruiting and retaining new teachers because of the stress of accountability for standardized testing. By improving the job satisfaction and retention rate of new teachers, the recurrent educational decline, the financial burden, and instructional instability may be improved for schools, which will lead to improved student academic outcomes.

In order to improve teacher job satisfaction, school leaders must counteract the causes of job dissatisfaction and implement actions, which improve teacher retention. When the principal is considered to be an instructional leader, collaboration and team-building become a key aspect of the culture and climate in a school, and this helps teachers feel valued and supported, which leads to an increase in job satisfaction. School leaders must also implement effective coaching and mentoring practices to better retain novice teachers. To offset low wages, offering incentives to teachers can improve retention and will better compete against opposing job markets.

Several theories and studies performed outside of the educational field will be useful in this study in terms of job satisfaction. Herzberg’s two-factor theory of Job Satisfaction and Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs give insight into factors for teacher retention (Gawel, 1996). Bandura’s theory (2012) considers conditioning in terms of mentoring new teachers, so they can learn how to handle their duties without feeling overwhelmed, which leads to job satisfaction. Guarino’s theories (2006) consider the labor market and encourage school leaders to develop policies and incentives to support teacher retention.
Current Teacher Labor Market

Currently, there is a severe shortage of teachers in the field, and teacher demand is growing at an alarming rate. Predictions (Sutcher et al., 2019) indicate by the school year 2024-2025 teacher demand will surpass 316,000 per year, which will create a teacher supply and demand gap of nearly 200,000. Certain areas, like the Mississippi Delta, lack funding, have minimal resources, and are less attractive to many young people majoring in education. This leaves some school systems with a relatively small application pool of certified teachers from which to select. As a result, districts, like the ones in the Mississippi Delta, are forced to hire teachers with alternate certifications or no certifications at all.

The National Center for Education Statistics (2002) reports teacher attrition rates every four years. Although the statistics are accurate to the best knowledge reported by schools, districts, and states, the numbers can change with the resignation of just a few teachers. The results from the Teacher Follow-Up survey give the most precise account of teachers’ plans at the end of any given school year, and the survey reports information concerning mobility for reported respondents. Findings from the 2015 report indicate the rate of teachers leaving to be lower than the move rate. Relatively, the rate of leavers in schools, which serve students receiving free or reduced lunch, is 75% higher than the leaver rate of all teachers. The ethnicity of leaver and mover teachers is almost equivalent (DiCarlo, 2015).

Between 1992 and 1995, non-whites comprised of approximately 40% of the total students in the United States; meanwhile, only 17% of the teachers were of non-white ethnicity (Achinstein et al., 2010). If racial and ethnic diversity is to be achieved, lawmakers recognize teachers of minority are vital for giving students of minority role models who look like them. Additionally, teacher education programs must extend additional opportunities for teachers of
color. The process of recruiting teachers of minority is especially daunting since there are few programs that focus exclusively on the needs of these teacher recruits. Once they have been recruited, retaining teachers of color is also difficult. Turnover rates for these teachers are much higher than their white counterparts (Achinstein et al., 2010).

The facts present a pressing problem in retaining teachers of minority in all schools, especially schools which are hard to staff. This issue can be linked to the inequality of opportunities for such teachers. The labor market exposes opportunity gaps as well as racial gaps (Achinstein et al., 2010).

The Teacher Shortage in the Mississippi Delta

Within the last few years, a major economic change and jobs have been sourced to technology and globalization, which leave the Mississippi Delta in a more precarious educational and financial state (PBS News Hour, 2016). Counties in the Mississippi Delta include Bolivar, Quitman Sunflower, Tallahatchie, Leflore, Washington, Sharkey, Holmes, Carroll, Yazoo, Montgomery, Panola, Tate, Humphries, and Tunica (Agricultural Communications, 2017). According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2021), the median household income in Mississippi was $46,511.00. However, Data USA (2019) reports the median household income in the Mississippi Delta is approximately $29,739.00. The disparity in access to basic needs further impedes equitable access to students in the area.

Schools in poor communities, such as the ones in the Mississippi Delta, are often staffed with a higher percentage of beginning teachers or minimally qualified teachers compared to more affluent communities. “Districts in the highest quartile of poverty have an average of 11.0 percent beginning teachers compared with an average of 8.4 percent for districts in the lowest quartile of poverty” (Gagnon & Mattingly, 2012, p. 1). Many of the students attending schools in
the Mississippi Delta cannot academically compete with their peers in other regions around the state due to these poverty-stricken circumstances. Miller et al. (2019) report underprivileged children begin their educational journeys with fewer academic skills than their more affluent peers, which leads to lower academic achievement. Also, the ability of teachers to provide high-quality instruction and experiences oftentimes renders marginal educational outcomes.

Recruiting effective teachers is a challenge for schools in the region because the area offers few to no lifestyle incentives for young tenacious individuals to move or stay in the area. The Mississippi Department of Education held a survey about teacher retention, which showed 47% of teachers applied based on their geographical location, and 28% applied after having a discussion with the school administration (Cook & Minor, 2022). Opportunity gaps are further perpetuated by districts’ inability to retain teachers once they are hired, which exasperates the persistently growing achievement gap of the region’s students. According to Redding & Smith (2016), over one-fourth of districts are in a crisis, reporting many of their teachers only earned a 2.75-grade point average as colleges and universities lower entry and exit requirements to help ease the shortage of teacher candidates. Uncertified and underqualified teachers are an unintentional inevitability result.

Disproportionally, schools similar to those in the Mississippi Delta often fall short in state accountability. The underprivileged students are the most impacted in the state. Students in schools in the Mississippi Delta don’t receive instruction from teachers with the same level of certification, unlike in other parts of the state; however, the students in those schools are held to the same level of accountability on state assessments. State and federal academic guidelines still apply. In addition, the Department of Education released the law Every Student Succeeds Act, or ESSA (2015), which mandates all students be assessed as a part of its educational funding
regulations. ESSA (2015), which replaced the No Child Left Behind Act (2001), was created to ensure all students receive a high-quality education. Schools in the Mississippi Delta educate a disproportionate number of students in poverty, students receiving special education services, minority students, and a growing number of students whose native language is not English. ESSA (2015) mandates Mississippi, like other states, provide students with exceptional math, reading/English, and science curriculum, which prepares them for either college or a career path beyond high school. The standard and quality of each states’ curriculum are measured by how much progress students make, which is measured on state assessments.

Additionally, as part of the accountability plan, districts must provide schools with certified teachers or apply for waivers when they are not able to hire certified individuals. In such cases, districts must present plans, showing how they will help students meet the rigorous law requirements, to the states’ department of education. Often, this task is daunting, to say the least (Lee, 2019). Not only are state and federal expectations the same for Mississippi Delta schools, but also academic and societal expectations apply as well. This unleveled playing field levels administrators to a certain disadvantage. Because administrators are like a coach without enough players to play the game, addressing and remedying the teacher retention issue is imperative.

While teacher shortages are more widespread in the Mississippi Delta than in many other regions in the United States, Morton (2021) affirms rural schools in Alaska and Montana are added to the list of states who are inundated with attrition, too. Most states with schools in rural areas report similar circumstances of difficulties with filling vacancies as compared to non-rural schools. Morton (2021) states the problem is especially prevalent. If teachers can be efficiently retained, areas like the Mississippi Delta will be more equipped to compete in a global society
and meet state and federal guidelines, as it relates to accountability. Job satisfaction, improved instructional practices, teacher collaboration, and teacher self-efficacy are all important factors for teacher retention, and they should be embedded in all schools (Duyar et al., 2013).

**Causes of Teacher Job Dissatisfaction**

Along with teacher shortages, there are several factors that lead to teacher job dissatisfaction, which is one of the leading causes of attrition in the field of education. One factor, which can contribute to job dissatisfaction, is the intensity of teaching demands, especially for subject area teachers. Another key factor behind job dissatisfaction is the lack of support from school leadership for teachers. When considering moving to a new school or leaving the profession altogether, all teachers, who were interviewed, expressed a lack of leadership support as a deciding factor (Hughes, 2012). Lastly, low wages in the field of education further influence teacher job dissatisfaction. If school leaders, educational institutions, and policymakers can identify and eradicate the reasons for quality educators leaving the profession, the educational system would reap tremendous benefits.

**Teaching Demands**

Teachers report teaching demands as the number one reason for leaving the profession during their first five years. Most cite workload issues, including grading, planning, and parent and faculty meetings. Many share they feel inadequately trained to effectively multitask all of their duties. Teachers report not having enough time to prepare for the courses they teach while simultaneously maintaining their personal lives. Some purport feeling overwhelmed to the extent of having a mental breakdown, which ultimately leads to resignation (Department for Education, 2018).
Some new teachers are assigned to the same duties as veteran teachers, even though novice teachers have not had time to master the skills to effectively manage multiple responsibilities. New teachers can feel overwhelmed when assigned several different courses or when their teaching assignments change within the first two years before they adjust to their new responsibilities. Although professional development is a vital aspect of a new teacher’s progression, designating too many activities for a new teacher proves to be counter-productive (Renard, 2003).

Intense demands placed on new teachers lead to low self-efficacy, which contributes to job dissatisfaction. Teachers are more likely to stay in the field when they realize their own effectiveness. Findings link teachers’ self-efficacy to teachers’ perceptions of their work and their students’ achievement. In addition to self-efficacy, teachers express school climate is another impactful reason to stay. Factors, which have a bearing on the environment, take into account available resources, poverty level, teacher-student ratio, and, sadly, faculty and student ethnic make-up. Unsurprisingly, salary and school rating impact teacher retention, too. Schools with high achievement ratings and higher pay rates have fewer problems retaining teachers (Hughes, 2012).

Teachers of minority are often recruited to schools in districts with a high concentration of low-socioeconomic students, where challenges of limited resources, lack of support, and high instances of student behavior issues are prevalent. Although some universities have managed to increase the number of teacher candidates of color, many still have not addressed the problem of the systematic disenfranchisement of the schools, where new teachers will ultimately be assigned. School leaders have the task of not only recruiting teachers of minority, but also providing the support necessary in retaining them as well (Watson et al., 2015).
Charter schools also experience retention difficulties. Teacher burnout is equally as prevalent among charter school teachers within their first two years in the profession, and they cite many of the same motivations as public and private educators (Fusco, 2017). Fusco (2017) maintains:

I am hopeful charter schools will find ways to stop burning through teachers, but, at the same time, I know that much of the sector has yet to be convinced that high teacher attrition is a serious problem. Until most charter leaders acknowledge that it is and until they begin to confront that problem honestly and aggressively, they will continue to send our best and brightest teachers the pernicious message that a career in the classroom is undesirable and unsustainable. (p. 30)

Standardized district, state, and national assessment accountability is the norm for public and most private educational institutions. The mandate to provide instruction, which yields successful scores, intensifies stress for educators in tested subject areas, and it inevitably guides decisions of whether a teacher stays or leaves a teaching assignment. Although accountability is a means of regulation for state and district funding and resource allocations for all levels, teachers catch the brunt of the responsibility and stress to succeed. In many cases, there is no empathy for subject area teachers when these pressures are placed on them. Subject area teachers are merely expected to generate results with little or no support from colleagues, who do not share their sense of urgency. Often, teachers with seniority opt to avoid the accountability of producing test scores by pulling rank and teaching non-tested area classes. This practice usually leaves novice teachers with a magnitude of responsibility, even though they are the least equipped to do the job (Boyd et al., 2008). Teachers were nine percent more likely to leave schools when they were assigned to high-stakes subject area classes. The study also contends
newer teachers are less committed to staying than teachers who have taught for more than three years (Boyd et al, 2008).

The Every Student Succeeds Act (2015) requires that states have academic accountability measures. Each year all schools must submit an approved plan, which measures their academic performance. The mandated indicators are academic progress, academic achievement, English proficiency, and high school graduation rate. School quality indicators, which measure student success, are kindergarten readiness, college readiness, access and completion of advanced coursework, and discipline rates. Although all indicators are used to qualify school effectiveness, the first four weigh heavier in the process (Lee, 2019).

In addition to feeling the stress of accountability from schools and districts, subject area teachers frequently experience repercussions from states for insufficient test data (Boyd et al., 2008). This added stress is a major deterrent for recruiting and retaining teachers in low-performing schools and districts, and aspiring teachers avoid such assignments. In one North Carolina district, schools added enticing provisions to encourage prospective teachers who will accept assignments teaching subject area classes in hard-to-staff schools (Boyd et al., 2008). In such situations, some teachers found solace in teaching because of the balance of success and the reward, which comes with their accomplishments. Also, accountability results are used to eliminate ineffective teachers, which directly impacts the quality of instruction by assigning more credible teachers to tested area classes. Teachers report high-stakes testing poses an imposition on their classroom environment and creativity (Boyd et al., 2008). Surprisingly, data suggests teacher turnover decreases when high-stakes testing is introduced to fourth-grade classrooms in higher-performing schools (Boyd et al., 2008).
Student behavior is another reason teachers experience burnout and choose to leave education, especially when proper training and resources are not provided. Teachers report students with behavioral issues perform marginally worse than their peers, whose behavior is cooperative (Elias, 2012). Intrinsically, some teachers are better at classroom management than others, and, in such cases, boundaries and rules are established at the beginning of the academic relationship. However, for those teachers who are not as skilled in such management techniques, school days can be long and arduous. For these teachers, valuable instructional time is often squandered by correcting behavior and repeating expectations. If the problem is not remedied expeditiously, teacher burnout most certainly ensues. Often, teacher burnout begins so early in the year, and by mid-semester, teachers consider leaving the field altogether. However, burnout is preventable, and school leaders must establish a culture of support to promote retention.

**Lack of Support from Leadership**

According to Hughes (2012), new teachers often report the lack of support from leadership as one of the core reasons they experience stress in their initial years. Many, who manage to stay, describe their experience as horrifying and overwhelming. Many novice teachers report a lack of support in difficult situations, which further compounds their frustrations (Elias, 2012). According to results of surveys and questionnaires, new teachers find duties, such as sponsoring extracurricular organizations, getting difficult teaching assignments, and having marginal teaching supplies, added to the stress of trying to produce effective lessons. Survey results also revealed teachers’ feelings of ineffectiveness contributed to increased apathy, and teachers described feeling like they were being set up for failure.

Renard (2003) suggests the lack of mentor support compounds new teachers’ frustrations. New teachers believed assigned mentors only provided support when prompted by the principal.
Many new teachers describe their student-teaching experience as haphazard, and mentors merely provide them with survival tips rather than authentic strategies to build on. New teachers describe their cooperating teachers as cheerleaders, instead of true mentors. Similarly, cooperating teachers report they feel inadequately prepared to provide student teachers with experiences other than observation opportunities. Renard (2003) reports mentoring and nurturing all teachers is vital for their job satisfaction. Effective planning, observation and feedback, and analyzing student work are three common mentoring practices, which are rarely ever taught or learned (Stanulis et al., 2018).

Low Wages in Education (MS Delta Comparison)

Besides high teaching demands and lack of leadership support, one of the most mitigating factors of teacher attrition is low salaries for teachers, especially for schools in Mississippi. During the 2019-2020 school year, the national average salary of a public school teacher was $64,133. While teachers in states such as New York and California earned an average salary of $85,500, teachers in Mississippi and South Dakota earned the least with an average salary of $47,500 during the 2019-2020 school year. Adding to the frustration of low pay are yearly salary increases for teachers during the same school year, which is an average of only five percent. There was no significant change in the number of public school teachers expected for the next year (National Education Association, 2021).

Teacher shortages are astronomical in low-socioeconomic schools and districts. To add to the shortage crisis, teacher earnings in 2018 were approximately 21% lower than most non-teaching professions with college degrees (Jones et al., 2013). College graduates, who opt not to teach after completing certification programs, choose more profitable options rather than putting themselves in financial hardship. Teachers working in low-socioeconomic school districts make
approximately five thousand dollars less than their counterparts working in more affluent school
districts, which poses concerns for teacher recruitment and retention (Garcia and Weiss, 2019).

According to findings from a study by García & Weiss (2019), low salaries create a need
for teachers to moonlight to support themselves and their families, which is becoming a common
practice. Most teachers moonlight in the form of coaching or additional school-related duties for
extra income. Thus, teachers find higher wages from alternative employment outside of the field
more enticing, which adds to the ongoing teacher shortage crisis. Teachers who take on
moonlighting jobs are less engaged in their teaching duties because of the weight of extra
responsibility. They report being more stressed and less likely to meet deadlines, and they
describe themselves as having low self-efficacy. Teachers also express a diminishing desire to
participate in school-sponsored team-building opportunities. To complicate matters further,
teachers state a low salary is their main reason for leaving the field. The correlation between low
teacher salaries and quitters is substantial.

**Job Satisfaction**

School leaders try to target why teachers leave their schools or the profession altogether.
However, a better question for leaders to pose is “Why do great teachers stay?” According to
Williams (2003), great teachers find both challenges and rewards in the intellectual stimulation
of students’ minds. Teachers also convey their profession provides a platform for continuous
personal and professional growth with infinite opportunities for creativity.

Teacher turnover comes at the expense of student achievement and the financial cost to
school districts, which emphasizes a need for teacher job satisfaction. There has been an
emphasis on why teachers leave the field, but Williams (2003) says more emphasis should be
placed on what gives teachers the tenacity to persevere. There are several recent studies on areas
of teacher job satisfaction, which principals may impact. When teachers feel valued and supported by leadership, it increases their self-efficacy, which increases teacher job satisfaction and retention.

**Implications of Teacher Turnover**

Sorensen and Ladd (2020) suggests turnover impacts are noted in the composition and quality of teachers in a school, and it hinges on the quality of teachers who leave a school relative to those who remain. Ultimately, the quality of replacement teachers is a major consideration for school leaders. According to Grissom and Bartanen (2018), leaders understand the quality of teachers must improve if student outcomes are to also improve. Often, in districts with students who are high-poverty, low-performing, and geographically isolated, schools employ entry or lateral level teachers, who hold provisional licenses, more than the average school (Sorensen & Ladd, 2020). Schools with a majority of minority students, especially African American students, experience the most negative effects in student achievement from teacher turnover (Ronfeldt et al., 2013).

