The Influence of the Principalship in Retaining Novice Teachers

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Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

by

Casey R. Whittle

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my extraordinary and supportive wife, Emily Whittle. Over the past two decades, you have been a constant source of encouragement, guiding me through endeavors such as coaching high school football, entering school administration, enduring two significant relocations, and now completing this dissertation. I am immensely grateful for your unwavering support, for keeping our family united through challenges, and for consistently providing the time and space for me to work on my paper. This achievement would not have been possible without you, and my love for you grows stronger each day.

To my children, Keaton and Adelyn Whittle, this dissertation is also dedicated to you. Your understanding and grace during the times I was immersed in my work are deeply appreciated. I hope that one day you will reflect on this journey and recognize the significance of this milestone for our family. I want you both to remember that you can achieve anything your heart desires with hard work, sacrifice, and determination. Although challenges are formidable, remember to keep moving forward one step at a time. I love you both more than words can convey.

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prioritize this study amidst your commitments is truly commendable. Without your participation

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Abstract

The purpose of the qualitative descriptive study was to understand novice teachers' perspectives of principal behaviors that keep them employed in a North Texas school district. A purposive sample of 12 novice secondary teachers and six secondary principals participated in semistructured interviews. The individual interviews were recorded and transcribed. In vivo coding and structural coding were used to analyze the data. The findings of the study confirmed that participants in the study believed certain behaviors of secondary principals influenced novice teacher retention. Novice teacher participants expressed a need to trust their principal and fit into the principal's vision and culture of the school for them to remain in their position. Equally as crucial to the principal's influence on novice teacher retention, the participants also emphasized the importance of professional links on their campus as a critical reason for them to stay in their jobs. Additionally, the study confirmed that secondary principals are intentional with retention during a teacher's first year of service; however, beyond the first year of service, principals are less purposeful in ensuring a novice teacher remains in their position. Teacher retention continues to plague schools, and the results of this study could be used to develop novice teacher retention behaviors as well as processes to ensure teachers are supported and valued beyond their first year of service.

Keywords: retention, attrition, teacher burnout, first-year teacher, working conditions, job embeddedness theory, novice teachers

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Chapter 1: Introduction

School districts are often the largest employers in many communities across the country. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2021), more than 8 million staff work in schools. The U.S. Census Bureau suggests that teachers form one of the largest professional groups in the country (Ingersoll et al., 2021). Even though teachers make up over 3.6 million of these jobs, numerous vacancies plague school districts and, more importantly, students (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021). According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2021), the teacher workforce has been reduced by almost 3% over the last 5 years. The demand for teachers cannot keep up with the increased number of students enrolled in schools. Using historical data and enrollment data from the U.S. Census Bureau's school-age population estimates, public school student enrollment is expected to increase from 50 million to 53 million by 2025 (Carver-Thomas et al., 2017). Compounding this issue is that fewer teachers are entering the workforce, leaving a substantial gap for schools to fill. Researchers have conducted extensive studies to better understand teacher retention and attrition for decades, suggesting that keeping teachers was a significant concern before the pandemic (Diliberti et al., 2021).

Occupational prestige, defined by Hoyle (2001) as the public perception of the relative position of an occupation in a hierarchy of occupations, is at an all-time low. Teaching was once viewed as an essential and influential calling filled by individuals who sought to impact society's next generation, and now many feel apologetic about their career choice. Teaching has long been regarded as an occupation rather than a profession, making it more challenging to keep professional teachers (Ingersoll & Perda, 2008). In the 2022 Texas Teacher Poll, 17% of educators feel significantly valued, and only 34% report feeling valued by their communities (Albright, 2023). These feelings are echoed throughout districts and impact the number of

teachers choosing education as a long-term career. Rinke (2014) captured one teacher's perspective as she explained the temporary status of teachers and teaching as a whole:

> I had to come up with something that was kind of a transitional thing. I started thinking what I could do, and I thought, you know, maybe I can teach. That would be perfect. It's a set amount of time, and it won't necessarily make sense to anyone who knows me, but it's something that I want to do. I felt like it would be at least a productive use of my time. Why do teachers feel the need to apologize? (p. 90).

The declining teacher workforce and the increase in alternative teaching certification routes have decreased the professional status of teaching (Ingersoll & Perda, 2008). In 1970, just over 176,000 college students earned bachelor's degrees in education from postsecondary institutions (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2021). In 2020, postsecondary institutions graduated 85,057 with educational degrees (NCES, 2021). The overall perceptions and feelings regarding teaching and teachers are waning inside and outside of education; the small amount of prestige once found in teaching has been diminished by a society that relies on them to educate the future, creating a "leaky bucket" effect that is quickly draining the current and future teacher workforce (García & Weiss, 2019). Teachers specializing in math, science, and special education are in short supply across 40 states, and another 30 states report significant shortages in other teaching fields (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019).

The teacher attrition crisis is predicted to increase over the next 3 years, leaving the school system woefully unbalanced. Performance pressure is replacing the simple joy and satisfaction of teaching students (Marder et al., 2022). Teachers leave classrooms faster than universities, and alternative certification programs can produce new teachers. It is presumed in 2020, more than 55 million students were impacted by school closures related to the pandemic

(Herold, 2020). These closures created significant academic and behavioral learning gaps that have changed the way teachers feel about teaching and increased challenges for school leaders to retain effective staff.

The wave of the COVID-19 pandemic shuttered schools and their retention effort as it has amplified the stressors of teaching (Herman et al., 2021). During the pandemic, teachers worked through swift educational changes, leaving many teachers feeling underprepared and without the proper resources to fill student learning gaps (Chan et al., 2021). These excessive demands drained every teacher, especially the most inexperienced. Inexperienced teachers are stretched far too thin, and many are contemplating leaving education altogether. According to a teacher survey by the Texas American Federation of Teachers (AFT, 2022b), which represents educators and has over 66,000 members, "teachers have 33% more students and only about 60% of the planning time they had pre-Covid. The workload was too much before the pandemic. This is just intolerable now" (Texas AFT, 2022b, p. 5). Teachers, young and old, are searching for a more work–life balance than ever before and no longer allow their passion for teaching to exploit them with more tasks and responsibilities.

In 2025, researchers predict more than 100,000 teaching jobs will remain unfilled (Sutcher et al., 2016). For decades, attracting and retaining qualified teachers for every classroom has been challenging for districts across the nation (Martin & Mulvihill, 2016). Many of those same school districts have suffered excessive turnover, leading to a significant shortage of teachers throughout the country. More than 157,000 educators quit teaching annually, while another 232,000 transferred to a new school district (Mack et al., 2019). Research has suggested that approximately 45% of teachers leave education to pursue another career within their first 5

years of entering the teaching field (Ingersoll et al., 2018). These departures disrupt student success beyond the classroom they leave.

Inflated teacher attrition rates carry high costs for students, school districts, and teachers. Costs associated with teacher turnover exceed approximately $7 billion annually in the United States, including recruitment, hiring, training, and ongoing support costs (Sutcher et al., 2016). Despite years of research on the teacher workforce, teacher retention remains a crisis educators and policymakers grapple with today. Educational leaders predict more teachers are on the verge of exiting (Ingersoll et al., 2021). Retaining strong quality teachers is one of the most effective ways school districts can serve their stakeholders (Player et al., 2017).

Schools are only as good as the quality of the teaching staff (Jones & Watson, 2017). Researchers have demonstrated teachers' critical role in improving student outcomes for many years; the disparity between being taught by a master teacher and a less competent teacher may equate to a full academic year of learning (Borman & Dowling, 2008). Guthery and Bailes (2022) believe the experience of being assigned an inexperienced teacher for multiple years adversely affects students. A student may never recover from having an inexperienced or uncertified teacher; therefore, teacher turnover becomes a liability for school districts. Teachers make a difference, and according to Frahm and Cianca (2021), "More than any other school-related factor, experts have demonstrated that trained, effective educators dramatically increase levels of academic achievement" (p. 102).

Across the country, teachers have not always exited the profession at such a rapid pace. In 1992, approximately 5% of teachers left the profession (Darling-Hammond & Podolsky, 2019). The rate at which teachers are leaving teaching today is even more alarming. Many novice teachers are exiting education altogether before entering their fifth year of teaching,

contributing to the expansive teacher turnover crisis (Kamrath & Bradford, 2020). Looking deeper into the national teacher attrition rates reveals that "8% of teachers leave the profession yearly, and another 8% change schools" (Darling-Hammond & Podolsky, 2019, p. 7). Comparatively speaking, other countries experience lower attrition rates, ranging from 3% to 4% (Geiger & Pivovarova, 2018). Almost two-thirds of teachers report exiting the profession for reasons other than retirement, including a lack of administrative support, limited decision-making input, and stress (Darling-Hammond & Podolsky, 2019). The above data suggest that teacher attrition remains a poorly understood dilemma that continues to allude educational leaders across the country.

Principals are one of the most significant factors in teacher retention (Player et al., 2017). Previous research on principals' leadership has suggested that a principal's relationship with a teacher positively impacts teachers' attitudes, classroom practices, learning culture, and student outcomes (Fox et al., 2015). Research studies on teacher retention have revealed that principal support can uniquely retain inexperienced teachers (Frahm & Cianca, 2021). However, understanding what new teachers define as principal support or encouragement has been much more difficult to determine. Beginning teachers often discover that they are underprepared in the first year of teaching, creating a demoralized and hopeless attitude. To combat these feelings, these teachers need an open, collaborative, and positive learning community to grow (Fox et al., 2015). The relationship between teacher and principal is even more vital to teacher retention than before the pandemic. The pandemic has made teachers question their profession (Barlow, 2021). Principal leadership relies more on the interpersonal relationships developed between the principal and teacher than ever before (Fox et al., 2015).

The public school system in Texas loses approximately 10% of its teachers yearly (Albright, 2023). The state spends almost $505 million annually due to teacher attrition, which is more than any other state (Mack et al., 2019). As school leaders, teachers, and students have navigated through the pandemic, Texas has continued to experience more teacher vacancies. Teacher turnover has remained a constant phenomenon and the catalyst for new teachers in the workforce; additionally, it explains the challenges and difficulties in staffing classrooms with certified teachers. In 2018, Texas averaged an almost 11% attrition rate among its teachers, which trends higher than the national average of 8% (Landa, 2023a). Texas does not have enough zero-year teachers entering the profession to fill teacher vacancies. In 2023, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) created a task force to study teacher attrition. TEA (2023a) reported a 13.4% attrition rate for first-year teachers and a 27% attrition rate for teachers with 2–5 years of experience. In the last 3 years, teachers' workloads significantly changed, and they experienced increased work-related stress and on-the-job demands, resulting in reduced professional functioning, increased attrition rates, and lower student achievement (Chan et al., 2021). Education has developed an unhealthy relationship with stressful work, and teachers, especially novice teachers, are opting for a different profession as soon as they feel the mounting stress and lack of support from the educational environment.

Statement of the Problem

The problem addressed in this study was the retention of novice teachers through principal behaviors. When schools and districts experience higher teacher turnover, student learning is negatively impacted (Guthery & Bailes, 2022). More importantly, teacher turnover stifles students' academic growth and erodes trust in the school and its leaders. Teacher turnover in the site district has risen significantly for the last 3 years, hitting an all-time high of 15%;

however, in the previous 24 months, the school district experienced an unprecedented 42

teachers who chose to abandon their contracts during the 2021–2022 school year, and over half

had between one and 3 years of experience (C. Teague, personal communication, July 2023). In

the last 2 years, the school district has hired over 500 teachers to fill vacated positions from the

previous year and started the 2022–2023 school year with over 40 vacancies (C. Teague,

personal communication, July 2023). This increased number of teachers leaving or abandoning

their contracts places a tremendous financial and organizational burden on the campus and

district (Guthery & Bailes, 2022). Principals are expected to be miracle workers as they balance

their students, teachers, and parents on top of the other demands of the job. School administrators

and other school leaders are faced with an increasing need to attract and retain high-quality

teachers to ensure students reach their highest potential, as teacher retention is significantly

correlated with the principal (Sulit, 2020).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to understand novice teachers' perceptions of principal

behaviors that keep them employed in the site district. Teacher attrition and job satisfaction have

been studied extensively in an attempt to understand teacher retention. In this study, I explored

why novice teachers with 1 year of teaching experience through 5 years of teaching experience

stayed in a school district. Additionally, the purpose of this study was to clarify the principal's

effect on novice teacher retention. The findings of this study may initiate future leadership and

principal training to better support the most vulnerable teachers on campus.

Research Questions

T. Mitchell et al. (2001) sought to understand why employees stayed in an organization

and introduced the construct of job embeddedness to explain why people remain in their jobs.

Job embeddedness is a combination of organizational attachment factors that explain employee retention (Li et al., 2022). More precisely, "It is the degree to which employees are integrated into the organization" (Watson & Olson-Buchanan, 2016, p. 5). Job embeddedness has been deemed as the theory of staying and centers around fit, links, and sacrifice in both the organization and the community (Watson & Olson-Buchanan, 2016). This theoretical lens was used to examine inexperienced teachers' perceptions of principal behaviors that lead them to stay on their campus. The theoretical framework allowed for the following questions to be used in this study:

RQ1: What are the perspectives and beliefs of novice teachers concerning the importance of teacher *fit* with the principal as a reason to stay in their current position?

RQ2: What are the perspectives and beliefs of novice teachers concerning the importance of formal and informal *links* between principals and novice teachers, and how do these connections impact their desire to stay?

RQ3: What are the perspectives and beliefs of novice teachers concerning the *sacrifices* of leaving their principal?

RQ4: What are the perspectives and beliefs of principals concerning the retention of novice teachers?

Definitions of Key Terms

This study uses several critical terms in this concept paper; the following are their definitions and how they are used throughout this research. Additionally, some of these definitions have been synthesized from the review of teacher retention literature.

Alternative certification pathways. This is a nontraditional route to teacher certification that allows educators to teach while completing the necessary credentials to be a certified teacher in Texas (TEA, 2022a).

First-year teachers. These are educators obtaining an initial, standard teaching certificate in an academic year and employed as teachers for the following academic year (TEA, 2022b).

Fit. Fit is an employee's perceived compatibility or comfort with the organization (T. Mitchell et al., 2001).

Links. Links are defined as discernible connections between people and institutions (T. Mitchell et al., 2001).

Novice teacher. A novice teacher has less than 5 years of experience (K. Kim & Roth, 2011).

Sacrifices. Sacrifices incorporate the perceived cost of material or psychological benefits that a teacher may give up for leaving the job (T. Mitchell et al., 2001).

Teacher attrition. Teacher attrition is when teachers leave the teaching profession (Fuller & Pendola, 2019).

Teacher migration. Teacher migration represents teachers leaving the school that employed them in the prior year (Ingersoll, 2001).

Teacher retention. Retention is continued employment in the workforce. For this study, retention refers to continued employment at the same school on a half-time or more basis (TEA, 2023f).

Teacher shortage. Teacher shortage is used to refer to insufficient production of new teachers, given the size of student enrollments and teacher retirements (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019).

Teacher turnover. Teacher turnover is when teachers leave a school either to move to another school (teacher mobility) or leave the teaching profession (teacher attrition; Fuller & Pendola, 2019).

University-based teacher certification. University-based certification is the route to educator certification while earning a bachelor's degree at the same time (TEA, 2022a).

Summary

Teaching is one of the largest occupations in the country. School leaders have seen rapid changes in the internal and external nature of education, producing conditions of extreme uncertainty and leaving the profession unstable (Rinke, 2019). Teachers' jobs are precarious as they must shift quickly with workplace patterns, school and district reform efforts, and societal changes. These variables raise the question of whether the teaching profession is becoming a temporary occupation. Teaching has become a revolving door where almost 50 percent of all teachers quit in their first 5 years (Rinke, 2019). New teachers enter their first teaching job with a passionate desire to impact their students in a positive manner; however, many beginning teachers report little professional development, ineffective mentoring experiences, and struggles to meet the job demands (Watson & Olson-Buchanan, 2016). Novice teachers quickly become dissatisfied with school workplace conditions and leave unfulfilled and unhappy after a few short years. Principal leadership is vital to helping beginning teachers find their fit on campus and in the community in an effort to retain them at their school.

Teachers are in the trenches of public education; this system has always been stressful and challenging during the best times. Researchers identified teaching as one of the six professions with the most stressful duties and lowest job satisfaction (Herman et al., 2021). The last 3 years have magnified teachers' stress levels and negatively impacted all teachers' well-being, causing an influx in teacher resignations and vacancies. Many scholars have researched to better understand teacher attrition and the reasons for leaving. This research study focused on embedding practices to help teachers stay in their current positions.

Using the job embeddedness theory, I examined whether novice teachers need a stronger and more intentional fit on their campus to influence their desire to stay. Principals and school leaders are vital in ensuring teachers are supported and fit within the learning community. Empirical evidence has illustrated that teacher retention increases when teachers perceive oneness with or belongingness to a school (Rinke, 2019). Principals are critical agents in this process and the most crucial factor in a novice teacher's success.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The problem addressed in this study was novice teacher retention. In this study, I sought to understand novice teachers' perceptions of principal behaviors that keep them employed in one North Texas school district. One of the most studied and examined academic issues in the 21st century has been the struggle to maintain a robust, healthy teaching workforce (Geiger & Pivovarova, 2018; Hughes et al., 2015; Nguyen et al., 2020). Much concern has been expressed about the expanding problem of teacher retention and attrition (Harrell et al., 2019). This critical issue has only been compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic, which increased an already high-stress profession, leaving a higher probability of teacher burnout (Zamarro et al., 2022). The prospect of novice teacher turnover is of concern for school districts as the continued stress of teachers may result in more teachers leaving.

This chapter offers an introduction to the background and context of the study, followed by the methods for performing the full review of the literature. The theoretical framework is next described because of its relevance to the review of the literature. The majority of the chapter addresses teacher attrition, the impacts of teacher attrition on multiple aspects of education, teacher retention with consideration for the effect of principal leadership, and novice teacher-related studies linking their experiences to the theoretical framework. The chapter ends with a conclusion about the reviewed studies' trends to demonstrate how the problem and the gap identified in the literature review suggest the need for this study.

Background and Context for This Study

Schools are only as effective as their teaching staff (Watson, 2018). School leaders have strongly emphasized increasing teacher effectiveness to improve student learning (Burroughs et al., 2019). Researchers have determined that competent, successful teachers considerably

increase levels of performance (Frahm & Cianca, 2021; Podolsky et al., 2019). By providing

quality instruction and guidance, educators can be instrumental in helping students understand

academic material and make the most of their educational opportunities. This is true especially

for students who may not have had access to the same resources or opportunities as their peers.

Research has demonstrated that teacher competency is correlated with student achievement; even

small changes in teacher efficacy can noticeably impact student success (Akram, 2019).

In addition to a teacher's experience, skill level, and certification, teacher turnover

disrupts academic performance and adversely impacts student learning (Sorensen & Ladd, 2020).

Guthery and Bailes (2022) concluded that when a student is assigned an inexperienced teacher

for multiple years, it could negatively impact student learning. Borman and Dowling (2008)

indicated that a student might never recover from having an inexperienced or uncertified teacher.

Teacher inexperience and high attrition levels negatively affect student learning and academic

performance (Kini & Podolsky, 2016). Therefore, teacher turnover represents a liability, and the

ability of a school or district to retain a sufficient number of quality teachers significantly affects

its ability to serve its stakeholders and community over time (Player et al., 2017).

Thousands of teachers leave their classrooms yearly before completing the end of their

fifth year of service (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019). During the 21st century, over

a million teachers entered, exited, or changed schools annually across the nation (Geiger &

Pivovarova, 2018). Data from the U.S. Department of Education revealed that 8% of teachers

leave teaching, and another 8% of teachers move to another school each year (Carver-Thomas &

Darling-Hammond, 2019; Watson & Olson-Buchanan, 2016). Diliberti et al. (2021) indicated

that inexperienced teachers exit the field at a rate surpassing the ability of school districts to

replenish their ranks, with around 8% of teachers departing annually. This type of attrition

carries substantial costs for student learning, and effectively retaining teachers is critical to ensuring the workforce has adequate, qualified, and committed teachers (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019).

By early 2020, teacher attrition had increased in many districts, and researchers estimate the size of the current teacher shortages at approximately 100,000 teachers annually (Darling-Hammond & Podolsky, 2019; Diliberti et al., 2021). This high rate of workforce loss appears unique to the field of teaching. The teacher attrition rate is more significant than the attrition rates of other nonteaching professions. Almost 30% of college-trained teachers leave their profession within 5 years when compared with attrition rates of 19% for lawyers and nurses and 16% for engineers (Ingersoll, 2019).

The challenges of teacher attrition are particularly acute in higher-poverty schools and hard-to-staff subject areas, including special education, science, and math positions (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019). Teacher attrition costs school districts hundreds of millions of dollars annually in recruitment and training expenses (Rinke, 2014). Each year, school districts spend exorbitant amounts of money and resources on hiring and training new teachers to fill vacancies by teachers who have chosen to leave the profession (Keese et al., 2022). It is estimated that for every teacher who leaves a position, it costs a school district $12,546, making attrition expensive (Harrell et al., 2019). The cost is even higher in urban districts, where costs have been calculated between $15,325 and $17,872 per teacher (Wiens et al., 2019).

Literature Search Methods

The review of the literature was completed after examining peer-reviewed articles, publications, books, and dissertations taken from Abilene Christian University's online library

databases that, included OneSearch, ProQuest, and the Digital Commons. Additionally, this

review incorporated public databases of ERIC and Google Scholar. Specific search terms and

keywords have been used to develop an in-depth literature review, such as *retention*, *attrition*,

teacher burnout, *first-year teacher*, *working conditions*, and *novice teachers*. Various word

combinations were used to narrow the search to multiple combinations: *teacher retention*,

teacher attrition, *first-year teacher attrition*, and *job embeddedness theory*. The initial keyword

search was limited to peer-reviewed scholarly articles written from 2010 to 2022. Several books

and articles from before 2010 were used to illustrate the ongoing, perpetual problem of teacher

retention and its effects on the public school system with foundational research. Finally, a

backward review of citations used in articles on teacher retention and attrition and the impact of

the school principal on retaining new teachers was conducted; this review of reference lists

assisted in identifying relevant literature previously acknowledged by past researchers.

Theoretical Framework

T. Mitchell et al. (2001) initially introduced job embeddedness theory as a framework to

comprehend the factors influencing individuals' decision to remain in their organizational roles.

