

PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP: THE MISSING LINK IN TEACHER RETENTION

by

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of

The College of Education

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Florida Atlantic University

Boca Raton, Florida

August, 2010

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This dissertation was prepared under the direction of the candidate's dissertation advisor, Dr. Lucy Guglielmino, Department of Educational Leadership, and has been approved by the members of her supervisory committee. It was submitted to the faculty of the College of Education and was accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

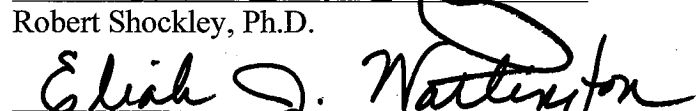
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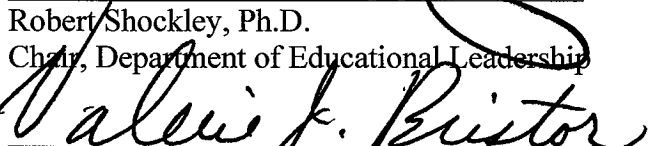
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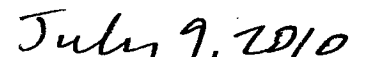

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To my husband who supported me throughout this process with love, support, and encouragement. He continually surprises me with his love and consideration. He has helped in more ways than I can mention. It would have been next to impossible to write this dissertation without his help. In this process, he has become a wonderful cook. I will have to find another project to work on so he continues to be the chef in our house.

To Dr. Lucy Guglielmino, my dissertation chair, I extend my deepest gratitude. She was generous with her time, direction, assistance, and guidance, and always provided positive feedback and helpful suggestions for improvement.

To Dr. Eliah Watlington who offered perspectives on process and content. Her input was invaluable. To my committee members, Dr. Robert Shockley and Dr. John Morris, who provided additional support during my research.

To my friends and colleagues, Dr. Chelly Templeton and Dr. Terry Liddell, who acted as sounding boards and sources of inspiration to complete this challenging adventure.

ABSTRACT

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Title: Principal Leadership: The Missing Link in Teacher Retention
Institution: Florida Atlantic University
Dissertation Advisor: Dr. Lucy M. Guglielmino
Degree: Doctor of Philosophy
Year: 2010

The purpose of this research study was to identify practices that principals utilize that are believed to influence teacher retention. Teacher turnover is a major problem facing principals and school systems today. Much of the present research focuses on why teachers leave the field, but there is little research on the principals' perceptions of what they do to stem the flow of educators leaving the classroom.

To accomplish this purpose, a case study was conducted, focused on identifying the principals' role in teacher retention and their perceptions of the most important strategies utilized to stimulate high teacher retention. Qualitative research methods including individual interviews, open-ended questionnaires, and focus groups enabled the researcher to identify, compare, and contrast the perceptions, beliefs, and practices used by the nine study participants. The research design produced interviews filled with rich narratives describing the practices used by principals at schools with high teacher retention. The focus group discussion elucidated the common behaviors that were

perceived to support teacher retention. The study yielded evidence that high-performing principals with high teacher retention rates clearly and consistently identified specific practices they believe support teacher retention; that principals play a vital role in teacher retention and that their leadership, support, and daily practices influence a teacher's decision to remain in teaching.

The data collected indicates the centrality of creating a positive school culture and a sense of belonging. All the other identified principal practices are intertwined with and contribute to this outcome. Choosing, supporting, and valuing faculty and encouraging shared decision-making appear to be the central practices in building teacher retention; and these practices are supported by and integrated with principals' modeling of positive personal characteristics, exercising fairness and equity, being visible and approachable, and communicating in an open two-way manner.

Congruence of findings from all data collection methods provided an updated list of common practices identified by these highly successful principals that may inform principal preparation and a professional development model for present and future educational leaders interested in maintaining a stable teaching faculty.

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CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

Teacher retention is a major policy issue in the United States. Retaining good teachers is important to the educational and economic well-being of this country. Student achievement is directly influenced by teacher quality and teacher quality influences the quality of our education system. “A good education is the backbone of our lives. It is the passport to a good job and vocational advancement. It is a barometer of our economical state” (Petress, 2007, p. 235). Retaining qualified teachers is a recurring issue in school improvement. The need to recruit and retain quality experienced teachers remains a persistent challenge for principals and their school districts (Coley, 2009). Policy makers and administrators are looking for strategies that help recruit, retain, support, and compensate quality teachers (Johnson, 2009). Principals may be a key element in solving the teacher retention problem.