Tremendous burdens, such as recruiting, hiring, and training costs, are imposed on districts when teachers leave their positions, and personnel departments must expend additional recruiting efforts. Additionally, new teachers require extensive and expensive training, which is required for new hires (Sorensen & Ladd, 2020). Only 39% of Americans without high school diplomas voted in the 2000 and 2004 elections, and on the other hand, approximately 66% of Americans with high school diplomas or higher voted (Sorensen & Ladd, 2020). Junn (2005) further substantiates education plays a significant role in voting, almost 75% of those with college degrees say they voted. Therefore, this evidence suggests educational attainment has some degree of influence on educational reform.
Junn (2005) reports districts incur both apparent and hidden costs when teachers leave. Apparent costs manifest as training new teachers, holding recruitment fairs, and replenishing tangible resources. Hidden costs take the form of democracy and economic regression of students, whose teachers leave the field. Students experience disparities in access to quality instruction, which leads to inadequate preparation and the inability to compete for higher educational opportunities. Inequality in student education leads to inequality in employment, which further perpetuates economic disadvantages. Despite intervention efforts, the United States is still plagued with an enormous number of socioeconomic inconsistencies both politically and educationally.

Ronfeldt et al. (2013) reports teacher turnover results in negative long-term consequences for the quality of the instructional staff and student achievement. The disruptive effect on students’ long-term academic outcomes is much more pronounced, however. As evident in an eight-year observational report of fourth and fifth-grade students in New York schools, results indicated minority students showed particularly lower scores when teacher turnover was high. Student achievement is greater when students are taught by teachers who have more experience and expertise (Grissom & Bartanen, 2018). According to Penner (2019), the Teacher for America program has been instrumental in improving teacher quality and student outcomes. However, academic achievement effects do not occur immediately. Gradual improvements are indicated over time as teachers are retained. Students, who are educated by an unchanging teacher cohort, report higher academic achievement than students, who experience a high teacher turnover reports Sorensen and Ladd (2020). Therefore, a principal, who can maintain a steady staff, greatly impacts students’ educational experiences. Leadership practices influence teacher efficacy and effectiveness, which leads to greater student achievement.
Feiman-Nemsar (2012) contends it takes a new teacher three years to reach their optimal level of effectiveness. Consequently, students in schools with low socioeconomic status or high-minority populations are almost two times more likely to have new, non-certified, or less effective teachers. Findings from studies by Sanders and Rivers (1996) note students who have low-performing teachers for three or more consecutive years achieved scores more than 50 percentage points below those of students who had high-performing teachers for three consecutive years. Moreover, studies by Wright, Horn, and Sanders (1997) conclude the overall impact of three years of highly effective teachers continually enhanced academic achievement; however, students with continual ineffective instruction experienced critical achievement loss. Because effective teachers have the greatest impact on student achievement, Sanders & Horn (1998), suggests students in schools with high-poverty and high-minority populations are at significantly higher risk and student achievement is detrimentally reduced as a result of high teacher turnover. Since schools are institutions of learning, Simon and Johnson (2015) suggests teacher turnover is an even larger concern than economic loss, particularly in schools with higher populations of at-risk students. Watlington et al. (2010) propose schools with higher populations of at-risk students employ a disproportionate number of uncertified teachers as well.

Roughly 25% of student achievement is the result of a school leader’s influence (Leithwood, et al. 2008). Supporting research suggests principals’ leadership is the second most prominent factor in student achievement (Leithwood, et al. 2008). When principals foster a culture of collaboration and professional growth, sustainable achievement is evident.

**Teacher Self-Efficacy**

Job satisfaction plays a vital role in job performance, and job satisfaction and student performance are consequential outcomes of self-efficacy. Ross (1996) posits teacher self-
efficacy is greater in teachers who believe they can be successful, which is reflected in their confidence in assignment completion, locus of control of outcomes, past success with similar projects, persistence, and adapted systems of coping with failure. On the contrary, individuals, who believe they cannot succeed at a particular task, shy away, often refusing to attempt new endeavors for fear of embarrassment and lowering self-esteem. Self-efficacy may vary as situations demand.

There is a correlation between efficacy and teacher attrition, which was substantiated in a study completed by Freudenberger (1974). Novice teachers begin their careers with a high level of efficacy, which is usually impacted by negative first and second-year classroom experiences. Conversely, confidence is restored incrementally as their careers progress. Stressors, which contribute to burnout, typically diminish as teachers participate in more professional development, receive constructive feedback from supervisors, and collaborate with their peers. The Freudenberger study found teachers who have opportunities to student-teach, experience considerably fewer instances of burnout in their first few years. The same group of teachers also reported a greater feeling of resiliency (Freudenberger, 1974).

According to findings from research completed by Duyar et al. (2013), many leadership characteristics and collaborative practices predict teacher attitudes in addition to confidence levels, which ultimately lead to the decision of whether or not they will leave a school or district. The study also indicates a link between an employee’s work attitude and performance. Thus, teachers, who have a positive attitude about their work, will perform effectively in the classroom. When teachers perceive their own effectiveness, they are more likely to want to be a part of the process (Duyar et al., 2013).
Improvement of Teacher Performance

Teachers gain knowledge through years of practice in the field, and experience and professional growth play a vital role in performance progression. Teachers learn through experiences, which can often provide wisdom as different circumstances arise. Often, simple memory recall from situational familiarities assists teachers when implementing the best plan of action or strategy in the classroom. Each year, not only does students’ knowledge increase, but also teachers’ knowledge, and students undeniably benefit from having experienced teachers. According to Sorensen and Ladd (2020), teachers increase their academic capacity by participating in professional development as well as peer observation.

As teachers acquire new knowledge and wisdom and implement newly learned strategies, their efficacy increases. Although novice teachers may bring a wealth of knowledge in technology and innovation, which older teachers may lack, experience is one of the best aspects for student learning. Because student learning and knowledge acquisition is the ultimate goal of education, leadership must assure teachers have the tools to support self-efficacy, where strategies will be implemented, which build student self-efficacy as a result. According to Bandura (2012), self-efficacy is the level of confidence in one’s to successfully complete a task. For teachers, the task could be as simple as managing a day-long classroom assignment with ease or as complex as conducting a semester-long project with disruptive students. As teachers gain knowledge and confidence through trial and error with success, their self-efficacy increases, thereby improving teaching performance. As teachers’ self-efficacy increases, they become experts and students reap the benefits. Ultimately, students taught by teachers who are confident and knowledgeable are more like to have better academic outcomes.
Leadership Practices Which Improve Teacher Retention

Beyond teacher job performance and student outcomes, teachers’ perceptions about leadership impact job satisfaction and retention. Leadership’s involvement with teachers makes a difference in their decision to remain at a school (Tillman, 2005). Teacher job satisfaction is linked to the school leaders’ abilities to establish a culture of high expectations with procedures, which monitor and adjust practices to guarantee consistent progress and success. When school leaders implement effective mentoring practices for novice teachers, it increases teacher retention. Another way for leaders to retain effective teachers is to provide incentive pay to offset low wages. When school leaders build a school climate to effectively implement practices and procedures for school success, then teachers have a heightened sense of satisfaction and self-confidence to do their jobs.

Building Climate and Culture

When teachers and leaders begin the year with esprit de corp, students, in turn, adopt a similar disposition, which is often evident -socially and academically- throughout the school year (Rolewski, 2019). Effects of this are evident in students’ level of participation, academic achievement, and overall motivation. Students’ abilities to cope with challenges and accountability are also enhanced when teachers set the climate for pride at the beginning of the school year.

An important factor for school culture and climate includes a concise mission and vision, supported by instructional and managerial norms. Research suggests principals’ impacts are indirect: Rituals and routines of school culture are often set by how they structure collaboration opportunities, mentoring assignments, curriculum decision-making, and hiring practices. However, students, who attend low socioeconomic schools, rely heavily on the principals’ ability
to create climates where curriculum and instruction are the primary focus. Since schools with such demographics have lower teacher retention rates than their counterparts, it is vital for principals to create a culture where teachers feel valued and supported. Findings suggest an increase of resources for students in newly tested subjects and grade levels has a significant impact on raising teacher morale and their desire to remain in the schools (Boyd et al., 2008).

Teachers contend continuous administrator and collegiate feedback provides a well-defined understanding of their mission and the school’s vision. Many teachers describe their motivation as a product of feeling a sense of belonging and a sense of recognized value. Many of them cite ideal work conditions with strong leaders who have visions of success.

Principals monitor teacher effectiveness by performing consistent observations and providing actionable feedback, which sets standards in school culture. Feedback varies from praise to recommendations for improvement, as warranted by the observation. In either instance, principals are the driving force when it comes to setting expectations and providing teachers with resources for effectiveness and improvement (Ikemoto et al., 2012). Since instruction quality depends on effective feedback, principals must be consistent in their efforts and persistent in their expectations (Marzano et al., 2005).

The efforts of the principal to cultivate teachers is one of the most complex aspects of their jobs. Ikemoto et al. (2012) suggest effective principals prioritize observations and feedback while de-emphasizing managerial tasks, which are not essential to increasing teacher capacity. Effective principals involve their leadership team in performing observations and providing feedback to develop other leaders alongside teachers (Ikemoto et al., 2012). The practice of involving more than one leader further creates a culture of collaboration, wherein rituals and norms are perpetuated throughout the organization. According to Maready (2018), in order to
form a culture of collaboration, principals should encourage cooperation among staff, allow staff to have a voice in school policies and procedures, provide more help to first-year teachers, and emphasize and uphold the school’s central mission. School leaders should develop and support these cultural practices to help new teachers navigate through difficulties in their first few years.

When novice teachers hear the same expectation from multiple sources, the norms are more likely to become ingrained into their routine. Once norms become ritualistic, students also develop a sense of consistency from the adults, who are responsible for their day-to-day educational experience. Multiple leaders’ perspectives heighten the probability that a new teacher will heed feedback suggestions. In addition, when data-driven decision-making is added to the equation, processes make more sense to novice teachers, which gives them a point of reference to further substantiate cultural practices. When the principal is deemed an instructional leader, rather than a building manager, collaboration and team-building become a major aspect of the culture and climate in a school.

**Mentoring for New Teachers**

Effective recruitment and induction practices encompass more than introductions, policy and procedure discussions, and campus and departmental tours. Strategic relationship building must be systematically included in the process. According to Maready (2018), by encouraging collaboration among teachers, school leaders are more likely to retain them. The mentors’ roles must be well-defined, and they must include specific responsibilities and checkpoints. Consistent communication and the availability of support from mentors and school-level administrators have been proven to encourage retention. Mentor-mentee relationships diminish isolation, which has been identified as problematic for novice teachers. Efficiently developing processes and practices, which address the needs and challenges, improves retention as well. A process, which
continues long after induction, is a teacher’s ability to transition from teaching students to teaching fellow teachers how to use effective strategies (Hope, 1999).

Some of the most researched strategies for teacher development are mentoring, teacher networking, and peer coaching and collaboration. Teaching, modeling, counseling, and advising are forms of mentoring support, and these supports are vital for most novice teachers to succeed. Urban schools pose a unique challenge for novice teachers: The schools serve mostly low socioeconomic students who often have academic challenges, minimal parental involvement, and few role models. In addition, the students in urban schools are often taught using substandard resources by non-certified staff (Tillman, 2005). To best support teachers who are placed in urban schools, networking with colleagues and proper mentoring are essential for success. Many teacher preparation programs do not prepare new teachers for issues, which exist in these schools. Therefore, it is crucial for school leaders to implement effective coaching and mentoring practices for novice teachers.

Mentors are appointed to serve in various capacities. The rigorous cultures and climates of urban schools often dictate that mentors provide not only professional support but also emotional support. Principals should establish a positive school culture, which supports mentoring expectations and produces classroom success. Principals should also give new teachers dedicated time to work with their mentors to oversee skill improvement and provide collaborative support, which is shown in Table 1.
**Table 1**

*Effective mentoring predictors of new teacher retention*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial steps</th>
<th>Oversight of skill improvement</th>
<th>Providing collaborative support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Assign a mentor</td>
<td>1. Classroom management and discipline</td>
<td>1. Subject area or grade level matters (at least once a month)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Match new teachers with mentors who have taught the same subject</td>
<td>2. Implementing a variety of instructional methods</td>
<td>2. Classroom management and discipline (once weekly)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. New teachers are observed by their mentor once weekly</td>
<td>3. Proper use of instructional technology</td>
<td>3. Use of instructional technology (at least once a month)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Selection and adaptation of curriculum material, instructional methods, and lesson plans</td>
<td>4. Developing and interpreting student assessments (once weekly)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Interactions with parents</td>
<td>5. Selecting and adapting curriculum, instructional methods, and lesson plans (once weekly)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6. Reflections on teaching practices (once weekly)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Novice teachers gain experiences critical for the enhancement of their professional and personal competence and growth (Tillman, 2005). When a new teacher is provided with professional and emotional support, effective mentoring, along with opportunities to collaborate and share ideas, leads to teacher retention, which data reveals. Also indicated in the data is how leadership’s involvement with new teachers makes a difference in their decision to remain at a school (Tillman, 2005). When principals and other school leaders show concern for their professional and personal well-being, new teachers feel more connected and are also more likely
to stay. Teachers report the more school leaders are involved, the stronger their commitment is to their school (Tillman, 2005).

**Incentive Pay**

Rewards play an intricate part in motivation for teachers. In North Carolina schools, where academic achievement is revered, the findings indicate rewards increase teacher interest and assignment acceptance (Boyd et al. 2008). Raising teacher salaries, providing incentives, and offering loan forgiveness programs are effective ways to improve recruitment and retention, which has been confirmed by teachers. However, school support from leaders and colleagues reins high among the list of teacher-perceived retention strategies in both affluent and low-socioeconomic schools. Affluent schools are less likely to have many novice teachers compared to high-poverty schools. New teachers are driven to high-poverty schools by incentive pay, critical needs shortages, and more job opportunities.

Inadvertently, novice teachers typically do not receive adequate training, support, and professional development to sustain professional growth, which is needed to encourage them to stay. Although, regardless of incentives, it is harder to teach in high-poverty schools because there is typically more disruption, fewer classroom resources, and reduced access to professional development opportunities. Often, new teachers are left to fend for themselves (Ingersoll, 2003).

**Theories Relevant to the Research Question**

Herzberg’s two-factor theory of Job Satisfaction and Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs are key theories, which will be referenced in contributing research on teachers’ job satisfaction (Gawel, 1996). Although the two theories are not used in a wide range, the works can certainly be applied to the field of education. Both theories give insight into the reasons teachers continue in or exit the profession. Herzberg theorizes job satisfaction is two-dimensional, and he coins
two terms: hygiene issues and motivators (Syptak, 1999). The hygiene category, also coined as dissatisfiers, includes many facets of one’s job, such as salary, supervision, interpersonal relationships, and working conditions. Meanwhile, the other category, coined motivators or satisfiers, includes the following aspects: the work itself, personal achievement in doing the work, recognition, responsibility, and achievement. Herzberg also theorizes satisfiers range from no satisfaction to high satisfaction; meanwhile, dissatisfiers range from high to no satisfaction (Maidani, 1991). Satisfiers, also referred to as motivators, are related to lasting progression, and dissatisfiers, or hygiene factors, are related to immediate -and often temporary- changes in attitudes and self-efficacy (Gawel, 1996).

Bandura (1999) suggests people learn from experiences alongside observation. His theories propose learning is a result of one’s response to stimuli, and behaviors are learned through the process of observing one’s environment. Bandura performed the famous Bobo doll experiment (1999). In his experiment, children observed adults, who exhibited aggressive behaviors toward the doll, and, when placed in a controlled environment, the children mimicked the aggressive behaviors, which they had observed. If teachers are ineffective, insurmountable damaging effects on student achievement may occur, which can be irreversible. Therefore, observation plays a critical role not only for students but also for teachers. Novice teachers are often assigned peer observation sessions for mentorship or for professional learning strategies. According to Bandura’s theories, teachers may inadvertently mimic behaviors observed during another teacher’s class, especially if their behavior produces desired learning results.

All learning is a result of conditioning, and Bandura suggests social observations are a key component to overall learning (2012). Bandura’s three models of observational learning include live models where there is a live demonstration of a particular behavior. Symbolic
models are described as characters, who are not actually present, displaying a behavior, and verbal instructional models are directions or accounts of a particular behavior, which are written or verbally presented. Bandura stresses the importance of one’s mental state in learning new behaviors. Intrinsic motivation and external reinforcement are vital in the learning process. Thus, Bandura urges learning does not necessarily constitute behavior change. He also proposes that a key indicator of learning is the ability for one to demonstrate newly acquired knowledge. To adequately assess whether a new skill or behavior has been learned, the learner must display their new abilities. Self-efficacy is important when maintaining a newly learned skill, according to Bandura’s theory. Observational learning cannot be achieved without the following steps in this order: paying attention, storing information for later recall and utilization, reproducing an action by modeling or demonstrating, and earning rewards. The aforementioned should reassure a successful demonstration of learning, which is the intended outcome (Cherry, 2021).

Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs postulates there are five levels of basic human needs, which must be satisfied (Gawel, 1996). The hierarchy ranges from levels one to five in this order: hunger and thirst, safety and stability, belongingness and love, self-esteem, and respect for oneself and others. The highest level on Maslow’s hierarchy is self-actualization of one’s potential, and Maslow’s Theory suggests self-actualization impacts self-esteem. Respect from peers and status affect self-esteem; therefore, if respect from their peers is minimal or non-existent, a teacher’s job satisfaction and motivation decline. Findings indicate principals should focus on teachers’ self-efficacy and self-esteem to develop strategies and adopt effective practices, which encourage retention (Gawel, 1996).

Guarino’s theoretical lens provides insight into how the labor market in education is similar to other labor markets (Guarino et al., 2006). In education, supply and demand are driven
by opportunity costs, which are attractiveness to the job and the perception of experience. When the demand for teachers is high, schools often resort to hiring individuals with alternate or no certifications, and qualified individuals entering the field can choose their placements. However, when the demand for teachers is low, schools are able to choose the best and brightest candidates while practicing strategic retention and encouraging ineffective teachers to explore alternative career options. Understanding the labor market is imperative to developing school policies and incentives, which attract high-quality teachers. Students depend on the educational system to provide one of the most important factors in their academic lives: effective teachers. In most research on teacher retention, females make up the largest teacher demographic, and minorities make up the smallest demographic, except Pacific Islanders (Guarino et al., 2006). Minority teachers also report fewer instances of attrition. Research reveals students with higher aptitudes tend to pursue careers other than education. Furthermore, secondary teachers are more likely to leave the field than elementary teachers, especially those in science and math. The research additionally reveals compensation; school policies, which provide family accommodations; and recruitment and retention support play a significant role when teachers decide to continue in the field of education (Guarino et al., 2006).