Job embeddedness refers to the extent to which an employee forms social and emotional bonds

with their job, community, and organization. It is conceptualized in the research literature as a

state of "stuckness" that makes employees want to stay in their jobs (Li et al., 2022). The

framework has been used as a robust predictor of retention across various professionals,

including hospital, military, police, and bank employees (T. Mitchell et al., 2001; Watson, 2018).

Job embeddedness encompasses employee engagement within the current organization and its

culture and involves people, tasks, identity, and opportunities for growth. This organizational

principle emphasizes factors related to organizational attachment that support employees in

remaining in their present roles. Job embeddedness is a construct that revolves around the organizational attachment factors that might retain employees in their current positions. For example, the degree to which teachers feel embedded in the school community is vital to keeping them employed in their organizations.

Job embeddedness is an effective way to increase employee loyalty because it gives employees a sense of belonging within their organization. It motivates employees who establish relationships with coworkers, become familiar with organizational policies and procedures, and understand the company's mission and culture. Employees who feel connected to their work environment are more productive and stay with their companies longer than those who do not, demonstrating higher job satisfaction (Watson & Olson-Buchanan, 2016). The theory portrays the comprehensive set of embedding forces that compel an individual to stay in a job, as opposed to focusing on the negative attitudes that might lead them to leave the position (T. Mitchell et al., 2001; Watson, 2018).

According to the theory, employee turnover is minimized when individuals are fully integrated into their roles (T. Mitchell et al., 2001). It predicts retention, attendance, and performance more than the most well-known and accepted psychological explanations (Holtom et al., 2006). However, T. Mitchell et al. (2001) concluded that job satisfaction and organizational commitment only partially explain why people stay in their jobs. Job embeddedness theory posits that individuals remain in their current position when they feel connected to three main components: the organization, the colleagues within it, and the community outside of it (Holtom et al., 2006).

T. Mitchell et al. (2001) developed the first job embeddedness theory with employees of 700 grocery stores and 500 hospitals. The results illustrated that the degree of embeddedness is

associated with the intent to leave and increased employee retention. Holtom et al. (2006) affirmed that embeddedness had a substantial negative association with voluntary job turnover.

Job embeddedness posits that there are six dimensions that employees use to measure the benefits of staying in their current positions. The components include the employee's fit with the organization, the links created in the organization, and the sacrifices of leaving the organization. Additionally, the framework includes a community element that incorporates the employee's fit with the community, links to the community, and the sacrifices of leaving the community (Watson & Buchanan, 2016). These components can be further broken down into smaller ones, each contributing to overall job embeddedness. By applying the job embeddedness framework to novice teacher retention, principals can review the links, fit, and sacrifice model to comprehend retention factors affecting novice teachers (Watson & Olson-Buchanan, 2016).

Fit

In 2001, T. Mitchell et al. defined fit as the employee's perception of compatibility or comfort with the organization, a factor directly tied to the degree of attachment to the organization. Employees who find a positive person-to-organization fit to see their personal values, career aspirations, knowledge, skills, and abilities reflected in the organization's culture and job requirements stay (Zhang et al., 2021).

Ongoing research is expanding on the connection between teacher fit, job satisfaction, and the retention of novice teachers. (Ellis et al., 2017; Miller et al., 2020). When job knowledge, abilities, and skills match the organization's and job's demands, it positively impacts job embeddedness and reduces turnover. Ellis et al. (2017) studied 729 Texas teachers and found higher levels of perceived organizational fit aligned with higher job satisfaction. Miller et al. (2020) examined 132 teachers in Michigan and Indiana and discovered novice teachers'

perceived organizational fit was associated with retention. Miller et al. (2020) studied longitudinal data of 132 novice teachers and determined that a teacher's professional organizational fit is positively associated with the decision to stay. Additionally, Miller et al. (2020) suggested principals should focus on practices that contribute to teachers' perceptions of organizational fit among their staff. The same researchers encouraged principals to explore ways to help teachers develop stronger bonds across the campus. Larkin et al. (2021), in a study conducted in an Aspen school district, found a close-knit relationship between teacher retention and organizational and community fit. Principals may influence this fit by instituting newly hired orientations, policies, and procedures that encourage teachers to join professional organizations and attend professional conferences.

Links

T. Mitchell et al. (2001) defined links as discernible connections between people and institutions. Furthermore, connections are classified as formal or informal links among an employee, an organization, or others (T. Mitchell et al., 2001). Linked employees connect formally and informally through work-related teams, coworker relationships, and out-of-work community associations (Watson, 2018). T. Mitchell et al. (2001) suggested that the more links an employee has, the higher the probability they are bound to their job and organization. The threads linking an employee to the organization can be social, psychological, or financial, including years of service and membership in community organizations (Holtom et al., 2006).

Links in the organization refer to the connections beyond the job itself. At the foundation, links are centered around relationships with coworkers, members of a work group, and other employees; these relationships can influence the degree of personal embeddedness and the intention to leave. The relationships in the organization would naturally develop over time and

grow. Leaders possess the capability to launch initiatives that foster and reinforce connections within the organization. Principals can provide group lunches and dinners to get to know their employees, helping to create a personal connection with the leader (Holtom et al., 2006). Miller et al. (2020) concluded that principals should implement practices allowing teachers to share their professional interests and goals as a way to increase teacher retention.

Sacrifice

Sacrifices constitute the final element of the theory, encompassing the perceived cost of material or psychological benefits that a teacher might forfeit upon leaving the job, as well as the ease or difficulty of serving the aforementioned links (Lee et al., 2004; T. Mitchell et al., 2001). Sacrifices incurred by quitting a job are the most mentioned issues by an employee when discussing employee retention (Holtom et al., 2006). Leaving a position or a job creates job-related losses; as a teacher contemplates leaving a position, the number and intensity of sacrifices operate against relationships with colleagues, the nature of projects, or the advantages that might be associated with the position (T. Mitchell et al., 2001).

Organizational sacrifices may look very different from organization to organization. Salary represents a possible sacrifice when determining to leave a job, especially among teachers. Additional advantages such as health and retirement benefits, educational perks, opportunities for advancement, and the convenience and proximity of the work commute also play a substantial role in influencing the cost associated with leaving a job. However, discontinuing relationships, institutional knowledge, and the notion of leaving students could contribute to avoiding the overall sacrifice of leaving a teaching position (Watson, 2018). Therefore, job-embedded employees must consider the potential sacrifices incurred by leaving their schools, including sacrifices against job advancement and stability, as well as the

advantages that occur because of retention (T. Mitchell et al., 2001). Finally, leaving a school or organization may result in losing community status, including career and rank attained over time.

In order to apply the job embeddedness framework to the study of novice teachers' perceptions of principal behaviors and the effects of those behaviors on teacher attrition and retention, it is imperative to dig deeper into what research has shown about attrition and retention. It is also essential to thoroughly study the results of job embeddedness research on the issues and challenges surrounding novice teachers' early years in the teaching profession as well as the research on principal leadership. These findings on job embeddedness in empirical studies provide enlightenment on the theory's relevance to the study.

Job Embeddedness Theory in Empirical Studies

By using job embeddedness theory as a framework for creating an effective workplace environment, employers can better understand why their employees stay with them and how they can build stronger relationships within their teams. Viewing teacher attrition from an organizational embeddedness perspective may assist in understanding the retention of teachers. Larkin et al. (2021) found a clear correlation between fit, links, and sacrifice to the school district and the surrounding community. Previous studies have indicated that retaining valued employees is among an organization's most critical needs (Holtom et al., 2006; Smith et al., 2019).

Additionally, the researchers sought to show that the degree to which an employer or supervisor influences job embeddedness creates a greater propensity to stay. Watson and Olson-Buchanan (2016) examined 143 novice teachers' perceptions of principal behaviors that retain them using job embeddedness. These teachers had less than 5 years of teaching experience and were in California. Watson and Olson-Buchanan (2016) found a correlation between retention, job embeddedness, and novice teachers, indicating that job embeddedness relates to novice

teacher retention. Teachers' job embeddedness and emotional and cognitive connections in their chosen teaching environments significantly reduced the likelihood of leaving for another position or retiring prematurely (Watson & Olson-Buchanan, 2016). Watson and Olson-Buchanan supported findings established by previous studies (e.g., Holtom et al., 2006) focused on individual teacher characteristics and the overall school context, with outcomes suggesting that higher levels of job embeddedness can help combat teacher attrition.

Li et al. (2022) conducted a 1-year longitudinal study of 264 employees from various organizations by interviewing them three times during the year. The researchers found that proactivity increased when employee embeddedness increased. Additionally, this same study illustrated that a drop in perceived embeddedness might negatively affect the employee's future in the organization. Miller and Youngs (2021) concluded teachers with a high-level fit with their coworkers are likely to remain at the school where they began teaching. They supported Watson and Olson-Buchanan's (2016) conclusion that teachers' perceptions of their integration into the organization and community significantly impacted their intentions to stay at the school. Through this framework, organizations can see the value of fostering meaningful connections between staff members and providing security and loyalty, leading to increased performance, retention rates, and overall satisfaction among staff members.

Teacher Attrition and Why Teachers Leave

Teacher attrition refers to teachers leaving the profession before retirement (Fuller & Pendola, 2019). A certain amount of teacher attrition is unavoidable and even healthy (Glazer, 2018). This phenomenon has become increasingly common in recent years and has a detrimental effect on the quality of education and students' overall well-being nationwide. In fact, the current teacher attrition rates exceed what experts consider "normal" attrition levels (Sutcher et al.,

2016). Podolsky et al. (2019) discovered that over 50% of teachers who exit the profession do so due to factors unrelated to retirement. Teacher attrition has remained problematic for educational leaders to understand, substantially contributing to teacher shortages (Harris et al., 2019; Sun et al., 2017; Wiens et al., 2019). Sutcher et al. (2016) indicated the current high teacher attrition rate is a primary factor in teacher shortages, and less than one-third of the attrition is found in retirements. Compounding the issue is student enrollments are increasing, and professionals entering the teaching profession are decreasing (Sutcher et al., 2016). Teachers may depart from a school for various reasons, but studies have indicated that workplace conditions are of utmost importance (Glazer, 2018). Previous researchers have divided teachers into categories to better understand the movement in and out of education: teachers who stay at the same school, those who move schools, and those who leave the teaching profession (Madigan & Kim, 2021). While all three affect a school's education quality, understanding how to retain the most inexperienced is paramount. Because of the costly, time-sensitive follow-up, it is challenging to study teacher attrition. Therefore, research on teacher attrition is limited to current teachers who intend to leave (Nguyen & Kremer, 2022).

Teachers in urban and suburban school districts left due to the challenges found in adolescent students (K. Allen et al., 2016). Moreover, turnover behaviors suggested that younger teachers are more at risk of turning over and need more support to keep them in the classrooms (Nguyen et al., 2020). Teachers also indicated that reasons for leaving range from the profession as a whole: from student discipline to an overload of paperwork (Glazer, 2018). García et al. (2022) examined various factors influencing teacher attrition and concluded that teachers voluntarily leave because of a lack of teacher voice, school support, school problems, and teacher morale. Kamrath and Bradford (2020) concluded that teachers turn over because of

salary, working conditions, preparation, and mentoring support; however, the importance of these factors varied and was heavily dependent on the working conditions on the campus. Additionally, extensive evidence has linked teacher attrition to burnout and job dissatisfaction (Madigan & Kim, 2021). Shirrell (2021) researched work-related social interactions as a pivotal key in retaining novice teachers; the researcher concluded that a novice teacher is on their own and presumed an expert by their colleagues and therefore receive little to no special status as they begin their careers. Further, Shirrell (2021) found that beginning teachers are sought out less often for their advice than more experienced teachers perpetuating a lack of shared technical culture and a lack of socialization among novice teachers. Although researchers have identified various reasons teachers leave, understanding the complexities of these variables remains problematic. In 2016, Acheson et al. interviewed 5 rural teachers from Florida to explore why teachers leave; they found that teachers leave from a perceived lack of community and institutional support.

Retaining the most effective teachers has always been a critical, complex, and challenging task for school districts (Miller et al., 2020). The rate at which teachers exit fluctuates nationally, almost 8% yearly, accounting for nearly 90% of annual teacher demand (Sutcher et al., 2016). Consequently, districts face the challenge of recruiting tens of thousands of teachers annually due to the increasing departure of novice and midcareer educators from the field of education. Furthermore, another 8% of teachers change schools yearly, increasing the overall turnover rate to 16% (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019; Harris et al., 2019; Nguyen & Kremer, 2022). It is estimated that 157,000 teachers leave their teaching job every year, and more than 232,000 transfer to another school (Sutcher et al., 2016). The number of teachers who move jobs laterally between schools is high, but those teachers continue to impact

students even if they work at different schools. The most significant concern for student achievement remains the high number of teachers who exit the profession permanently.

Generational Gap Affecting Teacher Attrition

Research has consistently supported the belief that teacher quality is the most critical attribute of student learning (R. Allen & Simms, 2018). There are fundamental differences across generations regarding how age groups connect to people and jobs (Mahmoud et al., 2020). Generally speaking, people in the same age groups share similar experiences and social and cultural events, ultimately influencing their attitudes and values (Mahmoud et al., 2020). In recent decades, the teaching force has become older, younger, and far less experienced but still unstable (Ingersoll et al., 2018). The generation gap between teachers in the 2023 workforce is a topic of concern and relevance. With more than two-thirds of the teacher workforce being 55 and older, there are growing concerns about how this generation gap could potentially affect the quality of teaching in classrooms throughout the country.

Generation Z currently represents approximately 24% of the countries' population and represents the predominant majority of the incoming workforce (Pichler et al., 2021). This group of teachers was the first to have internet and mobile phone access for the entirety of their lives. Broadbent et al. (2017) also suggested that these digital natives have grown and developed during the social media era, shifting society's attitudes towards information, relationships, and privacy. There has been limited research on Generation Z as teachers and their needs in the school district. However, some preliminary studies have shed light on the characteristics and needs of Generation Z individuals pursuing careers in education. Seemiller and Grace (2017) studied 1,200 Generation Z college students and found that they perceived themselves as ethnically diverse, influential, entrepreneurial, open-minded, and responsible. Additionally, they

found Generation Z teachers sought to build social networks to support coworkers (Seemiller & Grace, 2017).

There is a noticeable trend of Generation Z teachers leaving the profession early due to various factors, such as low salaries and a lack of opportunities for career advancement (Seemiller & Grace, 2016). Seemiller and Grace suggested Generation Z teachers seek an emotional connection to their work and autonomous work environments. Other empirical studies indicated that Generation Z individuals pursuing careers in education have unique needs and priorities related to work–life balance, professional development, and technology integration. As this generation continues to enter the workforce, it will be necessary for school districts and educational institutions to adapt their policies and practices to support and engage Generation Z teachers effectively.

Generational studies have suggested that changes in values and a gradual evolution have shifted the values of Generation Z (Pichler et al., 2021). This shift has forced school districts to reevaluate their leadership practices and development. With this influx of young talent comes an increased need for school districts to find ways to retain Generation Z teachers. As such, school districts have begun implementing strategies to engage and retain these younger teachers. Organizations can leverage the Generation Z workforce by incorporating elements of diversity and socialization programs, integrating technology with performance management and employee development, and creating supportive working conditions (Pichler et al., 2021).

Members of Generation Z demonstrate an eagerness to learn new skills and take on creative projects (Schroth, 2019). School districts can support self-directed learning through leadership programs or mentorship initiatives that allow members of this generation to hone their skills further and better contribute to their teams (Soares & Lopes, 2018). A paradigm shift has

created and produced young teachers with a greater awareness of society, and school leaders are wrestling with the need to be supported differently as they prepare to attract and retain novice teachers.

Teacher Attrition in Texas

The TEA does not have a statewide definition for what constitutes a teacher shortage; however, teaching positions across the state remain hard to fill. Texas continues to experience higher teacher attrition rates than the national average. Texas has the fourth-highest teacher attrition across the country and is surpassed only by Arizona, New Mexico, and Louisiana (Carver-Thomas et al., 2017). Further, southern states experience even more attrition and experience as high as 17% turnover rates (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019). Mason-Williams et al. (2020) found that higher-poverty schools have more significant turnover rates than affluent school districts. Specifically, teacher retention is a critical issue in Texas because, in addition to attrition, there is also a higher demand for teachers due to the radically increasing student enrollment. According to the TEA (2022a), student enrollment in Texas increased by over 428,000 students in 10 years, which is an 8.6% change in statewide enrollment. The additional students in Texas created a need for hiring approximately 42,000 additional teachers from 2012 to 2021 (TEA, 2023e). Despite this demand for more teachers, the state's high teacher attrition rate caused financial and performance difficulties in its school districts (García & Weiss, 2019).

Teacher attrition has plagued Texas since 2011, with the state losing 9% of the existing teaching force annually (Landa, 2023a). Additionally, approximately 8,600 teachers retired in 2021, almost 1,000 more teachers than the previous year (TEA, 2022a). During the 2020–2021 school year, Texas saw the attrition rate climb to nearly 12% (Landa, 2023b). Empirical studies

conducted in Texas by Holme et al. (2018) and Sullivan et al. (2017) highlighted the instability in the Texas teacher workforce. Holme et al. (2018) focused on teacher turnover from 2004 to 2014. To address these attrition issues, the state of Texas took several steps. In 2019, the 86th Legislature passed House Bill 3 to provide additional funding for recruiting and retaining quality educators by raising salaries and establishing a teacher mentor program and the Teacher Incentive Allotment, which can increase teachers' salaries (TEA, 2023b). Consequently, in 2019, TEA launched the Educator Excellence Innovation Program to provide professional development opportunities for experienced educators through grant-funded projects focusing on classroom technology or instructional strategies (TEA, 2023b).

Further, the TEA (2023c) established the Teacher Vacancy Taskforce to identify teacher-centered solutions to address these challenges. The task force brings together diverse perspectives and experiences from current classroom teachers and school administrators to formulate insightful policy recommendations and pave an innovative path forward that robustly supports the needs of our teachers. With the exception of the mentor program, it is essential to note that none of these efforts addressed the concept of job embeddedness for the teacher, and, despite all of these efforts, for the 2021–2022 school year, the TEA reported a 12% attrition rate of almost 43,000 teachers, which is the highest ever reported by the agency (Landa, 2023b).

Predicting teacher turnover is challenging; researchers have suggested that teachers' age, years of experience, and effectiveness can help forecast teacher turnover (Miller et al., 2020). When teachers leave their positions, it costs money to recruit and hire new teachers who require time to adjust to new working conditions (Scallon et al., 2023). Furthermore, teacher turnover can disrupt student learning since teachers who stay longer are better equipped to facilitate student achievement (Keese et al., 2022). The rapid turnover of teachers has various negative

consequences for the educational system, as it leads to decreased instruction stability, weakened student–teacher relationships, and a lack of subject-area expertise. High teacher attrition harms schools, which lose institutional knowledge and students, who are increasingly taught by less qualified teachers (Harris et al., 2019; Nguyen & Kremer, 2022).

The Impact of Teacher Attrition on Education

Instructional Stability Based on Texas Teaching Standards

Among academic researchers, it is widely accepted that the teacher's quality is the most significant influence on student achievement and, therefore, is critical for improving schools (Dietrich et al., 2015; Gentrup et al., 2020; Gunther, 2019). In 2014, the TEA established Teaching Standards outlined in the Texas Administrative Code, providing core propositions that define what quality teachers should be able to do to impact student achievement positively. Included in those propositions are the assertions that teachers should be able to manage and monitor student learning, know the subjects they teach (content knowledge), and know how to teach those subjects to students (pedagogy). The agency emphasized the importance of educators maintaining a constant commitment to high standards for personal development and performance. Furthermore, educators are tasked with identifying ways to collaborate with other professionals in the education field, both within and beyond the school, to actively participate in purposeful and targeted learning, feedback, and continuous improvement of teaching methods.

Classroom Management and Instructional Delivery

Teacher burnout or emotional exhaustion is correlated with teacher attrition (Bettini et al., 2017). Further, it is considered a precursor to teacher attrition (Bettini et al., 2017). Classroom management is an essential component of a teacher's job, as it is necessary to establish and maintain an environment conducive to learning. However, ineffective classroom management

can lead to teacher burnout and attrition. Cumming et al. (2020) used teacher self-reported data to understand how closely instructional practices related to burnout and found a strong correlation between both. Prior empirical research has suggested that teachers report more unmanageable workloads, higher stress, less time, and more responsibility, significantly lower job satisfaction (Bettini et al., 2017). When teachers struggle to manage their classrooms, they may experience high levels of stress and frustration, which can ultimately lead to them leaving the profession. Ramos and Hughes (2020) conducted a case study in a low-income public school district in Arizona and found that student behaviors negatively impact a teacher's commitment. Additionally, students in poorly managed classrooms may exhibit disruptive behavior, making it difficult for teachers to deliver instruction effectively. When new teachers join the teaching staff, they often lack experience and struggle with classroom management techniques that maintain student order (García & Weiss, 2019). The knowledge a teacher has for processing the complexity found in teaching depends significantly on their level of experience, leading to differences in how teachers perceive and interpret classroom events (Wolff et al., 2021). Researchers have also found that inexperienced teachers feel uncertain about classroom management (Shank & Santiague, 2021). This creates an environment where learning can be impeded due to misbehavior or other disruptions.

Content Knowledge and Expertise

Frequent teacher turnover typically has adverse effects on student achievement, leading to inconsistencies in instruction and variations in the quality and effectiveness of teachers who depart and those who take their place (Ronfeldt, 2021). Teacher attrition also results in a lack of subject area expertise as schools must continuously hire new personnel who may not be familiar with specific topics or methods of teaching that they will be expected to present (K. Lambert &

Gray, 2020). For teachers to be the most effective, they must remain in their position long enough to earn experience and expertise (Ingersoll et al., 2018). When schools have a high attrition rate, they are forced to hire novice teachers, who, on average, are less effective than more experienced teachers (García & Weiss, 2019; Ladd, 2011). This hiring practice often results in students receiving less effective and lower-quality pedagogy (Redding & Nguyen, 2020; Simon & Johnson, 2015). A wide variety of research indicates that variations in teacher quality are closely associated with differences in student achievement (Jackson et al., 2014). Teaching experience is most valuable; a researcher from the University of Illinois, Ben Ost, found that if a teacher can teach the same content over multiple years, they learn the art of teaching faster (R. Allen & Simms, 2018). Using the U.S. Department of Education's School Staffing Survey, Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2019) concluded that constant turnover can lead to gaps in knowledge in particular subjects like mathematics or science, where instruction should remain consistent throughout the academic year. Without this level of consistency during instructional periods, there can be difficulties identifying gaps in understanding, ultimately impeding learning progress. Darling-Hammond and DePaoli (2020) maintained that students excel in a routine, stable, nurturing environment. Further, the authors suggest that within-year turnover has a destabilizing effect on a student.