In 2010, the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (NCTAF) reported that every school district in the country is affected by continuous teacher turnover, especially in low performing schools (NCTAF, 2010). The national pool of experienced teachers is hemorrhaging due to the loss of retiring veteran teachers and the high attrition rate of new teachers. The projected outlook on teacher turnover continues to look bleak. In 2004, Susan Moore-Johnson reported that 50% of newly hired teachers leave the field within the first five years and that trend is expected to continue. Every year teacher attrition numbers grow due to an aging teacher population and student

growth (Flynt & Morton, 2009). At the state level, departments of education are concerned with teacher turnover. “Florida is expected to see an unprecedented rise in the number of teacher retirements in the decade following 2006” (FLDOE, 2006, ¶1). A year later Florida Department of Education stated that between 2007 and 2017, Florida will need to fill more than 200,000 classroom teacher positions to address enrollment growth, teacher terminations and replacement of an aging workforce (FLDOE, 2007). The public school districts in Florida are experiencing similar high teacher attrition rates. For example, a study conducted by Florida Atlantic University, Palm Beach County’s teacher attrition rate was reported as having reached 35% after three years (Watlington et al., 2004).

While today’s economic downturn may postpone some teachers from leaving their current positions, the Florida Senate (2009) used the 2008 NCTAF report to note:

Over 50 percent of the nation’s teachers and principals are baby boomers. During the next four years, the nation could lose a third of its most accomplished educators to retirement. Additionally, the wave of departures will peak during the 2010-11 school year, when over one hundred thousand veteran teachers could leave. The report contends that the nation cannot recruit its way out of this problem (The Florida Senate, 2009).

A stable teaching faculty is directly linked to school improvement and student achievement. “Research has continually indicated that the most important factor in individual student achievement is the effectiveness of the teacher in the classroom, with the leadership of the principal as the key determinant to the success of the school” (FLDOE, 2005, ¶ 1). *Florida’s Standards for Principal Leadership*, state “Florida’s

school leaders must possess the abilities and skills necessary to perform their designated tasks in a high-performing manner” (§ 1). The standards require that principals employ their instructional, operational, and school leadership skills to effectively lead their schools and create communities of learners (Clement, 2009). These competencies and skills calls for school leadership to adopt a systems thinking point of view (Senge, 2006) to explore complex aspects of the teacher retention problem (Mallory & Melton, 2009; Minarick, Thornton, Perreault, 2003).

The problem of teacher retention involves links between and among school leadership and workplace environment, effective instruction and is in need of additional study. The teacher retention problem cannot be solved by using a linear scientific management point of view with respect to leadership (Taylor, 1911). How principals execute their leadership affects school organization, culture, and working conditions, which, in turn, affect job satisfaction and teacher retention. Research indicates that a teacher’s decision to remain at a particular school is influenced by the principal and the principal’s leadership style (Brown & Wynn, 2007). Further research is needed to understand the links between leadership and teacher retention to curb the exodus of well-trained educators from the field, particularly research that uses principals’ perceptions.

Statement of the Problem

Teacher turnover is a major problem facing principals and school systems today. Teacher recruitment and retention are integral to the success of a school system. Based on a review of the literature, teacher recruitment and retention are affected by a number of variables. Much retention literature focuses on the characteristics and qualities which teachers possess that motivate them to remain in or leave the teaching field. The majority

of current literature also indicates that the quality of school leadership is an important factor for teachers in their decision to remain in a particular school, move from or leave a particular school or abandon the teaching profession altogether. Fullan (2003) reports that effective leaders have the ability to change organizational culture which, in turn, can create an atmosphere of job satisfaction and higher teacher retention rates. Effective principals manage their schools by successfully attracting, supporting, and retaining qualified teachers who cultivate high achievement (Brown & Wynn, 2007; Mallory & Melton, 2009; U.S. Department of Education, 2001).

Teacher recruitment practices influence retention; however there is evidence that improvement is needed in this area. “Information-rich hiring processes are better at facilitating good matches between candidates and schools than information-poor processes” (Liu & Johnson, 2006, p. 349), and good matches yield better teacher retention. Late hiring practices in some parts of the country have negative effects on obtaining qualified teaching candidates (Learning Point Newsletter, 2009, December). In Florida, one out of every three teachers is hired within the month prior to school opening (Liu, 2003). Late hiring practice hinders an information-rich communication between the teacher candidate and the hiring school principal (Liu & Johnson, 2006). Both parties lack ample time or opportunity to ensure that the prospective candidate matches the need in the vacancy. If the potential candidate were able to preview curriculum, meet with parents, and tour the community, his/her expectations would match the reality of the open position. Additionally, if the principal along with a hiring committee were able to interview the candidate, preview a teaching portfolio, or observe the candidate teach, a better match of candidate to the needs of the vacant position might be obtained. Thus, this

late-hiring practice affects job satisfaction because it reduces the opportunity to find the match for the school culture to the individual teacher.