Summary of Chapter 2

Aside from classroom teachers, principals have the most influence on student achievement and success. Therefore, as an instructional leader, building positive relationships with both new and returning teachers is a major aspect of principals establishing a productive culture. School culture matters. Culture is a critical component of effective leadership, and evidence indicates schools with robust cultures are more adaptable, have higher faculty and staff and commitment. Faculty and staff at schools with strong cultures are more cooperative and are
well versed in conflict resolution. Strong cultures in schools typically have a greater capacity for innovation and are more operative in attaining higher academic outcomes. A fundamental job for school leaders is to develop a strong school culture, which focuses on student learning (Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011).

However, new teachers are in need of ongoing support more than any other school-level population. Instructional and administrative supports are vital components for teacher retention. Continuous support for all teachers positively influences job satisfaction, strategic practices, and overall school climate. Establishing a culture of support and collaboration improves teacher development, which leads to enhanced efficacy and increased retention. When there is an emphasis on accountability, feedback, group effort, and effective managerial practices, teachers find, contract renewal as an appealing decision. In addition, when principals engage in parent conferences, teachers have positive attitudes toward their jobs (Duyar et al., 2013).

Teacher performance improves dramatically during their first two to three years in the profession, which makes retention critical (Roberson & Roberson, 2009). For continued growth as an educator, it is imperative to learn and implement effective practices. When effective training is a part of the recruitment and retention plan, novice teachers receive the tools necessary to sustain professional growth (Aaronson, 1999). Although they are costly, comprehensive induction programs are more likely to produce better retention. A comprehensive program includes extensive instructional training, intense planning sessions, and commonly aligned procedures for every aspect of a teacher’s day, which help alleviate stressors that would otherwise exasperate a novice teacher’s experience. The objective of these extreme practices is to cultivate confidence and job efficacy, which ultimately translates to improvements in teacher performance and student achievement (Ingersoll, 2012).
CHAPTER III
Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study was to gain insight from the perceptions of both successful and departing teachers on the practices of school principals which impact teacher retention in rural public schools in Mississippi through their lived experiences. This research study examined the lived experiences of six teachers and focus on their perceptions of how principal practices influenced their decisions to stay or leave. The subjects of this research study were all former or current teachers in Mississippi Delta schools. This research study was intended to delve into the reasons behind attrition, the effects of attrition, and strategies for the eradication of attrition in the field of education (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In this study, in-depth interviews were performed via Zoom. An existing survey by Godwin (2001) was utilized. Responses to the interview questions were then analyzed and coded by emerging themes. These interviews were used to examine reasons why teachers leave the profession or stay in the field, and to discuss plausible solutions to remedy attrition in education.

The research was conducted qualitatively by interviewing subjects, documenting their experiences, and analyzing responses. This allowed the subjects to express their unique experiences, which detailed their reasons for leaving or staying. This study used the phenomenological method of qualitative research, which allows participants’ lived experiences to be examined by the researcher. This method is free of presumptions and relies solely on the
participants’ responses (Dowling, 2007). Phenomenology helps researchers understand the meaning of a person’s lived experience.

According to Patton (1990), a phenomenological study emphasizes the descriptions of participants lived experiences and how they perceive their experiences. Patton’s step-by-step process includes the epoche, which is where the researcher dispels any personal preconceptions about the phenomenon being studied (1990). Patton (1990) further outlined the process of phenomenological reduction, coined as bracketing. Bracketing also includes the researcher’s interpretation of the meanings of the identified phrases and words. Not only is the researcher’s interpretation noted, but also the interpretation of the participants. Patton (1990) suggested the importance of analyzing the meanings of the bracketed words and phrases for the revelation of aspects of the phenomenon. After bracketing is completed, Patton (1990) recommended the development of a description of the theme or phenomenon. At this time, an organizational mechanism can be developed, and it will comprise the understanding of the participant’s lived experiences but not the meanings according to the researcher’s presumptions.

A phenomenological study evokes people to explain their experiences and how they go through those experiences (Patton, 1990). When conducting a phenomenological study, it is customary to allow the participant’s responses to questions to lead to subsequent questions and ultimately guide the researcher’s development of common themes. Phenomenology has a foundation in viewpoints, values, and thinking, which will be emphasized as the teachers provide their responses to the research question (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This phenomenological research study explored what these six teachers experienced and focused on their involvement in a phenomenon.
According to Patton (2002), qualitative research involves three divergent inquiry elements, which include rigorous methods for gathering high-quality data, which can be analyzed with meticulous consideration for validity; reliability; and triangulation. This chapter provides information on the foundation of phenomenology and the central concepts of its research methods. The goal of this study was to explore how principal practices impact Mississippi Delta school teachers’ decisions to stay in or leave the profession. This research study was designed to determine how principal practices contributed to teachers’ decisions. This research correspondingly sought to identify strategies, which school leaders and policymakers might develop and employ, to address teacher attrition and retention in Mississippi Delta schools.

The phenomenological method of qualitative research permits researchers to unequivocally examine participants’ lived experiences and eludes assumptions, by solely relying on the responses of the study participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The goal of this phenomenological inquiry was to describe lived experiences explicitly. This study contributes to the needs of schools and districts to recruit and retain quality educators and to reduce attrition in the field of education. The research sought to improve the quality of mentorship, teacher collaboration, and leadership practices, which contribute to teacher retention.

**Qualitative Research Design**

According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), “Qualitative research is an approach for exploring the meaning of individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (p.4). Qualitative research discovers emerging trends, problems, questions, and processes by collecting and analyzing data from participants’ backgrounds, locations, and themes by the researcher’s interpretation of the implication of the data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). “Qualitative researchers also seek to understand and interpret how people in a social setting construct the
According to Patton (1990), the qualitative research analysis is more of a creative process and is the opposite of quantitative research, which is fundamentally constructed by utilizing formulas and rules. For this reason, it is necessary for researchers to employ rigorous techniques to enhance credibility and integrity when conducting qualitative studies.

Phenomenological research is often used to study commonalities in the behaviors of a group of people and how a particular phenomenon impacts these individuals (Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenological researchers seek to extract the purest data. As researchers conduct investigations, they aim to answer two basic questions: “What experiences of the subjects are related to the phenomenon?” and “What factors influenced the experience of the phenomenon?” (Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenological research is grounded in philosophy and psychology, which rationalizes its appropriateness for this study. This study employed open-ended interview questions, which allowed participants to present multiple perspectives of the phenomenon. To include details leading to a decision to stay or leave, focus group interviews and follow-up interviews could have been conducted if additional data had been needed to help clarify the phenomenon. To further address the validity of the study, prolonged engagement follow-up interviews could have also been conducted.

**Phenomenological Research Methods**

According to Harappa (2021), phenomenological research can be conducted by the researcher, who observes the subject or accesses records written by the subject: texts, journals, diaries, or other forms of written expression. Another method of research involves conducting interviews with open-ended questions, which allow the subject to provide the purest responses without bias from the researcher. When a subject responds to open-ended questions, objectivity
is more likely to be achieved. The researcher must extract information about the subjects’ personal experiences and document how those experiences are interpreted by the subject. Extracting intimate information requires the researcher to also establish an empathetic rapport with the subject. Focus workshops are another phenomenological research method, which is where participants have a noted commonality (Harappa, 2021).

One caveat to conducting effective phenomenological research is assuring participants have the ability to freely communicate without barriers, such as language, age, or cognitive concerns (Harappa, 2021). The phenomenological approach is suitable for this study because the subjects’ lived experiences and interpretations were being examined. The responses of the six teachers, who stayed in or left the field of education, provided an understanding of what influenced their decisions.

**Research Questions**

As suggested by Creswell and Creswell (2018), the subjects were asked a comprehensive research question about the phenomenon, which provided a basis for inquiry, data collection, and analysis. “What are the perceptions of both returning and departing teachers on school leadership practices which impact teacher retention in rural public schools in Mississippi?” is the central question drafted for this study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The following open-ended, associated sub-questions contributed to the response to the central question:

1. How do the participating current and former teachers describe the impact of mentoring practices on their decisions to stay in or leave the profession?
2. How do the participating current and former teachers describe the impact of teacher collaboration on their decisions to stay in or leave the profession?
3. How do the participating current and former teachers describe the impact of school culture and climate on their decisions to stay in or leave the profession?

As in phenomenological research, open-ended questions allowed participants to candidly respond, which encouraged the most authentic interpretations of lived experiences, and this method removed bias and subjectivity, which is the objective of utilizing phenomenology (Bernard & Ryan, 2010). Recording narratives was a powerful way to help the researcher understand emotions and experiences while illuminating a subject’s mental state as part of the data (Harappa, 2021). Phenomenology also gave the participant an opportunity to describe the essence of an experience. In a phenomenological research study, participants’ responses encapsulate emotional, physical, and psychological lived experiences through dialogue with the researcher (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The researcher was tasked with explicitly documenting and analyzing the participants’ information, which concerns the phenomenon.

Participants

The population for this research study comprised six current or former teachers in Mississippi Delta schools. The questions in this study have a qualitative phenomenological research design, which documented accounts of six former or current teachers from Mississippi Delta schools. Their responses detailed their lived experiences of staying in or leaving teaching positions in Mississippi Delta schools. In an effort to identify a central phenomenon, the participants must be capable of objectively responding to the questions posed; thus, as suggested by Dowling (2007), the participants were discriminatorily chosen.

According to Creswell (2016), the phenomenological approach allows the researcher to select research subjects who are willing and capable of articulating details of lived experiences, and these lived experiences can be utilized in forming a description of a central phenomenon.
With intentional sampling, subjects or groups were chosen to represent a particular population; thus, intentional sampling was applicable to select subjects for this study (Gay et al., 2009). The subjects consisted of current or former teachers employed by Mississippi Delta schools for five years or fewer. The researcher interviewed the six participants, who matched the selection criteria. According to Ross (1996), four to ten participants constitute a sufficient number of subjects for validity in a qualitative study. The study included interviewing six former or current teachers in Mississippi Delta schools. The criteria for participants are listed below:

1. Current and former teacher in a K12 Mississippi Delta public school;
2. Fewer than five years of teaching experience,
3. Willing to provide candid details about experiences as a teacher in a Mississippi Delta school.

The research subjects were selected with the intent of gathering the most comprehensive description of each individual’s lived experiences. Information gathered from interviews were considered representative samples of teachers’ experiences in Mississippi Delta schools for fewer than five years.

Individuals selected as subjects for this research were current or former teachers in Mississippi Delta schools. The participants provided the following demographic information: years of experience, age, gender, relationship status, number of children, hometown, state, current teaching grade level, school district, and whether education was their first career choice.

**Informed Consent**

One of the foundational components of ethical research is informed consent. Informed consent gives participants a timeline of the study, explicit details regarding the study, their requirements for the study, and potential risks of the study. Participants were provided with
consent forms, which required signatures acknowledging agreement to the terms of the study. Prior to their recorded interviews, participants were given essential documentation, which ensured the removal of any identifiable information from any voice recordings and other forms of data collection, which was suggested by Creswell (2018).

Confidentiality

Tolich (2004) suggested deductive disclosure, which is also referred to as internal confidentiality, arises when participants’ traits make them identifiable in documents or reports, and this often occurs in qualitative research. To prevent the chances of deductive disclosure, while also collecting the most authentic data, researchers must cautiously record and report information. Hatch (2002) identified some attributes to conducting qualitative research and suggests a natural setting for interviews provides the researcher with the best quality responses from the participants. When conducting a qualitative study, Jacob (1988) suggested research questions should have the flexibility to develop and change as the study unfolds and patterns are defined. Inductive data analysis also can be attained as specific details are uncovered and recorded.

Data Collection

Creswell (2016), Hatch (2002), and Marshall and Rossman (2016) conveyed a natural setting for the researcher is a key instrument in the collection of data for a study. Multiple sources of data, inductive and deductive data analysis, participants’ meaning, emerging design, reflexivity, and holistic are all basic characteristics, which should be utilized when conducting qualitative research. Data collection for this research study was achieved by recording participants’ responses verbatim. According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), qualitative data analysis entails categorizing and classifying people, objects, and experiences. In collecting and analyzing data for this research study, patterns and themes from the perspective of each
respondent will be recorded. The data will then be organized by using coding techniques, and the findings will be compared to the literature and similar studies.

Interviews were scheduled after the Institutional Review Board approved the study to be conducted. The participants were contacted by phone calls and email. After the participants were initially contacted, they were provided with Informed Consent Forms, Interview Protocol Questions, and Invitation to Participate Letters. After the Participant Consent Forms were collected, interviews were scheduled at the participants’ convenience. Participants were asked to review the Protocol Questions and inform the researcher of any questions or concerns before the interviews were conducted. Since no questions or concerns were presented by the participant, the researcher commenced the interview by posing the interview questions. Participants were asked to provide concise responses to the interview questions, and they were allowed ample time to reflect and respond to each question. At the end of the interview session, participants were asked if they would like to provide any additional information about their lived experiences. For this study, no interviews were conducted face-to-face due to the ongoing pandemic, which was for the safety of the researcher and participants. The interviews in this study were conducted via Zoom sessions.

Member checking is an internal strategy, which is used to ensure internal validity and to establish the reliability and the true value of the data (Creswell, 2009). By returning the documented responses to the participants, this process allowed the participants to confirm the accuracy of what was recorded and allow for any corrections to their reported experience. Member checking is also a means of clarification to ensure the intended message is transferred through the dialogue between the respondent and the researcher (Birt et al., 2016). Transcripts of interviews were returned to participants to complete the member-checking process.
Data Analysis

In preparation for data analysis, the researcher recorded the participant interviews, listened to the recorded audio, ensured all transcriptions are accurate, made field notes, catalogued materials, and sorted through the data. Transcriptions were acquired from Zoom and edited for accuracy by the researcher. After the transcriptions were completed, the researcher provided each participant with a copy of their narrative for member checking. Based on feedback from the participants, responses were modified, clarified, or removed. When looking at the collected data, the researcher organized all the gathered information into themes and descriptions, which was suggested by (Creswell, 2018). The researcher’s impression of depth and credibility was noted by using field notes and recordings taken during the interviews.

To organize the data, the researcher used coding techniques and used terms to represent categories coined by the participants in the study. Three different types of coding were used in this body of research: expected coding, which are topics the reader would expect to find; surprise coding, which are findings, which could not be anticipated; and codes of unusual or conceptual interest. Thus, the researcher classified ideas, which were common in the participants’ responses, and created a list of commonalities in specific words or phrases, also noted in responses. The researcher generated a description of five to seven themes, which included people, places, and events in a setting. As common elements became evident, the researcher documented and interpreted the distinctions of the meanings and interpretations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Then, the researcher developed tables and charts to document and analyze phenomenological themes, which emerged from respondents’ descriptions of their lived experiences.

Using this process ensured the validity of the researcher’s analysis of the collected data. As noted by Merriam (1997) and Marshall and Rossman (2016), data were collected and
analyzed simultaneously. The researcher summarized the findings and compared them to related findings in the literature. The researcher then developed an interpretation of the findings, outlined knowledge from completing the research study, and stated limitations and opportunities for future studies as suggested by Creswell (2018).

**Summary Chapter 3**

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to gain insight through the lived experiences of successful and departing teachers about their school principals’ practices, which impact teacher retention in rural public schools in Mississippi. This research study examined the lived experiences of six teachers and focus on their perceptions of how principal practices influenced their decisions to stay or leave. The subjects of this research study were former or current teachers in Mississippi Delta schools. This research study was intended to dive into the reasons behind attrition, the effects of attrition, and strategies for the eradication of attrition in the field of education (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Chapter three addressed qualitative inquiry methods utilized to conduct and analyze research established through emerging phenomenological theory. Research design, participant selection and consent, member checking interview techniques, and data analysis of this research study were outlined in this chapter.
CHAPTER IV

Data Analysis

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to gain insight from the perceptions of both returning and departing teachers on school principals’ practices, which impact teacher retention in rural public schools in Mississippi. This research study was intended to delve into the reasons behind attrition, the effects of attrition in the field of education, and strategies for the eradication of attrition. This study was conducted to convey the thoughts of two diverse groups of teachers: those who remain in the field beyond the first five years and those who choose to leave within the first five years. To develop an understanding of why teachers continue or concede, this research study supplements research previously documented on the subject of teacher retention, such as Aaronson (1999), Duyar (2013), Guarino (2006), Hendricks-Harris (2012), and the National Education Association (2021).

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to gain insight from the perceptions of both successful and departing teachers on the practices of school principals, which impact teacher retention in rural public schools in Mississippi through their lived experiences. This study examined the lived experiences of six teachers and focus on their perceptions of how principal practices influenced their decisions to stay or leave. The subjects of this research study were all former or current teachers in schools in the Mississippi Delta. This research study sought to delve into the reasons behind attrition, the effects of attrition, and strategies for the eradication of attrition in the field of education (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In this study, in-
depth interviews were implemented via Zoom. An existing survey by Godwin (2001) was also utilized for questioning during the interview process. Responses to the survey were then analyzed and coded by emerging themes. These interviews were used to examine reasons why teachers leave the profession or stay in the field, and to discuss plausible solutions to remedy attrition in education.

The research was conducted qualitatively by interviewing subjects, documenting their experiences, and analyzing responses. This allowed the subjects to express their unique experiences, which detail their reasons for leaving or staying. This study used the phenomenological method of qualitative research, which allows participants’ lived experiences to be examined by the researcher. This method is free of presumptions and relies solely on the participants’ responses (Dowling, 2007). Phenomenology helps us to understand the meaning of a person’s lived experience.

The researcher sought answers to a central question, followed by three sub-questions. This was the central question: What are the perceptions of both returning and departing teachers on school leadership practices which impact teacher retention in rural public schools in Mississippi? The following sub-questions contributed to answering the central question:

1. How do the participating current and former teachers describe the impact of their principal’s support of quality mentoring practices on decisions to stay in or leave the profession?
2. How do the participating current and former teachers describe the impact of their principal’s support of quality teacher collaboration on decisions to stay in or leave the profession?
3. How do the participating current and former teachers describe the impact of their principal’s support of a quality school culture on decisions to stay in or leave the profession?