Teacher–Student Relationships

Students' relationships with teachers are fundamental to their success in school (Darling-Hammond & DePaoli, 2020). Teacher attrition can also have a significant impact on teacher–student relationships. Schools and school districts that experience significant teacher turnover, especially among novice teachers, lack the sustained continuity between stakeholders which would allow them to establish positive routines to enhance student, parent, and teacher

relationships (Simon & Johnson, 2015). When experienced teachers leave the profession, they take with them their knowledge of students' individual needs, strengths, and challenges. Researchers demonstrated that teacher attrition weakens the connections between teachers and students, leaving students without the guidance and support they need to succeed academically (S. Braun et al., 2019; Summers et al., 2017). Harm to students is especially concerning when students, such as kindergarten and lower elementary grade students, are more dependent on teacher guidance to understand concepts and perform academically (Summers et al., 2017). When there is rapid turnover among teachers due to attrition, little time is available for teachers to cultivate individual relationships with their students that are beneficial for both parties (S. Braun et al., 2019). As such, even if incoming teachers possess all the necessary knowledge and skillsets required for effective lesson delivery, without these strong connections between students and teachers, teachers cannot efficiently understand how to ensure each student attains academic success (Darling-Hammond & DePaoli, 2020).

Teacher Attrition's Negative Effect on Student Achievement and Growth

Teacher attrition can significantly impact student achievement (Sorensen & Ladd, 2020). When experienced teachers leave the profession, schools often struggle to find and retain qualified replacements, leading to increased turnover rates and instability within the classroom. In the realm of academic research, there is a broad consensus that the quality of teachers is the most impactful factor in student achievement, making it crucial for the enhancement of schools (Gunther, 2019). High teacher attrition harms schools and students (Harris et al., 2019). Specifically, teacher attrition diminishes schools by losing institutional knowledge and filling vacancies with less qualified teachers (Nguyen & Kremer, 2022). The loss of experienced teachers can disrupt the continuity of curriculum and instruction, further hindering student

progress. Studies have shown that teacher turnover is associated with lower student achievement, particularly in low-income schools where teacher attrition rates tend to be higher (Sorensen & Ladd, 2020). Therefore, it is essential for schools and districts to address the underlying causes of teacher attrition, such as inadequate support and low compensation, to ensure that students have access to high-quality instruction and achieve their academic potential. Examining middle school math and English teachers in North Carolina, Sorensen and Ladd (2020) determined that teacher turnover is associated with a 0.013 standard deviation decrease in student performance in English and math. Inexperienced teachers, possibly lacking robust content and pedagogical knowledge, may encounter challenges in effectively instructing their students (Stewart & Janksy, 2022). Since teaching requires understanding a wide range of instructional activities, newly hired teachers face further challenges when attempting to gain sufficient pedagogical knowledge about their field to prevent disruption or reduce confusion among students (Reitman & Karge, 2019).

Teacher Retention

Employees who believe their pay, supervision, chances for promotion, and work environment are fair choose to stay in their position. The retention of teachers presents a complex and challenging issue for school districts, causing a ripple effect throughout the organization. Even though thousands of hours and dollars have been allocated to solving the problem, researchers and school leaders have not found a single, straightforward solution. Teacher retention studies have illustrated that there is no single explanation for teacher retention; however, when a teacher decides to leave, it is typically for multiple reasons, including job dissatisfaction with the workplace conditions (Ingersoll et al., 2019). Because of the sustained increase in teacher attrition, researchers have been prompted to examine school characteristics, teacher characteristics, working conditions, and organizational fit as variables in understanding

how to slow teacher attrition and increase retention (Ladd, 2011). Rosenblatt et al. (2019) analyzed data from the 2014–2015 TAPR report using multiple regressions models and found teacher decisions to leave a position are largely impacted by student populations and the training and support needed to address those individuals, suggesting that school leaders can influence attrition rates by addressing situational factors that influence a teacher's experience.

The annual hiring of teachers to fill vacancies created by those who exit the profession is expensive and inefficient (Keese et al., 2022). Statistics on teacher retention have suggested that teachers leave the profession at higher rates when compared to other occupations; as such, the attrition rate of teachers has increased over the last two decades (Madigan & Kim, 2021). Teacher retention is often associated with job satisfaction and alternatives. Previous research has pointed to teachers' workplace dissatisfaction and burnout contributing to teachers leaving their positions (Madigan & Kim, 2021; Nguyen & Kremer, 2022). Studies have revealed that teachers are more likely to leave when they are burned out and dissatisfied with their school (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2020). In 2003, Ingersoll identified a set of analyses to unveil the specific characteristics contributing to school staffing challenges. The data for this study were derived from the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) and the Teacher Follow-Up Survey (TFS) conducted by the NCES. The objective of the survey was to measure the attrition rates for teachers and examine the characteristics of teachers who stayed and those who left. Both samples were substantial; the SASS involved 53,000 teachers, 12,000 principals, and 4,500 districts to guarantee a diverse representation of teachers and school districts nationwide. Furthermore, the 2012–2013 TFS comprised a sizable sample of 7,000 teachers, offering a comprehensive and representative dataset to gather a wide range of information focused on teacher turnover. The data demonstrated that the demand for teachers has increased in recent years, as well as student

enrollments. Ingersoll (2003) reported that 58% of all schools had difficulty filling job openings within their district, demonstrating concerns with recruitment across districts. The data showed that the demand for teachers and the resulting staffing difficulties were not limited to student enrollment and teacher retirement but were directly related to teacher turnover, making it imperative for school leaders to retain teachers.

Effects of COVID-19 Pandemic on Teacher Retention

Although teacher retention has always been an essential issue in the education system, the COVID-19 pandemic has increased its effects more than in previous historical periods in the modern education era. The unprecedented crisis has caused significant disruption to teachers and students, leading to immense pressure for educators to adjust their teaching methods and school systems to find ways to support their teacher workforce. When considering this through the job embeddedness framework, it can be said that the COVID-19 pandemic sparked a significant change in both the links, or connectedness, in a working environment and the fit, or compatibility, that an employee would feel. In education, the COVID-19 pandemic has only amplified the stressors of teaching and enhanced the stress of managing students, coworkers, and bureaucratic teaching tasks (Herman et al., 2021). When teachers returned to the classroom settings for the 2020–2021 school year, they faced new school conditions, new job expectations, and new classroom environments (Pressley, 2021). The pandemic has made teaching a more difficult job and exceptionally challenging to stay in for the long run. Diliberti et al. (2021) reported that "extremely high rates of teacher burnout and low levels of morale during the 2020–2021 school year foreshadow higher teacher attrition by the end of the academic year" (p. 2). Job satisfaction levels associated with teaching have reached an all-time low, and almost half of the current teaching workforce has considered quitting (Will, 2022).

Principal Leadership Effects on Teacher Retention

Some of the most critical jobs of a building principal are recruiting, hiring, inducting, and retaining teachers. Additionally, principals nurture working conditions that foster effective teaching (DeMatthews et al., 2022). Researchers widely acknowledge strong, effective principals significantly influence student achievement (Hayes & Irby, 2020; Young et al., 2017). Prior research linking leadership to retention suggests that more effective leadership is associated with higher retention for the average teacher (Grissom & Bartanen, 2019). From a school leadership and continuous improvement perspective, all teacher turnover is not created equal. Schools benefit from failing to retain below-average or ineffective teachers (Adnot et al., 2016). Further, the principal can significantly influence teacher job satisfaction and commitment (Scallon et al., 2023). Principal actions determine how policies and campus decisions affect teachers, which may directly impact job embeddedness (Watson, 2018). Player et al. (2017) employed data from 3,000 teachers in the 2011–2012 Schools and Staffing Survey and the 2012–2013 Teacher Follow-up Survey to investigate the correlation between leadership and retention. Their hypothesis was validated, revealing that teachers who perceived strong or high-quality principal leadership were significantly less inclined to leave their school. According to Murray-Johnson and Guerra (2018), principal leadership affects teacher retention in public schools by creating an environment that encourages staff collaboration, inclusion, and professional development opportunities. Empirical studies have correlated that the quality of principal leadership on campus is the most important predictor of teacher retention (García Torres, 2019; Ladd, 2011). Scallon et al. (2023) used in-depth case studies with 32 teachers across two districts to explore organizational factors affecting teacher turnover; they concluded that despite differences in leadership styles, principals with low turnover in their schools focused on three main themes:

recognizing teachers, communicating the culture and vision of high-quality teaching, and focusing on student learning. DeMatthews et al. (2022) believed the principals' abilities to understand their school community and needs allowed them to promote a shared set of values that retain teachers.

In 2012, a report from the New Teacher Project suggested principals should implement strategies to retain the most effective teachers, including recognition, personal encouragement, and meaningful feedback, by providing more leadership opportunities. The environment can significantly impact teacher recruitment and teacher motivation that the campus principal fosters. With the teaching force becoming increasingly unstable and districts experiencing 44% of their new teachers leaving within 5 years, principal leadership and its effects on retention are more important than ever (Ingersoll et al., 2018). J. Kim (2019) explored longitudinal, national early career teacher data and concluded that principal support as it pertains to student behavior management is the most critical variable impacting novice teacher turnover. Further, principals who foster relationships between faculty members based on trust and respect, offer quality professional development opportunities, recognize teacher achievements, and implement policies that enable instructional improvement tend to have higher retention rates (Ladd, 2011). Kraft et al. (2016) explored New York City longitudinal teaching data and found teachers' perceptions of their principal predicted lower teacher turnover rates. Principals who take the time to get to know each teacher individually can help foster an atmosphere of trust and collaboration among faculty members (C. Mitchell & Larry, 2021).

Administrative Support and Job Satisfaction

The literature on attrition emphasizes the significance of principal support when contemplating leaving their position. In 2013, the TEA adopted administrative standards to align

school administrators' training, appraisal, and professional development. The second of those

standards, human capital, charges the principal with providing high-quality teachers and staff in

every classroom throughout the school (Standards Required for the Principal as Instructional

Leader Certificate, 2023). Additionally, principals are tasked with developing systems, priorities,

and culture that ultimately lead to the school's work conditions, placing significant value on

administrative support and leadership. When positively influencing teachers' working

conditions, administrative support and leadership can directly impact teacher fit, compatibility,

and links or connections. Boyd et al. (2011b) characterized administrative support as "the extent

to which principals and other school leaders make teachers' work easier and help them to

improve their teaching" (p. 307). Hughes et al. (2015) examined the perception of support

between teachers and principals and how that perception impacted retention. Hughes et al. found

that teachers' perceptions centered around emotional, environmental, and instructional support.

They concluded all levels of support affect a teacher's decision to stay or leave, but emotional

and environmental support was valued the most. Further, teachers preferred to work in schools

with more administrative support to reduce their stressors on the job, and the support helped

them succeed. Thibodeaux et al. (2015) researched principal leadership behaviors influencing

teachers' intentions to stay. Using a Likert scale survey in five school districts in the south, they

found consistent results with previous studies (Boyd et al., 2011b; Ladd, 2011) that principal

leadership is a critical factor in teacher retention. For teachers, their perception of administrative

support is a more essential component of teacher retention than the students they teach; lack of

administrative support is a pivotal component of teacher retention (Player et al., 2017;

Thibodeaux et al., 2015).

Ladd's (2011) study of teacher retention in North Carolina discovered that teachers place significant value on school leadership, which can help to predict teacher retention. Teachers' perceptions of their school leaders were directly correlated to the decision to leave the school, as they contributed to the working conditions of the school. Specifically, it is the principal's ability to encourage and acknowledge their staff, promote a clear vision, and run an effective school (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019). Teachers who voluntarily left their teaching positions pointed to administrator concerns centered around their building administrator's lack of recognition and support (Kamrath & Bradford, 2020). This was even more profound in low socioeconomic schools, where researchers have found a higher percentage of attrition due to administrative support (Boyd et al., 2011b; Ingersoll, 2001). Previous studies have linked teacher retention and administrative effectiveness (García Torres, 2019; Redding & Smith, 2019). Teachers' perceptions of campus leadership emerged as a crucial predictor of their intentions to leave, with many identifying dissatisfaction with the administration as the most significant factor influencing their decision to depart (Boyd et al., 2011b). Previous research has confirmed that the strongest principals provide an encouraging and positive culture by supporting and buffering the stressors of teaching (Kaiser & Thompson, 2021). Fox et al. (2015) found that the principal's relationship with teachers was positively connected with teachers' attitudes, and the determination and encouragement of the principal, specifically, had a critical impact on teachers.

Beginning teachers, specifically, needed more substantial administrative support. In a study focused on supporting beginning teachers, Ronfeldt and McQueen (2017) found that support from campus leadership reduced the odds of teachers exiting the position by almost 48%. Hughes et al. (2015) found that teachers relied on emotional, environmental, instructional, and technical support to navigate the early years of teaching. Teachers who received substantial

support in their first year of teaching were 51% to 58% more likely to remain in education than new teachers who perceived a lack of support (Ronfeldt & McQueen, 2017). In a research study that looked specifically at beginning teacher stress levels, the researchers asserted that it is not necessarily the challenge of the job but the structure of the social–professional support that ultimately led to attrition or retention (Harmsen et al., 2018). For beginning teachers, the support of campus leadership mattered because it allowed them to develop connections that created a feeling of belonging or embeddedness that made them want to stay.

The Novice Teacher Attrition

Over the past 30 years, teacher attrition rates have increased significantly (Ingersoll et al., 2014). The novice teacher experience is fraught with challenges and difficulties, ranging from classroom management to dealing with the intricacies of student lives. Consequently, novice teachers are at a higher risk than experienced teachers for leaving the profession. Hanushek et al. (2005) examined over 300,000 Texas teachers and found that more than 26% left their schools within the first 2 years. In comparison, in the same study, Hansushek et al. (2004) also found that 23% of those teachers left after more than 30 years of experience. Teacher attrition in the first 5 years of employment has been proven higher than in any other stage of teaching (Perryman & Calvert, 2020). Teachers with 5 or fewer years of experience have an attrition rate estimated to be between 40% and 50% (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019; Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). These high attrition levels during novice teachers' first few years of teaching suggest that teachers leave the profession before they can reach their full potential.

Novice teachers are more likely to abandon their contracts in the middle of the school year, costing students 32 to 72 instructional days (Henry & Redding, 2018). This attrition can be attributed to multiple factors, including workload demands, lack of support from administrators

or colleagues, coursework overloads, inadequate professional development opportunities, or challenges related to classroom management, all of which directly impact job embeddedness (Watson, 2018). When novice teachers feel overwhelmed by the demands of teaching and lack support from those around them, they may become disillusioned. When they lack links to colleagues and a feeling of compatibility with the campus culture, they leave the profession before becoming successful educators.

Novice Teacher Links

Links are connections developed between a teacher and the school or others associated with the school district. These links help connect employees through formal and informal channels and are salient reasons for novice teacher retention (Watson, 2018). Research has illustrated that 46% of new teachers left the field during their first 5 years (Glazer, 2018; Rinke, 2014). Novice teachers often face numerous challenges as they begin their careers, such as managing classroom behavior, developing effective lesson plans, and building relationships with students and colleagues (Shirrell, 2021). By fostering these connections and providing ongoing support, principals can help novice teachers develop their skills, confidence, and sense of belonging, ultimately leading to greater job satisfaction and longer-term retention. Social interactions among colleagues are pivotal to the effectiveness of the success and retention of novice teachers (Shirrell, 2021).

Teacher Pay

The challenges facing teachers in public schools are complex and multidimensional. Chief among these challenges is an ongoing struggle for adequate pay, which is closely linked to teacher attrition. Teacher pay and other monetary factors positively impact teacher retention and help link teachers to their schools (Gunther, 2019). García et al. (2022) found that the salary

level is especially important for the retention of novice teachers, and a 1% increase in teacher pay reduces turnover by 0.16 percentage points. To understand the issue thoroughly, it is essential to consider both the short- and long-term effects of inadequate teacher pay. In the short term, lower salaries can lead to higher levels of burnout and dissatisfaction among teachers who become increasingly frustrated with their job situation. This frustration can manifest in absenteeism, decreased engagement with students and colleagues, and other forms of disengagement from teaching responsibilities. Schools with lower salaries are more likely to have higher turnover problems (García et al., 2022). These issues can increase teachers' stress as they face growing financial pressure and limited job security. Low wages may diminish morale and make it difficult for teachers to stay in their positions when better-paying opportunities arise elsewhere. This leads to fewer experienced educators in classrooms as new teachers have not yet developed expertise or established relationships with students and staff. Low salaries have been identified as a chief cause of the increased teacher attrition rates; however, research has demonstrated that raising salaries alone has not effectively reduced attrition rates, suggesting that pay is only a fraction of the problem (Colson & Satterfield, 2018). Furthermore, replacing departing educators can be costly as schools must often invest additional resources into recruitment efforts or offer signing bonuses for new hires. High turnover rates thus drain school budgets that would otherwise be invested into providing quality educational instruction.

Teacher Collaboration

For this review, teacher collaboration encompasses collegial relationship building, shared goals, and shared responsibility (Griffiths et al., 2021). Researchers have conducted multiple studies highlighting the independent and isolated work of teaching and the autonomy that accompanies it. Historically, classroom teachers lacked peer assistance or collaborative

conversations, and teachers were reluctant to collaborate or link for help. Over the last two decades, many scholars have advocated increasing opportunities for teachers to work together collaboratively (DuFour, 2010). As a result, teachers have begun to see collaboration as a crucial factor that positively improves the working conditions of the school and leads to a decision to stay in their schools (Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018). Collaborating with colleagues aids in building teacher resilience and can be a factor in retaining teachers (Kamrath & Bradford, 2020). This collaborative professionalism has evolved over the last decade, becoming pervasive and embedded across school districts (Hargreaves, 2019). Shuls and Flores (2020) examined support for novice teachers, and they concluded that principals can develop and implement targeted strategies to meet their needs and help cope with the challenges of teaching, many of which can be identified in a Professional Learning Community.

Teacher collaboration is a crucial link that novice teachers especially need. Teacher networks provide invaluable camaraderie and collaboration opportunities, allowing them access to feedback on best practices for instruction, which can help improve overall job satisfaction levels (Sommerlad et al., 2022). Collaborative relationships enable teachers to share goals, responsibilities, and workload. Reitman and Karge (2019) conducted a grounded research study and surveyed 60 teachers to discover the significant supports that foster retention. They concluded that supportive, collaborative relationships were among the most impactful. These types of relationships create opportunities to connect while learning from each other and combating isolationism, which is shown to have a detrimental effect on teacher satisfaction and retention. Additionally, this collaboration adds to the feeling of fitting in or being compatible with the campus which is a key component of job embeddedness.

New teachers, particularly, rely on social interactions with experienced educators to learn and adapt to their roles (Shirrell, 2021). Collaborative efforts among teachers facilitate the exchange of ideas and strategies, leveraging educators' diverse experiences, knowledge, and skills (Griffiths et al., 2021). Collaboration fosters supportive environments crucial for the professional success of inexperienced teachers (Farmer, 2020). Unfortunately, novice teachers often face a "sink or swim" approach, leading to challenging relationships with administration and mentors. Torres (2020) discovered that novice teachers frequently experience heightened anxiety due to their unfamiliarity with the subject matter and concerns about students, families, and colleagues (p. 511).

In a teacher retention focus group conducted by Resta et al. (2013), 93% of participants revealed experiencing a low point and contemplating leaving the profession within their first 2 years of teaching. According to the 2022 Texas Teacher Poll, 77% of surveyed teachers have considered leaving education in the past 12 months (2022). Teachers often express guilt about not teaching as effectively as veteran educators, feeling underprepared for class, and providing subpar instruction to their students (Torres, 2020).

Previous teacher retention studies have shown that teacher commitment is closely tied to the quality of support provided by school leaders (Player et al., 2017). Supportive environments can be instrumental for young teachers navigating their initial year, making the teaching profession more appealing. Teachers who perceive support from their colleagues are more likely to stay in the teaching workforce (Texas AFT, 2022a). Job embeddedness plays a pivotal role in ensuring employees remain loyal, content, and engaged with their school.

Professional Learning Communities

Professional learning communities (PLCs) are educational collaborations that have been found to positively impact novice teacher retention and the overall educational environment. Broadly defined, PLCs are small groups of teachers who meet regularly to assess and develop strategies for student and school problems (Brake & Kelly, 2019). Most PLCs have similar characteristics, including shared purpose, collaboration, and focus, all contributing to a professional's professional capacity to succeed in schools (Brake & Kelly, 2019). However, García and Weiss (2019) reported that more than two-thirds of teachers have little to no influence over what and how they teach. Effective professional learning communities and continuous training significantly impact teacher growth, and new knowledge development makes their job easier and more rewarding (Brake & Kelly, 2019; García & Weiss, 2019). Professional learning communities allow for collaboration among novices and veterans alike, creating strong relationships between participants and fostering a sense of self-efficacy among novice teachers (Berry et al., 2021). These relationships enable trust between colleagues, which is essential for novices when seeking support if they experience difficulty with specific topics or lesson plans (Dixon et al., 2019). Furthermore, conversations surrounding challenges faced by novice teachers can help identify ways veteran educators can assist those just entering the profession, such as providing access to resources or helping connect novices with other networks within the school district. PLCs allow teachers to gain new knowledge, skills, and confidence in their teaching practices and strengthen their professional relationships with colleagues and administrators (García & Weiss, 2019; Ladd, 2011). For novice teachers, PLCs offer a space for support from experienced educators who can provide advice and guidance.

The supportive atmosphere of professional learning communities also helps build confidence among new educators (Berry et al., 2021; Dixon et al., 2019; García & Weiss, 2019). Novice teachers may struggle with self-doubt about their teaching abilities; however, within the PLC setting, they are able to express their concerns without fear of judgment while receiving constructive criticism from more experienced educators. By discussing topics related to effective teaching methods, such as culturally responsive instruction or developmentally appropriate strategies, novices can gain insight into the many facets of successful teaching that otherwise would not be acquired through traditional education courses.