A strong match between employee and employer is critical to preventing high turnover; it is much more difficult to change the organization's work or culture than to hire individuals whose skills and interests are appropriate for the job....Implementing effective hiring and placement practices helps all schools and districts but it is particularly important for those that are at risk. Improved hiring, assignment, and placement practices help districts....create a better fit for the candidate and school (Learning Point Newsletter, 2009, December).

Accountability standards are forcing school districts to utilize standardized test scores to evaluate schools and teachers. The Florida practice of grading schools exacerbates the teacher retention problem, especially in hard-to-staff urban or rural schools where test scores are traditionally lower. Principals of low-performing schools have a difficult time establishing a positive learning culture if their school and faculty are labeled as inadequate or a failure. "Principals aren't always equipped with sound strategies to retain such teachers, who typically are at their prime and have much to contribute to their classrooms, their teacher colleagues, and the entire school community" (Doan & Peters, 2009, p. 18). Principals who synergize retention strategies with the development of professional learning communities experience success with teacher job satisfaction. Collegial relationships reduce stress and job dissatisfaction leading to lower teacher attrition (Miller, Brownell & Smith, 1999).

New teachers are approaching teaching more tentatively than previous generations (Olsen & Anderson, 2007). In the business world, new employees have an

opportunity to rise to higher levels of status, but teaching is traditionally seen as a flat career ladder. Yet some school leaders create collaborative professional learning communities that fill the void by increasing teacher self-efficacy through increased distributive leadership practices. Research indicates that, “Teachers with positive perceptions about their working conditions are much more likely to stay in their current school than educators who are more negative about their conditions of work, particularly in the areas of leadership and empowerment” (Learning Point Newsletter, June 2007, p. 1).

Monetary incentives are being offered to attract other qualified candidates into the teaching profession through alternative certification routes. Although these new teachers may possess content knowledge expertise, they may not have the pedagogical knowledge that prepares them for success in the classroom. They often lack the necessary classroom management skills that make for a successful teaching experience. Research says that school principals who provide induction and mentoring programs that support these new recruits ensure their success in classroom management and use of best practices. When beginning teachers participate in induction programs and are mentored in their first years of teaching, they experience less isolation and more connection to the school community through the collegial support received from such programs (Inman & Marlow, 2004). And while monetary incentives are enticing, a supportive professional culture is essential. “How we support [new teachers] and how we encourage them makes a huge difference in whether or not they like what they are doing” (Brown & Wynn, 2007). Liu, Johnson & Peske (2004) reported that while Massachusetts offered a substantial signing bonus to alternatively certified teachers to lure them into teaching, induction and mentoring

programs were more beneficial in keeping them from leaving teaching. Holcombe's (2009) research reminds administrators "not [to] count on any one intervention to produce major results. The cumulative effect gave teachers content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, technology resources, mentor support, and pay incentive" (p. 36) to successfully remain in the field.

Collaborating with Teacher Preparation Institutes is another way that school principals affect teacher retention. Professional Development Schools have met with success when paired up with Teacher Education Preparation programs. Matching veteran teachers with pre-service teachers provides the necessary scaffolding novices need to increase self-confidence and skill in best teaching practices. Practical application of classroom management techniques provides novice teachers with an opportunity to define and refine their approaches to classroom problems (Grenier & Smith, 2006). This clinical experience allows the novice teacher to identify and remediate deficiencies under the guidance of veteran teachers and university faculty supervisors. Positive field experiences and student internships are strongly related to teacher retention (Grenier & Smith).

Research shows there is a relationship between effective principal leadership practices and teacher retention. Research is lacking in describing the principals' perceptions of best practices that can be modeled and applied to increase teacher retention and improve teacher quality. Enhancing teacher retention requires principals to follow effective intervention practices. Knowing what practices are important for administrators to focus on makes it possible to concentrate leadership efforts on those aspects. Developing intervention practices is important in retaining teachers and maintaining a stable school culture. Yet, there is little literature detailing the principals'

perceptions of specific practices they perceive are effective in retaining teachers. The addition of the principal's voice through research of effective practices held by high-performing principals would enrich the literature providing insight needed to better understand how principals influence teacher retention.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this case study was to examine principals' perceptions of practices that influence high faculty retention in the principals' schools, compare their perceptions to teacher retention literature and identify a consensus description of practices perceived to be most important in supporting teacher retention. The study identified a consensus description of principal practices that are perceived to be most important in supporting teacher retention. Emergent categories suggest professional development content that should be included in a model of effective principal leadership practices supportive of teacher retention.