**Participants**

The research subjects in this study chose to keep their identities confidential. For this reason, each participant is labeled with numbers one through six. Table 2 shows participant demographics, which were relevant to the study.

**Table 2**

*Participant Demographics*

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Research Subjects</th>
<th>Current Profession</th>
<th>Total Years as a Teacher</th>
<th>Total Years as a Teacher in a MS Delta school</th>
<th>Stayer/Leaver</th>
<th>Gender</th>
</tr>
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<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Leaver</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 2</td>
<td>Engineer</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Leaver</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 5</td>
<td>Entrepreneur</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Leaver</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 3</td>
<td>Lead Teacher</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Stayer</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 4</td>
<td>Educational</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Stayer</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 6</td>
<td>School Administrator</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Stayer</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Data Analysis**

In preparation for data analysis, the researcher recorded the participant interviews, listened to the recorded audio, ensured all transcriptions were accurate, made field notes, categorized materials, and sorted through the data. Transcriptions were acquired from Zoom and edited for accuracy by the researcher. After the transcriptions were completed, the researcher provided each participant with a copy of their narrative for member checking. Based on feedback from the participants, some responses were modified, clarified, or removed. When looking at the...
collected data, the researcher organized all the gathered information into themes and
descriptions, which was suggested by Creswell (2018). The researcher’s impression of depth and
credibility was documented by using field notes and recordings taken during the interviews.

To organize the data, the researcher used coding techniques and used terms to represent
common themes coined by the participants in the study. Three different types of coding were
used in this body of research: expected coding, which are topics the reader would expect to find;
surprise coding, which are findings that could not be anticipated; and codes of unusual or
conceptual interest. Thus, the researcher classified ideas common in the participants’ responses
and created a list of commonalities in specific words or phrases. As common elements became
evident, the researcher documented and interpreted the distinctions of the meanings and
interpretations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Then, the researcher developed tables and charts to
document and analyze phenomenological themes, which emerged from respondents’ descriptions
of their lived experiences. Using this process ensured the validity of the researcher’s analysis of
the collected data. Emotions, body language, and participant demeanor during the interviews
helped further contribute to the data. Participant 1’s disposition was stern but caring. Participant
2 perpetuated a positive attitude, although he admitted struggling initially in his career.
Participant 3 seemed to realize, although her leadership provided encouragement, she felt she
incompetent and wanted more constructive feedback. Participant 4 cried at one point during the
interview: She hadn’t processed her emotions and deeply missed her positive relationships with
her previous administration. Participant 5 seemed to waver as she answered, and she didn’t seem
very confident in her administrators. Participant 6 appeared to be confident in his responses to
the research questions. All participants emphasized how much the administrator’s support
impacted their experiences. Additionally, all participants’ demeanor conveyed positive attitudes.
Themes

This process resulted in five themes, which were relevant to the central and sub-questions the study sought to answer. The analysis of the interview transcripts resulted in the detection of the following themes: (1) first year of teaching; (2) advice, feedback, and support; (3) classroom management and discipline; (4) collaboration; and (5) PLC (professional learning communities) and presentations.

Most of the participants in this study expressed perceptions of their (1) first year of teaching. This theme mainly presented itself when participants were asked about their mentoring experiences. Three of the participants expressed they initially felt unprepared to do the job in which they were assigned prior to support from mentors or administrators. All participants recalled having mentors, whether they were formally or informally assigned. Four of the six participants believed mentors helped acclimate them to the profession and impacted the way they provided instruction, the way they managed discipline, and how they handled day to day operations of their classrooms. All six participants mentioned the culture of the school was affected by the administrator practices such as support, feedback, and general concern for both academic and personal progress of their staff. All six participants reported schools having a clear vision with established norms for practices such as enforcing rules of student behavior and lesson delivery. Of the six participants, only one reported being assigned a mentor who was not very cooperative and approachable.

Most of the participants also expressed comments about (2) advice, feedback, and support, which was another emerging theme from this study. Participants perceived advice from mentors and administrators helped them feel supported. They reported advice from administrators was the single greatest piece of information they had received. Participants also
conveyed advice, or feedback, transformed the way in which they ran their classrooms. This not only contributed to the teachers’ self-efficacy, but also to their confidence in making retention decisions. According to participants, school culture was affected by the manner in which administrators communicated what was being done correctly and what was not. In one case, the teacher reported feeling dismissed by their administrator when soliciting advice. The participant indicated the experience as being a contributing factor in their decision to leave the school.

Meanwhile, another individual reported the manner in which their administrator included them in collective decision-making influenced their perception of what makes school leaders effective. The participants’ mentors and leaders also provided classroom management, social-emotional, and resource support. The support received helped teachers transition to new schools or even jobs other than teaching.

Participant 3 expressed this theme by saying:

   This is going to sound odd, but everyone's very supportive. They always give me positive feedback. At the time that I first started, I knew I was struggling badly, but I didn't know what to fix or how to fix it; so, I appreciated being cheered on and being told it was okay. But it wasn't getting to the root of what I wanted to fix, so I think it's a balance because new teachers need to be cheered on and not held to the same level that I had expectation-wise so. Even though it wasn't what I was looking for, it was nice that people had my back.

Participant 4 also said this about overall support from their administration:

   So, administrators support [influenced my career with] anything I needed. The administrators would make sure we had it, and that's from building level to district level administration.
Also, participants agreed administrators who facilitated the practice of consistent feedback, whether formal or informal impacted their decisions to stay or leave. They posited, administrators’ consistency and openness to two-way communication positively influenced their perceptions and contributed to their decision to stay or leave. Capacity building through feedback substantiated the need for consistency in the practice. The participant shared the dismissive behavior made them apprehensive to solicit further feedback and less confident about doing their job. The same participant indicated this experience contributed to their decision to leave the school at the end of the school year. Participants expressed feedback advised them of whether they were doing an effective job or if the strategies they were using needed to be altered or eliminated altogether. Participants posited their level of self-efficacy improved because of advice and support. All shared instances in which they altered the way they interacted with students in difficult situations because of advice or insight they received from mentors or administrators. All six participants posited support or the lack there of, was one the most crucial factors which contributed to their success and ultimately their decision to leave or stay. Participants reported when support is an element of the culture, challenges were easier to overcome. They stated access to support in both academic and personal realms, built morale, and job satisfaction impacted their level of commitment to remain in a classroom. Participants described either changing teaching strategies, increasing lesson rigor, or altering discipline approaches as a result of advice shared through feedback. Participants described feeling better prepared to do their jobs with consideration to what they were learning during their first year of teaching.

Another theme, which emerged among all participants, was (3) classroom management and discipline. Participant experiences from both school culture and mentoring practices contributed to this theme. Participants seemed to emphasize their struggles with classroom
management during their initial years in the teaching profession. The participants found it extremely hard for them to deliver their lessons if they did not have good classroom management. They sought to gain guidance from their peers and mentors about regular classroom management strategies. Mentors shared time management strategies and modeled protocols and procedures in addition to providing insight on dealing with classroom management issues. When there were major disciplinary issues, where teachers had difficulty, the mentors gave them targeted advice specifically for the students they were working with. The participants asked for lesson plan templates or test questions from their teaching community. This way they could effectively engage all kids by learning how to differentiate instructional strategies.

The most valuable thing one participant learned from their mentor, especially when it came to dealing with student discipline, was how to properly address it with the student’s guardians. The mentor helped develop the teacher’s confidence to be open and up-front in those discussions with parents. In some disciplinary cases, the principal would provide support to work with the teacher and the students involved to come to a resolution. When the leadership was involved in the oversight of teachers’ classroom management and disciplinary procedures, the participants agreed the school had a better sense of community.

Participant 2 expressed the following about discipline in terms of school culture:

So, I think the overall culture of the school was definitely like, when it came to discipline, I think everything was done with a lesson in mind. I mean, so it wasn't like, “Okay, we're just going to yell at some kids because you're doing something wrong.” I was like there's always like a learning experience within that. So it's like, “Okay, you know we're going to sit down with kids that might be misbehaving and trying to figure out what's going on” or try to, you know, be proactive and kind of build those
relationships and stuff… I think really kind of having that culture of, “Hey, we're here to help you out and we're here to know about who you are and everything,” and “We're here just to make sure that as a person, you're learning more than just what's in the classroom but as an individual.” I think that was something that was really well done from the administration's point.

Most participants in the study made mention of the term (4) collaboration, which became another occurring theme. The participants and their mentors—some of whom included administrators—met to do lesson plans together, mapped out units, and exchanged ideas and strategies throughout the year. Some teachers had the opportunity to go to their mentors’ rooms and observe them while they were teaching. Hence, all the learned practices helped novice teachers develop their individual classrooms, including classroom rituals and routines. The mentors checked on the teachers on a regular basis, just to make sure they had what they needed and were okay through the week. They also scheduled meetings to catch up on how things were going with their mentee. Participants indicated mentorship and school culture aided their ability to establish community and familial relationships within their work environment. For some of them, it was like building another community outside of the classroom, where they worked together on school projects or at athletic events, which also developed relations with students and their families. Their interactions with colleagues and peers provided the participants with the support and resources to have a more positive teaching experience.

Participant 6 gave this example about collaboration:

The school that I started at had a very positive, very collaborative, very team-like culture that was cultivated by the leader at the time, so we, as an educational team, all really got along well. That's one of the things that made it so easy for me to get that information
from so many different sources from teachers -who were also first-year teachers- that had come from some other occupations to teachers. One of the teachers that worked a half a year had more than 30 years in education. I learned so much from that educator. So really, a wide range of experience and a wealth of knowledge. But we were all collaborative so we all got along really well.

Participants indicated they felt collaboration impacted their effectiveness in their career overall. Common planning times were also mentioned as an opportunity to collaborate. Participants suggested they felt collaboration improved their confidence to lead professional learning, ultimately improving the efficiency of some of their classroom strategies. One participant reported collaborating on a particular project not only improved their self-efficacy, but also collegial relationships.

Another emerging theme from this study was PLCs (professional learning communities) and presentations, and each participant spoke about how they contributed by sharing their knowledge with their peers. Most participants in the study talked about presentations they made to their peers. Some participants talked about how they didn’t really have PLCs, but they did have group sessions with their peers to share information. Some participants talked about how their learning communities shared data to improve certain content areas for the students’ clarification. The participants stated they would like to have trust in a system, which would allow them to participate in professional learning communities with their peers. With a platform like this, they could talk about standards and strategies, and it would allow them to learn more about what it means to be a teacher and what it looks like to teach effectively. They inquired about how to go about getting professional development on some skills and lessons, which they were not comfortable teaching. Participants suggested professional
development was complex while they were being prepared to meet the demands of the duties they were assigned.

Throughout their interviews, the participants expressed first year experiences; advice, feedback, and support; classroom management and discipline; collaboration; and professional learning communities as extremely important factors in their decision to concede or continue their teaching career. Their statements provided insight into personal experiences which they perceived as impactful factors in their career choice. These five themes were used as conditions for organizing the remaining data and provided insight into the research questions. The following section poses an overview of the research questions based on the narratives from the interviews of six participants in this study.

**Findings for Research Question One: Mentoring Practices**

Research question one asked: “How do the participating current and former teachers describe the impact of their principal’s support of quality mentoring practices on decisions to stay in or leave the profession?” This research question was addressed by examining whether the participants were assigned mentors by their school leadership. The participants were asked to share how mentoring affected their teaching experience. The effect of mentoring practices on the participants’ job performance was also explored in this question. The participants shared some things they learned from peer observations. Lastly, participants relayed meaningful experiences with their mentors.

Four out of six of the participants confirmed their administration provided them with a structured mentorship assignment. In some cases, the mentor-mentee relationship was not appointed officially by the institution but was sought out by the mentee. The participants acknowledged the value of having an available, knowledgeable peer, whom they could rely on a
consistent basis to guide them through their daily activities. In some cases, the participants interacted with more than just a single mentor. In doing so, it helped them develop more effective experiences, which also enhanced the learning experiences of the students. Those relationships helped give them the benefit of the mentors’ years of experience in the school district and knowledge of the culture and the climate in their work environment.

The mentorships were particularly meaningful for beginning teachers who had no experience and little knowledge of the expectations to uphold. Novice teachers indicated a reduction in stressors as they found having a mentor provided opportunities for guidance through the year. In their initial years of teaching, the participants stressed mentorship proved to be of great importance in terms of developing classroom management techniques. Mentorship also provided novice teachers with opportunities for collaboration, which reduced the anxiety that existed in the beginning of their career. The mentors served as models, demonstrating teaching strategies and providing a safe haven to vent or ask questions about the teaching process. The participants relayed it was beneficial to receive advice and feedback or simply have a colleague to talk to about happenings in the classroom. They also expressed having a mentor promoted confidence while they developed strategies to handle various school issues, including classroom management and discipline.

Participant 1 contributed the following about support from their school administration:

I don't know about like other teachers, but definitely administrators. This made me feel like they were not just checking to see what was happening academically, but also to make sure I was in a good place, being a new teacher. It helped build my confidence.

For all participants, mentoring was critical to improving the delivery of instruction in their classrooms. Some of the participants were given templates by their peers, which outlined
effective ways to approach teaching and classroom management. Mentoring relationships encouraged free, open dialogue in a safe environment where teachers could discuss issues without penalty or being judged. This space also gave the teachers the ability to collaborate and resolve any problems.

Some of the participants reached out to other experienced teachers who had a wealth of skills in the classroom. They wanted to find out what successful teachers did well in terms of classroom management and performance. Novice teachers observed their peers to learn how to use their surroundings to their advantage. Teachers learned how to be more interactive and to be more relatable with the kids in their classrooms. One participant solicited advice from teachers from another school who had been in education for a long time. The mentors showed the participants how to take things they were already doing in the classroom and make them motivating for students.

One participant was told by their mentor they were molding them because they already had the potential to become a great teacher. The participant was encouraged to increase the rigor of their lessons. The experience made the teacher perform the job better because they felt they were being supported. One participant talked about how their mentorship led to meaningful relationships outside of the work environment. For the participant, this created a feeling of inclusion, community, and trust.

Participant 4 specifically spoke about mentorship support directly from their administration:

Okay, so I was lucky and blessed because I had administrators who mentored me. It is rare that you have three administrators, who offer you mentorship, but they did. One administrator - I won't reveal him - I don't think I'm supposed to mention a real name, so one administrator - I remember I was crying in my room - and the administrator just
happened to be walking by the door and came in, and I was crying in my room on my planning period. But that mentor just happened to be by my door and planning and like talks to me… So, like I had that real emotional support.

According to the responses communicated by study participants, their decision to remain as teachers was greatly impacted by principal mentorship practices of providing them with opportunities to build relationships with and through mentors. Participants posited their mentorship experiences greatly improved their capacity and resiliency to do the job to which they were assigned, which, in turn, impacted their decision to stay or leave. Participants expressed the impact of having more than one mentor and having administrators, who also served as mentors in some cases, was even more progressive. Participants’ perceptions of principals’ practices, in which they checked in on the teachers, was a similar theme throughout the interviews. All the participants indicated they had at least one positive experience, while some mentioned experiences where the assigned mentor was not as cooperative. Overall, participants perceived their involvement with mentors as impressionable and necessary for success.

Findings for Research Question Two: Teacher Collaboration

Research question two asked: “How do the participating current and former teachers describe the impact of their principal’s support of quality teacher collaboration on decisions to stay in or leave the profession?” This research question examined the participants’ relationships with their colleagues while they were employed as teachers in Mississippi Delta schools. In those relationships, the participants were asked to share experiences with colleagues who were difficult to work with and colleagues who were helpful to work with, as these relationships affected the overall workspace and collaboration. The participants also discussed their experiences with PLCs
and presentations, which were a way for them to lead in collaborative efforts. Most importantly, the participants shared experiences about how their administration encouraged collaboration with their peers.

The participants described their relationships with colleagues as being full of mutual respect. They expressed they had positive interactions with their colleagues, and their peers were always checking in every day or between periods. The students could tell when teachers and administrators all were on the same page. Most participants described their relationships with their peers as positive and collaborative, and they had a team-like culture, which was cultivated in the school by the administration. A few participants shared times when colleagues helped them through difficult situations, mostly with classroom management. The participants said their colleagues mentored them by expecting them to hold the kids accountable for everything with love and firmness.

Every participant was asked to give an example of a colleague who was difficult to work with and to give a brief explanation. A few participants gave examples of colleagues who were just placed in their positions and were unhappy. Due to this unhappiness, those colleagues had no interest in giving their students proper instruction, and the participants described those classrooms as “party” or “fun” rooms. This would cause a disruption in the participants’ abilities to perform their own instruction, and it would hinder the overall culture of the school. Participant 6 relayed they had to intervene with one colleague’s classroom management. They said, “I found myself having to manage two classrooms.” One participant said one of their colleagues was confrontational and relentlessly questioned about why they had to do certain things, including duties for their job, such as procedures, lesson planning, and collaboration. Participant 3 said one of their colleagues had begun to act in their own best interest instead of the students.
On the other hand, the participants recalled experiences with colleagues who were helpful and pleasant to work alongside. Most participants agreed support, positivity, encouragement, reliability, and the ability to collaborate on problem-solving were all characteristics of cooperative colleagues. One participant noted one colleague who was pleasant to work with was going through a similar situation as them, so relatability was also an important characteristic. Participant 3 expressed these thoughts about colleagues they got along with best, “Hey, we're all here for the better end of the students. And here's how we're going to do it.” The relationships between pleasant colleagues and the participants were in the best interest of the students and overall mutual success in job performance.

In terms of collaboration, each participant was asked about how they contributed to their school in terms of PLCs (professional learning communities) and peer presentations. Most participants had the opportunity to do presentations, which presented updates on student test score data. A few participants had the opportunity to lead some of the departmental meetings in their school. One participant described their meetings as a place to just share information without any specific expectations or pressure, which made them and their peers more likely to give input and feedback.

Some participants shared experiences about how they collaborated with their colleagues on extracurricular projects. One participant collaborated with their peers on an end-of-year promotional program for their school, which ending up being a complete success. Another participant completed collaborative work with a group of colleagues to do a project for a “welcome back” event for their students at the beginning of the school year. Participant 2 talked about participating in a fundraising project, which turned out to be a positive extension for their community. Participant 3 said this about collaboration projects, “I think sometimes you've got to
take a role where you're leading and sometimes you take a role when you're following. And it's important to know where you are in that process.”