Teacher Mentors

Teacher mentor programs are essential components of successful teacher induction processes across all educational settings. These programs assist novice teachers in increasing their communication skills, engaging students in the classroom setting, and providing long-term support systems that promote resilience amongst new faculty members. Teacher mentors play an essential role in retaining novice teachers by offering numerous advantages for beginning educators (Wiens et al., 2019). Teacher mentor programs are designed to provide support, advice, and professional development opportunities to new educators during their transition into the teaching profession. Mentoring programs increase connections and support from within the school (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Keese et al., 2022). Teacher mentors often have many years of experience in the education field. They can provide valuable insight into various aspects of teaching, from classroom management strategies to curriculum design and lesson planning. Wiens et al. (2019) examined teacher mentor data from a large, urban school district in the southwest United States and concluded pairing a novice teacher with a mentor teacher reduced novice teacher attrition. Additionally, the researchers found an increase in retention rates among

new teachers. Teacher–mentor relationships facilitate a safe learning environment for novice teachers to develop their skills and establish confidence in their abilities as educators (Marshall et al., 2022). Teacher mentorships act as a form of professional development that can equip novice teachers with the tools they need to succeed in the classroom while building relationships that foster resilience against job-related stressors (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Wiens et al., 2019).

In addition to helping reduce teacher turnover rates, quality teacher mentor programs offer numerous other benefits related to educator effectiveness and student outcomes. Reitman and Karge (2019) reported that sustained, rigorous individualized support from a veteran teacher is critical to novice teacher retention. Wexler (2019) concluded that mentoring novice teachers matters in the learning-to-teach process. Additionally, Wexler found that how novice and mentor teachers interact impacted novice teacher success. By recognizing the importance of investing in teacher mentor programs, which cultivate relationships between experienced educators and those just entering the profession, school districts can reap lasting benefits beyond merely reducing turnover rates amongst novice staff members.

Novice Teacher Fit

Teacher turnover negatively impacts schools and students. When turnover contributes to teacher shortages, schools often hire inexperienced or unqualified teachers (Sutcher et al., 2016). Retaining new teachers in public schools is critical. With teacher shortages, inadequate salaries, and a competitive job market, school districts have been forced to find creative ways to retain new teachers by creating more profound ones. These responsibilities can be overwhelming for any teacher, especially just starting out in the field, and if novice teachers feel disconnected from their colleagues and their school community, the feeling of being overwhelmed is magnified.

There is a growing awareness of the importance of teacher job fit regarding teacher retention. Job fit is the degree to which an individual's skills, personality, values, and interests match the requirements of a specific job or role (Miller et al., 2020). New teachers often need additional support when settling into their roles as they may be unfamiliar with certain aspects of teaching, such as classroom management or curriculum delivery. Using survey data from 132 teachers in Michigan and Indiana, Miller et al. (2020) examined how novice teacher fit impacted teacher attrition, and they concluded that teacher fit had a statistically significant and positive association with teacher retention. Further, this study's findings highlight the significance of matching teachers' values and professional goals with the schools. This builds on previous studies that illustrate a correlation between collegiality and positive relationships with colleagues and attrition (Kraft et al., 2016; Miller et al., 2020).

Research has shown that ensuring a good job fit for teachers can significantly increase teacher retention rates (Ellis et al., 2017; Miller et al., 2020). This is because when teachers find themselves in positions where they can use their knowledge and skills effectively, they become more engaged in their work and less likely to consider leaving the profession altogether. In addition, having a good job fit can also lead to improved morale among educators as they feel more appreciated for what they bring to the table professionally and personally.

Teacher Working Conditions and Dissatisfaction

Teachers face many challenges inside the school building, and teacher working conditions are consistently the strongest predictor of teacher turnover across empirical studies (Geiger & Pivovarova, 2018; Harrell et al., 2019; Harris et al., 2019). However, previous quantitative studies have focused on teacher turnover and the correlation to student demographics, with little attention to the working conditions found in the school (Kraft et al.,

2016; Ladd, 2011; Mack et al., 2019). What that limited attention has found, though, is that schools with supportive working conditions enhance teacher quality and enable teachers to perform at high levels and that poor working conditions in public schools have been significantly linked to job dissatisfaction and teachers quitting their jobs (Geiger & Pivovarova, 2018). Further, working conditions are clearly associated with teacher retention (Kraft et al., 2016; Mack et al., 2019).

Establishing a clear definition of working conditions is challenging. One study suggests that these conditions encompass the workplace's physical features, the organizational structure, relationships among staff, and the staff and administration (Ladd, 2011). Overall, throughout the literature on teacher retention, there is no acceptable construct definition delineating and defining the working conditions (Merrill, 2021). Specifically, the literature does not define working conditions with the same variables, creating conflicting information in the literature. For consistency with the literature and clarity in meaning, the term "working conditions" in this review includes the variables of collaboration, administrative support, decision-making power, and school culture. Working conditions are also a critical factor when considering job embeddedness.

Educators have provided various reasons for exiting the profession, yet workplace conditions are frequently cited as one of the primary factors. School environments that produce undesirable working conditions and a lack of support increase teachers' dissatisfaction with their jobs and, as a result, have a higher attrition rate (Geiger & Pivovarova, 2018). When explaining these high attrition rates, teachers point to a lack of administrative support, school culture, and limited decision-making input (Harris et al., 2019; Mack et al., 2019). These unfavorable working conditions contribute to teacher stress and burnout, leading to higher attrition rates.

Teachers who feel satisfied with their school and district continue to teach significantly more than dissatisfied teachers in the same school or district (Raue & Gray, 2015). Mertler (2016) researched teacher motivation and job satisfaction in Arizona and found that 20%–30% of teachers were dissatisfied with their jobs. These findings are consistent with similar research; however, they are slightly lower than research that asked teachers if they would choose education if provided with the opportunity to select a different profession again.

Texas continues to experience higher-than-average teacher attrition due mainly to challenging teaching conditions (Reyes & Alexander, 2017). Teachers are exiting the profession and schools with unmanageable working conditions. In 2015, Texas public schools retained approximately 90% of their first-year teachers; in 2018, teachers with 4 years of experience were retained at roughly a 67% rate (Landa, 2023a). The Texas Teacher Poll conducted in 2020 indicated that 58% of teachers seriously considered leaving teaching, and 2 years later, the number increased to 77% (Albright, 2023). The study showed that increased dissatisfaction resulted from an untenable workload, job satisfaction, and working conditions (Albright, 2023). The Texas AFT represents more than 65,000 teachers and staff in Texas. In the Texas AFT (2022a) survey regarding teaching over the last 2 years, one teacher responded:

> I'm so tired, and the stress in the workplace is out of control. The district and the state are piling on expectations as if everything is back to normal, and none of this is normal. Teachers are hanging on by a thread. (p. 3)

The most important responsibility of the state of Texas is to ensure the public education system allows all Texas students to reach their greatest potential; teachers and the quality of the teachers are pivotal in ensuring student success because teacher working conditions reflect students' learning environment (Merrill, 2021).

How teachers perceive their working conditions impacts their decision to stay or leave a school, and the pandemic has exacerbated or aggravated these issues making retention more problematic (Diliberti et al., 2021). Working conditions of educators, grounded in organizational theory, demonstrate that teachers leave because of the working conditions of the school and not their student characteristics (Geiger & Pivovarova, 2018). Harris et al. (2019) confirmed that knowing how many teachers leave each year and why can be challenging. Additionally, some researchers estimated that up to 16% of teachers will leave their school every year.

School Culture

Eaker and DuFour (2015) concluded that school structures are vital to the culture and success of the school. School culture also plays a crucial role in novice teacher success. In order for novice teachers to succeed at any given school, they must first understand the underlying expectations at each particular institution. This includes (a) understanding what standards are expected of both students and educators alike, (b) knowledge about who is responsible for making decisions, (c) methods used for addressing student issues, (d) approaches taken when dealing with parent concerns, and (e) general beliefs about teaching styles. Much of the literature on teacher attrition is focused on workplace culture centered on professional cooperation and collaboration (Carver-Thomas et al., 2017; Simon & Johnson, 2015). However, Simon and Johnson (2015) summarized the relatively significant finding on teacher turnover in California, Chicago, New York City, and North Carolina. They concluded that a culture of trust, respect, and commitment coupled with supportive administrators increases teacher retention. Novice teachers need to gain an understanding of these underlying values so that they can build strong relationships with students and colleagues alike while at the same time meeting all other expectations held by both faculty members and administration.

Existing research has indicated a correlation between connectivity and professional success (Mullen et al., 2021). Novice teacher fit and school culture are critical considerations when providing novice teachers with the tools necessary to succeed in any new position. By understanding how their individual classroom style fits into that particular atmosphere and developing an awareness surrounding existing expectations from faculty members and students alike, novice teachers can better prepare themselves for a more successful experience overall.

Novice Teacher Sacrifice

Leaving their teaching position can be an extended and challenging process for many teachers. Sacrifice refers to the ease or difficulty of breaking the links that connect them to the school and the community (Holtom et al., 2006). Further, it may include avoiding loss, which may be vital to a teacher's decision to remain in their classroom (Kiazad et al., 2015). Novice teachers may consider other sacrifices when choosing to leave, including the discontinuation of relationships, the gleaned institutional knowledge of the school, their classroom, and, for many, the sense of leaving their students.

Teacher–Leader Decision-Making Power

Teacher autonomy and decision-making power have long been vital components of teacher retention. This autonomy can be manifested in various ways, including providing teachers with discretion over classroom management strategies and allowing them to use instructional practices that are best suited for them (Grissom & Bartanen, 2019). Ingersoll et al. (2019) found that teachers who depart from their jobs link it to their administration, lack of input into decisions, and lack of classroom autonomy. Teachers are empowered to create pedagogical approaches that support student engagement and achievement by having the agency to shape

their teaching practice. Teacher autonomy and decision-making power lead to teachers feeling respected and supported in their roles as educators and more likely to remain in their positions.

A culture of trust, academic autonomy, and openness can strengthen teacher retention (Ingersoll et al., 2019). Schools are seldom structured to create and capitalize on informal or formal leadership from teachers. Teacher decision-making power contributes to the overall working conditions of the school. Teachers who are provided with the opportunity to be informal leaders in the decision-making process increase their feelings of ownership and ultimately improve their job satisfaction, which makes staying more enticing (Liu & Watson, 2020). Teachers who perceive administrators as providing more decision-making authority report greater retention and job satisfaction (Frahm & Cianca, 2021). Teachers who have been empowered with decision-making over their day-to-day decisions report low levels of burnout and a higher level of commitment.

Professional Development

Professional development is key for novice teacher success; it is impactful when readily available, useful, focused on practice, and collaborative (Berry et al., 2021). Professional development equips novice teachers with the necessary skillset required for teaching in a modern educational landscape, enabling them to build strong relationships between themselves, their students, and fellow faculty members (Berry et al., 2021). However, in this study, only 20% of teachers polled in North Carolina strongly believed they had the resources to have ongoing opportunities to work with colleagues to refine teaching practices.

Summary

Solutions to teacher retention continue to elude school leaders. By and large, novice teachers are exiting the profession at an accelerated pace. Highly effective school principals can

positively impact novice teacher attrition by helping teachers embed in their campus and community. The problem that needs to be addressed is that many novice teachers feel overwhelmed and unsupported by their principal and leave their teaching job without hesitation. Research highlights important reasons why novice teachers might feel underprepared; the most important is a lack of support to manage the challenges of working conditions found in teaching. While research does identify some specific challenges novice teachers experience, it does not explicitly provide principals with tangible actions to curb the novice teacher attrition rate, allowing this area to be further studied.

This qualitative case study explored the retention of novice teachers through principal behaviors in one suburban North Texas school district. It gathered information about the experiences of novice teachers and what behaviors they need from their principal to retain them in their jobs. The results of the study could assist building principals and district leaders in developing or improving principal leadership and targeted support for novice teachers.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Method

The general problem addressed in this study was novice teacher retention. In this study, I sought to understand novice teachers' perceptions of principal behaviors that keep them employed in one North Texas school district. The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to understand novice teachers' perceptions of principal behaviors that keep them employed in the site district. Teacher attrition and job satisfaction have been studied extensively in an attempt to understand teacher retention. This study explored why novice teachers with 1 year of teaching experience through 5 years of teaching experience stay in the district. Additionally, in this study, I sought to clarify the principal's effect on novice teacher retention. Job embeddedness has been deemed as the theory of staying and centers around fit, links, and sacrifice in both the organization and the community (Watson & Olson-Buchanan, 2016). This theoretical lens examined inexperienced teachers' perceptions of principal behaviors that led them to stay on their campus. This study had two primary research questions: Why are more novice teachers leaving the site district than in previous years, and how can the principal increase teacher retention?

Principals are essential to the success of novice teachers as they are responsible for providing novice teachers with the necessary tools, guidance, and support to help them develop as professionals in their field. Studies have shown that novice teachers who receive strong principalship support have higher job staying power than those who do not (Carver-Thomas et al., 2017). This suggests that a principal's ability to effectively mentor novice teachers is essential in keeping them from leaving their job prematurely (Fox et al., 2015; Frahm & Cianca, 2021; Player et al., 2017). The general problem addressed in this study was the retention of novice teachers through principal behaviors; principals are not embedding novice teachers into

the culture and communities of their schools and, therefore, failing to retain them. This study examined teachers who achieved a teaching certification through a traditional teaching certification program in Texas; these university programs offer a bachelor's degree and a route to a teacher certification simultaneously (TEA, 2023a). This qualitative research aimed to understand secondary novice teachers' perspectives of principal behaviors that keep them employed in the school district.

This chapter outlines the study design, the rationale for using a qualitative descriptive case study approach, and the data collection and analysis procedures. Furthermore, this chapter summarizes the site of the study, including the population and the process for selecting the study sample. This chapter concludes by discussing the methods to establish trustworthiness, reliability, and ethical considerations for the study.

Research Design and Methods

Qualitative research is founded on the belief that people build knowledge as they engage in and understand the experience as a whole (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Qualitative research attempts to realize how individuals "make sense of their lives, delineate the process of meaning-making, and describe how people interpret what they experience" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 15). Qualitative methodology was chosen to provide an extensive understanding of secondary novice teachers' perspectives of leadership behaviors that retain them on campus. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) described this style of research as an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and the interactions there.

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to answer *why* teachers stay and *how* principals retain them (Yin, 2018). The main purpose of descriptive research is to explore unnoticed phenomena and organize the findings to explain and validate the findings; it is

common to use qualitative research when seeking to answer questions from observations, interviews, and surveys (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This study did not explore future events but sought to comprehend the nature of the situation, how the participants behave in the setting, and what their day-to-day looks like (Yin, 2018). The analysis of this case study strove for a depth of understanding of novice teachers and campus leadership (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Figure 1 shows the research alignment of the study.

A qualitative descriptive study was selected for this research project to examine the unusual teacher attrition rate over the last 3 years in a North Texas school district (Yin, 2018). This design allowed for an in-depth inquiry into the retention of secondary novice teachers over 3 years, covering numerous circumstances expanding over time (Yin, 2018). Qualitative descriptive designs are well thought out and combine an eclectic combination of data collection and analysis procedures. This study had an intrinsic design because its primary focus was on one school district. By studying this case, the research may reveal insights into principals' behaviors that foster a sense of "staying" on their campus for novice teachers.

Context

The site of the study was a suburban North Texas school district. Over the last 12 years, the district has experienced exceptional student growth and has been categorized by Texas as a fast-growth district. The school district serves five distinct and diverse communities. The site district serves approximately 24,500 students on 30 campuses**;** these campuses include three high schools (Grades 9–12), two alternative, nontraditional high schools, five middle schools (Grades 6–8), and 20 elementary campuses (Grades Pre-K–4). Including administration and support, the site district maintains 68 facilities covering more than 4 million square feet on 603 acres of ground.

Figure 1

Research Alignment

Purpose statement	The purpose of this qualitative descriptive case study was to understand novice teachers' perspectives of principal behaviors that keep them employed in a North Texas school district.
Research questions	1. What are the perspectives and beliefs of novice teachers concerning the importance of teacher fit with the principal as a reason to stay in their current position? 2. What are the perspectives and beliefs of novice teachers concerning the importance of formal and informal links between principals and novice teachers, and how do these connections impact their desire to stay? 3. What are the perspectives and beliefs of novice teachers concerning the sacrifices of leaving their principal? 4. What are the perspectives and beliefs of principals concerning the retention of novice teachers?
Framework	Job embeddedness theory (T. Mitchell et al., 2001): Job embeddedness is the degree an employee socially and emotionally connects to their job and organization (Watson & Olson-Buchanan, 2016). It is conceptualized in the research literature as a state of "stuckness" that makes employees want to stay in their job (Li et al., 2022).
Research tradition	Descriptive design is used when a straightforward description of a phenomenon is desired. It is a research approach used when researchers are seeking to understand events pertaining to who were involved, what was involved, and where did things take place (V. Lambert & Lambert, 2012).
Paradigm	This study used the interpretive paradigm. Its dynamic, constructed, and evolving nature seeks to understand social reality through the eyes of those being studied (Rashid et al., 2019).

The site district students come with various languages, backgrounds, and program needs. The student demographics depict a diverse and wide-ranging student population: 45% are White, 29% are Hispanic, and 15% are African American (TEA, 2020). Under the National School Lunch and Child Nutrition programs, 31% of the students in the district are eligible for free or reduced-price meals, which is lower than the state average of 60% (TEA, 2020). In the last accountability rating, the district earned a letter grade of a "B" or an excellent level for the district.

The school district is one of the largest employers in its local communities and is committed to attracting, retaining, and valuing its staff. Approximately 10 years ago, the board of trustees pledged to offer competitive teacher salaries. In a recent market analysis conducted by the school district, it ranks first in the county for teacher pay, making it competitive with surrounding school districts. The school district employs over 2,700 employees with over 1,600 professional staff and employs teachers of all backgrounds and professional experience; the average teaching experience across the district is 12 years, and over 30% of all teachers hold an advanced degree (TEA, 2022a). Table 1 highlights the years of experience in the district.

Table 1

Teacher Experience

Years as a teacher of record	Percentage of the workforce in the site district
0 years	9%
1–5 years	16%
6–10 years	20%
11–20 years	38%
20 or more years	15%

The students benefit from the experience and expertise of the teachers. The site district historically retains approximately 85% of its teachers and 68% of the instructional support staff; however, in the last year and a half, the district has seen the retention rate of teachers decline and job abandonment increase.

Population

The study incorporated two distinct population groups. The first group consisted of current secondary building principals in Grades 6–12 in a suburban North Texas school district. The second group consisted of secondary novice teachers with 1–5 years of teaching experience who chose to remain in the same suburban North Texas school district. For the purposes of this study, a *novice teacher* was defined as having 0–5 full years of teaching experience.

Study Sample

Sampling is a critical tenet of any research, and careful consideration must be made as to whom to include as participants in qualitative research (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). Study participants were selected using a purposeful sampling technique because they met predefined criteria. More specifically, typical case sampling was used in this research. Participants were selected because they represented the norm or average and were not atypical (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). The study's teacher participants were between the ages of 23 and 27 and had worked as teachers in the case study district for a minimum of 1 year and were still employed at the same school during the 2023–2024 school year. This allowed 12 participants currently employed by the school district to provide a more expansive view of the principal's retention behaviors. Secondary principal participants must have been a principal from 2018 through 2023 and have had a current or former teacher participating in the study. This helped to provide the principal perspective on retaining novice teachers. The limiting variables in determining teacher

participants were their years of employment, experience, age, and certification program; only teachers with one to 5 years of teaching experience and who had earned a teaching certificate through the traditional certification pathway were included in this research.

Upon receiving approval from the ACU Institutional Review Board (Appendix A), I identified potential study candidates employed or previously employed within the last year in one suburban North Texas school district. To target potential candidates, I implemented a two-phase approach to select participants. First, candidates were identified through the site district's human resources office by surveying employment records using the following criteria: (a) years of experience in the site district, (b) the pathway to certification, (c) teaching certifications, and (d) employment status with the site district. Once the interviews began, I used snowball sampling to recruit research participants who fit the studied population. Participants in the interview were asked to send the invitation to any potential candidates interested in participating in the study who matched the defined criteria.

Once potential participants were narrowed, email invitations were sent to invite them to participate in the research study (Appendix B). In this qualitative descriptive study, 18 semistructured in-person interviews were used to collect data. To ensure that middle school and high school teachers were represented in the study, I invited teachers from each campus group to participate. Additionally, I sought six secondary principals to participate in a semistructured in-person interview to understand their perspectives on novice teacher retention. In quantitative research, I understood that quality was a more important element than quantity (Johnson et al., 2020; Koerber & McMichael, 2008). Therefore, I acknowledged that the number of participants might need to be altered depending on when data saturation occurs; I conducted research in order to attain data saturation by collecting rich and thick data (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

Materials/Instruments

The primary instruments used in this study were individual, semistructured interviews with the two distinct population groups. Additionally, I used interview guides developed to focus on why teachers stayed in their teaching positions, how they came to their decision, and what it was like for them. The questions were worded to make them easy to understand and framed in a way that encouraged each participant to share freely (Roberts, 2020). The questions were written to elicit in-depth responses relevant to each research question (Roberts, 2020). Each interview guide was reviewed by three experts in the educational field with research experience to provide feedback on clarity, content, and connection to the research questions. The interview questions were also tested in pilot interviews conducted with experienced secondary principals and teachers who were not included in this study. Further, I conducted the interviews through the Zoom platform.

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

Qualitative descriptive studies are often used to examine education issues (Seidman, 2019). It is a widely cited research approach for its ability to discover the who, what, and where of events and experiences while gaining insights from participants (H. Kim et al., 2017). Qualitative methodology often relies on the researcher collecting data through individual, semistructured interviews to understand the participants' lived experiences in the selected district site (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2018).

Screening Questionnaire

After obtaining consent from willing participants who agreed to take part in the study and signed the informed consent document, I administered a screening questionnaire (see Appendix C). The questionnaire was designed to collect demographic information such as age, years of

experience, ethnicity, and certification pathway. While qualitative research often relies on direct interpersonal interactions with participants to gather data, these indirect data points were instrumental in selecting participants for each setting, ensuring a diverse group of teachers who met the criteria were included.

Teacher Semistructured Interviews

Individual interviews provide researchers the opportunity to explore, comprehend, and learn the participant's perspectives and experiences (Carter et al., 2014). Before each interview, I sent selected participants the informed consent to electronically sign and submit at the time of the scheduled interview. I conducted the semistructured interviews (Appendix D). Each interview was scheduled using the Zoom platform and was expected to last between 45–60 minutes. Using the Zoom platform for this qualitative research provided accessibility to participants. Participants might have felt more comfortable speaking from a space of their own choosing, being able to end the interview at any time, and still feeling personally connected with their interviewer (Gray et al., 2020). The audio from the interview was recorded to ensure the accuracy of the transcripts. Interviews were transcribed. According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2019), interviews, of necessity, must be transcribed verbatim. I took detailed notes throughout each interview, allowing follow-up or clarifying questions when applicable.