Significance of Study

Teacher turnover disrupts program continuity, hinders student learning, and increases school district costs unnecessarily. Constant teacher turnover lowers morale and increases teacher and student stress (Rieg, Paquette, & Chen, 2007). The monetary and instructional cost of teacher turnover is significant (Miller et al., 1999; Wynn, Carboni & Patall, 2007; NCTAF, 2010). The monetary and annual costs associated with teacher recruitment and retention take away much-needed funds that could be directed to other important educational needs (Minarik et al., 2003; NCTAF, 2002; Watlington, Shockley, Guglielmino, & Fernandez, 2008).

Research Questions

1. What practices do principals with high teacher retention rates perceive to be the most important in teacher retention?
2. How do principals perceive their role in teacher retention?
3. Are there commonalities across the principals' responses and the teacher retention literature?

A qualitative approach was most appropriate because it allowed the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the principals' perceptions of their role and the perceived influence on retaining teachers at their school sites. Data were collected through interviews, observations, document analysis, and focus group discussion. The examination of principal perceptions and practices at schools with low teacher turnover through a comprehensive process could reveal common leadership practices that influence teacher retention. Understanding how high-performing principals make sense of teacher retention practices adds their voice to the literature on successful leadership practices to be modeled. The voices of the high-performing principals gained through individual interviews, supplemented by their analysis and ranking of teacher retention practices compared to the teacher retention literature may lead to themes which inform content for principals' professional development. This study will add to the body of knowledge that informs school districts and school leadership with regard to best practices that contribute to the recruitment and retention of quality teachers.

Operational Definitions

Induction programs – refers not to additional training per se but to programs presented to new teachers who have completed pre-service teacher preparation. These programs are often conceived as a bridge, enabling the student of teaching to become a teacher of students (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004)

In-service - refers to periodic upgrading and additional training received on the job during employment (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004)

Instructional leadership - Leadership designed to promote a positive learning climate that utilizes all available resources in a way that maximizes learning for all students that is both measurable and effective (FLDOE, 2005)

Mentoring - the personal guidance provided, usually by seasoned principals and teachers, to beginning teachers in schools (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004)

Operational leadership - Leadership that involves critical thinking and problem solving strategies to make decisions regarding school improvement, use of technology and development of human resources in an ethical manner (FLDOE, 2005)

Practices - term used interchangeably to refer to practices, strategies, techniques used by principals perceived to influence teacher retention

Pre-service - refers to the training and preparation that candidates receive before employment (including clinical training such as student teaching) (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004)

School leadership - Leadership that effectively communicates the school's vision to all stakeholders and works collaboratively to develop positive relationships that address the needs of the school's larger diverse community (FLDOE, 2005)

Systems thinking - way of thinking about, and a language for describing and understanding, the forces and interrelationships that shape and change the behavior of systems more effectively (Senge, 2006)

Teacher out-of-field - a teacher who lacks certification in the subject area he/she teaches (Ballou & Podgursky, 1996)

Teacher retention - keeping teachers in the profession. A teacher's decision to stay in a particular school or teaching profession (Moore-Johnson, 2004)

Teacher shortage - lack of qualified teachers willing to work at the salaries and under the working conditions offered in specific locations (NCTAF, 2002)

Acronyms

FCAT - Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test

FLDOE - Florida Department of Education

NBPTS - National Board for Professional Teaching Standards

NCATE - National Council on Accreditation of Teacher Education

NCEE - National Commission on Excellence in Education

NCES - National Center for Educational Statistics

NCLB - No Child Left Behind Act 2001, U.S. Department of Education

NCTAF - National Commission on Teaching and America's Future

PIRT - Principal's Influence on Retaining Teacher List

SASS - Schools and Staffing Survey by US Department of Education

TEP - Teacher Education Preparation

TFS - Teacher Follow-up Survey

Delimitations

The sample was confined to principals in one large, diverse school district located in southeastern Florida. The school sites were chosen from those receiving a school's grade of A or B as measured on the FCAT assessment data. The sample was further delimited to principals who lead schools with a high teacher retention rate reported by the school district. It should be noted that principals are periodically moved from one school to another; the data obtained regarding teacher retention is assigned not only to the principal but to the school site and may not be indicative of the current principal's practices. To ensure a linkage between school performance and teacher retention data with the principals interviewed, participants were limited to principals who had worked at their current schools for at least three years.