All the participants discussed how their administration encouraged collaboration with their peers. Most participants seemed to recall having mandatory department meetings or they were allowed similar planning periods with colleagues in the same grade or subject area. When they had a planning period at the same time, the team got together to plan and collaborate to discuss various classroom issues. One participant emphasized their ability to have department meetings, which involved their administration, helped them transition to upcoming changes in the school environment. The administrators also encouraged collaborative PLCs and professional development sessions for participants and their colleagues. When the administration granted the participants the ability to share information with their colleagues, they felt they were better equipped to perform their jobs effectively. In meetings, the administrators discussed goals and how to achieve the goals with the participants, and the administrators gave them the support needed to do so. Some participants stated their administration was willing to implement new practices, which their cohort suggested, and this empowered the teachers and created a supportive work environment. With the principal’s involvement in the participants’ collaboration with their peers, they felt their work environment was open and secure to give input and ask questions.
Participant 4 relayed this perception about how principal practices promoted collaboration in their district:

We were encouraged to stay together. We were encouraged to collaborate, and, even when I left my first school and went to my other school, there were collaboration instructors. A lot of it was, uh, around planning, but it was encouraged and it was encouraged by [the administrators].

Participant responses indicated collaboration approaches or practices relating to shared leadership in the form of leading professional development and data sessions, professional learning communities, critical friend protocol, subject-area teams, common planning time, teacher-admin think talks, school or district-wide sessions, or team appeal to the administrator were significant factors which affected their decision to leave or stay. Teachers explained collaboration helped them acclimate to the school and helped ease the stress of the job. The participants reinforced principal support through the practice of facilitating collaboration opportunities was one of the most crucial factors in retention.

**Findings for Research Question Three: School Culture**

Research question three asked: “How do the participating current and former teachers describe the impact of their principal’s support of a quality school culture on decisions to stay in or leave the profession?” This research question was addressed by examining the culture and norms of schools, in which each participant was employed. Participants were asked what their role was in helping encourage a positive culture in their schools. Then, they were asked about how their school's administration impacted the culture of their school. Each participant gave insight into how support from their administrators influenced their career. The participants also shared their views about how their administration’s norms and practices negatively impacted
their school’s culture. Participants were asked for their opinions of whether staff development influenced their decisions to leave or stay. They were also asked to consider how their administration contributed to the teacher retention rate in their school. Participants were asked for their opinions on what behaviors they think administrators should exhibit to positively impact teacher retention.

The first set of interview questions for research question three investigated the participants’ experiences with school culture. Participant 1 discussed two different experiences with school culture from different locations. They spoke about their experience in the Mississippi Delta school as being supported on an individual level and given morale by the administration. Whereas, upon transferring to another school out of state, they were met with a top-down approach, where the administration was not involved with what was going on in the teachers’ classrooms. Another participant talked about how their administration enforced a culture of accountability, which emphasized quality instruction. Participant 3 also had two different experiences. Their positive experience focused on support and motivation, which came from the administrators. Like Participant 1, they also described their negative experience with school culture as being a top-down approach. Participant 4 commented about how their first school was community-oriented and student-driven with high expectations; however, they later transferred to an urban school, and they left the field of education altogether due to the pandemic and their administration’s lack of regard for the safety of their educators and staff. Participant 5 described their experience of their school culture as being “non-existent,” and they claimed there was no foundation for expectations.
Participant 6 relayed this experience of their school culture:

The principal there was a former coach and that's kind of the field that was brought to the staff we were all teammates… It developed this family-like atmosphere there at the school so having that positive culture made it that was one less thing you had to deal with coming into education.

Each participant was also asked what their role was in helping encourage a positive culture in their school. One participant said they tried to pass their expertise on to newer colleagues once they attained more years of experience in the classroom. Another participant felt they encouraged a positive culture by letting the students know they cared and wanted them to be successful. Participant 3 talked about how they held students accountable and how their support influenced an optimistic school culture. Another participant described their role as being high energy, and they would communicate and interact with parents and students when out in public spaces in the community. They also indicated they tried to make their classroom a safe space for their kids, which also helped with their classroom management. One participant shared they contributed to their school culture by organizing spaces and decorating bulletin boards, which were updated to help give students information about various subjects. Participant 6 showed initiative by arriving at the school early every day to greet and welcome the students, and their consistency contributed to their school culture.

The participants were invited to share their perspectives on how the school's administration influenced the culture of their school. Participant 1 expressed support was the most vital action their administration provided, which influenced their school culture. Participant 2 shared the administrators emphasized learning lessons in terms of student misconduct. They added there was a sense of awareness of everyone going through their own personal experiences
while trying to foster a healthy school community. Participant 3 emphasized their administration had a positive culture in terms of how discipline was approached. Everyone was involved in trying to address issues. They said a positive school culture depended on the level of respect the administration gave the teachers and students.

Participant 4 shared the following about how their administration impacted their school culture:

> For our school administrators - for the culture - they had their teachers’ backs. They had their students’ backs, too. Let's be clear, but to know you have an administrator who supports you? That influences the culture.

> From their experience, Participant 5 stated their school had a positive culture because it was student-centered. However, they said there was a discrepancy in expectations and accountability to follow through. Participant 6 expressed their administration was vision-centered and they emphasized teamwork. The ability for everyone to be on the same page and strive together for success greatly impacted the positive culture in their school.

The participants were also asked their opinions as to how the support of their administrators influenced their careers. Participant 1 said their district and event training, which were encouraged by the administrators, helped give them a lot of insightful information to be able to perform their job effectively. Participant 2 shared how they were held to high expectations, and they were given the support to reach their goals. Although they aren’t in education anymore, they share their takeaway was routine and emphasis, which helps them arrive at resolutions in their new workplace. Participant 3 expressed their thoughts, “I think it's important for administrators to remember to evaluate people where they're at in the learning process and give them the support they need where they're at.” Participant 4 articulated their administration, including the superintendents, helped with whatever resources were necessary for
the success of the teachers and students. The support of their administration helped them receive an honor from the White House and helped them have a voice to advocate for teachers from the Mississippi Delta. Participant 6 emphasized how they’ve taken the concept of creating a positive culture into other workplace settings.

Participant 5 shared the following:

> Administrative support influenced my career tremendously because if you have their support and you know that they have your back, whether it's with you know constructive criticism or assisting with something.

After focusing on the positive aspects of school culture, the participants were asked to share their experiences with how their administration’s norms or practices had a negative impact on their school culture. Participant 1 shared an experience, which wasn’t from a Mississippi Delta school, but they described the administration at the particular school as being demanding, and the administration there didn’t take teachers’ input into consideration. Participant 4 also shared an experience, which wasn’t from a Mississippi Delta school, and they discussed how their administration handled their employment during the pandemic. They described teachers as being “a body in the classroom,” and they weren’t valued by their leaders. The students noticed this, too, and they shared it negatively impacted the overall school culture. Participant 5 said there were two negative practices, which impacted their school: inconsistency and lack of preparation. They said their administration and peers would keep putting things off after they kept asking for help with things, like looking at data or implementing plans. Participant 3 agreed with Participant 5 in terms of inconsistency from their administration, which negatively impacted their school culture. Participant 6 expressed one of the worst things administrators do to negatively impact the school culture is to leave their teachers to fend for themselves without any
Participant 2 expressed they couldn’t think of any specific examples of what negatively impacted their school culture, except for the stressors of testing days.

In this study, the participants were asked to share how staff development influenced their decisions to stay or leave. Participant 1 was a leaver, and they expressed their staff development improved their ability to do the job; however, they did not correlate how this influenced their decision. Participant 2 also is a leaver, and they shared there “wasn’t any one thing in particular,” which influenced them to leave the field. Participant 3 was a stayer, and they said how helpful the professional developments were in enhancing their ability to teach. Participant 4 was a stayer, and they described how their administration had hired consultants to strategically improve teaching in the classroom. To best summarize their experience, they used the expression: “I was continuously developed.” Participant 5 was a leaver, and they expressed there wasn’t any staff development to influence their decision. Participant 6 was a stayer, and they said staff development didn’t influence their decision but they did complete three years of training.

The participants shared their perspectives about how they believed their administration contributed to the teacher retention rate in their schools. Participant 2 said their administration helped retention by being a resource and being there for teachers to reach out to. They described their administration as fostering a healthy workplace environment, which felt like a community or family. Participant 3 described how their administration was consistent and gave everyone common goals for success. Participant 4 also described consistency as an element of how their administration contributed to the retention rate. They said their principals were consistent with support, with how students were served, and with how disciplinary actions were applied. They also agreed with Participant 2 about the factor of feeling like a part of a community. Participant 6 commented by saying their school didn’t have a high turnover rate, but they didn’t go into detail
about practices, which encouraged retention. Participant 5 said there wasn’t anything the administration did to help retention. They said the principals would make promises without any follow-through to fulfill them.

Participant 1 shared this experience about how their administration helped the retention rate in their school:

I think I mentioned in the last response that feeling like you have support from your administrators and your team and that there's a good environment along your immediate colleagues as well, where like you actually feel supported.

Participants were asked for their thoughts about which behaviors they think administrators should exhibit to positively impact teacher retention. Participant 3 said their administrators positively impact teacher retention by providing proper disciplinary protocols.

Participant 4 maintained creating a sense of community, from staff to students to parents, should be a critical focus for administrators to have good teacher retention. They emphasized the service to students and the value of teachers and staff are critical for administrators to establish.

Participant 5 said compassion, commitment, and appreciation were all important factors, which administrators should contemplate for teacher retention. Participant 6 believed administrators should take more consideration into what their teachers need. They said the principals should get teachers’ input on how they can be more helpful to them. Participant 2 seemed to agree with a lot of the other participants in terms of positive behaviors, such as commitment, consistency, holding expectations, and listening to the teachers. They emphasized how administrators need to be a resource for teachers to succeed, which would impact retention. Participant 1 also expressed the administrators should value and show appreciation for their teachers to retain them. They stressed teachers should be treated like professionals in their work environment.
The results indicate teachers feel the principal sets the tone for the culture of the school. Participants’ responses suggested when the principal is supportive of practices, rituals and routines, programs, and policies then programs will be more effective. Teachers mentioned they were more likely to stay at schools where the principal practices of supporting a positive school culture. Teachers mentioned practices or protocols, relating to classroom autonomy, recognition, student and teacher recognition, and praise, impacted their decision to stay. Teachers mentioned programs of support including those which empowered teachers by giving them a voice in decision-making, principals listening to concerns with compassion, and systems of expectations and accountability for teachers and students impacted the culture and their decision to stay. Teachers also stated a culture where feedback and follow-up were routine gave them a sense of growth and self-efficacy also affected their decision to stay. Teachers explained major reasons for their decision to leave a school was impacted by practices of lack of respect, compassion, and inconsistency.

**Summary of Chapter 4**

For data analysis, the researcher documented the participant interviews, listened to the recorded audio, confirmed all transcriptions were precise, made field notes, organized materials, and arranged the data. To sort the data, the researcher used coding techniques and used terms to represent themes, which were devised by the participants during the study. First year of teaching; advice, feedback, and support; classroom management and discipline; collaboration; and PLC (professional learning communities) and presentations were all themes, which emerged from participant responses during the interviews. Overall, the themes showed administrative support, collaboration, and professional learning opportunities were all interrelated factors.
All six of the participants felt administrative support was the number one consideration, which led to collaboration and mentoring practices. Administrative support was cited in several categories, such as emotional support, disciplining students, and reward or recognition. Additionally, providing opportunities for teachers to collaborate was particularly valuable to teachers. Teachers articulated the need for common planning time being essential for collaboration which led to team building and unity. Upon reviewing the data on the types of practices administrators should demonstrate to aid in the retention of teachers, teachers overwhelmingly responded leaders should have high integrity while treating teachers as professionals; leaders should be compassionate, fair, and consistent; and leaders should empower teacher through opportunities of autonomy and flexibility. The results of the study indicate principals’ practices had a high impact on the participants’ decisions to stay or leave.
CHAPTER V

Summary and Recommendations

Introduction

This chapter is a presentation of the summary, conclusions, implications, and recommendations for this research study. This body of research sought to gain insight from the perceptions of both returning and departing teachers on school principals’ practices, which impact teachers’ decisions on whether to remain in school or seek employment in another school or profession in rural public schools in Mississippi. Teacher shortages are exacerbated by districts’ inability to retain effective teachers. Retention has become a significant issue for the educational system because teacher turnover comes results in tremendous fiscal costs to districts and greatly impacts the lives of students and their academic development.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a synopsis and interpretation of the data from participants’ interviews. Responses from participants indicated how they believed leadership practices impact teacher retention. Themes emerged from the dialogue in the interviews. In addition, implications and recommendations for future research are revealed.

Research on how to retain high-quality educators is at the front of educational platforms, and data indicate a rising need to recruit, retain, and adequately train teachers, if schools are to provide equal access to quality educational experiences. Since there is a need for review and further study of infrastructural shifts in teacher recruitment and retention, this study seeks to address the following: the reasons teachers choose education as a career, which teachers stay the course, which teachers leave within the first few years, motivation factors behind those who stay,
motivating factors behind those who leave, what recruitment practices are effective, what financial incentives and legislative processes can be implemented to increase retention.

The issue of retaining teachers continues to be a critical national crisis and he reported nearly all school districts in the United States are affected by perpetual teacher turnover (DiCarlo, 2015). The most reported reason for teachers leaving the field of teaching was inadequate leadership support (Ingersoll & Merrill, 2010). Considering the aforementioned, it is necessary to determine if the leadership practices of principals in schools impact teacher retention.

This research sought answers to a central question: What are the perceptions of both returning and departing teachers on school leadership practices which impact teacher retention in rural public schools in Mississippi? The following sub-questions contributed to answering the central question:

1. How do the participating current and former teachers describe the impact of their principal’s support of quality mentoring practices on decisions to stay in or leave the profession?
2. How do the participating current and former teachers describe the impact of their principal’s support of quality teacher collaboration on decisions to stay in or leave the profession?
3. How do the participating current and former teachers describe the impact of their principal’s support of a quality school culture on decisions to stay in or leave the profession?

The purpose of this study was to investigate, through a qualitative research method using a phenomenological design, the perception of teachers on the impact leadership has on teacher
The researcher conducted interviews with teachers of Mississippi Delta Schools with five or fewer years of teaching experience. The study interviews consisted of several relevant questions, which were presented to six teachers.

The researcher conducted all interviews. Themes emerged from the dialogue in the interviews which were presented and discussed in the previous chapter. Teachers expressed their thoughts on lived experiences regarding how the behavior of those in leadership positions at their school impacted teacher retention. In addition, implications and recommendations for future research were revealed in this study.

**Summary of Findings**

While teacher retention is not a new problem, the impact of administrators’ practices on teacher retention remains an important factor. It is essential to understand teachers’ perceptions and beliefs, in an effort to identify dispositions related to the effectiveness of school leadership. Culture, climate, and expectations guide behaviors, which ultimately lead to the establishment of a supportive teaching and learning environment. Ingersoll (2003) indicated principals’ behaviors which are viewed by teachers as administrative support, or lack thereof, have been linked to teacher retention and creating positive, or negative, working conditions. Additionally, research on successful principals has found successful principals are open-minded and remain optimistic when the availability of professional development and training programs are offered (Day & Leithwood, 2007).

The themes, which emerged from the participants’ responses, and the themes’ corresponding weights were developed from this qualitative research. The study consisted of interviews with six participants, former or current teachers in Mississippi Delta schools. While it is not known to what extent administrators’ leadership behaviors influence teacher retention in
the schools in this study, the research results have supplemented critical findings, which were derived from valuable perceptions of the participants.

Research question one addresses the impact of principals’ support of quality mentoring practices and how they impacted the participants’ decisions on whether to leave or stay. The positive impact of mentor relationships within the first five years of a teacher’s career was further substantiated by Maready (2018), when graphing the attrition rates of teachers by years in the classroom, a U-shaped curve was formed, where up to 50% of teachers leave the teaching profession in the first five years, at which point attrition drops intensely and levels-off until the retirement years. As teachers’ careers approach retirement eligibility, attrition increases dramatically once more (Ingersoll, 2001). According to Maready (2018), this indicates that once past the first five years of teaching, most teachers remain in the profession until they retire. According to the Beginning Teacher Longitudinal Study, Maready (2018) also reported 17% of teachers left by their fifth year, 15% by their fourth year, and 11% by their third year, indicating an upward trend heading toward the fifth year of teaching. The second wave of the BTLS indicated 92% of teachers with assigned mentors remained in the field as compared to 84% without mentors remaining in the field (Maready, 2018). Experienced teachers report they give themselves more time to consider whether to leave or stay (Department for Education, 2018).

Participants indicate advice and feedback from mentors and administrators improved their self-efficacy, a term coined by Bandura (2012), meaning an individual’s belief in their capabilities, improves with consistent mentoring, coaching, and feedback from peers and administrators. When asked to enumerate the percentage of ineffective teachers, novice educators responded with an approximation of 27%; however, the actual number is fewer than six percent (Gawel, 1996). The discrepancy indicates novice teachers lack confidence in their
work. When the measures of efficacy improve, so does practice. When practice improves, so does job satisfaction (Blanchet, 2020). Enhanced skills, which are gained through continued training, practice, and collaboration, contribute to job satisfaction. A survey on Mississippi Teacher Retention found the vast majority of teachers value the ability to have a mentor and learn from their peers, and school administration is the most prevalent influence on teacher attrition and retention (Cook & Minor, 2022). Teacher retention increases when individuals feel valued and supported, which the participants in this study corroborated in their interviews. There has been an emphasis on why teachers leave, but Williams (2003) says more emphasis should be placed on what gives teachers the persistence to endure.

Key findings from the teacher interviews revealed teachers perceive mentorship, whether formal or informal, positively impacts retention. Findings also revealed teachers believe professional development improved their effectiveness and self-efficacy, which ultimately impacted job satisfaction as indicated by Hertzberg’s Theory. Teachers said achievement recognition also contributed to job satisfaction. Another key finding which was revealed was retention was improved when teachers were granted opportunities for advancement as they developed advanced teaching strategies.