The interview structure involved an interview guide with prewritten open-ended questions steered by themes intentionally inserted with probes designed to elicit more thorough responses (Qu & Dumay, 2011). The interview questions were constructed to create comfort within the interview by beginning with background questions and language that was relevant and understandable to the participants. The interview questions stemmed from the research questions guiding the study which focused on why and how principals retain novice teachers. The

interview guide was reviewed by an expert panel consisting of two to three experienced researchers, veteran teachers, and veteran principals for connection to my research questions, clarity, and themes (Yin, 2018). This ensured the interview questions were worded intentionally and understandably and encouraged participants to share freely (Brinkman & Kvale, 2015).

Semistructured interviews worked well for this research because they allowed the participants to answer without restrictions. This interview approach allowed for "flexibility, accessibility, and capability to disclose important and often hidden facets of human and organizational behavior" (Qu & Dumay, 2011, p. 246). This structure enabled me to approach the environment from the teacher's and administrator's perspectives. Additionally, probing assisted in pulling more comprehensive descriptions from the interviewees (Qu & Dumay, 2011). Prior to conducting the interviews, I field-tested the interview, audio recording, transcriptions, redaction, and Dedoose software to ensure any errors or mistakes were mitigated. After the field test was completed, I conducted two trial interviews to ensure the interview questions were clear, concise, and unbiased.

Principal Semistructured Interviews

I interviewed six secondary principals. I selected an equal number of principals from the middle schools and high schools. Once approval was granted through the site district, I emailed all secondary principals to recruit them to participate in an individual interview regarding novice teacher retention. Before each interview, I sent selected participants the informed consent to electronically sign and submit at the time of the scheduled interview. Semistructured interviews took place using the Zoom platform and were scheduled for approximately 45–60 minutes. An interview guide with open-ended questions was used to facilitate the interview (Appendix E). The audio from each interview was recorded to assist with the accuracy of the transcripts. During

the interview, I took detailed notes and asked targeted follow-up questions when needed. Both the transcripts and notes of each interview were redacted, ensuring all identifiable information was unavailable. The interview questions were derived from the guiding research questions and sought to understand the principal's efforts toward retaining novice teachers.

Data Analysis

Qualitative research data collection and analysis should be a simultaneous process, both recursive and dynamic (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The audio of the teacher and principal interviews were transcribed. An informal analysis of the data began during the transcription process. I followed V. Braun and Clarke's model for conducting the data analysis. The first step in any qualitative analysis is becoming familiar with the data by reading and rereading the transcripts (V. Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Coding is the transitional process that occurs between data collection and a more extensive data analysis and is the second step in the model (Saldana, 2015). In order to analyze responses from teacher interviews and principal interviews, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) suggested using manual coding to identify any segment of data that might be useful, helping to condense the data into more manageable units. Saldana (2015) described coding as an interpretive act that adds value to the research story as the researcher codes and categorizes data by what the participants discuss during the interview. I employed an in vivo coding process to utilize the exact language and terminology used by the participants. In the coding process, I focused on patterns and insights guided by my theoretical framework (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2018).

Qualitative data analysis relies heavily on identifying themes, categories, patterns, or answers to research questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In order to identify and analyze

patterns in the qualitative data, I used thematic analysis (V. Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic

analysis is flexible and allows patterns to be identified within and across data concerning

participants' lived experiences, views, and perspectives (Clarke et al., 2015). This analysis was

the third step in V. Braun and Clarke's steps for data collection, and it allowed for repeated

patterns of meaning to be identified across interviews (V. Braun & Clarke, 2006). Once the

initial coding was completed, the full transcripts were uploaded into Dedoose. This cross-

platform research software provided data visualization to reveal hidden patterns in the data. More

specifically, Dedoose assisted me in highlighting themes found in the participant's responses and

gathering all the data that were relevant to each theme; however, Dedoose only assisted me in

organizing and categorizing the data. In the fourth step, I carefully reviewed the themes that

emerged from the data to ensure that all the data were relevant to each theme (V. Braun &

Clarke, 2006). V. Braun and Clark (2006) described the fifth step of their model as defining

themes to identify the essence of what each theme was about, how each related to the main

theme, and how the themes related to each other. Data analysis of a case study requires the

researcher to analyze all the information about the case to develop a holistic understanding of the

case (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). To ensure that internal validity is obtained, I used triangulation

to connect data points from participants.

Ethical Considerations

Case study research often involves human participants; therefore, protecting their rights is

an obligation to ensure ethical research (Yin, 2018). Before conducting any research, this study

was approved by the Abilene Christian University Institutional Review Board. Initially, I gained

informed consent through email from all persons who might be part of the case study, provided

the nature of the study, and formally solicited their voluntary participation in the study (Yin,

2018). I provided a clear description of all steps taken to ensure their anonymity and conducted interviews to ensure all participants were protected from harm. Additionally, I audio recorded the interviews and had them transcribed and then redacted identifiable information, ensuring the participants' privacy and confidentiality were protected before, during, and after their participation (Yin, 2018). The transcripts were encrypted, password protected, and stored in the Dedoose software. Any documents collected that were not digital were stored behind lock and key at all times.

Trustworthiness

It is imperative to establish trustworthiness as it pertains to the degree of confidence in data, interpretation, and methods used to ensure the quality of the study (Connelly, 2016). To ensure trustworthiness in this research study, I adhered to the criteria that qualitative researchers accept, including reliability, credibility, confirmability, and transferability (Connelly, 2016). Initially, I communicated all justifications and rationales for the methods and techniques implemented and their strict alignment with the research questions. Furthermore, I used standard procedures found in qualitative case studies to guide this research (Connelly, 2016; Shenton, 2004). Using large amounts of data nuanced through analysis enhanced the credibility and trustworthiness of the study (Saldana, 2015).

Credibility, Reliability, and Transferability

I read, reread, and analyzed the thick descriptions of the interviews to assert the actual situations that had been investigated and the context surrounding them, strengthening the credibility as a whole (Quick & Hall, 2015). Qualitative researchers are expected to depict a vivid picture of the case by incorporating thick, rich, detailed descriptions of the case study; both of these combined nuances reinforce the transferability of the research (Quick & Hall, 2015);

however, in order for readers to transfer to their own environments, the research must provide sufficient contextual information about the fieldwork sites to make such a transfer (Shenton, 2004).

The selection of appropriate participants in this study increased its authenticity and credibility. I ensured no risks to participants; each participant was informed of their rights before the interview. I secured data from various participants from two different types of secondary schools and used multiple data collection techniques. Additionally, great care was taken to inform the participants of their right to refuse to be in the study and the measures taken to maintain anonymity. I instituted member checks by allowing them to review the transcript of the interview to review their responses and confirm that their words matched what was intended (Seidman, 2019; Shenton, 2004). I also used my dissertation committee to provide guidance and recommendations throughout my research.

Assumptions

Assumptions are the beliefs and ideas the researcher believes to be true about the research study (Yin, 2018). The assumptions related to this study are listed below. I assumed that (a) all participants were open and honest during the interviews, answering questions without fear of violating privacy, (b) the sample represented the desired studied population, and (c) novice teachers leave for various reasons, making it hard to provide treatment for all novice teachers to slow the rapid retention pace.

Limitations

Limitations are factors limiting the generalizability or applicability of a study's findings. In qualitative research, this also included the subjective nature of the data. As expected in most qualitative studies, the sample size was one limitation of this study. It met the criteria for

qualitative descriptive studies and emphasized novice teachers' perspectives and experiences in the site district; however, the themes may not be applicable to all novice teachers in the site district or other surrounding districts. The data collected were considered thick and rich and answered the guiding research questions. Additionally, the site district may have had individually unique policies and procedures regarding teacher attrition that may not be found in other school districts. Accessibility may have limited this study; the research was conducted over the summer when many teachers and administrators were not on contract or reporting to work regularly. Another limitation may have been the reluctance of novice teachers to provide detailed personal experiences due to the fear of negative job-related repercussions. Further, diverse teacher experiences from various campuses may have limited this study as novice teachers may have experienced different leadership styles.

Delimitations

Delimitations refer to the initial choices made about the overall design of the study and include characteristics that define and clarify the conceptual boundaries of the research (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). The theoretical framework guiding this study was delimited to the teacher–principal relationship; therefore, the study did not incorporate the community aspect of the Job embeddedness framework into this study. This study was delimited to one school district in North Texas; therefore, the results may not apply to Texas as a whole or across the country. Further, conducting interviews regarding their supervisor may have made participants hesitant to answer honestly during the semistructured interviews. The teacher participants for this study had to be between 23 and 27 years of age. Additionally, they have worked for at least 1 year in the site district at a secondary school and earned their teaching certificate from a traditional university pathway. Therefore, these findings may not be beneficial to examine veteran teacher

retention and novice teachers who entered the teaching profession through a nontraditional path. Another delimitation of this study was the years of employment; participants must have been employed or still employed in the site district between 2018 and 2023. It is important to note that this is the academic year before, during, and at the end of the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Finally, the principal participants were veteran administrators in the same district. These delimitations aligned with the research study's problem, purpose, and research questions.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to understand novice teachers' perspectives of principal behaviors that kept them employed in a North Texas school district. This chapter provided insights into how I conducted my research. Qualitative descriptive studies represent a thick and rich description of a situation through the participant's experience (Yin, 2018). I outlined the population I studied, including the sample selection technique. By using in-depth individual interviews, I collected qualitative descriptive research data from the selected population to better understand the participants' perspectives (Weller et al., 2018). Further, I outlined the data analysis steps that were implemented in the study, including coding and thematic analysis. This chapter also highlighted assumptions, limitations, delimitations, and ethical considerations associated with the research.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of the qualitative descriptive study was to understand novice teachers'

perspectives of principal behaviors that keep them employed in a North Texas school district.

This chapter provides a summary of the data collected from the six secondary principals and 12

novice teachers participating in the study. The themes and subthemes that emerged from the

collected data are discussed, including thick and rich quotations and descriptive phrases used by

the participants to enhance the data analysis.

Data Collection Process

For the sample selection in this study, I employed a purposeful sampling technique to

ensure in-depth data collection from the participants. A total of 75 novice teachers were invited

to participate in the study (Appendix B), and 21 expressed interest in participating. Additionally,

8 secondary principals were invited to take part in the study (Appendix B), and all 8 responded

with an interest in participating. Consent to participate was obtained from 18 novice teacher

participants and 8 principals. The 29 participants who indicated interest then completed the

screening questionnaire (Appendix C). Following this, I determined that only 17 novice teachers

and six principals met the criteria for inclusion in the study. Subsequently, I sent calendar

invitations for participation in a semistructured interview to each identified participant; 12 novice

teachers and six principals accepted their invitations and actively participated in the remainder of

the study.

Each participant completed a screening questionnaire, which provided the demographic

data for the study (see Tables 2 and 3). I conducted semistructured interviews with 12 novice

teachers (Appendix D) from six secondary schools. Further, I conducted semistructured

interviews with six principals (Appendix E) from the corresponding schools. Each of the

interviews was conducted via the Zoom platform. Audio files from each interview were transcribed, and the data were coded using in vivo coding and structural coding based on the guiding research questions. I used a thematic analysis method to identify patterns, which revealed four themes and 10 subthemes.

Table 2

Novice Teacher Profiles

Pseudonym	Age	Years in education	Years as a teacher at the same school	Certification pathway	Gender	Ethnicity	School level	Teaching assignment
Carla	27	3	3	University	Female	Caucasian	MS	Math
Jodie	25	2	2	University	Male	African American	HS	Physical Education
Wanda	26	4	4	University	Female	Caucasian	MS	English
Elizabeth	25	3	3	University	Female	Caucasian	HS	Career and Technology
Pamela	24	2	2	University	Female	Caucasian	HS	English
Ruth	26	4	3	University	Female	Caucasian	MS	Music
Harper	26	4	4	University	Female	Caucasian	MS	History
John	25	3	3	University	Male	African American	HS	Math
Matt	25	3	3	University	Male	Hispanic	MS	History
Adam	27	3	3	University	Male	Caucasian	HS	English
Tabitha	27	5	2	University	Female	Caucasian	HS	Science
Jensen	26	3	3	University	Male	Hispanic	MS	Math

Table 3

Principal Profiles

Pseudonym	Age	Years in education	Years as a principal at the same school	Gender	Ethnicity	School level	Retention rate over the last 2 years
Allison	39	17	6	Female	African American	HS	84%
Brenda	47	25	3	Female	Caucasian	HS	85%
Amy	44	22	7	Female	Caucasian	MS	93%
Danny	42	19	4	Male	Caucasian	HS	86%
Maria	46	24	7	Female	Hispanic	MS	83%
Kimberly	36	13	2	Female	Caucasian	MS	62%

Research Questions

The research questions guiding the study were as follows:

RQ1: What are the perspectives and beliefs of novice teachers concerning the importance of teacher *fit* with the principal as a reason to stay in their current position?

RQ2: What are the perspectives and beliefs of novice teachers concerning the importance of formal and informal *links* between principals and novice teachers, and how do these connections impact their desire to stay?

RQ3: What are the perspectives and beliefs of novice teachers concerning the *sacrifices* of leaving their principal?

RQ4: What are the perspectives and beliefs of principals concerning the retention of novice teachers?

Theme 1: Retaining Novice Teachers: Principals' Perspectives

A key to understanding what support novice teachers need was examining how teaching has changed, what novice teachers are confronted with from the secondary principal perspectives, as well as what those novice teachers said they need. As the principal interviews were conducted, six participants acknowledged that outside the first year of teaching, the district and the campus viewed them as veteran teachers and did not provide much additional support, which most novice teacher participants acknowledged. However, six affirmed the notion that if a novice teacher were struggling, they would attempt to intervene and provide help as needed.

Amy and Allison discussed novice teacher retention from their principal perspective, sharing that they did nothing new or unique to retain teachers with 1–5 years of experience. Both principals said they approached it as a "sink or swim" mentality. Amy also mentioned that she does not intentionally target new teachers for additional support or outreach after the first six weeks of school. Maria also agreed that after the first several weeks of school, the notes of encouragement and intentional interactions get replaced with the job demands.

Allison pointed out that she leaves her teachers, even novice teachers, alone so that they can "do their jobs." She discussed her line of thinking during her interview:

I do my best to recognize and acknowledge that our new teachers are professionals and have had extensive training to be in front of kids. I do not want to micro-manage teaching styles and team plans or over-question them about their data. I want to be a source of support for them. . . . I want them to feel like I believe in them and am here when they need me.

Novice teachers Carla and Wanda shared that a level of autonomy contributed to their professional identity. Carla mentioned during her interview that her principal shows that she

trusts her by not micromanaging her: "She does not question why I am doing something in my class. Instead, she helps me restructure my delivery rather than question if I am doing the work." Wanda expressed a similar feeling of being encouraged rather than critiqued by her principal: "My principal looks for the positive when she enters my room, and I love that. She acknowledges not everything is going to be perfect. My principal assumes positive intent in all my encounters with her."

The six secondary principals discussed teacher retention from a district standpoint, almost excluding additional campus support for novice teachers. Brenda confirmed the sentiment in her interview: "We have two or three people in a district office trying to make sure new teachers get what they need, and that's not going to cut it anymore." Brenda shared that principals are busier than ever and cannot give as much support to teachers: "We feel overwhelmed with everything else that falls on our plates." Overall, the principal participants viewed teacher retention as a district initiative and treated novice teachers more like veteran teachers.

Each principal participant discussed that the workforce has changed and expressed the need to be more intentional with novice teachers; however, they found it challenging to list exclusive support for novice teachers. Table 4 reveals how the principal participants answered how they support novice teachers. It is essential to note the participants found it difficult to list supports for novice teachers. As Amy states, "I've been a principal in this district for 7 years, and we have not done anything different to ensure we keep the new teachers. I've tried several things, but I couldn't keep it going."

Table 4

The Three Most Often Reported Principal Supports

Principal supports	Number of participants who mentioned the specific support
Teacher mentors	6
Frequent check-ins	4
Appraiser goal setting	3

Maria, who is in her seventh year as a building principal, discussed the new challenges for teachers she has noticed over the last 2 years during her interview:

Teaching is different from what is outlined in their schooling. I think the new teachers I have worked with—the job seems overwhelming to them. What is put on a teacher's plate today and the over-the-top expectations are hard to navigate for young teachers. . . . Leaving is much easier if you're only a few years into it; you haven't committed as much as the veteran teachers.

Allison shared a story about a novice teacher she had recently worked with, depicting the challenges for principals to retain novice teachers:

Last year, I had a young teacher quit in the middle of the school year. During my conversation with her, she expressed that she was unprepared for what the classroom would really look like. . . . Most of our teachers came in at the secondary level with content expertise; she was math and knew math. However, she was shocked when she shut the door. She shared that she thought teaching was going to be much easier for her; the reality of the job's difficulty set in, and before she could even feel the support or ask

for help, she had already decided that she was leaving. I tried to save her, but she had her mind made up. It's sad because she would have been a great teacher.

Kimberly told a story similar to Allison's as she discussed why novice teachers are leaving more often than ever before. Her vantage point supported the stories shared by other participants:

Two years ago, a young teacher told me she was not returning and was going down a different career path. I was shocked and took it very personally. I learned later that she was suffering alone and in silence. She had not connected with her team and was unhappy, but she seemed to smile and move through the day like she was okay. I felt disconnected from the situation and wished I had visited with her more.

John, a third-year mathematics teacher, expressed that he was underprepared for his first year of teaching, citing a less supportive student teaching experience. He shared feeling "isolated and on his own" during his first year. He described a feeling of helplessness and a degree of hopelessness during his first year. His principal rarely checked on him, and his mentor barely knew his name. Additionally, he felt underappreciated by his principal and colleagues.

Both Allison and Kimberly shared stories depicting the complexity of teacher retention. Amy, a principal at the same school for the last 7 years, discussed a shift in the people joining the teaching profession. She shared that she has witnessed a lack of perseverance from her novice teachers on her campus. From her perspective, they complain more often and do not know how to get through something difficult without "somebody holding their hand. They are new but do not demonstrate a sense of grit to overcome the problem." In addition to the novice teachers' inability to overcome challenging situations, Danny discussed the work ethic of young teachers; from his perspective, his younger teachers do not match the work ethic of his veteran

teachers, causing team dynamic issues. He also shared that quality teachers are more difficult than ever to hire and that "teaching has just become harder."

Teacher Mentors

The site district employs a Director of Retention and Recruitment responsible for retention efforts, including the teacher mentor program. Danny mentioned during his interview that the position may be why principals do not take a more assertive approach. As Table 4 captures, providing a teacher mentor was the most often recorded response when I asked what support each principal provided for novice teachers. During the interview, the process for assigning mentors was discussed; Brenda shared that the process is not necessarily appropriate because sometimes a teacher volunteers who should never mentor a novice teacher for the first year. Maria shared her past experience with teacher mentors and their impact:

> I would hope all of my novice teachers feel supported, but I'm sure I've had some who do not get the support they need. . . . I have witnessed a novice teacher receive a poor mentor; they do not pay them enough attention, do not give them what they need, or help them take care of the school business. Unfortunately, they leave by the end of the school year.

The overall sentiment for the mentoring program was positive; however, it was inadequate for today's novice teachers. Allison discussed their campus process with mentors and new teachers:

> I intentionally assign mentors; it is one of my passions and nonnegotiables. We used to assign mentors where they were mentored by someone who physically teaches near them or someone in their department. But we have changed that practice because we believe new teachers are supported by someone on their team by default. We have started

intentionally pairing new teachers with someone we feel might connect with socially or have similar interests.

Allison believed this process provided a different option to a new teacher rather than someone in their hallway and positively impacted their campus. However, this process highlighted that the district has not established a straightforward method for its mentoring program.

Amy shared that she believes it is "beneficial for the first year, but the district does not have anything in place to support them in the following years." Danny elaborated on the mentor program: We have tried to connect an English teacher with another English teacher so they have someone in their department to lean on for continued support. However, like mentors, intentional support has been dedicated only to the first year in the profession.

Even though the mentor program was established, multiple participants questioned its effectiveness. When I pressed the participants on this issue, Maria shared that nothing else was formally done beyond assigning a mentor to the novice teacher. She said, "They are really on their own, and each mentor approaches it differently, so you either get an excellent mentor who cares or someone who is trying to get an extra stipend." Novice teachers come from all backgrounds and have a variety of classroom experiences. As discussed throughout the interviews, mentoring novice teachers is challenging because they have individual needs, and one program will not take care of them all. As mentioned, Table 4 highlights the most often reported support novice teachers need; it is essential to note that no participant mentioned a teacher mentor.

When I asked novice teachers about support, only six participants mentioned being provided a mentor during their first year. The overarching sentiment was that it was nice to have someone to check on you occasionally; however, the mentors were only assigned for the first

year and did not significantly help. Some participants felt the mentor program was just something that "looked and sounded good," but from a practical perspective, it was ineffective. One of the most often heard responses was that the teacher and principal participants wished the mentor program would encompass the first 3 years of teaching. Jodie explained the following:

> I was assigned a mentor during the back-to-school professional development at the start of my first year. We met in the library with other mentors and their mentees. We toured the building, ate lunch, and then listened to our principal share her vision of the school. When the meeting ended, we exchanged phone numbers, which was great. However, I only spoke to my mentor one more time. He never checked on me or followed up with me. At the end of the year, it was clear the mentor program was over. Overall, it was disappointing.

Adam shared a similar experience:

> I felt the district had the mentor program to say they had one, but it was ineffective. I've been teaching for 3 years and only had a mentor for the first year. My mentor came by my room maybe three times during my first year. When she did, she just asked if I was okay. If the district wanted to make it more meaningful and impactful, they should create standards and expectations for both the mentor and the mentee. I think something less abstract and longer would be more impactful for teachers.

Jodie's and Adam's excerpts exemplify some of the problems most novice teacher participants had during the mentor program. The program has lacked consistent expectations, direction, and purpose. Novice teachers do not feel they have the help and support they need to succeed.

Frequent Check-Ins

In this section, frequent check-ins had the most considerable variance regarding what check-ins looked like and how intentional principals were with novice teachers. Again, from the principal perspective, if they were returning teachers, any additional support was greatly limited as they viewed them as veteran teachers. However, 4 participants listed frequent check-ins as essential support for novice teachers. It is important to note that the 2 principal participants who did not list check-ins are high school principals who discussed the amount of staff they have on their campus. Both principals indicated one of their assistant principals checks in on the novice teachers; however, one high school principal did make that a focal point of support.