Limitations

The sample was limited to schools that are currently not under "restructuring" and have been approved by the school district to conduct research. The sample was restricted by district approval as to which schools researchers were allowed to contact. Ninety-eight of the school district's schools were on the approved list. The size of the population was determined by the number of principals who met district approval and voluntarily agreed to participate. The participants were those principals who: (a) had worked at their current school for at least three years, (b) worked at schools that earned an "A" or "B" on the FCAT Assessment data, and (c) who had high teacher retention rates of 90% or better for three years or more. The data relied on self-reporting and may be subject to selection bias.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this case study was to examine principals' perceptions of practices that influence high faculty retention in the principals' schools, compare their perceptions to teacher retention literature, and identify a consensus description of practices perceived to be most important in supporting teacher retention.

The study identified a consensus description of principal practices that are perceived to be most important in supporting teacher retention. A review of the literature on teacher retention and school leadership indicates that principals contribute to the reasons teachers choose to remain in teaching at a particular school or in the teaching profession. It further suggests that what a principal does on a daily basis to support his faculty may reduce teacher turnover. This study was designed to provide insight into which specific practices are perceived by high-performing principals to be important in retaining teachers and may inform professional development models for future leaders to stem the exodus of qualified educators from the field. A qualitative approach to this problem helps readers make sense of principals' perceptions on effective practices perceived to influence teacher retention problem.

Chapter two will present an in-depth review of the literature related to teacher retention and principals' role in teacher retention. Chapter three will present the qualitative research methods for the study. Chapter four will present the study findings. Chapter five will present conclusions, implications, and recommendations from the study.

CHAPTER 2 – REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

There has been a great deal of research on the causes of teacher attrition. What is noticeably absent from the literature is the principals' voices on what practices principals actively engage in that contribute to teacher retention. This literature review focuses on the principal's role and the importance that role has in retaining teachers. Interrelated topics that frame the importance of teacher retention are also examined: (a) school leadership and teacher retention; mentoring and induction; recruitment for retention; and hiring practices to ensure teacher quality; (b) motivations for teaching; (c) teacher quality as it relates to recruitment and retention; and (d) impact of teacher turnover. The literature suggests that principals' leadership affects job satisfaction and how a principal develops the school culture may make the difference between high and low teacher turnover. The topics described are strategies that principals can implement to maintain a stable, quality teaching faculty.

School Leadership and Teacher Retention

Principals in the 21st century have a difficult challenge ahead of them. "The need to retain a new generation of teachers is one of the biggest challenges facing school administrators" (Coley, 2009, p. 20). Principals today have to understand needs of both experienced teachers and young teachers entering the field if they want to retain them. Coley suggests that Generation Y teachers have different needs than previous

generations. These young teachers have grown up with technology and networking. They welcome collaboration and teamwork and expect it from their principals. They value connectedness and expect the principal to establish a school culture and sense of belonging. They look for ways to develop their skill and will expect the principal to mentor to their needs. They look for feedback and will expect the principal to value the work that they do. They will be interested in what the principal will do to help them achieve their goals and will expect the principal to support them in their professional development. Coley says, “knowing the characteristics of each generation in the teaching force, their unique needs, and how to lead a multigenerational faculty will help you [the principal] recruit and retain effective teachers” (p. 23).

Today’s principals are expected to hire, induct, and evaluate school personnel. However, less than 11% of leadership course work is devoted to teacher retention issues (Hess, 2007); thus when faced with real retention problems, principals may lack the experience needed to put theoretical or conceptual models into practice. Fleck (2008) advocates that educational leadership programs need to incorporate additional personnel management skills to deal with today’s complex school cultures. School districts also need to provide school leaders with ongoing professional development. Principals are expected to be educational visionaries, instructional and curriculum leaders, assessment experts, disciplinarians, community builders, public relations/communications experts, budget analysts, facility managers, special programs administrators, as well as guardians of various legal, contractual, and policy mandates and initiatives (Brewster & Klump, 2005). In addition, principals are expected to serve the often conflicting needs and interests of many stakeholders, including students, parents, teachers, district office

officials, unions, and state and federal agencies. One thing is clear: they play a vital role as instructional leaders and they influence teacher retention.

Recruiting and retaining teachers is a major policy issue not only in schools in the United States but in Europe as well (Webb et al., 2004). What is seen as a teacher shortage issue may really be a retention issue. Teacher turnover remains a major concern for schools in many states because it creates a demand for teacher replacements.