Research question two focused on how the participants of the study perceived their principal’s support of teacher collaboration. According to findings from research done by Duyar et al. (2013), many leadership characteristics and collaborative practices predict teacher attitudes in addition to confidence levels, which ultimately leads to the decision of whether or not they will leave a school or district. The study also indicates a correlation between an employee’s work attitude and job performance. Thus, teachers, who have a positive attitude about their work, will effectively execute lessons and feel more confident in their ability to manage their classroom.
When teachers perceive their own effectiveness, they are more likely to continue to be a part of the process (Duyar et al., 2013).

Participant responses indicated collaboration approaches or practices relating to shared leadership were significant factors, which affected their decision to stay or leave. The interviews revealed collaboration helped the participants adjust to the school and alleviated the stress of their workload. When the administration allowed the participants to share information with their colleagues, they felt they were more prepared to perform their jobs efficiently. In meetings, the administrators discussed goals and how to achieve the goals with the participants, and the administrators gave them the support needed to do so. Some participants shared their administration was willing to apply new practices, which their peers suggested, and this practice empowered the teachers and created a supportive work environment. The participants reinforced principal support through the practice of facilitating collaboration opportunities was one of the most crucial factors in retention.

Research question three explored how the participants viewed their administrators’ influence and support of school culture. When the principal is considered to be an instructional leader, collaboration and team-building become vital aspects of the culture and climate in a school, and this helps teachers feel appreciated and supported, which leads to a rise in job satisfaction. Consistent with Leithwood (2008), teachers' responses to interview questions concerning culture indicate principals' development of a positive culture is imperative in retaining teachers in their building. Hertzberg's two-factor theory further substantiates positive school culture as fostered by job satisfaction (Gawel, 1996).

When describing school culture, all six participants reported principals as the most prominent factor in maintaining either a positive or negative culture. Five of the six participants
cited instances of a family-like culture at their respective schools, which helped reduce job-related stress. Teachers contended continuous administrator and collegiate feedback provided a well-defined understanding of their school’s culture and vision. Many teachers describe their motivation as a product of feeling a sense of belonging and a sense of recognized value which was also a result of the positive culture perpetuated by the principal. Many of them cite ideal work conditions with strong leaders who have visions of success as a major component of the culture, which impacted retention decisions.

**Conclusion of Research Study**

For some time now, school districts have been losing the services of qualified teachers, and this trend has increased considerably with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Even before the COVID-19 outbreak, Ehrenberg and Smith (2017) reported a market shift, where demand for teachers was outweighing supply. They reported enrollment in teacher education programs was declining, and attrition and difficulties with teacher recruitment put public education in a difficult situation. These simultaneous events emphasize the need for policy overhauls, which focus on the education job market.

Guarino et al. (2006) reported attrition in the field was becoming more frequent, even though careers in education are highly regarded and prestigious. The responses of the teachers in this study suggest educational leaders would benefit from taking teachers’ perceptions of their practices into account, which contributes to teacher job satisfaction and teacher retention. As schools explore strategies to increase the retention of teachers, it is important for administrators to understand the relationship between the leadership practices of principals and the decisions of teachers to remain in the school or leave. Guarino et al. (2006) supported the notion that job satisfaction plays a substantial role in whether or not individuals pursue a chosen endeavor. In
addition, participants agreed leadership contributes to whether or not individuals continue to teach.

Contrary to findings by Elias (2012), the lack of effort and support from novice teachers’ building-level leaders, recruitment, and mentors has amplified attrition in the field of education, most of the teachers interviewed applaud most of their colleagues and administrators for the support they provide in trying to ensure they are successful in the classroom. Most of the teachers express satisfaction with the teacher training, collaboration opportunities, and preparation for dealing with problematic student behaviors, which have been provided to support their success.

Consistent with the findings of Renard (2003), most teachers believe, as new teachers, they diligently prepare for their first-year students, and they enter the classroom eager to begin their careers. They believe the teachers who decide to resign, usually do so because of work overload. The teachers also share the same experience reported by Bandura (2012) that their efficacy, their belief in their own capabilities, improved as a result of the consistent mentoring, coaching, and feedback from both peers and administrators. If school leaders, educational institutions, and policymakers can identify and eradicate the reasons for quality educators leaving the profession, the educational system would reap tremendous benefits.

**Implications of this Research Study**

Through this study lived experiences of six teachers were explored through interviews to understand why teachers stay or leave in educational careers. Recent data indicate a market shift, where demand exponentially outweighs supply (Ehrenberg & Smith, 2017). Therefore, it is imperative studies like this one are implemented to improve teacher retention.
This study revealed teachers’ perception of principals’ leadership practices has a direct impact on teacher retention. Consequently, this study’s findings can enhance awareness of principals’ influence on teacher retention. Schools and districts would benefit from having data on which factors influence teacher retention and which factors contribute to attrition. This study also adds to bodies of research to the extent of the knowledge of which factors teachers deem most important in influencing their decision. Teacher turnover comes at the expense of student achievement and the financial cost to school districts, which emphasizes a need for teacher job satisfaction. There has been an emphasis on why teachers leave the field, but Williams (2003) says more emphasis should be placed on what gives teachers the tenacity to persevere.

Because extreme teacher turnover can be costly and damaging to instructional consistency in schools, having access to this data may perhaps prevent attrition and prevent schools and districts from spending unnecessary money, time, and other resources which can be better used in educating students. The implementation of targeted legislative and school policies and practices with the purpose of effective recruitment and retention the eradication of attrition might be achieved. District and school leaders must develop a comprehensive awareness of effective leadership practices that are conducive to retaining teachers. Leadership practices associated with teacher retention based on this study suggest the need for continued cognizance of a robust system of teacher support and feedback, accountability for principals to develop a positive school culture, and comprehensive mentoring practices and professional learning opportunities. Consequently, principals are charged with the understanding that leadership practices are a crucial factor in teacher job satisfaction which is critical to retention.
Recommendations for Future Study

This study is nearly a first phase in understanding the role administrators play in teachers’ decisions to remain in the teaching profession. Although this study supports evidence school leaders are an essential element in teacher retention decisions, further studies are necessary to establish how teachers are truly affected by what they identify as supportive school leadership.

School districts should endeavor to offer competitive salaries to teachers. Districts with limited resources find it problematic to contend against opposing job industries (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). This significantly impacts low-socioeconomic schools, like those in the Mississippi Delta, which lose teachers at a significantly higher rate than those in wealthier areas, and it makes them more vulnerable to the effects of attrition (Hanushek et al., 2004). In addition, as suggested by Maready (2018), school leaders should encourage collaboration among teachers so that retention rates can be increased.

In research, there are considerably fewer studies on qualitative teacher perspectives of attrition, which leaves gaps and gives opportunities for discovery. Whereas qualitative factors include considerations, such as perceptions, beliefs, cultural context, and experiences, quantitative factors provide data based on factual attributes such as age, gender, and years of experience and would be helpful in analyzing and enumerating such factors. A quantitative research study could also be used to investigate the long-term effects of the findings in my study. A mixed-method research design would be appropriate to examine factors of this study in more depth.
This study could be duplicated with a larger population to include the different regions of Mississippi (Agricultural Communications, 2017). A comparative component to the study would add to the data which could be studied quantitatively to broaden the scope of findings using a larger number of participants. There is a need for review and further study of infrastructural shifts in teacher recruitment and retention, and this study sought to address the reasons teachers choose education as a career, which teachers stay the course and which teachers leave within the first few years, motivation factors behind those who stay, and what recruitment practices are effective.

A future study should be conducted to examine why individuals pursue careers in teaching and determine the characteristics common in these individuals. Recent data indicate a market shift, where demand exponentially outweighs supply (Ehrenberg & Smith, 2017). Enrollment in teacher education programs is declining, and attrition and difficulties with teacher recruitment put public education in a precarious state. A study should be conducted to explore the need for policy overhauls that focus on the education job market. An investigation should be conducted to document the supply and demand framework to make policymakers and school leaders aware of the relevant characteristics of teachers who enter the profession. Recommendations for future research are to investigate how to develop policies and practices which improve teacher preparation programs, recruitment strategies, and appealing incentives for novice and future teachers.
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REFERENCES


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LIST OF APPENDICES
APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL QUESTIONS

Interviewer: Chiqueta Daniels
Date: ____June 2022
Time: 6:00 p.m.
Location: Via Zoom Call

1. Interviewee will be asked to provide a time in which they feel comfortable to participate in the interview.

2. Interviewer will confirm time via email.

3. A confirmation email with date, time and Zoom link will be sent back to the interviewee.

4. On the scheduled date and time, at the beginning of the Zoom call the interviewer will read the script below.

5. The interview will be recorded and the interviewer will take notes and write the participant’s responses verbatim.

6. After the interview, the investigator will review the recording and revise written notes as needed to ensure accuracy.

7. After reviewing and revising the notes, a copy will be forwarded to the participant for member checking and accuracy.

8. Upon receipt of approval of notes from the interviewee, the interviewer will assign codes and utilize qualitative data software for data analysis.

9. Results and Summary of findings from the data will be documented along with limitations of the study and recommendations for future studies.
Script: Welcome and thank you for your participation today. My name is Chiqueta Daniels and I am a student at the University of Mississippi conducting a study on “Teacher Perceptions on Practices Which Impact Teacher Job Satisfaction and Retention” in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Ph.D. Thank you for participating in this 60-90 minute interview session which will include questions regarding your experiences as a teacher in a Mississippi Delta school and its impact on your decision to leave or continue teach. I would like your permission to record this interview, so I may accurately document the information you convey. (Pause) If at any time during the interview you wish to discontinue the use of the recorder or the interview itself, please feel free to let me know. All of your responses are confidential. Your responses will be used to develop a better understanding the perceptions of both returning and departing teachers on school leadership practices which impact teacher retention in rural public schools in Mississippi. The purpose of this study is to increase our understanding what school and district leaders, teachers and policy-makers might implement to identify and develop strategic protocols and procedures that improve the retention of teachers and to promote stability in the educational field. At this time I would like to remind you of your written consent to participate in this study. I am the responsible investigator, specifying your participation in the research project: “Teacher Perceptions on Practices Which Impact Teacher Job Satisfaction and Retention”. Thank you. Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary. If at any time you need to stop or take a break, please let me know. You may also withdraw your participation at any time without consequence. Do you have any questions or concerns before we begin? Then with your permission we will begin the interview.
This concludes the interview. Thank you again for participating in this study. Are there any questions?

**Central Research Question:** What are the perceptions of both returning and departing teachers on school leadership practices which impact teacher retention in rural public schools in Mississippi?

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<tr>
<th>Research Question 1</th>
<th>Research Question 2</th>
<th>Research Question 3</th>
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<tr>
<td>How do the mentoring practices imposed by leadership influence the participating current or former teachers’ decisions to stay in or leave the profession?</td>
<td>How does the quality of leadership support for teacher collaboration impact the participating current or former teachers’ decisions to stay in or leave the profession?</td>
<td>How does the influence of leadership on school culture influence the participating current or former teachers’ decisions to stay in or leave the profession?</td>
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**Interview Questions**

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<tr>
<td>Were you assigned a mentor at your district/school upon initial employment?</td>
<td>Can you describe your relationships with your colleagues?</td>
<td>Can you describe some cultural and norms for your school?</td>
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<td>How often did you meet with your mentor?</td>
<td>Can you describe a colleague that was particularly difficult to work with and why you classified them as difficult?</td>
<td>How do you think the administration has contributed to that retention rate? Give specific examples.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Can you describe mentoring practices and activities which you participated in at your district/school?</td>
<td>Can you describe a colleague that was particularly helpful and pleasant to work with and why you classified them as helpful?</td>
<td>Can you describe how your school administrators influenced the culture of the school? What specific actions did they take to encourage a positive culture?</td>
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<td>Can you describe some information or advice you sought from your peers about what to teach and how to teach it?</td>
<td>Can you describe how your administration encouraged collaboration with your peers? What practices and protocols were facilitated by school administrators?</td>
<td>Can you describe your role in helping encourage a positive culture in the school?</td>
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<td>Can you describe some advice given to you from your peers.</td>
<td>Describe a time which you were asked to present in a Professional Learning Community (PLC) session.</td>
<td>How did administrator support influence you in your career, and how do you think that support might influence other teachers to continue working at your school?</td>
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<td>observations?</td>
<td>Did you feel it was successful? Why or why not?</td>
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<td>Did you feel it was successful? Why or why not?</td>
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Can you describe some advice or feedback given by your peers/principal?

Can you describe how it made you feel?

As a teacher, how often were you observed by your peers/school administrators?

Describe a time when you collaborated with colleagues on a project or activity. Did you complete the assignment successfully? If not, please describe the reason.

What type of staff development have you received that has helped you make a decision to stay in or leave the teaching profession?

Did you feel sufficiently prepared to teach in the way that you are/were expected to teach at your school?

What types of behaviors do you think administrators should exhibit that would positively impact teacher retention?

Can you describe some norms or practices of the school which made a negative impact on the culture and climate?
APPENDIX B: MAP OF THE MISSISSIPPI DELTA REGION

(Agricultural Communications, 2017)
APPENDIX C: INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH STUDY

Invitation E-mail for participants

To: [participant e-mail address]

Subject: Research Focus Group Discussion and Individual Interview at: The University of Mississippi

Dear [Name]:

Your experiences and insight as a teacher is very important to us. We know that many of our teachers face significant challenges in their efforts to achieve their educator goals. Therefore, my dissertation committee and I are very interested in learning what we can do to help teachers stay in the field of education and have a successful and satisfying experience.

To help us determine what programs, protocols, policies and supports school and district leaders and policymakers already have in place that are particularly helpful to you, and also to help us identify ways to improve programs and supports, we need to hear from you. To learn about your experiences in school in the Mississippi Delta and hear your opinions, we invite you to participate in a 60-90-minute focus group discussion with six to ten other participants. You will also participate in an individual interview session with me, the researcher. During the interview, a series of open-ended questions will be posed to you as an opportunity for you to give insight into your personal lived experiences while teaching in a Mississippi Delta school and how your experiences impacted your decision to either continue your teaching career or to leave the school or the profession altogether. Details on the individual interview will be forwarded to you upon my receiving the attached consent to participate form.

Since this study will involve a limited number of participants, the success and quality of our discussion will depend on the full participation of the participants who attend. Please complete the attached consent form. If you have any additional questions or concerns, please contact Chiqueta Daniels at (901) 409-4511 or cdaniels@go.olemiss.edu.

This study has been approved by UM’s Institutional Review Board (IRB).

I look forward to talking with you on [Date].

Sincerely,

Chiqueta Daniels
APPENDIX D: IRB APPROVAL

This is to inform you that your application to conduct research with human participants, “Teacher Perceptions on Practices Which Impact Teacher Job Satisfaction and Retention” (Protocol #22x-003), has been determined as Exempt under 46 CFR 46.101(b)(2). You may proceed with your research.

Please remember that all of The University of Mississippi’s human participant research activities, regardless of whether the research is subject to federal regulations, must be guided by the ethical principles in The Belmont Report: Ethical Principles and Guidelines for the Protection of Human Subjects of Research.

It is especially important for you to keep these points in mind:

- You must protect the rights and welfare of human research participants.
- Certain changes to your approved protocol must be reviewed and approved before initiating those changes. These changes include the addition of a vulnerable subject group (children, persons with disabilities, and prisoners), as well as the addition of research materials, such as the addition of surveys or interview questions and test articles, the addition of the use of deception, or any changes to subject confidentiality. Personnel amendments for exempt protocols are no longer required. Instead, PIs are responsible for keeping an up-to-date record of all active personnel and for ensuring that personnel have completed the necessary training to be on their protocol.
- You must report promptly to the IRB any injuries or other unanticipated problems involving risks to participants or others.
- If research is to be conducted during class, the PI must email the instructor and ask if they wish to see the protocol materials (surveys, interview questions, etc) prior to research beginning.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the IRB at irb@olemiss.edu.
Consent to Participate in Research

Study Title: Teacher Perceptions on Practices Which Impact Teacher Job Satisfaction and Retention

Investigator
Chiqueta Daniels, Student
Department of Educational Leadership
Student Leadership Doctoral Programs
121 Guyton Hall
University of Mississippi
University, MS 38677
(901) 409-4511
cdaniels@go.olemiss.edu

Faculty Sponsor
Dr. Doug Davis
Leadership & Counselor Education and
Director of Leadership Doctoral Programs
121 Guyton Hall
University of Mississippi
University, MS 38677
(662) 915-1459
drdavis@olemiss.edu

Key Information:

Dear Participant,

My name is Chiqueta Daniels, I am a doctoral student at the University of Mississippi. I am seeking to earn a Ph.D. in Educational Leadership. I am conducting my research on Teacher Perceptions on Practices Which Impact Teacher Job Satisfaction and Retention.

• **Purpose.** The purpose of this research is to gain insight from the perceptions of both returning and departing teachers on school principals’ practices, which impact teacher retention in rural public schools in Mississippi.

• **Duration.** It is expected that your participation will last approximately one month. The focus group session will last one hour, followed by individual interviews which will last for 60-90 minutes.

• **Activities.** You will be asked to participate in a 60-90 minute individual interview session with the researcher. In order to obtain the data needed for this study, an initial interview will be scheduled during a time which is most
convenient for you. This interview will be conducted via Zoom call and may last approximately 1-2 hours. An additional interview may be scheduled if needed.

- The interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed and you will be provided an opportunity to review the transcript for accuracy, as well as make any additional changes. Participation in the study is voluntary. If you decide to participate, I will provide you with the interview questions prior to the interview. Please note that the results will be reported in my dissertation and all information will remain confidential. Your real name and school district will not be used, as you will be identified using an alias.

- **Risks.** This study will involve minimal risk and discomfort. The probability of harm and discomfort will not be greater than your daily life encounters. Risks may include emotional discomfort from answering questionnaire or interview questions.

- **Benefits.** Some of the benefits that may be expected: Your participation in this study is beneficial because the findings will further increase the knowledge school and district leaders, teachers and policy-makers and who aspire to identify and develop strategic protocols and procedures that improve the retention of teachers, who enhance teacher efficacy, increase student achievement, and promote stability in the educational field. It is my hope that you will agree to participate in my study, as I am anxious to learn about your experiences as an educator. I am available to meet with you at your convenience.