Maria explained during her interview that keeping young teachers was an intentional focus for her, and she did very deliberate and specific things. One of the most crucial was meeting with them early in the first grading period and sharing "specifically what skillset they brought to the campus and their team." From Maria's perspective, this was her way of communicating that they were valued and had a purpose on campus. Every 3 weeks, she would check in with her new teachers and discuss their impact on their team and campus. Brenda shared how challenging it was to support and check in with teachers by saying, "It is a bit abstract in a way." She (Brenda) said check-ins come from being in the hallways, smiling, and checking in with her teachers. She described the intentionality with which she approached these intentional and unintentional contacts:

> I would chart the hallways I would go to that day and then note what people said and
> needed, especially my novice teachers. I have a list of all my 0–4-year teachers and keep
> my touch points. I have two different colored dots; one represents the teachers who have
> contacted me and need something, and the other represents the teachers I have

intentionally approached because I have heard something is going on or, intuitively, I think there might be. . . . This allows me every week to visually look at how many new teachers I have visited and who I need to visit next week.

Kimberly expressed similar viewpoints on checking in with novice teachers. She has taken an unintentional approach to frequent check-ins. She highlighted leaving positive notes of encouragement, quick check-ins to see how things are going, and having an open-door policy to support novice teachers as critical components of her retention approach.

Whether principals were intentionally or unintentionally checking in with novice teachers, novice teachers reported a need for their principal to check in with them frequently. It was clear from the teacher's perspective that visiting teachers is a bright spot for them and one that can impact their sense of belonging and confidence. Tabitha shared the impact it has on her:

I especially like it when my principal just appears in my classroom. I'm not sure if it's on purpose or if she was walking down the hall by accident, but she will do a quick check-in to see how things are going; it's not a weekly thing, but it is occasionally. I love my principal's attitude and demeanor. She is always happy, upbeat, and encouraging. I feel like I want to be here because of her.

Matt and Carla expressed an appreciation for their principal coming by their classroom. Although they were not identical, they felt an increased sense of belonging. They both shared that they love the encouragement and the confidence boost it gives them, but the principals have taken slightly different approaches. Carla said, "My principal will come by and visit with me for a few minutes, but then she will visit my students and sometimes work with them, which I love." Matt shared, "My principal is always in the hallways, walking around and visiting with teachers

and students. I love his positive attitude and that he asks about my family and my life outside the school."

As previously discussed, Wanda and Jensen shared that their principal made them feel they could trust their principal. Additionally, both participants shared that their principals frequently come by their classrooms to visit. Jensen shared that he feels his principal is genuinely there to check on him and does not feel his principal is "playing a game of gotcha like some of his colleagues." Wanda shared this story:

> One time last year, my principal came by my classroom during the passing period. I asked him with a little bit of anxiety, "Why are you here? Am I in trouble for something?" He laughed and said he was there to check on me and see how things were going. I appreciate his approach to checking in with me. He did not approach it like I was struggling or needed anything. He wanted to come by and check on me, the person, and that made all the difference to me.

Theme 2: Fitting With the Principal Matters to an Extent

When conducting this study, it was essential to understand the degree of influence the principal had on novice teacher retention and what behaviors impacted novice teachers. Specific questions were asked to elicit this information. In the one-to-one interviews, questions were asked to determine if the principal's behaviors affected teacher retention**.** The range of the principal's influence on novice teacher retention was vast but, most importantly, varied significantly among participants. When asked if the principal has affected their decision to stay at their school, 12 participants commented on their principal's leadership style and the campus culture their principal has fostered. It is important to note that while all the participants

mentioned leadership and culture, it was not necessarily a positive remark, and they did not all feel like they fit into the campus.

Harper mentioned in her interview that she only has 3 years in education but has heard "horrible stories from her friends who do not have a strong principal." She believed that from her experience and her friends' experiences, the principal impacts retention: "I think the principal helps determine if you are going to stay at your school." As Harper described in her interview, the principal sets the "tone and mood of the entire campus," the school would not be what it is if our principal were different. Ruth discussed multiple factors contributing to her school's culture but admitted that "the driving force behind them all is her principal." Pamela discussed the impact her principal has made on her. She told a story that helped illustrate her principals' influence on her remaining on their campus.

> During my very first week of school, my principal came by my room with a basket of my
> favorite things. I also found a personal card in the basket that encouraged and uplifted
> me. The card was personal. She already knew where I grew up, what college I graduated
> from, and my dog's name. She made me feel seen.

Pamela continued to discuss the sense of belonging and the sense of "I want to stay here" that her principal had created for her. She continued to talk about the number of staff members who work on her campus, but her principal sought her out and made her feel special. The participants' perspectives highlight principals' importance and impact on teacher retention on their respective campuses.

Elizabeth echoed similar sentiments during her interview. She discussed her principal and the belief that her principal is moving the school in the right direction: "I believe in my principal's vision and efforts to improve the school." She discussed at length her principal's

ability to model a positive and nurturing school environment that included all staff members.

When asked if her principal contributed to returning to her campus, Elizabeth said, "Yes,

absolutely," similar to how the other participants responded to the same questions (Table 5).

Even though the principalship can be challenging, Jensen discussed his belief in his principal and

appreciated that he was "highly visible and spoke to me by name" making him feel a sense of

belonging to the campus and principal.

Table 5

Principal Effect on Novice Retention

Pseudonym	Does the principal impact your desire to return or leave your campus?
Carla	For sure
Jodie	Somewhat
Wanda	Yes
Elizabeth	Yes
Pamela	100%
Ruth	To some extent
Harper	Absolutely
John	To a point
Matt	Somewhat
Adam	A little
Tabitha	Yes
Jensen	Yes

Carla discussed her fit with her principal, describing it as "really, really good. I cannot imagine a circumstance where I would leave her. We have a healthy relationship; she does not micromanage me and trusts me to do my job." Within this category of principal matters and fit matters, Ruth discussed why she left her first teaching job after 1 year:

> I left my previous teaching job because I did not feel like it was a good fit, and the culture the principal created did not align with my vision as a teacher. I feel like at my current school, the principal has hired a majority of teachers who are on the same page about what teaching should look like and what school and relationships should look like for kids. I appreciate the culture our principal has created, and the other teachers believe in it. It makes me feel like I belong here and makes me stay.

Jensen reiterated a similar feeling toward his principal and how he makes him feel: "My principal fully trusts me, and I know he has my back in challenging moments like upset parents." Jensen also elaborated on the fit he feels on campus and the impact his principal has had on his early teaching career:

> He is easy to come up and talk to. He has an open-door policy, but he also finds time to come and check on me . . . make sure I'm okay, and he always asks how's everything going. My principal makes me feel important, and he knows who I am even though I'm a young teacher. . . . He also allows me to try something new or be innovative in my classroom, especially with technology. I feel like I've found the right environment or culture for me.

Trust

Principals were trusted when teachers perceived they had a degree of belief in them as professionals. Wanda discussed trust during her interview and shared that she appreciated that

her principal trusted her to "do what I think is best and does not make me justify everything I do." This sentiment was also reported throughout other interviews; when asked if they felt like their principal trusted them, the most frequent responses were yes. Adam shared his thoughts on his level of trust with his principal:

> I think there is a level of trust. She trusts that we will do everything she has communicated to us as important, and more importantly, she trusts that we are professionals. . . . We will buy in and believe in the importance of these things. I like that she communicates and trusts that we will get her requests done. Her trust in me makes me trust her even more.

Wanda believes she had a very trustworthy relationship with her principal and appreciated the trust he showed her. During her interview, she described her perception of what that trust felt like:

> My principal calls me into his office if he thinks I might have misunderstood something or I did not respond the way he had anticipated, allowing me to ask questions for clarity. He always made multiple attempts to ensure I understood the message and intent behind the message so that I could communicate the information to my team. I feel very comfortable approaching my principal and talking about almost any issue. . . . I believe trust is a two-way street, and when the principal trusts the teachers, the teachers will reciprocate that trust.

Pamela explained that she had an appropriate level of trust with a boss: "I feel comfortable talking with him. I feel comfortable approaching him with something, but I wouldn't trust him with a personal secret. However, I do feel that he cares for us and has our best

interest in mind." Principals who recognized teachers as professionals fostered more trust and appreciation from their teachers.

Like Wanda and Pamela, Ruth explained experiencing a level of trust with her principal. However, she has never been very close personally with her principal, which she believes is professionally appropriate. She did, however, feel "very professionally supported and trusted. My principal supports me, and she understands me. I am impressed by how much she trusts me, which makes a real difference in my teaching." Ruth pointed out that she is here to teach, and her principal trusts her to teach and to know and do what is best for her program. Ruth also shared a story about her first-year teaching:

> During my first year of teaching, my principal came in to do a walkthrough during one of my most challenging classes. When she walked in, my classroom was completely chaotic. She looked at me, and I looked at her; she smiled, and I smiled, and we both immediately started laughing. She could tell the lesson wasn't going as I planned. She left soon after our laugh and sent me an encouraging email about the walkthrough.

After that encounter, "I felt like she had full trust in my abilities and trusted me to do my job; I've never felt like she was breathing down my neck. Because she trusted me as a professional, I have always trusted her and her leadership at our school."

Even though each teacher participant spoke about the importance of having trust with their principal, 2 participants discussed the lack of trust with their principal. Interestingly, Jodie and John discussed a profound distrust with their principal. Jodie shared that his lack of trust in his principal stemmed from "low student expectations, inconsistent student consequences, and being backed or supported in difficult situations with parents." He believed that parents got their way: "My principal often caved under their pressure and did not see us as professionals.

Essentially, teachers have been relegated to yes men to the parents, and we do not have the support of our principal." Jodie also shared that his principal talks about having high expectations and holding students accountable for their actions, but he does not see any follow-through from his perspective. Additionally, Jodie disclosed he did not feel connected with his principal: "I do not feel super tight with my principal, and I don't feel like I connect personally or professionally with him, and therefore, I do not trust him a whole bunch." Remarkably, Jodie mentioned that he had trust and respect for one of the assistant principals. During the interview, he said he would not follow his current principal anywhere but would follow one of the assistant principals. He was the only one to indicate that he would follow one of his assistant principals.

John also discussed the need to have trust in the leader. However, from John's perspective, he does not "get the interaction with his principal. She's seemed upfront with us and told us her expectations, but I never interacted with her. She is consistent, but I never see her or talk to her. My level of trust with her is pretty low." John discussed the culture of distrust during his interview:

> The trust is not necessarily where I believe it should be. . . . The school is chaotic and all over the place, and the more you sit back and look outside, the more people don't trust what the principal is putting out there to the staff. It looks good from the outside, but on the inside, people don't trust in the direction.

John also shared that his principal did not always appear to be "looking out for teachers, and it seems like she is looking for things to hang over their heads." He said during his interview, "If a teacher makes a mistake, they are criticized even though there is a lack of communication with clear directions on how you want us to operate or handle certain situations."

From the principal's perspective, trusting a teacher to do their job was never mentioned during the principal interviews. The majority of principals mentioned that building a culture of trust and collaboration is critical to running a school but did not share anything about building trust in individual teachers. However, Allison discussed the balance principals face with novice teachers and classroom support:

> For my teachers with 0–1 year of experience, I try to get into their classrooms once a week. . . . If they have more experience, I probably go in there much less frequently. . . . I'm going into their classroom to encourage them and find positive things happening in their classroom. From my perspective, I think I am building trust and offering support. But, from their perspective, I'm not sure they feel like I trust and support them. Last year, one of my second-year teachers visited with me about the frequency of my visits to her room. She said I came in so often that it made her feel I didn't trust her.

Brenda, who has been a principal for 3 years, shared a story of the difficulty of building trust with teachers:

> I heard some good things about a second-year teacher on my campus a year ago. One morning, I swung by to say, "Great job," and let her know I had heard great things about her class. Unfortunately, she wasn't in her room at that time. The teacher who was next to her told her I came by. That night at 8, I got an email from the teacher apologizing for missing me and asking me if everything was okay. . . . I realized at that point how hard it was to build trust and that my presence is presumed a negative.

Building principals Danny and Maria shared that campus onboarding and goal setting were essential to building a culture of trust with new teachers. Maria said, "I always did very

intentional things to onboard my new teachers. I spent half a day preparing them for what teaching was like on my campus, sharing the unspoken rules and expectations."

Danny discussed the importance of meeting with novice teachers during the first month of school to discuss their personal and professional goals. He shared:

I make it a point to appraise teachers on my campus with 0–3 years of teaching experience. I need to invest in them; they are the most likely to leave at the end of the year, and I want to try to impact their decision. Goal setting is essential, especially for novice teachers. I'm big on having them focus on just one thing they want to accomplish. I have them set little measurable goals to get them to where they ultimately want to be. I try to help them narrow their focus so they can see their success. . . . I think these conversations are the backbone of trust on our campus.

Principal Support

Principal participant Maria discussed the importance of the principal supporting novice teachers:

I think supporting novice teachers is equivalent to teachers support[ing] new students. Principals should model that level of support for their beginning teachers. I do my best to build a relationship with them, help them to feel supported, and always treat them with dignity. I try to remember how hard it is to be in the classroom and try to offer unwavering support.

Carla shared in her interview that principal support is critical; she shared that she had heard from the teachers who had left that they did so because they felt a lack of principal support. When asked to describe what their principal does to make them feel like they belong on their campus, the participants immediately began articulating what Carla described as "supported

by my principal." Pamela described it as a "feeling of support and freedom to apply what I learned in school into the classroom." Elizabeth described her principal as a source of support and encouragement when he walked into the school; she also discussed leaning on her principal to grow and push her through her first year of teaching. Tabitha highlighted her principal as a dynamic leader and shared that her principal's support is why she has stayed at her campus for 2 years. Wanda described her team's frustration with their principal in regard to support:

> My principal never came to our PLCs. He was over our department but never came to see what we were doing in our meetings. My team and I got frustrated because he did not support us in this way. He wasn't involved in our job. We tried to reframe the situation and find a positive in his absence, but my team could not get over the fact that he never showed up and felt unsupportive throughout the year.

When describing what principal support encompassed, 12 participants mentioned principal support in their interview, but not all felt supported by their principal; however, what is meant by "support" varied from participant to participant. Table 6 captures the four essential supports reported during the novice teacher interviews. The participants' responses were grouped into four categories to simplify and clarify reporting. The responses from the participants capture and highlight the multifaceted challenges a principal is confronted with concerning teacher retention; teachers view principal support as a myriad of actions and duties, making the complexity of retaining novice teachers complex.

Table 6

The Four Most Important Principal Supports

Principal supports	Number of participants who mentioned the specific support
Individualized conversations	12
Classroom management supports	12
Written or verbal encouragement	8
Encourage self-care and work–life balance	7

Before discussing the four categories of responses, it is important to note that while participants responded similarly regarding principal supports, each participant described a wide variety and intensity of what those supports were like on their campus.

Individualized Conversations

When asked what they felt was the most critical support their principal provides for them, the most frequent responses centered around multiple individualized personal and professional conversations. As the participants indicated, many of these centered around their professional goals for the school year; however, the participants most often mentioned personal, individualized conversations. Additionally, principals encouraged personal conversations by maintaining an open-door policy and a literal open office door. Amy, who has been a building principal for 7 years, discussed the importance of having an open door:

> As an assistant principal, my principal told me to keep my office door open as much as possible, and I have done my best to do them the same way. So often, teachers swing by to tell me something or ask me quick questions; when the door is open, it creates a

relaxed, collaborative environment. When closed, it unintentionally communicates that I do not have time to visit with my teachers, and they leave my office frustrated and resentful.

I asked Harper what novice teachers needed to persevere through teaching challenges during their first 5 years. She stated two different times that principals need to check in on young teachers, have short conversations with them, and encourage them often. Tabatha recommended that principals should be intentional with individualized discussions and encouragement. Jensen echoed similar thoughts, "Principals need to support new teachers; during small conversations, they should ask what they need and reiterate that they are there to support them." Matt recommended that principals have more check-ins and conversations with teachers; principals must make themselves available to have individualized conversations.

Tabatha highlighted during her interview the close relationship that she has been able to form with her principal over the last couple of years: "I appreciate being able to share very personal things going on in my life that aren't always the prettiest and being supported through them." She also discussed the "family feeling" as she is often checked on during difficult times. Elizabeth illustrates how impactful the individualized conversations or check-ins her principal offers her: "I'm here because my principal knows me on a personal level. He knows me, my husband, and both of my kids. He checks on me, especially when an interesting situation arises with a student and parent." During those moments, Elizabeth shared that her principal acts like he "is invested in me and supports my handling of a situation." She went on to discuss how much she values the small moments of conversation with her principal: "It's encouraging."

Harper mentioned in her interview that she appreciated when her principal came by "my classroom to check on me," overtly coming by her classroom during her off period or simply

walking by and asking "how I was doing." She also mentioned her principal would text her often to check on her and the impact and encouragement she felt from those personalized moments. Above all else, Harper mentioned in those personal moments, her principal learned what she needed, and it was typically followed up with random acts of kindness like "making copies, or anything that takes the load off my plate, or simply saying thank you for doing something that benefits the team." Carla explained that personal conversations go a long way:

> When my husband's mother passed away unexpectedly, my principal called, texted, and sent a note to me and my family. That went a long way with me; she is good about texting, checking on me, and asking if we are doing okay or need anything. I know she checks on other teachers, too; I've heard other teachers say the same thing.

Carla mentioned her principal individualizes her conversations and creates a relationship with each teacher that helps foster an individual relationship with teachers. Ruth explained that she was connected to her principal because she took the time to speak with her individually. She believed that little things like quick, individual conversations eventually add up. Jensen also shared that he has had three small and quick check-ins with his principal this semester, allowing personal and professional dialogue. Pamela shared that she feels like her principal knows who she is and that she loves that: "He comes by and visits with me in brief moments." She shared this story:

> A few weeks ago, he came by my room and said, hi, Pamela, here is your state fair ticket. I love that he knows my name. He's a celebrity and so busy, but he knows my name. He asked me about my school year, my classes, and the club I sponsor. We visited for about 3–4 minutes, and then he encouraged me to keep working hard, and the work would slow down.

Matt illustrated how much he appreciates his conversations with his principal and the

approachability with which his principal interacts with each staff member. Each of his

discussions with his principal leads him to believe and see that "he's trying to help me and the

school grow in a positive direction, and that means a lot to me professionally."

Interestingly, Jensen discussed the need for individual conversations and how important it

was for his principal to speak to him; however, he addressed a need for the principal to ensure

that those conversations were equitable. During his interview, he shared that his feelings are hurt

when he sees his principal talk to other teachers in his hallway, but sometimes slips past him

without saying hello.

Classroom Management Supports

Overwhelmingly, the participants reported that the perception of classroom management

support is the most needed support for teachers and has the same impact on them as

individualized conversations with their principals. Matt expressed a desire to see his principal

come into his classroom and take a minute to work with students and interact; he felt the

engagement would help with classroom management. The majority of the participants admitted

that classroom management was what they felt least prepared for coming out of their university.

John pointed out that classroom management has been his biggest struggle early in his teaching

career. He also shared he would describe his student teaching experience as not very good; his

cooperating teacher did not help very much and, most of the time, left the room when he was

teaching. Jodie pointed to new teachers' struggle with managing the students once the door is

closed. Wanda discussed a feeling of being misled and underprepared in her college training:

> The classroom was not the environment I remember my professors speaking about. I had
>
> a reality check during the first month of school in my first year. I was overwhelmed and

lost; I needed the help and support of my principal to find structures and routines that helped control the environment.

Pamela shared that overall, she had extraordinary support during her first 2 years of teaching. She gave her principal credit for her growth in the classroom:

She would come by my classroom and observe, set up a meeting, and then ask me what I thought; she allowed me to identify positives and negatives regarding classroom management. For my personal growth, being a part of the conversation of improvement made all the difference; I owned my classroom.

Harper shared similar struggles early in her first year; however, she mentioned that her principal did not visit her about her classroom management as she had hoped; that job was left to the assistant principals and instructional coaches. She went on to discuss that she felt like the principal "sets the tone for student management," and when students are not acting appropriately, she thought it was the lack of discipline from the school. In contrast, Pamela mentioned that her principal was her appraiser and did visit with additional support for her classroom management: "I really appreciated my principal last year; she made me observe three veteran teachers and then meet with her about what I saw. I used several things I saw in those classrooms, improving my classroom and my confidence."

One contrasting opinion emerged from the interviews regarding classroom support. Three participants mentioned a severe lack of classroom management support, claiming they did not see their principal enough to have help in their classroom. Still, they all indicated it as pivotal to new teacher success. As Adam illustrated, he does need his principal to support him; he discussed the notion of "stay out of my way and let me do my job mentality." He shared during his interview that he doesn't mind when his principal comes to see him, which is less than twice

a year, but he does not need her support with students in the classroom environment. Jodie

discussed that his principal has a "presence in the hallways with students, but definitely not in

the classrooms growing teachers." During his interview, he shared that his principal was more

concerned with athletics and did not want to deal with what was happening in the classroom.

John shared that his principal barely knows who he is and isn't concerned with his classroom

management: "He hasn't been to my classroom more than three times in the last 2 years. He does

not have a clue if I was struggling with classroom management."

During the principal interviews, classroom management was discussed as one of the most

significant struggles for novice teachers. Five of the six principals shared that a lack of classroom

management is often a key component when a teacher does not return. Allison discussed

classroom management and novice teachers during her interview:

> Most often, our novice teachers struggle with classroom management. And unfortunately,
>
> that is what they were told during their teacher preparation. When I meet with young
>
> teachers, I will ask them what they are the most uncomfortable with, and they almost
>
> always say classroom management. I will always ask them, "What does classroom
>
> management mean to you?" They cannot answer that question. I try to help them create
>
> systems and processes that create classroom management.

Written or Verbal Encouragement

During the interviews, six principals discussed the importance of providing novice

teachers with written and verbal encouragement. Allison shared they start every school year with

a letter of encouragement for their entire staff, not just the new or novice teachers:

> At the beginning of every year, I write a letter of encouragement to every staff member's
>
> family. In this letter, I thank their family for the commitment the staff member will give

to the campus and community. I also thank them for sacrificing time away from their loved ones. I also include something about commitment and the outstanding contributions of the staff members to the school as a whole.