University of Tennessee (UT) researchers say, “If nothing changes by the fall of 2013...the state can expect a teacher shortage so severe [that] 40 percent of the current positions could be open” (Roberts, 2009, ¶1). The severity of the problem causes school districts to look at where the shortages are occurring. Bill Fox, the Director of the UT Center for Business and Economic Research in Knoxville says, “dire shortages are predicted in all areas and at all grade levels” (Roberts, 2009, ¶ 2). The state of Florida’s U.S. General Accounting Office reports:

High attrition rates and shortages of teachers, especially in high-poverty areas are challenges. For example, almost half of teachers leave the profession in the first five years of teaching and there is an anticipated surge in retirement of teachers from the baby boomer generation (Florida Senate, 2009, ¶ 3).

Florida also continues to report critical shortage areas, especially in the areas of math, science, exceptional student education, English for speakers of other languages, foreign languages and technology (FLDOE 2009, November). According to the FLDOE website, it appears that there was a drop in the teacher shortage figures this year; but this is due, in part, to current economic conditions and to the state collapsing some of the certification areas, especially in the area of exceptional student education. In Palm Beach County, the

current retention rate of 59% after five years mirrors the national average (Watlington et al., 2004). Florida's Office of Research and Evaluation further projects shortages due to resignations, retirements, class size legislation, and state and private university teacher education programs' ability to provide only 44% of the projected need (FLDOE 2009, November).

Based on current enrollment projections and the additional teachers needed to further reduce the average class size, the state is likely to face a 5% ... increase in the number of teachers [needed] over the next five years (2006-2011) and 19% [needed]... over the next ten years (2006-2016) (FLDOE, 2007, ¶ 4).

Reasons for teachers leaving the profession are a concern for school districts and administration. Leadership has much to do with job satisfaction, and job satisfaction is tied to retention. Principals may hold the key to teacher retention. Administrators can positively or negatively affect workplace conditions. Professional support and school culture are two areas that the school principal has the power to modify (Kukla-Acvedo, 2009). A school culture can be positively influenced by a principal who supports and values his or her faculty and creates a positive environment that promotes teamwork and shared decision-making. The school culture is enriched by these collegial relationships when principals and faculty work together on issues that concern them. "Leadership is about helping people understand the problems they face, helping them manage these problems, and even helping them learn to live with them" (Sergiovanni, 2005, p. 118). Moore-Johnson (2004) says it is the leadership--principals that are supporters, mentors, leaders, movers and shapers of a professional, positive, and actively engaged learning center--that can make a difference.

An important role of the principal is to build and maintain a beneficial learning and teaching community. “Leaders are able to unleash the potential of people by aligning values, systems, structure, and strategy” (Lumpkin, 2008, ¶ 14). Great principals know their schools, students, families, and community. Great principals support and reach out to their faculty and staff. Great principals create school cultures where teachers want to stay (Rigsbee, 2009).

Mentoring and Induction

Many school districts recognize the need to support their professionals through induction and mentoring programs (Roberson & Roberson, 2009). Induction programs are a cost effective way of retaining qualified and experienced teachers (Smith & Ingersoll, 2008). Principals provide the initial introduction to the school’s culture by providing induction processes that include information about daily routines and procedures necessary for new teachers to survive the initial days of a teaching assignment (Roberson & Roberson). As the novice teacher gains confidence and experience, the principal assists by assigning peer mentors that offer further support throughout their first year and beyond. New teachers need positive and constructive feedback, and the primary person who provides that is the school principal as the instructional leader. New teachers need continued feedback and encouragement to ensure that they are doing a good job. But principal feedback alone is not enough, and simply adding an induction program is not an inclusive cure. In addition to initial routine and procedural induction processes, supplemental support and training is necessary in classroom management, curriculum development, and best practices to ensure success in their new position (Drago-Severson, 2007; Haar, 2007).