- **Cost and Payments**
  This interview will take approximately 60-90 minutes to complete. If additional time and/or days are needed, they will be scheduled. Since participating in this interview is voluntary, you will not be compensated for your contribution.

By checking this box, I certify that I am 18 years of age or older.

**What you will do for this study**
You will be provided a Zoom link and specific time to log on 2 days within the same week. The first day you will take participate in a focus group session. While subjects in focus groups will be instructed not to share information about the groups, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. The second day you will participate in an individual interview with the researcher. Each day the sessions will approximately 1-2 hours.

**Surveys.**

1. **Focus Group (first day)**
   You will be provided a demographics survey via email prior to the Focus Group Session
• The ‘demographics’ survey asks about your age, education, marital status, number of children, and birthplace.

You will log on to the provide Zoom link along with 6-10 other participants.
• The Focus Group facilitator (research will pose 10 questions).
• Focus group participants will be asked to respond one at a time.
• Each participant will be allow, but not required to provide input on all questions.
• Participants will be asked to allow the respondent to speak with interruption.
• The focus group session will last from 60-90 minutes.
• The focus groups session will be video/audio recorded.
• Transcripts of the session will be provided to each participant for member checking and accuracy of responses.
• A follow-up session may be held if the researcher deems necessary.

2. Individual Interviews (second day)

Possible risks from your participation
This study will involve minimal risk and discomfort. The probability of harm and discomfort will not be greater than your daily life encounters. Risks may include emotional discomfort from answering questionnaire or interview questions.

Benefits from your participation
You should not expect benefits from participating in this study. However, you might experience satisfaction from contributing to scientific knowledge. Also, answering the focus group and interview questions might further increase your interest about what school and district leaders, teachers and policy-makers are implementing to identify and develop strategic protocols and procedures that improve the retention of teachers and to promote stability in the educational field. It is my hope that you will agree to participate in my study, as I am anxious to learn about your experiences as an educator.

Incentives
There is no compensation for your participation in this study.

Confidentiality
Research team members will have access to your records. We will protect confidentiality by physically separating information that identifies you from your responses (which is a safer strategy than how medical records are stored). While focus group subjects will be instructed not to share information about the groups, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.
Members of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) – the committee responsible for reviewing the ethics of, approving, and monitoring all research with humans – have authority to access all records. However, the IRB will request identifiers only when necessary.

Right to Withdraw
You do not have to volunteer for this study, and there is no penalty if you refuse. If you start the study and decide that you do not want to finish, just tell the experimenter. Whether or not you participate or withdraw will not affect your current or future relationship with the Department of Education, or with the University, and it will not cause you to lose any benefits to which you are entitled.

The researchers may terminate your participation in the study without regard to your consent and for any reason, such as protecting your safety and protecting the integrity of the research data. If the researcher terminates your participation, any incentives will be prorated based on the amount of time you spent in the study.

IRB Approval
This study has been reviewed by The University of Mississippi’s Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB has determined that this study fulfills the human research subject protections obligations required by state and federal law and University policies. If you have any questions, concerns, or reports regarding your rights as a participant of research, please contact the IRB at (662) 915-7482 or irb@olemiss.edu.

Please ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you need more information. When all your questions have been answered, then decide if you want to be in the study or not.

Sincerely,

Chiqueta Daniels
Statement of Consent
I __________________________ have read and understand the above information. By completing the survey/interview I consent to participate in the study. My signature below indicates that I voluntarily and willingly agree to participate in this research study. I am aware the results of this study will be used for this research study only. I also understand that my identity will remain confidential throughout the research process and once the results of the research study are disclosed. While focus group subjects will be instructed not to share information about the groups, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

________________________________________
Signature of Participant/ Legally Authorized Representative Date

________________________________________
Printed name of Participant/ Legally Authorized Representative Date

________________________________________
Researcher’s Signature Date
The following are participant responses from the interviews that are relevant to the themes and research questions, which were discussed in Chapter 4.

**Theme 1: 1st Year Teaching**

Participant 1 recalled their experience from their first year of teaching:

Being a first-year teacher that was really, really important. To have somebody to ask questions about how to like kind of pace, the curriculum and also get insights into what they're like. Classroom management. Pieces of advice. And just have somebody to you know kind of talk to about. Things that are going on in the classroom.

Participant 1 also made this comment in regard to staff development:

My first year. Absolutely not. But I think that with having a mentor and attending district and other staff development training, I improved a lot.

Participant 3 expressed the following experiences about their first year of teaching:

So, I definitely think the colleagues help you make it through. That first year is exceptionally tough. Specifically, about two months into teaching, I remember I was not doing the job that needed to be done. And at that time, my administrator said, “First year's tough,” and they were there. They gave me tips and they gave me strategies, but they kept bringing it back to, “Keep in mind where you're at, you're learning too. This is your first year.” And I think it's important for administrators to remember to evaluate people where they're at in the learning process and give them the support they need where they're at. Because we're not going to come out being perfect that first year, that first year
is going to be rough. See, the whole first year is experimental, and you keep trying new things. Does that work for you? What worked for the other math teachers I was working with? What worked for the other teachers in my hall with the same students? Discipline really has to match your personality, so you've got to experiment until you find out what is working.

Participant 4 shared their thoughts about their first year:

So, yes, I was assigned a mentor teacher who would work with me for a certain number of hours. And as a first-year teacher that was a big deal because there's so much angst and so much, “Am I doing this right?” Honestly, that first year you feel like you're doing everything wrong, but to have a mentor teacher was a big deal.

Participant 5 spoke about their first year about mentoring:

During my initial appointment, I was not assigned a mentor. I guess officially, but unofficially, I got under different people in my area that I felt that could help me in different people in my district that I felt could help me grow. I do think having a mentor and I became a mentor to incoming teachers as they came in. Just something I did personally, but I believe it plays a big part at first, especially for first-year teachers. I think it plays a big part in how your year goes; it really makes or breaks your year of having that mentor.

Participant 5 also added this view about their first year with how they encouraged a positive culture:

So, we created this space which I think creates positivity because like I said especially with the first year of teaching you don't know where to go. You don't know where to get stuff, so having ways to access stuff makes a difference as well.
Participant 6 shared their experience about their first year of teaching:

I was assigned a mentor and it helped me greatly. I didn't go through the traditional route. I was an alternate route educator, so having a mentor that first year really helped because I had no idea what I was doing as a first-year teacher. So, in my first year of teaching, I had two other teachers on my team. One of them was officially my mentor and the other one might as well have been. Also, probably one of the greatest bits of advice that I got from either one of them was actually from the one who was not my mentor and that was the need to stress reading, even though my course was not a reading course. But that's one thing that I did pick up from that teacher. One of the greatest issues I had during my first year is probably the one that a lot of first-year teachers have, and that's dealing with misbehavior and discipline in the classroom. The number one greatest bit of information I got from my administrator at the time was that you have to keep the kids busy and that if they get idle it's going to cause problems. And that led to me developing a system of always having the next assignment available to the students at all times, and it completely transformed. I had no classroom management issues after that, so that was the single greatest piece of advice or piece of information I got from an administrator. There are things, as administrators, that we know that first-year teachers need and we try our best to give that to them. But I think that what administrators don't do enough is to sit down with the teachers and ask them what they think they need and try to work with them on those things that the teacher thinks they need. Often, we're giving them what we know that they need, and we're missing the fact that the teacher believes that they need this, or, at least, explain to them why they don't need it. But spend more time getting feedback from the teacher to the administrator.
Participant 6 also commented on their perception about if they felt sufficiently prepared to teach at their school:

No, but maybe about three-fourths of the way through my first year of teaching. And that was all due to the fact that I received a decent amount of support.

**Theme 2: Advice, Feedback, and Support**

Participant 1 expressed:

It was a lot of advice. What do I remember? I think the general thing that I keep going back to is probably advice on classroom management and how to like handle certain things. Because, to me, I think that was really important. When I started teaching, I realized if you don't have classroom management, it was really hard to actually get the instruction in.

Participant 2 relayed their perceptions of feedback:

I think, just like you know, positive feedback helps out a lot as well. Are you doing a great job? “Hey, keep this up! Hey, I've been there before.” It kind of makes you feel like, “Hey. This is a normal thing.” And I think the more normal you feel, you don't feel like you're failing, and that can be a morale boost. And then also just let you know, “Hey, everyone goes through these different ups and downs. Just keep pushing through.”
Participant 3 added to the theme:

This is going to sound odd, but everyone's very supportive. They always give me positive feedback. At the time that I first started, I knew I was struggling badly, but I didn't know what to fix or how to fix it; so, I appreciated being cheered on and being told it was okay. But it wasn't getting to the root of what I wanted to fix, so I think it's a balance because new teachers need to be cheered on and not held to the same level that I had expectation-wise so. Even though it wasn't what I was looking for, it was nice that people had my back.

Participant 4 recalled this experience about feedback from their administrator:

I tell people when I talk about my experiences as a first-year teacher I felt like I was the spoiled brat because I really did have administrators that felt more like aunts, uncles, mama, or papa. So, I kind of had that experience where it was like going to family. And I remember once going to my principal and saying, “Hey, I'm having this behavior issue with this group of students. What is going on? What am I doing wrong?” And the principal set up a meeting in the conference room. When I got there, there was soda and candy, like we are rewarding children, but we're building relationships. So, we get there, and he sat down; and we literally had like this almost like a family chat. We were sitting at this conference room table eating candy bars and coke, and the kids are drinking soda and the kids are really sharing like, “Hey, like we feel like you're giving more attention to other kids. So, the reason we're doing this is because we want you to notice us as well.” And it was eye-opening for me. I didn't know that. So, like in that experience, the advice that he's given me is like it's relational, and it felt so good because I was able to learn like, “Hey, like, here's how you connect with students. Here's how you solve it.” We
didn't do detention. I mean they didn't get in trouble or write up. We just sat down and talked, so it felt good to have that feedback and to have candy bars and coke in the middle of the day.

Participant 5 expressed:

The last feedback that was advised to me, they told me to stop being an overachiever. At first, I was like, “What?” But then it made me be more aware: Don't stretch yourself too thin when it's already paper, so don't make it any thinner. You know, because you're doing a good job, and you know you're doing a good job.

Participant 6 commented:

I can't think of any specific feedback that I got from in anybody during that time. Well, I take that back. First of all, one of the greatest issues I had my first year is probably the one that a lot of first-year teachers have, and that's dealing with misbehavior and discipline in the classroom. The number one greatest bit of information I got from my administrator at the time was that you have to keep the kids busy and that if they get idle it's going to cause problems. And that led to me developing a system of always having the next assignment available to the students at all times, and it completely transformed. I had no classroom management issues after that, so that was the single greatest piece of advice or piece of information I got from an administrator, and I got it probably before Christmas. And I know I got it before Christmas my first year because when I came back after Christmas, I implemented that new strategy and kept it for the other years that I was in the classroom.

Participant 6 also expressed this perception about administration practices on feedback:

There are things, as administrators, that we know that first-year teachers need and we try
our best to give that to them. But I think that what administrators don't do enough is to sit down with the teachers and ask them what they think they need and try to work with them through those things. Often, we're giving them what we know that they need, and we're missing the fact that the teacher believes that they need this, or, at least, explain to them why they don't need it. Spend more time getting feedback from the teacher to the administrator as to how the administrator can be more helpful to the teacher. Not a teacher that I worked with, but - There was a teacher at a school that suffered for two years, and I don't think any of the administration has ever really put forth a real effort to help that teacher. And they did two years and they left. They probably have the worst opinion about education that anybody could possibly imagine, but it was because no one in two separate administrations ever stopped and said, “Hey, what is it that you need in order to succeed, and I kind of watched it. I talked to one of the administrators like, “Look, you know, you need to go check on that teacher. They're miserable down there.” And it never happened, and they left. They did a very poor job both years because nobody ever stopped to check in on them and see what it was they needed.

**Theme 3: Classroom Management/Discipline**

Participant 1 relayed their experiences about classroom management:

Being a first-year teacher that was really, really important: to have somebody to ask questions about how to like kind of pace the curriculum and also get insights into what they're like. Classroom management. Pieces of advice. And just have somebody to you know kind of talk to about things that are going on in the classroom. Kind of like just regular classroom management pieces, but also within our department meetings, “how to structure some things,” or like “what to spend additional time on.” It was a lot of advice. I think the general thing that I keep going back to is probably advice on classroom
management and how to like handle certain things. Because, to me, I think that was really important. When I started teaching, I realized if you don't have classroom management, it was really hard to actually get the instruction in.

Participant 1 added how they helped contribute to their school culture by sharing their experience in classroom management with new teachers:

I think I tried to like whatever I knew and like how the things that I have learned -how to organize myself for my lessons or the structure in the classroom- so that classroom management would flow well. I tried to pass that knowledge on to others, so they would have an okay experience in the classroom.

Participant 2 contributed to the theme of classroom management:

I think also too, which is like classroom management, was kind of a good sounding board to kind of figure out, “OK? We got to make sure everyone has the ability to learn and listen,” and if there's misbehavior going on, obviously it's going to prevent that from happening. So, kind of being a sounding board like, “Hey, what can we do to kind of make sure we're getting kids engaged.”

Participant 2 added the following about discipline:

So, I think the overall culture of the school was definitely like, when it came to discipline, I think everything was done with a lesson in mind. I mean, so it wasn't like, “Okay, we're just going to yell at some kids because you're doing something wrong.” I was like there's always like a learning experience within that, so it's like, okay, you know we're going to sit down with kids that might be misbehaving and trying to figure out what's going on or try to, you know, be proactive and kind of build those relationships and stuff. And I really feel like - like I don't know if it was a community thing or if it was
just a school thing, but like everyone was aware that everyone was going through something, and there was like a genuine like awareness and concern about what was going on. And I think like as I spoke earlier about that kind of trust, looking at a student as a holistic person instead of, “Hey, this is just my student in this classroom at this point in time.” They're looking at them, and this is a real human being going through a growth experience in life and may or may not be going through hard times at home. Maybe things are going good; maybe they're struggling in one area of my class or a different class. I think really kind of having that culture of, “Hey, we're here to help you out and we're here to know about who you are and everything,” and “We're here just to make sure that as a person, you're learning more than just what's in the classroom but as an individual.” I think that was something that was really well done from the administration's point.

Participant 3 expressed this about discipline:

There are so many parts of the culture of a school, there's how you treat students…. discipline where -and I'm not saying discipline has to be consistent because each kid needs to be treated in the way that kid needs to be treated - but when discipline is taken seriously, and the teacher is involved in the discipline decisions. I understand discipline is held at an administrative level, but when administrators come back and talk to you. It changes that culture, and so I really think the biggest part of the positive culture is that balance. And as humans, you can't do it 100%, but that balance of talking and giving those individual needs to those individuals. Not everyone needs the same thing you have to meet the individual needs.
Participant 4 shared the following about discipline:

It was just a great, just a great support system, so that helped with retention. I think something else that helped with retention was having us being on the same accord of like, “This is how we serve students,” and, even on discipline issues, “This is how discipline is taken care of.” So, you always had support. Even from discipline lenses, I think that was another piece for retention.

Participant 5 commented about the importance of classroom management:

I believe [mentoring] plays a big part at first, especially for first-year teachers. I think it plays a big part in how your year goes. It really makes or breaks your year of having that mentor. For somebody to say, “Hey, you know this is here. You know, look into this.” You know, just giving you insight on things that are critical for your planning, critical for classroom management, and things of that nature. Just knowing the ins and outs is a simple thing. You'll be surprised how many teachers just need to know how to, you know, how to clock in or where to go get resources.

Participant 6 expressed these views about classroom management:

I don't think that I ever requested information concerning what to teach or how to teach. The things that my mentor helped me with, mostly, were kind of the record-keeping stuff that goes on with the education processes, procedures of how things are done in the school, and then dealing with classroom management issues. Probably one of the most valuable things, I was advised from my mentor, especially when it came to dealing with student discipline and such, and it taught me how to deal with parents. Of course, kids being kids, you know; most will step out of line at some point in time. And this child was one of the ones that stepped out of line on kind of a regular basis in that classroom. And
having to meet with my mentor about a student issue taught me how to deal with parents with regard to the students.

Participant 6 added:

One of the greatest issues I had during my first year is probably the one that a lot of first-year teachers have, and that's dealing with misbehavior and discipline in the classroom. The number one greatest bit of information I got from my administrator at the time was that you have to keep the kids busy and that if they get idle it's going to cause problems. And that led to me developing a system of always having the next assignment available to the students at all times, and it completely transformed. I had no classroom management issues after that, so that was the single greatest piece of advice or piece of information I got from an administrator.

Theme 4: Collaboration

Participant 1 made this response when asked about how their administrators contributed to the retention rate:

I think I mentioned in the last response, feeling like you have the support from your administrators and your team and that there's like a good environment among your immediate colleagues as well, where like you actually feel supported and not just by the administrators. I knew I had the support of the teachers in the hallway.

Participant 2:

And I think I, also, just the overall mindset of, “Hey y'all are in the math department together and you guys need to, you know, rely on each other and be resources for one another.” I think was really helpful because I really felt like there was a real team, a real unit where it was like we're all working together and we're all here to help each other out. It was just a collaborative effort which I thought was a really good deal.
Participant 3:

So, for the collaboration, we had a few team meetings, but, at that time, whatever we asked for, we were told “Yes. Just how can I help you do it?” It didn't matter how crazy of an idea it was; it was “If you're OK with it, I'll support you. Just make sure we're teaching these kids,” and that was awesome.

Participant 6:

The school that I started at had a very positive, very collaborative, very team-like culture that was cultivated by the leader at the time, so we, as an educational team, all really got along well. That's one of the things that made it so easy for me to get that information from so many different sources from teachers who were also first-year teachers that had come from some other occupations to teachers. One of the teachers that worked a half a year had more than 30 years in education. I learned so much from that educator. So really, a wide range of experience and a wealth of knowledge. But we were all collaborative so we all got along really well.

Participant 6 also added to the theme:

The principal there was a former coach and that's kind of the field that was brought to the staff we were all teammates. We all work with one another. If someone needed help, jump in and help them.

**Theme 5: PLCs and presentations**

Participant 1 expressed the following about presentations they made for their peers:

Yeah, probably just a data presentation. I don't remember. I mean, I know towards like the end I was kind of leading some of the math department meetings.
Participant 2 shared this about presentations:

Yeah, it's about mainly in regards to like this like student test score data and stuff like that, or different things like that. Or yeah, we think like that where it was like breaking down. You know areas of, I don't wanna say concern, but areas of focus. This is what the impact is, I think. You know, create some good conversations and stuff.