The six principal participants expressed the need to encourage when they enter inexperienced teachers' classrooms. Danny explained that providing informal encouragement to the teacher after he has been in the room builds confidence and trust with his teachers. The other participants mentioned they write notes of encouragement to all teachers, but especially the most inexperienced. Brenda shared a very similar belief to Danny:

> I recognize that the principalship carries a lot of weight, so when somebody struggles, I need to use that power for good. If I can give positive attention, I can help and encourage my teachers. . . . If I can swing by a teacher's classroom who just had a brutal encounter with a parent and say, I heard about that crazy parent. I know you guys handled it the right way; let it go. Let it roll off your back.

Kimberly expressed the same belief about encouraging teachers:

> As a school leader, I believe it is my job to bring positivity and positive interactions with my staff. I am committed to doing that. I make it a point to find a teacher after a problematic situation and encourage them. If I have to skip a meeting to do so, I will. Treating my staff with kindness, grace, and encouragement is the key to retaining teachers.

Encouragement is essential to novice teachers. However, as our participants shared during their interviews, individual encouragement has the most impact on creating a connection. Eight out of the 12 participants mentioned the influence of principal encouragement. Ruth discussed that one of the best things her principal does is leave notes after visiting her classroom,

saying specific positive things that happened in class. She explained that she had approximately 10 walkthroughs from her principal in the last year or so. After each walkthrough, she would receive a note encouraging her and highlighting her pedagogy and the best parts of the lesson. Ruth shared that the notes often boosted her confidence and made her feel more loyal to her principal.

Elizabeth expressed the effort she sees her principal make to make teachers feel valued and appreciated; she relayed his efforts during the interview. Her principal dedicates significant time to making everyone feel valued and a part of the organization.

He does this in a large high school by writing birthday cards to every staff member on campus. . . . I was caught off guard when I first got the birthday card. I felt special and had a sense of attachment to the school and district. When I found out everyone got one on their birthday, it only added to the value of the gesture.

Pamela shared a story about the encouragement she received from her principal that captures the effort her principal makes to encourage his teachers. As she explained the event, it was clear that the personal encouragement had a profound professional impact on her sense of belonging and attachment to her principal:

Last week, I planned a student council event. It took a lot of planning and coordination to ensure everything got done. My principal showed up during the event, which blew my mind, and he stayed for the entire event. The next week, he gave me a card bragging about the event, our students, and the public turnout. It made my day, week, and month.

Pamela remarked, "My principal's encouragement helps to motivate me, and his acknowledgment of my work helps sustain me." Pamela went on to share that encouragement is a sensitive topic amongst teachers at her campus; it needs to be individualized and timely for it to

matter and have an effect. John discussed that his principal does not send out cards of encouragement like other campuses, but his principal does have a way of encouraging teachers.

During his interview, Matt described the conversation between himself and his principal about moving to team lead: "My principal approached me and encouraged me to become the team lead. During our conversation, he validated my work and acknowledged my strengths and weaknesses. Ultimately, I became the team leader for him." When asked if his encouragement made a difference, he said, "Yes. I only agreed to do it because he encouraged me and made me feel like I was the best fit."

Tabitha highlighted the positive notes she received after her principal completed a walkthrough in one of her classes. She discussed its impact on her confidence and how her principal's attitude and enthusiasm impacted her confidence.

Jodie discussed what he wanted and, more importantly, needed during his first year of teaching:

> I need my principal to encourage and support me with clear, concise communication. I also want my principal to tell me directly when I make a mistake; that is how I learn and grow. When my principal does not communicate his expectations clearly, he makes the job more challenging for me. I want to be given direction and guidance and then supported with encouragement and redirection as needed.

Encourage Self-Care and Work–Life Balance

Teacher burnout is a critical issue for teachers today. As Amy and Danny previously discussed, the workforce is changing, and teachers are looking for balance and empathy from their leaders. During the interviews, 11 of the 12 teacher participants mentioned burnout and workload, and 7 of the 12 discussed their principal's positive actions to encourage teachers to

take care of themselves by finding a balance. Principals are often charged with finding a balance for teachers that meets Texas' educational goals and supports teachers as they navigate a more complex work environment. The participants in this study mentioned an appreciation for their principals' willingness to discuss and encourage self-care and work–life balance. Adam shared during his interview that he appreciates his principal talking openly about finding a balance between work and life. He also discussed the open conversations about self-care and its importance on their campus. Adam illustrates that his principal shares at every faculty meeting that she wants to be "respectful of our time" and that she wants to get us out of there to spend time with our family. Harper also reiterated the notion of self-care and instituted a Workout Wednesday, allowing staff to wear sweats during the day if they spent their lunch hour or conference period walking around the school or track with a faculty member.

Matt, a teacher and coach, discussed the challenges of teaching and coaching and the sacrifices he has to make. Regarding time, Matt painted a picture of "never having enough time to get everything done. Coaching makes being prepared to teach your class every day difficult." To further illustrate his point, he elaborated on her efforts:

> One of the things I respect most about my principal is how she encourages the staff to take care of themselves and wants them to set a time to leave regardless of what is left to accomplish. She mentions this at almost every faculty meeting, and I believe the staff genuinely takes it to heart.

Ruth illustrated the juxtaposition that her principal creates, and her frustration and disappointment were evident in her voice as she responded to this question. On the one hand, she has been encouraged to build relationships with her students by attending outside events like football games, choir concerts, and fine arts events; on the other hand, her principal discussed

with the faculty the importance of not burning yourself out and taking care of yourself. Ruth expressed that she cannot balance the two appropriately, making her job more difficult.

Jensen shared similar sentiments about his principal and her dedication to communicating a degree of work–life balance. He discussed, "My principal cares about us as people and wants us to have a family life. She always mentions her desire to respect our time and encourages us to leave here as soon as possible." Jodie shared that his principal canceled faculty meetings this school year to give the staff more time with their families. Additionally, he shared that his principal has reduced the number of "mandatory events" they must attend for the school year to help boost the work–life balance.

Harper alluded to the challenges of being a teacher during her interview. She shared that the most overwhelming teaching component is "all the other stuff teachers are required to do. I was not prepared for the additional meetings like special education and RTI meetings outside of the PLC or professional learning community that I was required to attend." Harper continued to express that her principal guided her through her first 2 years with "empathy and encouragement to take care of herself."

From what the novice teacher participants shared, it is clear that the principal matters and helps create a fit on the campus. However, there was one overall contrasting opinion when the participants were asked if they had developed a sense of attachment or a level of belongingness to their principal; most respondents did not feel a level of devotion to their principal. Adam explained that he does not feel connected to his principal and does not need her to know him personally: "If she were to change schools in our district, I would stay where I am; I love my team, classroom, and students. She's great, but I love my team and what I teach." Adam's statements summarize 9 of the 12 participants' feelings on developing an attachment to their

principal; they expressed other factors that would contribute to their decision. Further, when the participants were asked what the sacrifices of leaving their principal were, the majority said their relationship with their principal was the only sacrifice. Additionally, the same majority indicated that sacrifice would not solely determine their retention.

The majority believed in their principal but had not yet developed a deep attachment to their principal. Jodie and John both expressed that they do not have an attachment to their principal. Jodie described his principal as a "figurehead" who approached his job as a job; He does not seem to "care about people. It's a job and paycheck." When I asked John if he would follow his principal to another school in the district, he quickly answered, "No way." He shared that his principal is professional and cordial but not supportive or engaged on campus.

Theme 3: Links With Colleagues Impact Retention

When conducting this study, it was essential to understand the degree to which additional factors contributed to novice teacher retention. Specific questions were asked to elicit this information. During the one-to-one interviews, participants were asked how or if their colleagues factored into their level of belonging to the campus and if that factors into their decision to stay.

Overall, the participants indicated that they believe the principal is critical to retention, but their colleagues have as much of an impact on their decision to return. The teacher participants in this study believe they will succeed in their teaching positions and highlighted their colleagues' impact on their decision to stay. Table 7 reveals how the participants responded when asked why they returned to their school.

Table 7

The Five Most Often Mentioned Reasons to Return

Why did you return to your school?	Number of participants who mentioned the specific reason to return
Coworkers	12
My principal	12
Commute	9
Students	5
Community	3

The teacher participants indicated their success and desire to return to their campus from year to year largely depended on their coworkers. When I asked the teacher participants why they returned to their school, they all mentioned their coworkers. Tabatha shared that one of the most influential reasons she returned to her campus was the team she was on. She loved the "team dynamic and the people I work with and interact with daily." She described a high-functioning team that worked well together, which is why she returned. During this portion of her interview, Harper discussed with passion and conviction her team's influence on her decision to return to campus. During her interview, she highlighted her team's closeness and appreciated the "work- and personal-based relationship" they had formed. The concept of the "team I work on" was a consistent notion throughout the interview. It was clear from the participants that their colleagues heavily influenced their decision to return.

Pamela communicated how much she loved her teammates and the support they provided her. Elizabeth conveyed her love for her team and commented on how much time they spent

together talking, eating, and celebrating each other. She pointed out that her team strengthened her connectedness to her school and job.

However, Ruth discussed a similar feeling about her colleagues, with less passion and enthusiasm than other participants, "I appreciate the support and relationships I have developed with my coworkers. I feel very supported by my coworkers. We have developed into a small work family, but I do not depend on them for my happiness; they just enhance my job." She also made it a point to share that those relationships do not mean as much to her. She only expects colleagues to be friendly and respectful, but they are not why she stays.

Knowing that Jodie had earlier discussed a level of distrust with his principal, I asked if he had trust in his colleagues. He mentioned that he does not trust anyone on campus besides his mentor from last year. He expressed frustration with his team and an inability to be seen as an equal. Jodie discussed that his colleagues have not gone out of their way to help or support him; "they pretty much just leave me alone." He alluded that veteran teachers are reluctant to share what they are doing in their classes and how they will teach. He highlighted that PLCs force his team to come together, but the meeting is often unproductive and does not help him connect with his team.

The six secondary principals acknowledged the importance and influence of colleagues concerning retention and novice retention. One principal, Amy, discussed that Gallup has reported that having a best friend at work is critical to employee engagement and retention, which she agrees with. When I asked principals if they intentionally created fits with colleagues for novice teachers, they all indicated it played a part in their campus culture. With that in mind, each of the principals has a variety of thoughts on how to accomplish it.

Interviewing

Overall, interviewing was critical to finding the right person for the team; however, it did not apply just to novice teachers. The six principals discussed that they try to include either the entire team, team lead, or department chair during a teacher interview. As Maria discussed, ensuring the candidate fits on the team and the team is enthusiastic about the candidate is often a critical component in a new hire developing relationships with colleagues that influence retention. When discussing the interview process and ensuring the new teacher fit with her team, she said, "The team component is crucial with teachers who have minimal experience because they often rely on their team so much." Brenda highlighted that the interview and the new teacher being accepted onto the team are the first steps. She believed once that happened, there was a better chance for novice teachers to find friends or even a best friend at the school. Allison shared how important the interview process is for her school:

I don't wait until we hire the candidate to discuss fit, working with the team, and finding a best friend at work. I discuss it in the interview . . . almost as an expectation. I believe it is vital for the interview team to hear me say that because I am really communicating that if we select this candidate, I expect you guys to be colleagues and friends. . . . I feel like the interview process is just as important to me and the team as it is to them. During the interview, I discuss the importance of building relationships and community.

Maria shared the value of the interview process as the launching point of fit and culture:

Before I hire them, I question the heck out of the interviewees in order to see if they will be a good fit with my school and the team. I want to know if they are relational and have a growth mindset. Both of those things help me predict if they can lean on their team and forge friendships.

Team or Department Events

As the campus leader, principals have the opportunity and the ability to create interactive opportunities for colleagues to become better friends. Brenda discussed that on her campus, she plans very intentional things to help foster friendships and mutual respect throughout her campus:

> We do a lot of team building but not many activities that force people into uncomfortable situations. We focus on many meals to create informal ways for people to gather and visit. Each department also has a potluck lunch once a month that brings part of the staff together, which forces teachers, including novice teachers, to come together personally.

Danny shared during his interview that his campus has a social committee that organizes social events for the staff:

> Each month, the committee has an after-hours get-together off campus for dinner. Typically, my young and unmarried teachers take advantage of the social hour, which is nice because it fosters friendships and personal connections. I've had more novice or young teachers mention that to me than almost anything else we do. They seem to enjoy it, and I think the consistency of the monthly social communicates an expectation that "fitting in and finding friends is a large part of our culture."

Kimberly relayed that a large part of her culture focuses on staff relationships. She conveyed the importance of finding a best friend at work during her interview and shared what she does to foster work friends:

> Once a month, we have a faculty meeting with all of our staff. I intentionally start with "good things," which are opportunities for our staff to tell stories and share highlights from their work or personal lives. I believe the more we share, the more opportunities we

create for people to relate and connect. The atmosphere of "sharing" helps perpetuate the

need to have a best friend at work.

Theme 4: Campus Involvement

Campus involvement was an intentional component of the teacher-participant interviews.

Under this theme, the study examined whether involvement outside their classroom increased

their belonging or commitment to the principal. Additionally, under this heading, we discussed

whether these involvements increase novice teachers' desire to stay in their jobs. Of the 12

teacher participants interviewed, only 7 reported outside-classroom commitments. These

commitments included sponsoring a club, coaching a sport, serving on a committee, or being a

team leader on a content team. The 7 teacher participants involved in commitments outside of

their classroom reported that those commitments helped create a deeper connection and fit on the

campus, increasing the likelihood that they remained in their jobs.

Jensen openly discussed his campus involvement with excitement and enthusiasm and

expressed multiple times how much he appreciated being asked to do more for his principal and

school. This year, Jensen has stepped into the team lead position for his math team, which allows

him to assume more ownership and a leadership position on his campus. Additionally, Jensen

shared he is a member of the Campus Improvement and Food Drive Committees and expressed a

feeling of "commitment and belonging to both his campus and principal." Carla discussed in

depth what her involvements were outside of her classroom and the fit she feels on her campus:

In my second year, I was asked to be on committees or serve the campus in a leadership

role. Currently, I am on the RTI, Student Behavior, and Teachers Advisory Committee.

This year, I was asked by a student to sponsor a club called Helping Hands. I feel like I

have a meeting every day after school. I am entirely embedded in our school and love it;

that might change if I start a family, but I like it for now. Being on committees helps teachers find their voice and help make campus-based decisions, and I think it absolutely helps retain young teachers.

Elizabeth highlighted the pride and ownership she felt by being more involved in the school. She shared that she is a team lead and serves on three different campus-based committees and one district-level committee. She expressed a sense of pride and responsibility from serving the school in a larger capacity. Pamela also felt more ownership from serving on committees and sponsoring clubs. She explained that she was initially nervous about the time commitment, but by the end of the year, it helped her meet new faculty members and students, making her feel more seen and heard by her principal.

On the other hand, Harper shared that she was not a part of anything outside her classroom and her content team; she stressed that she was asked to do so this year, but she declined and immediately regretted the decision. She shared that she wants to sponsor a club next year to get to know and impact more students outside her subject area. Tabatha told a similar story:

> I do not serve in any additional way. I have done that intentionally; I was heavily involved last year with multiple clubs, and I believe it builds a broader network of students with whom you can get to know more deeply. This year, I needed to step back and ensure I was being my best teacher. Next year, I have been asked to be on our academic steering committee, and I want to sponsor a club; I miss it. I know it will enrich my work and help keep me at my school.

Some of the other participants shared stories of concerns with commitments outside their classroom. For example, Jodie, a high school football coach who does not want to participate outside his classroom, shared:

> I do not want to be on any committees or sponsor a club. I guess if they paid me to do it, I might consider it, but I probably wouldn't. . . . I was not hired to serve the campus in any capacity other than teaching and coaching. . . . I'm learning education is different. Everybody wants you to do more, but they do not want to pay you for it. Last year, my principal asked me to serve on the discipline committee, and I said no. I appreciated the gesture, but money and time matter more to me.

John was unaware of the different opportunities to serve outside his classroom and how to get put on one. John explained that he has "never" been "asked" or "approached" to serve or help outside of his classroom. He shared that he has been focused on teaching math and surviving over the last 3 years. However, he pointed out that he might be interested in seeking ways to be more involved.

Only 3 principals believed involvement in commitments outside novice teachers' classrooms created a stronger sense of fit and belonging. The other 3 principals believed the most important thing was for novice teachers to focus on their craft inside their classroom; once they developed their teacher efficacy, they would successfully juggle the demands of teaching and serving the campus in other capacities.

Allison shared a story that illustrates her approach to creating opportunities for novice teachers to find a fit outside of their classroom:

> I have two teachers that come to mind that I've worked with recently. One of the teachers was highly introverted but talented in the classroom, and I wanted to ensure she did not

feel lost or unimportant. I wanted to make sure she knew I valued her, so I asked her to sponsor a group of kids who were very similar to her during lunch. I actually asked her to mentor these students. She was initially reluctant, but she agreed and eventually found a deeper purpose on our campus. The kids loved her, and she loved the students. The second novice teacher had the attitude of, "I'll do anything you ask me to do, but please do not make me go to pep rallies. I have extreme anxiety, and I can't do it." Once I learned that, I asked her to sponsor a club during pep rallies for students who did not want to go to the pep rallies. . . . She played games and worked with those students.

Kimberly revealed that she believes every classroom teacher should be involved in something outside their classroom. From her perspective, "It helps foster a deeper purpose and enables us to embed them more deeply." She makes every teacher, including novice teachers, sit on a committee or sponsor a club. She acknowledged that is a lot but believes in creating opportunities for teachers to "stick" on campus.

Summary

The purpose of the qualitative descriptive study was to understand novice teachers' perspectives of principal behaviors that keep them employed in a North Texas school district. This chapter was an in-depth report of the data gathered from six semistructured interviews with secondary principals and 12 semistructured interviews with novice secondary teachers. A total of 18 certified educators participated in the study. An analysis of the data revealed that although the principal impacts novice teacher retention, novice teachers need a variety of supports to feel connected to the campus and ultimately stay in their position. In the following chapter, I discuss the findings of the study in relation to past literature, the study's limitations, the implications of the study, and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Effective secondary principals can have a significant influence on novice teacher retention. However, principals must overcome the reality that teachers need differentiated continued support of varying degrees, including emotional, environmental, and instructional support (Hughes et al., 2015). The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to understand novice teachers' perspectives of principal behaviors that keep them employed in a North Texas school district.

To explore the perceptions of novice teachers, I conducted 12 individual semistructured interviews with secondary novice teachers as well as six individual semistructured interviews with secondary principals. All the participants were currently employed in one suburban North Texas school district. The secondary novice teacher participants were 27 years old or younger, returned to their current school for the 2023–2024 school year, and earned their teaching certifications through a university program. The secondary principal participants must have at least one teacher participate in the study and have been a principal at their current school for the 2022–2023 school year and the 2023–2024 school year. Aside from the individual interviews held with novice secondary teachers and seasoned secondary principals, every participant underwent a screening questionnaire providing demographic data for the study. Subsequently, all interviews were transcribed, and each transcript underwent coding using both in vivo and structural coding methods. Furthermore, I employed thematic analysis to discern prevalent themes within the data.

The following research questions guided the study:

RQ1: What are the perspectives and beliefs of novice teachers concerning the importance of teacher *fit* with the principal as a reason to stay in their current position?

RQ2.: What are the perspectives and beliefs of novice teachers concerning the importance of formal and informal *links* between principals and novice teachers, and how do these connections impact their desire to stay?

RQ3: What are the perspectives and beliefs of novice teachers concerning the *sacrifices* of leaving their principal?

RQ4: What are the perspectives and beliefs of principals concerning the retention of novice teachers?

The results of the study showed that novice teacher retention is a multifaceted issue, and it is difficult for principals to anticipate which behaviors influence retention and to what degree. The teacher participants illustrated that principals and colleagues are the most influential in the decision to return to their jobs or leave. Further, the principal participants found intentionally focusing on novice teacher retention with their other duties and expectations is challenging. The remainder of this chapter will discuss the results of the study in relation to past literature, its limitations, its implications, and recommendations for future studies.

Discussion of Findings in Relation to Past Literature

Overwhelmingly, the secondary teacher participants of this study affirmed their principal influenced their decision to stay in their jobs by helping them to connect socially and emotionally to their school, which fostered a connection to their principal. Further, only 2 of the 12 participants shared that their principal minimally influenced their decision to stay; the other 10 believed their principal positively affected their decision to remain in their position. These results align with a study by Player et al. (2017) that found principals are among the most significant factors in teacher retention and with the study by Redding and Smith (2019) linking teacher retention to principal effectiveness.

Principal Fit. Repeatedly, the principal is one of the most valuable components of teacher retention, including novice retention. Albright (2023) reported a correlation between a teacher's sense of belonging and whether the teacher perceives the principal values them. Rinke (2019) explained teacher retention increases when teachers perceive a oneness or belonging to their school. Overall, the teacher participants in this study expressed their principal is a critical component in making them feel like a "fit" into the school and the principal's vision and culture. However, the teachers in this study indicated that while fit is essential for retention, six noted that they do not consider the principal a sacrifice when determining to leave. Further, these participants held their principal solely responsible for the "culture of the school" and their assimilation into it. Player et al. (2017) supported these findings, which indicated when teachers perceive their principal as a strong leader, they are less likely to leave their position. Additionally, the majority of the participants felt their principal has helped to embed them into the school. This closely mirrors the findings of Ellis et al. (2017) in a study of 729 Texas teachers, revealing higher levels of perceived fit and increased job satisfaction and retention. These results also support what Larkin et al. (2021) observed in a study in an Aspen Colorado school district that found a close correlation between teacher retention and fit.

A Behavior of Trust. From the novice teacher's perspective, it was overwhelmingly evident that trust was imperative for teacher fit and retention. Novice teachers reported that when they perceive their principal will keep their promises and act in the teacher's best interest, trust develops. Further, for the participants in the study, trust developed when principals were present, accessible to meet with, and acknowledged novice teachers as professionals. One novice teacher participant (Wanda) spoke about her relationship with her principal: "He lets me do what I think is best and does not make me justify everything I do." Further, 80% of the participants shared

that they trust their principal and the direction of the school. As the teacher participants shared how their principal developed trust with them individually, it was evident that principals who developed relationships with their novice teachers and were in tune with their needs, concerns, and well-being fostered more trust. C. Mitchell and Larry (2021) supported these results in research that found that principals who take the time to get to know teachers individually foster an atmosphere of trust. Further, as the teachers felt more comfortable with their principal, they indicated comfortability in sharing their needs and struggles.