New teachers participating in induction and mentoring programs are two times more likely to stay in the profession (Brown, 2003) and principals who establish support programs for new teachers are more likely to retain them. New teacher induction programs vary widely in scope and quality (Chauncey, 2005). There is a need to study programs that are the most cost effective and successful. Successful induction and mentoring programs serve as a model to principals who want to curb teacher turnover. Significant differences in the effectiveness of programs may depend on how the principal implements the program, the selection process, the training of participants, and the way the mentors are compensated for their time and expertise. The quality and quantity of contact time between the mentor and mentee also impact the success of the mentoring experience (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Programs like Mentoring Aspiring Technical Educators (MATE) choose mentors very carefully (Brown, 2003). Mentors must have five years experience, skill in instructional leadership, problem solving capabilities, reflective and listening capacities, commitment to a two year program, and be screened by a fifteen member committee. This highly structured enrollment process is followed by a well thought-out mentoring schedule which requires the mentor and mentee to engage in monthly meetings and discussions that allow corrective feedback on relevant topics designed to “keep the beginning teacher[s] focused on improving their teaching [and learning]. This process of solid collaboration and feedback to novice teachers leads to less isolation and more support” (Brown, p. 52), which in turn leads to increased teacher retention. Collegial supports initiated by principals help the beginning teacher become a part of a vital professional culture that lessens teacher isolation and frustration. In the words of Johnson and Kardos (cited in Brown, 2003):

Initial evidence from our longitudinal study suggests that new teachers working in settings with integrated professional cultures remain in their schools and in public school teaching in higher proportions than did their counterparts in veteran-oriented or novice-oriented professional cultures. In other words, the professional culture of schools may well affect teacher retention over the long term. (p. 20)

Collegial support programs are particularly helpful for new teachers whose pre-classroom preparation is relatively weak or inadequate. However, the quality of the mentor factors into a successful experience. Poorly trained mentors can do more harm than good and simply pass on ineffective teaching practices. Smith and Ingersoll's research (2008) supports comprehensive induction programs that help teachers remain in schools. There is a strong link between participation in such programs and reduced rates of teacher turnover.

Establishing induction and mentoring programs is important to the continued success of any novice teacher (Inman & Marlow, 2004). Broward County in Florida has an award-winning teacher induction program in place that can boast a retention rate of 70% after the fifth year of employment (Shockley et al., 2008). Another study of teachers in Boston Public Schools found that mentoring programs work best for new teachers who are paired with mentors who teach the same subject, at the same grade level, in the same school (Colgan, 2004). Teacher support programs vary greatly in quality and structure. They can range from a single beginning-of-the-year orientation meeting to highly structured ongoing professional development activities planned throughout a beginning teacher's first years (Chauncey, 2005). They can and should be structured to address the diverse needs encountered in newly hired teachers (Ingersoll, 2008).

How school districts address these needs is left up to induction program planners, administrative personnel, and principals. Smith and Ingersoll (2004) state that induction programs also vary in the extent of training mentors receive, the amount of effort made to match mentor strengths to mentee needs, and the degree to which mentors are compensated for their efforts either monetarily or with a reduced course load. Mentors may or may not teach in the same grade level or field of experience; they may or may not have common planning time; they may or may not be from the same school; they may or may not be a part of an external network of teachers; but most have one thing in common, and that is to support and encourage novice teachers when they are in need of a sympathetic ear and expert advice. Assistance in curriculum development, advice about lesson planning and feedback, and personal encouragement from the principals and colleagues are invaluable tools in increasing self-confidence in the classroom.

Principals can initiate other support measures for new teachers, which might include limiting out-of-classroom responsibilities for first year teachers; scheduling common plan time for mentor and mentee (Fleck, 2008); assigning mentors who will help build a strong foundation for collegial collaboration (Pawlenty & Hunt, 2009); building strong collaborative and problem solving communities correlated to student learning and school improvement (Nowocien, 2005); and ensuring adequate resources and maintained facilities (Buckley, Schneider, & Shang., 2005). All of these support measures create a positive work environment conducive to teacher retention. “Dissatisfaction with workplace conditions and dissatisfaction with the support received from administrators ... were equally cited as other important reasons in [teachers’] decisions to move” (Fleck, 2008).

School leaders cannot do the job alone. Support at the district level, as well as the school level, is necessary to develop the capacity of the school and those leaders who support teachers. School leadership is integral to the overall success of the school program, teacher quality, and stable faculty (Peckron, 2001). Research says effective principal leadership is highly correlated to student learning and student improvement. Leaders who clearly communicate vision and mission are instrumental in altering the course of a school improvement plan (Learning Point Newsletter, March 2008b). Highly professional teachers expect highly skilled professional principals to create an effective learning culture. This type of atmosphere contributes to the success of a school where teachers are motivated to stay.

The success of one's school depends on the multi-dimensional talents of the principal. Principal practices and leadership abilities are often assessed by the grade a school earns on standardized tests rather than on evaluation of how effectively the principal conducts the business of education at their schools (Reeves, 2004). On a National Leadership Evaluation Study conducted by Reeves, only 47 % of school leaders reported that their evaluation helped them improve their performance. Reeves suggests using alternative assessment techniques to improve leadership practices that affect school improvement. The role that principals play in the retention of quality teachers merits more research. We know that principals play a key role in the instructional leadership of a school, but without a stable faculty any instructional gains can be offset by incoherent curriculum instruction and high teacher turnover.