Participant 3 said this about presenting in a PLC:

I don't remember the first time I was asked to present an PLC, but the environment was set up so that we were just meeting and it wasn't really a presentation. It was more sharing information and I think when you use the word sharing information or just helping others, it takes the pressure off of being a presentation. If you start throwing that presentation board in then you feel like you're required for like teaching instead of it being a learning community, so I don't even remember the first time I had to present, but yes, I felt successful and sharing information often.

Participant 4 said the following about presenting at PLCs:

So, I'm, uh, I'm trying to think when. Uhm, I used to do so after my first year of teaching. I received an honor after the first year of teaching, and I would go with our Superintendent and an assistant Superintendent and present my classroom practices to other educators. I think it was receptive because people were successful because people were receptive and listened and just to be able to have that forum. We had one where I got to present at the PLC, and then we had a group of people come in and do observations to see how my classroom was set up and see the different strategies I was using in the classroom. I felt like that was successful because it wasn't just a presentation. There were also opportunities for people to come and visit the classroom as well.
Participant 5 shared this experience about presenting at a PLC:

I presented an app PLC and district-level PDF of modeling on technology integration software that we were using. I think it went really well. I just model teach using the teachers kind of like my students but also showing my board as a transparency so they could see the student side and what it looks like on the teacher background, and I think it went really well.

Participant 6 said this about doing presentations in front of their peers:

I did a couple of data presentations. Well, yeah, I guess that would be just days of presentations presenting the data from my classroom I did do that fairly regularly. We were always talking about data.

**Research Question 1:**

The following conversations from the interviews portray perceptions of how leadership forged mentorships and how those mentorships impacted the participants’ experiences.

Participant 1 said this about their leadership establishing a mentorship:

I can't remember if it was official, but I definitely remember Miss Morris being the like the 8th-grade math mentor. It was almost like a very structured mentorship. We had department meetings which she led so being a first-year teacher that was really, really important to have somebody to ask questions about how to like kind of pace, the curriculum and also get insights into what they're like. Classroom management. Pieces of advice. And just have somebody to you know kind of talk to about. Things that are going on in the classroom.”
Participant 1 also added the following about support from their school administration:

I don't know about like other teachers, but definitely administrators. This made me feel like they were not just checking to see what was happening academically, but also to make sure I was in a good place, being a new teacher. It helped build my confidence.

Participant 2 made these remarks about their administration assigning a mentorship:

I believe I was assigned. I know one for sure. I might have been 2. I think it was really important to have kind of an outlet to have somebody that you know could rely on a day-to-day basis or week-to-week basis if you will. To kind of know, “Hey. What can I do to be doing better?”

Then, Participant 2 spoke about their mentorship support:

There wasn't really a mentor per se at the school that we could utilize. They had to kind of go to different departments if you will, but like I said that was helpful. I think kind of expands upon that portion with everyone being new. And the department for math, I think, they'll rely on those. If that was really a mentor thing, but kind of group kind of effort.

Participant 3 had this to say about their administration assigning a mentorship:

So, I was assigned a mentor, but the mentor wasn't interested in mentoring; so, my first experience with a mentor was not very positive, and it didn't really help the teaching situation at all. However, my second year, so, after I survived the first year, my second year, a person that was not assigned as a mentor became my mentor.

Participant 4 answered with the following:

So, yes, I was assigned a mentor teacher who would work with me for a certain amount of hours. So, they had like even sign-in sheets and things of that nature. So, I did have a
mentor teacher. It was really helpful because the mentor teacher and I both taught the same content. We both taught math. She had an understanding of the district because she had been there and she knew the culture and climate of the district and she just was very - she was laid back so you could pretty much tell her anything and you'd be okay. And as a first-year teacher that was a big deal because there's so much angst and so much, “Am I doing this right?” Honestly, that first year you feel like you're doing everything wrong, but to have a mentor teacher was a big deal.”

Participant 4 also specifically spoke about mentorship support directly from their administration:

Okay, so I was lucky and blessed because I had administrators who mentored me. It is rare that you have three administrators, who offer you mentorship, but they did. One administrator - I won't reveal him - I don't think I'm supposed to real name, so one administrator - I remember I was crying in my room - and the administrator just happened to be walking by the door and came in, and I was crying in my room on my planning period. But that mentor just happened to be by my door and planning and like talks to me and I was ready to go for the next class period. So, like I had that real emotional support.

Participant 5 spoke about the importance of being assigned a mentorship by their administration:

During my initial appointment, I was not assigned a mentor. I guess officially, but unofficially, I got up under different people in my area that I felt that could help me - different people in my district that I felt could help me grow. I became a mentor to incoming teachers as they came in. Just something I did personally, but I believe it plays a big part, especially for first-year teachers. I think it plays a big part in how your year goes: It really makes or breaks your year of having that mentor.
Participant 6 recalled their experience of being assigned a mentorship in their district:

I was assigned a mentor and it helped me greatly. I didn't go through the traditional route. I was an alternate route educator, so having a mentor the first year really helped because I had no idea what I was doing as a first-year teacher.

Participant 6 also had this to say about mentorship from their school leadership:

The number one greatest bit of information I got from my administrator at the time was that you have to keep the kids busy and that if they get idle it's going to cause problems. And that led to me developing a system of always having the next assignment available to the students at all times, and it completely transformed. I had no classroom management issues after that, so that was the single greatest piece of advice or piece of information I got from an administrator.

**Research Question 2:**

Participant 1 shared their experiences about how their administration supported collaboration:

So, we had those like -I think weekly- where we met with our department. And then like being asked to kind of have like similar lesson plans, right? So, like you're teaching the same thing if you're in 8th grade no matter which classroom you go into, you should have kind of the same things that you're teaching at the same time. So, it kind of like let you go and collaborate with other teachers that are doing the same thing without you having to like recreate the wheel all by yourself.

Participant 2 expressed their thoughts about how their administration fostered collaboration:

I think you know what's really helpful was everyone having the planning period at the same time. I think that was really helpful and it was. I loved it. I think it was like during the middle of the day too. I think I recall, so it was actually really helpful. You know, all
math teachers, the ability to kind of press pause like halfway through the day and kind of say, “Hey, this is what's going on over here. What do you all think that it could be helped out?” Whether it's like, “Hey, these lesson plans aren't working like I think they would be.” Or, you know things like that. And I think I also too. Just the overall. Mindset of, “Hey y'all are in the math department together and you guys need to, you know rely on each other and be resources for one another.” I think was really helpful because I really felt like there was like a real team, a real unit where it was like we're all working together and we're all here help each other out. At a point there was like a “Hey, this is one person has all the answers.” It was more just a collaborative effort which I thought was a really good deal.

Participant 3 commented about their experience on how their administration nurtured collaboration:

The most empowering thing was “This is our goal. This is what we're trying to do. How can we do it and how can I support you in helping us do it?” And, so, it was completely open. “We will try anything if you guys are willing to do the work” and that empowerment. It's motivating because you're now held accountable intrinsically for the outcome because it was your idea and you're invested in it. So, the collaboration we had a few team meetings, but, at that time, whatever we asked for, we were told “Yes. Just how can I help you do it?” It didn't matter how crazy of an idea it was; it was “If you're OK with it, I'll support you. Just make sure we're teaching these kids,” and that was awesome.
Participant 4 relayed this perception about how principal practices promoted collaboration in their district:

They encouraged it a lot. One with our UM pacing meetings. Oh my goodness, but that was a big thing like where they had us sit together and come up with our pacing guide together and say like, ‘Here's where we are. Here are the adjustments we need to make, and this is what it means for the end of the school year.’ So we were encouraged to stay together. We were encouraged to collaborate, and, even when I left my first school and went to my other school, there were collaboration instructors, a lot of it was, uh, around planning, but it was encouraged and it was encouraged by them.”

Participant 5 made these comments about how their administration encouraged collaboration:

The only collaboration practices that I can think of is PLC. He encouraged PLCs and common planning. He encouraged those inside the school, but it was kind of left up to us.

Participant 6 said this about how their administrators influenced collaboration:

The school that I started at had a very positive, very collaborative, very team-like culture that was cultivated by the leader at the time, so we, as an educational team, all really got along well. That’s one of the things that made it so easy for me to get that information from so many different sources from teachers who were also first-year teachers that had come from some other occupations to teachers.

Participant 6 also had this to say about how their administration encouraged collaboration:

Oh, one thing that we had was we had a schedule, so all of the teachers in a grade level had planning at the same time so. There was always an opportunity for the team to get together and plan with one another to collaborate with one another, discuss issues, and stuff and that was school-wide, and all of the different teams -all of the grade level teams-
had planning at the same time. Whenever there were meetings and such that one needed to go to, everyone went, so there everybody was privy to the same information throughout the team, which made it really easy to deal with changes that might be coming up, or events that might be coming up. We all knew about it, so no one had to go back and like, ‘OK, you have the information now you go back and find your team and tell them.’ Everybody heard the same thing at the same time.

Research Question 3:

Participant 1 had this to say about how administrators supported their school culture:

There were two very different cultures that I had was the one when I was in Mississippi and then the one when I was in Houston. Yeah, because they're like opposites, I think. The one in Mississippi - having an administrator that like you knew was supportive but also was like push you to like work hard and it was okay. And I'll be like you weren't like you were tough with us, but it was like we knew it was because you knew that we could do it and that we could work and I always felt like there was support that if I needed that I would get. OK, and so I think that just like did a whole lot for morale in general. Whereas, I think my other experience was very top-down and not really considering what was actually happening in the classrooms. It's just like this is what I'm telling you to do and like that's it, which is why I'm no longer teaching.

Participant 1 also added to the theme:

I think I mentioned in the last response, feeling like you have the support from your administrators and your team and that there's like a good act like environment along your immediate colleagues as well, where like you actually feel supported and not just by the administrators. I knew I had the support of the teachers in the hallway.
Participant 2 commented on their experiences about how their administrators affected their school culture:

I think it was like a culture of accountability in regards to “Hey we got to make sure that we're teaching the kids the right information and that we're teaching it to them all enough to work.” It’s like, “OK we got we got to make sure that we're teaching the right way and making sure these kids know this stuff,” and, then, “If not you better figure out a way to get it done.”

Participant 2 also added the following:

What the administration did from my experience, I think, as I mentioned before, like being there as a resource and being there as people that I can reach out to, I think that it's most important, I think in any job in the teaching profession. If you feel like that you don't have a voice or you don't have someone you can talk to, I think it's gonna make you feel like I got to get out of here sooner rather than later.

Participant 3 had this to say about their overall experience with how administrators impacted school culture:

I'm going to give you the positive and I'll give you the negative.

The positive: When you want to come to work is when you feel a part of something and you feel like you're doing something: motivating change and driving change. The norms are an open environment and truly listening: true support. The data review is saying “OK. How did this work? What can I do to help you better?”

The negative is when it's almost top town dictatorship. So negative is “You will do this and you're going to do it in this way. And no, we know this is going to work best. So you're going to do it like this.”
Participant 3 also added these thoughts:

Inconsistency is the number one struggle with administration, and you can have a great administrator: Last year, Mr. Mays was fantastic, but the schedule kept changing, and not only do students need rituals and routines, but teachers need to know what to expect, how to set things up, and plan ahead. So, consistency is the number one thing from the schedule to how things are handled. We all need our children in routines.

Participant 4 said this about how their administrators fostered culture in their school:

The culture at my first school was family-oriented and community-oriented, and we had high expectations for students like it was student-driven and it made the school hard to leave. I think what I've noticed at both schools that I worked at, as far as teaching, the biggest piece for retention was the relationships between administrators and teachers and students. In my first school, the whole administrative staff I had that relationship that made it just made it easy to stay. At the second school, there were two administrators in particular who really were supportive. We were willing to partner up. It was just a great, just a great support system. We then also had like this culture of like we're all here together for students and like that piece of like we're here for kids together. It's another piece. I felt like I was something a part of something bigger than myself, and that makes - that's another piece that of the culture.

Participant 5 expressed these thoughts about how their leadership affected their school culture:

The culture of the school is non-existent. And I used the word nonexistent because the school has been going through a transition since we consolidated and since they have been transitioning. It hasn't reached a peak yet where there is a solid foundation built to start creating a new culture of what's expected. I feel like they influenced the culture
because they're the head and just like in any household whatever the head does everybody else is going to follow. So, if you don't set the tone, the tone won't be set. Now on a positive aspect, they're very vibrant, they're speaking and they have a positive mindset of, you know we're going to go into this day a year. We're going to make sure we keep disciplinary. Yeah, we're gonna make sure that the kids are first and priority, which is good, but when it comes down to the physical part of actually doing it. That's the missing piece. The talk is good, but then there's a missing gap there in-between talking and actually doing.

Participant 6 recalled this about how administrators nurtured their school culture:

So, we had a very teen-centered culture at our school. The principal there was a former coach and that's kind of the field that was brought to the staff we were all teammates. We all work with one another. If someone needed help, jump in and help them. We all rallied around the central mascot. Everybody was called by that mascot name. Students and teachers, so it developed this family-like atmosphere there at the school so having that positive culture made it that was one less thing you had to deal with coming into education. So, it really helped make you feel like you were part of something bigger than yourself.

Participant 6 also added this about their principal practices in their school culture:

He was really vision-centered. When things were discussed, it was never “I want this” or “you're going to do that.” It was “We are going to do this together,” “We are going to make this happen,” and “We are going to be successful.” It was never an “I, you, them.” It was always “us.”
VITA
Chiqueta Daniels
cdaniels@go.olemiss.edu

________________________________EDUCATION________________________________
Ph.D. Candidate, Educational Leadership
University of Mississippi
01/2018-present

M.Ed., Educational Leadership
University of Mississippi
06/2005-12/2006

Bachelors of Science, Biology
Alcorn State University
08/1986 to 12/1990

_______________________________EXPERIENCE_______________________________

Director of Professional Development and Testing & Science Curriculum, 07/2019- Present
Greenwood Leflore Consolidated School District
♦ Conducting and coordinating professional development for the implementation of the Next Generation Science Standards ♦ Writing grants to support the efforts of implementing a state of the art science program in the district ♦ Working directly with the district’s science teachers to achieve effective implementation of the science standards ♦ Researching and procuring required resources for implementation of strategies ♦ Creating multimedia presentations and resources including video and text-sync’d resources for enhanced teacher and student understanding of science standards and strategies ♦ Assisting teacher groups through professional development and modeling execution of the strategies for effective implementation process ♦ Supporting district implementation efforts via curriculum coordinator and superintendent support ♦ Researching, creating and analyzing assessments for the implementation and creation of a state of the art science program ♦ Assisting building level administrators with monitoring, analyzing and modifying instructional strategies to ensure student progress ♦ Modeling effective instructional delivery strategies ♦ Researching and applying for various grant opportunities

Principal, 2017-7/2019
Bankston Elementary School
♦ Conducting and coordinating professional development for the implementation of the Next Generation Science Standards ♦ Writing grants to support the efforts of implementing a state of the art science program in the district ♦ Working directly with the district’s science teachers to
achieve effective implementation of the science standards ♦ Researching and procuring required resources for implementation of strategies ♦ Creating multimedia presentations and resources including video and text-sync’d resources for enhanced teacher and student understanding of science standards and strategies ♦ Assisting teacher groups through professional development and modeling execution of the strategies for effective implementation process ♦ Supporting district implementation efforts via curriculum coordinator and superintendent support ♦ researching, creating and analyzing assessments for the implementation and creation of a state of the art science program ♦ Assisting building level administrators with monitoring, analyzing and modifying instructional strategies to ensure student progress ♦ Modeling effective instructional delivery strategies ♦ Researching and applying for various grant opportunities

Principal, 7/2010 to 7/2017
Greenwood Middle School, Greenwood Public School District
♦ Provided instructional leadership via professional development ♦ Data analysis ♦ Team building ♦ Modeling effective instructional delivery strategies ♦ maintained a fiscally sound institution ♦ ensured a safe and orderly environment ♦ developed processes for employee evaluation which resulted in marked performance improvements ♦ maintained effective professional learning communities throughout the school ♦ instituted a school design for prominent student academic achievement and academic growth ♦ maintained thriving academic and athletic programs for students in the school and community ♦ maintained active parent and community involvement relationships ♦ worked directly with all teachers and team leaders and students to achieve exponential student and school academic growth

Assistant Principal, 7/2008 to 7/2010
Greenwood High School, Greenwood Public School District
♦ Provided instructional leadership via professional development ♦ Data analysis ♦ Team building ♦ Modeling effective instructional delivery strategies ♦ maintained a fiscally sound institution ♦ ensured a safe and orderly environment ♦ developed processes for employee evaluation which resulted in marked performance improvements ♦ maintained effective professional learning communities throughout the school ♦ maintained active parent and community involvement relationships ♦ worked directly with all teachers and team leaders and students to achieve exponential student and school academic growth

Science Lead Teacher, 1994 to 2008
Melrose High School
♦ Provided effective instruction and instructional leadership in Physics, Chemistry, Biology and Anatomy ♦ implemented strategies for the creation of Project “9th Grade Academy” ♦ Researched and applied for various grant opportunities

________________ACHIEVEMENTS, MEMBERSHIPS AND AWARDS________________

♦ Maintained Successful School Rating 2010-2019
♦ 2017-2018 Mississippi Science Teachers Association
♦ 2017-2018 National Science Teachers Association
♦ 2017-2018 Mississippi Valley State University External Advisory Board Member-Department of Math and Science

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2016-2017 Mississippi Association of Colleges for Teacher Education-Administrator of the Year
2017 National BETA School of Merit
2016-2018 Mississippi Banner School in Financial Readiness
2015 to Present RAND American School Leadership Panel Member
2015 Prep Value Added Award for Outstanding Student Achievement Gains
2014 Prep Value Added Award for Outstanding Student Achievement Gains
2014-2015 Greenwood Public School District-Administrator of the Year
2013 Financial Literacy Challenge-College Knowledge Project Division
2012 Prep Value-Added Award for Outstanding Student Achievement Gains
2011 Prep Value-Added Award for Outstanding Student Achievement Gains
2010 Prep Value-Added Award for Outstanding Student Achievement Gains