Each teacher participant discussed the importance of developing trust with their principal; however, 2 participants shared a growing distrust of their principal and did not intend to return to their school. These results support Kraft et al. (2016) findings from a longitudinal study that teachers' perceptions of their principal predicted lower teacher turnover. One participant (John) discussed the lack of trust in his principal: "My principal is not looking out for teachers, and it seems like she is looking for things to hang over their heads." The 10 participants who reported having a degree of trust with their principal indicated that it stemmed from a level of autonomy found in trust by the principal. However, the 20% that reported a lack of trust in their principal stemmed from a culture of a lack of communication, lack of accessibility, and an increase in criticism.

A Behavior of Support. Ronfeldt and McQueen (2017) analyzed data from three beginning teacher surveys. They concluded that new teachers are 51% to 58% more likely to remain teachers than teachers who perceive a lack of support. Overall, the novice teacher participants in this study reported that they are more probable to stay in their teaching position if they perceive the principal individually supports them. This complements the findings of Boyd et al. (2011b) that principal support positively impacts teacher fit and compatibility in the school.

The 12 teacher participants discussed principal support as essential for novice teachers and retention. Teachers also expressed a desire to work in an environment that allows teachers to make mistakes and grow. Seven teachers mentioned that the level of autonomy their principal provides contributes to their feeling of growth and support. This closely aligns with the retention research across five school districts by Thibodeaux et al. (2015), which concluded that administrative support and a lack of administrative support closely impacted retention. One of the participants (Elizabeth) discussed the support she receives from her principal: "I'm here because my principal knows me on a personal level and checks in on me. She has fostered a family feeling." Tabitha shared a similar feeling as she discussed the ability to share personal things with her principal and "being supported through challenging moments." This is similar to the findings of Podolsky et al. (2019) indicating that principals need to nurture teacher support in an effort to fight attrition.

Encouragement. Overwhelmingly, the novice teacher participants pointed to specific encouragement from their principal as a critical component to their well-being and job satisfaction in the first year and beyond; this is in line with Fox et al. (2015), whose research in Maryland with 398 teachers concluded that the principal's relationship with teachers and encouragement critically impacts novice teachers. In addition, principal participants noted specific behaviors to encourage novice teachers and indicated this is the most thoughtful, intentional behavior they do for novice teachers. For the 10 teachers who indicated that the principal positively impacted their decision to stay, efforts made by their principals were primarily credited as a crucial factor. One participant (Wanda) shared: "My principal looks for the positive when she enters my room." Teachers voiced a desire for principals to assume positive intent and find the good in their classrooms.

For the 2 participants who reported their principal negatively impacted their decision to stay, they cited a perception of a lack of effort by their principal to know them and encourage them. Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2019) reported that teachers perceive it as the principal's responsibility to encourage and acknowledge their staff. The 2 participants who lost trust in their principal pointed to their principal's lack of encouragement and engagement. This aligns with Kamrath and Bradford (2020), whose findings indicated that teachers who voluntarily leave often point to the principal's lack of recognition, support, and encouragement. One participant (John) shared: "I felt isolated and on my own. My principal rarely checked on me and barely knew my name."

Scallon et al. (2023) studied 32 teachers across two school districts to determine factors affecting teacher turnover. One of the conclusions was that recognizing and encouraging teachers is vital to reducing attrition. The principals in this study all indicated they intentionally encourage new teachers during their first year. Eight of the 12 teacher participants indicated that written or verbal encouragement impacted their retention. They shared and discussed various ways they do that, including notes, texts, check-ins, and personal goal-setting conferences. Teacher participants also indicated that principal encouragement contributed to the work culture, their self-confidence, and sense of belonging. Overall, the novice teachers shared the relevance of encouragement to their retention through conversations and check-ins. One of the teacher participants (Harper) emphasized that principals must check in on young teachers intentionally and encourage them as often as possible. Other participants believed the principal should model and foster an encouraging environment among the staff.

Encouragement Through Conversations. Most teacher participants discussed their appreciation of their principal coming by their classroom to encourage and check on them and

having a "door" always open. Eight of the 12 teachers discussed the importance of their principal "stopping by" to check in. However, the principal participants acknowledged that the intentional conversations and degrees of encouragement for novice teachers quickly fade as the semester progresses. Principals discussed that leaders are responsible for encouraging novice teachers; however, they admitted that after a semester, they treat novice teachers the same as veteran teachers. Kimberly captured this sentiment in her interview: "I take an unintentional approach after the first semester. I treat them as veteran teachers."

Pamela explained the impact of her encouraging conversations with her principal: "The personal encouragement I have received from my principal continues to have a profound effect on my growth and attachment to my school." Ingersoll et al. (2018) confirmed the principal's impact on teacher retention, which found that the novice teaching force is becoming more unstable and the principals' leadership is more critical than ever. Results in this study pointed to the impact principals have when they take the time to visit and encourage teachers; Pamela expressed the need for principals to individualize their encouragement. The impact of the principal's leadership resonated throughout this study and confirmed the importance of visiting and encouraging teachers well past the first semester or first year.

Encouragement Through Writing. Support is perceived and operationalized by principals in a variety of ways and degrees. The teacher participants shared that quick notes are among the most common supports they receive. Six principals confirmed this support as one of the most often used to demonstrate care and concern for their novice teachers. One principal participant (Danny) explained that providing handwritten notes of support is a way for him to encourage and create a supportive relationship with teachers. The Texas AFT (2022) reported

teachers have a greater probability of remaining in the workforce when they feel supported and encouraged, which mirrors the feelings of both sets of participants in this study.

Classroom Management Supports. Research examining novice teacher retention through longitudinal and early career teacher data concluded that principal support with classroom management is the most critical variable impacting novice teacher turnover (J. Kim, 2019). The teaching participants in this study indicated that classroom management was their most difficult challenge during the first 5 years of teaching; Nguyen et al. (2020) supported this, reporting that novice teachers are more at risk of leaving because they need more support in the classroom. The teachers indicated that classroom management is the area they felt least prepared for coming out of their training. Another study conducted by García and Weiss (2019) concluded that novice teachers lack experience in classroom management and struggle to maintain student order. Overwhelmingly, the teachers indicated classroom support is as impactful as their principal visiting with them. One teacher (Wanda) expressed feeling misled and underprepared to walk into a classroom of her own. Ultimately, novice teachers believe struggles with classroom management made the act of teaching exponentially more challenging.

Principal support concerning classroom management varied greatly by campus. Overall, the teacher participants believed classroom management was closely related to working conditions and student discipline. After a case study, Ramos and Hughes (2020) concluded that student behavior negatively impacted a teacher's commitment, increasing the chances of novice teachers leaving. Additionally, teachers believe their principal is ultimately responsible for working conditions and, thus, classroom management.

Behaviors Linking Professional Colleagues. The teacher participants in this study indicated that links to their colleagues influenced their decision to stay in the job as much as their

principal. This sentiment aligns with Miller and Youngs (2021), who concluded that teachers who fit with their coworkers are more likely to remain at the school where they began teaching. Teachers reported that the links developed through informal and formal channels, such as being on a grade level team, a PLC, a school committee member, or sponsoring a club or student organization, fostered professional friendships and bonds. Ten out of 12 teachers mentioned a strong link or connection to someone on their team; additionally, their involvement outside their classroom strengthened their connection to the principal and campus. The two teacher participants who do not feel connected or linked to their team indicated they do not intend to return to school because they do not "fit in." This feeling is similar to Shirrell's (2021) conclusion on novice teacher retention; many teachers feel alone and often lack socialization.

One teacher (Tabatha) reported that she loved her team and "the team dynamic and the people I work with and interact with daily." These results align with Hargreaves and O'Connor (2018), who concluded that collaboration among teachers improves working conditions and increases the likelihood of novice teachers returning. Additionally, these results are supported by Kamrath and Bradford (2020), who found that collaboration with teacher peers contributes to developing teacher resilience and factors into teacher retention.

Six principal participants believed that novice teachers would be more successful if they fit on the team and into the school's culture. Further, most principals discussed the importance of novice teachers finding a "best friend" at work. Teacher networks are critical in supporting novice teachers. Their beliefs mirror a study done by Shuls and Flores (2020) examining support for novice teachers; they concluded principals should develop targeted strategies, like PLCs, to help novice teachers cope with the challenges of teaching. Allison shared that she focuses a portion of the interviews on the importance of campus and team fit. Miller et al. (2020)

recommended that to retain teachers, principals should intentionally focus on behaviors that help teachers recognize their fit in their building. Promoting social interactions among staff members is effective for keeping novice teachers (Shirrell, 2021). One principal shared during her interview that she requires every teacher on her campus to sponsor a club or serve on a committee to help foster collaboration and links to other teachers. She explained, "I make every teacher serve on a committee; however, my novice teachers intentionally place them on several low-key groups to help them assimilate into the campus and find friends outside their hallway."

Principals and Novice Retention

Principal participants in this study acknowledged teacher retention, but more importantly, they shared that novice teacher retention is complicated and not understood. Over half of the principals discussed how challenging it was to predict which novice teachers would persevere through the first 5 years. These results mirrored the study by Diliberti et al. (2021) that found novice teachers exit teaching faster than they can be replaced. The six principals acknowledged principals must be more intentional toward novice teacher retention to change the outlook of the teacher workforce.

Teacher mentors were the most mentioned support by six principals and the most extensive support provided to novice teachers; however, most of the principals believed the program was adequate for some new teachers but underperforming and not impacting novice teacher retention. One participant (Allison) highlighted that the district does not have a straightforward process for mentoring and ultimately leaves it to the campus to manage. One of the most significant complaints regarding the mentor program was its duration; it is a 1-year program dedicated to first-year teachers only. The results from this study indicate that principals support novice teachers with teacher mentors, check-ins, and goal setting with novice teachers.

However, principals highlighted the need to incorporate other long-term initiatives to help combat novice teacher retention.

Overall, the principal participants discussed how the workforce has changed over the last 5 years. Ingersoll et al. (2018) supported the principal's beliefs in their study and concluded that the teaching force is becoming younger and less experienced, making it more unstable than in previous years. Secondary principals Amy and Danny shared that new novice teachers "lack perseverance" and have lesser work ethic than their more veteran teachers, creating team dynamic challenges and stress among teams.

Limitations

Similar to any qualitative study dependent on interview data, there is the potential for participants to feel uneasy about providing candid responses during the interviews. To mitigate this concern, every participant was explicitly briefed on the measures in place to safeguard their anonymity, and they were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any point. Moreover, the study may be constrained by the diversity of teacher experiences across different campuses, as novice teachers could encounter varying leadership styles among their principals.

While data were collected from a diverse range of participants across various contexts, encompassing middle and high schools, it is essential to note that the findings of this study cannot be generalized to settings beyond the specific parameters established for this research. Specifically, the gathered data pertain exclusively to novice teachers in secondary education, covering grades 5–12, with less than 5 years of teaching experience and a minimum of two consecutive years of employment in a suburban North Texas school district. Additionally, the site district may have individually unique policies and procedures regarding teacher attrition that may not be found in other school districts. Accessibility may have limited this study; the research was

conducted over the summer when many teachers and administrators are not on contract or reporting to work regularly.

As expected in most qualitative studies, the sample size is one limitation of this study. It meets the criteria for qualitative descriptive studies and emphasizes novice teachers' perspectives and experiences in the site district; however, the themes may not be applicable to all novice teachers in the site district or other surrounding districts.

Implications

Because teacher attrition in the first 5 years of employment has been proven higher than in any other teaching stage, principals must implore behaviors intentionally implemented to increase novice teacher retention. Although novice teachers are adequately educated and credentialed, they are often met with increasing workloads, a lack of support from their principal, and challenges related to classroom management. These challenges leave novice teachers feeling overwhelmed and disillusioned, directly impacting job embeddedness. The perception from novice teachers is that principals are responsible for behaviors that lead to novice teacher retention. As such, this study has implications that apply to secondary principals as well as local school districts.

Recommendations

Recommendations for Principals

Previous research on teacher retention has proven no single explanation or answer exists to reduce teacher attrition. The findings of this study support previous research conclusions that novice teacher retention is complex, challenging, and unpredictable. Additionally, this study supports that the principal heavily influences novice teacher retention in secondary schools, and novice secondary teachers prefer an individual, supportive relationship with their principal.

Additionally, the principal participants in this study shared that the teaching workforce is changing, and novice teachers need more support than previous beginning teachers.

Therefore, it is recommended that principals intentionally plan behaviors that foster personal relationships with teachers with less than 5 years of experience in order to strengthen the link or bond with the principal. Further, because teachers, individually, might prefer certain behaviors over others, it is recommended that secondary principals intentionally plan various supportive behaviors to strengthen the fit with their novice teachers through their fifth year of teaching, including personal conversations and check-ins, encouragement, classroom management support, and developing trust with teachers.

Participants in this study shared that their colleagues have as much influence on their retention as their principal. Additionally, they affirmed their colleagues were instrumental in developing and strengthening their sense of belonging on campus. Therefore, it is recommended that principals intentionally focus on developing professional links with colleagues throughout the campus. It is also recommended that principals discuss the importance of developing friendships at work as a part of their campus expectations and culture; this would include encouraging novice teachers to be involved in activities outside their classroom to help assist and foster links with colleagues throughout the campus, making it more difficult for novice teachers to quit.

Recommendations for School Districts

Novice teachers face a significant risk of quitting their jobs in the first 5 years of teaching. Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2019) estimated that 40%–50% of novice teachers will not return to education, leaving the profession before they reach their potential. The principal participants in this study shared that they do not intentionally focus on novice teacher

retention past a teacher's first year of service; they reported treating them as veteran teachers as soon as they complete their first semester. Therefore, it is recommended that school districts build a leadership development program for principals focusing on teacher retention and fostering novice teachers through their first 5 years of teaching. The program should focus on specific behaviors of support novice teachers need and expect from their principal as they grow in the profession.

It is also recommended that school districts facilitate monthly support meetings for novice teachers to attend on campuses. This can foster links with other novice teachers from across the district and create a collaborative culture of best practices. During these meetings, it is recommended that principals share best practices on classroom management support and facilitate conversations for novice teachers.

Additionally, it is recommended that school districts expand their teacher mentor program through a teacher's third year of teaching. This extension should allow school districts to differentiate supports based on years of experience, allowing teachers to grow into their potential. Further, school districts should support campus principals in the selection of mentor teachers by selecting teachers who are the most effective and supporting and growing novice teachers.

Finally, it is recommended that school districts emphasize retaining novice teachers by implementing a strategic plan for principals to use as a resource to strengthen novice teachers' links with their principal, colleagues, and fit on their campus. The strategic plan should include intentional and varied measures to help connect with all secondary novice teachers.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study offers valuable insights into novice teachers' perceptions regarding principal behaviors that influence their retention. However, it is important to acknowledge the possibility that participants may not have accurately reported their perceptions due to the potentially uncomfortable nature of discussing their principles. Future studies could add to these findings by differentiating years of teaching experience and which supports are most applicable to their experience. It is possible that a secondary teacher with 1 year of experience may have different wants and needs from their principal when compared to a teacher with 5 years of experience.

It is also recommended that future research explore novice elementary teachers' perceptions of principal behaviors that impact retention. This study only studied secondary teachers and principals to understand better how a principal impacts retention. It is possible elementary teachers have different needs and expectations of their principal.

This study was conducted in a highly metropolitan area. It is recommended that future studies examine secondary novice teachers' perceptions in a rural setting. Even though these findings may not be generalizable, it is important to explore the experiences of rural novice teachers to understand how a principal may influence teacher retention in that environment.

Future researchers may approach a similar study through a quantitative or mixed-methods approach. Using a quantitative approach to determine principal behaviors influencing novice teachers could provide valuable insight for principals and school districts as they combat novice teacher retention.

Conclusions

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to understand novice teachers' perspectives of principal behaviors that keep them employed in a North Texas school district.

Overwhelmingly, the secondary novice teacher participants indicated that their fit with their principal significantly influenced their retention. This fit primarily centered around a trusting relationship with various forms of encouragement, support, and professionalism. However, the results of the study also showed that links to colleagues were equally important in their sense of belonging on campus and their retention.

The findings indicate that the principal can influence novice teachers to remain in the job by ensuring secondary novice teachers fit with the principal and encouraging links with their colleagues. Similar to prior research, these findings align with previous studies. Additionally, the implications of the study's findings extend to secondary principals and local school districts, with corresponding recommendations provided for both.

Secondary principals have a powerful influence on secondary novice teachers. As such, it is critical to continue the development of principal behaviors that create novice teacher fit and a sense of belonging to their campus. Recommendations for future research are made to support that work.

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Appendix A: IRB Approval

Date: August 22, 2023
Pl: Casey Whittle
Department: ONL-Online Student, 17250-EdD Online
Re: Initial - IRB-2023-179
The Influence of the Principalship in Retaining Novice Teachers
The Abilene Christian University Institutional Review Board has rendered the decision below for
The Influence of *the Principalship in Retaining Novice Teachers.* The administrative check-in
date is --.
Decision: Exempt
Category: Category 2.(ii). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests
(cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures**,** interview procedures, or
observation of public behavior (including visual **or** auditory recording) **if at** least one of **the**
following criteria is met:
Any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research would not reasonably place
the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing,
employability, educational advancement, or reputation; or
Research Notes:
Additional Approvals/Instructions: This study meets criteria to be exempt from IRB oversight.
The study is nonexperimental, uses a general population sample of informed and consenting
adults, and there is very little risk of harm should data accidentally be leaked.
If at any time the details of this project change, please resubmit to the IRB so the committee can
determine whether or not the exempt status is still applicable. All approval letters and study
documents are located within the Study Details in Cayuse IRB.
The following are all responsibilities of the Primary Investigator (PI). Violation of these
responsibilities may result in suspension or termination of research by the Institutional Review
Board. **If** the Primary Investigator is a student and fails to fulfill any of these responsibilities, the
Faculty Advisor then becomes responsible for completing or upholding any and all of the
following:
• When the research is completed, inform the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs. If
your study is Exempt, Non-Research, or Non-Human Research, email orsp@acu.edu to indicate
that the research has finished.
• According to ACU policy, research data must be stored on ACU campus (or electronically) for
3 years from inactivation of the study, in a manner that is secure but accessible should the IRB
request access.
•
It **is** the Investigator's responsibility to maintain a general environment of safety for all research
participants and all
members of the research team. All risks to physical, mental, and emotional well-being as well as
any **risks** to confidentiality should be minimized.
For additional information on the policies and procedures above, please visit the IRB website
http://www.acu.edu/community/offices/academic/orsp...
or email XXXXXXXX with your questions.
Sincerely,
Abilene Christian University Institutional Review Board

Appendix B: Participation Invitation Email

Dear Educator,

My name is Casey Whittle; I am a doctoral candidate at Abilene Christian University in the Organizational Leadership program and a North Texas educator. I am currently conducting a study focused on the retention of novice teachers through principal behaviors. Teacher attrition and job satisfaction have been studied extensively to understand teacher retention. This study will explore why novice teachers with one year of teaching experience through 5 years of teaching experience stay or leave their teaching job. Additionally, this study will clarify the principal's effect on novice teacher retention.

The study incorporates two distinct candidate groups. The first group will consist of current secondary building principals 5–12 in a suburban North Texas school district. The second group will consist of secondary novice teachers with 1–5 years of teaching experience who chose to remain in the same suburban North Texas school district. For this study, a *novice teacher* is defined as having one to five full years of teaching experience.

Should you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to sign a consent form and participate in a one-on-one virtual interview. The interview is expected to last approximately 60 minutes. Additionally, your identity will be protected, and all identifiable information will be redacted before I see any responses. Your anonymity is critical to the credibility of the research. If you are willing to participate, please email me at XXXXXXXX confirming your participation, and I will send you the consent form. If you agree to participate in this study, you will always have the right to withdraw at any time.

Thank you,

Casey Whittle

Appendix C: Screening Questionnaire

Q1.   Please indicate your age.

Q2.   Please indicate how many total years of experience you have in education.

Q3.   Please indicate how many years of experience you have at your current school.

Q4.   Please indicate your total years of experience as a principal.

Q5.   Please indicate the setting of your current position.
- Elementary (K–5)
- Middle School (6–8)
- High School (9–12)

Q6.   Please indicate the grade level and content you taught the previous school year.

Q7.   Please indicate the grade level and content you currently teach.

Q8.   Please indicate your gender.
- Male
- Female
- I prefer not to provide this information

Q9.   Please indicate your ethnicity.
- African American
- Hispanic
- White
- American Indian
- Asian
- Pacific Islander
- Two or more Races
- I prefer not to provide this information

Q10.   Which of the following best represents the organization that provided your teacher certification program?
- University
- Alternative Certification Program

Q11.   Please indicate the year that you completed your teacher preparation program.

Appendix D: Semistructured Teacher Interview Questions

Research Questions	Interview Questions
RQ1. What are the perspectives and beliefs of novice teachers concerning the importance of teacher *fit* with the principal as a reason to stay in their current position?	1. How long have you worked at this school and under your current principal? What makes you stay? 2. How would you describe the level of trust between you and your principal? 3. How would you assess your goodness of fit with your principal and school? 4. What types of school involvement or activities impact your decision to stay at your school?
RQ2. What are the perspectives and beliefs of novice teachers concerning the importance of formal and informal *links* between principals and novice teachers, and how do these connections impact their desire to stay?	5. What professional engagements with colleagues and administrators at work make you want to stay at your school? 6. How have your relationships with your principal supported your decision to remain? 7. Do you feel a sense of attachment or "belongingness" to your principal or campus? If so, how have they developed that attachment for you? 8. How many campus teams, clubs, and/or committees do you serve on and how do they impact your commitment to your principal and school?
RQ3. What are the perspectives and beliefs of novice teachers concerning the *sacrifices* of leaving their principal?	9. Describe the challenges you would face if you were to voluntarily leave your job as it relates to your campus. 10. What sacrifices, professional and/or personal, did you give up to live and/or work at your school? 11. What advantages do you see in staying and working for your principal? What would you be giving up if you left?

Appendix E: Semistructured Principal Interview Questions

Research Questions	Interview Questions
RQ4. What are the perspectives and beliefs of principals concerning the retention of novice teachers?	1. How long have you been the building principal? What makes your stay? 2. Why do you think novice attrition continues to increase in the district? 3. How do you encourage professional engagements with novice teachers? 4. How would you describe your interactions and relationships with your novice teachers? 5. How do you encourage novice teachers to set professional goals and then assist them in achieving them? 6. What processes do you have in place to help novice teachers find a sense of belongingness on your campus? 7. How do you encourage novice teachers to get involved on your campus? 8. What support do you provide for novice teachers? 9. How do you assess if a novice teacher has a level of fit within your school culture? 10. From your perspective, what do novice teachers need to succeed?