Recruitment for Retention

Often the first step in retaining teachers is hiring the right person for the job. With an expectation of hiring between “2.9 and 5.1 million full-time teachers between 2008 and 2020 ... there is no way current recruiting strategies--even in hyper drive--can meet this challenge” (NCTAF, 2010, p. 9). As the surge of teacher retirements grows, it will be more important than ever for principals to become actively involved in the hiring process to ensure a match between the school and teacher candidate. When principals match teacher recruitment processes with candidates’ skills and requirements of the teacher vacancies, a better fit is made. The result of this process impacts morale, motivation, retention, and quality of a school district’s teaching force. One problem with current school districts’ recruitment strategies is “that it treats teachers like easily replaced, interchangeable units - rather than individualized professional development investments” (NCTAF, 2010, p. 10). Principals who hire teachers at the school level have the ability to hire teachers that fit the school culture and help them develop into long-term career professionals.

During the past decade studies have reported teacher shortages (Brown, 2003; Goldberg & Proctor, 2000; Hirsch, 2001; Olsen & Anderson, 2007). Increased birth and immigration rates, class size amendments, and No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) have exacerbated the teacher shortage. “While there is no universal shortage of teachers nationwide ... teachers are not always in the communities and fields where they are needed” (Goldberg & Proctor, 2000, p. 3). Unraveling the teacher shortage issue begins with teacher recruitment (Easley, 2006). NCTAF (2010) forecasts the need to hire between two and five million teachers between 2008 and 2020. One can assume that the

current economic crisis will lessen the recruitment rates slightly, but will not address the enduring teacher retention issue (Armstrong, 2009).

In 2003, the U. S. Department of Education said, “teacher education was ‘broken’ in that it was not producing the teachers needed by the nation” (Cochran-Smith, 2005, p. 6). Nearly 20 years later, the need for qualified teachers has not decreased. In March 2010, the U. S. Department of Education published a nationwide listing of teacher shortage areas. The current critical shortage areas for Florida include bilingual education, English language acquisition, foreign languages, math, reading, science, special education and other possible areas according to geographic needs (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education Policy & Budget Development Staff, 2010). Furthermore, “The National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future ... [estimates] ... one-third of all teachers leave after three years, and 46 percent are gone within five years” (as cited in Kopkowski, 2008). Previous studies by Susan Moore-Johnson (2004) reported that teacher turnover causes 50-70% of the vacancies each year. Because of these vacancies, school districts tap every avenue to recruit qualified candidates. Many states are experiencing teacher shortages, and school districts are employing additional methods of attracting new teachers into the field. Incentives and alternative routes to certification are being implemented to lure new applicants. Human resource departments are filling the vacancies as fast as teachers are leaving the field. Grenier and Smith (2006) expressed concern that teacher turnover is a greater problem than recruitment, but noted that careful recruitment practices can contribute to reduced teacher turnover.

Hiring Practices to Ensure Teacher Quality

The need for principals to attract and retain qualified teachers is critical if American classrooms are to be filled with qualified educators. Attracting and retaining high-quality, dedicated teachers is a major professional issue that has ramifications for all Americans. The high quality of life that Americans enjoy is attributed to the high quality of the educational system. It is a source of national and individual self-respect. “Our education quality enhances or detracts from our ability to compete internationally. A well-educated population is what keeps our system of government going” (Petress, 2007, p. 235).

Timely recruiting practices are an important ingredient in hiring quality teachers. Liu (2003) documented Florida as being one of four states that commonly hire late; one out of every three candidates is hired just before the beginning of the school year and sometimes after school has begun. The practice of late hiring often leads to districts offering positions to less qualified candidates. When principals are hindered from hiring in a timely manner, they often have to resort to hiring less qualified candidates (Learning Point Newsletter, 2009, December). Recruiters, school districts, and principals should not have to compromise quality at the expense of quantity. It may take more effort in the long run to repair the damage of a poor choice than it would to recruit the right candidate.

Recruiting begins with the job interview and is the first step in retaining quality teachers. Rich communication between the principal and teacher candidate is essential to ensure the right fit for both parties. The principal must provide a clear and accurate picture of the school and community to the candidate in order for both of them to make informed decisions (Liu & Johnson, 2006). Ideally, the principal should encourage

teacher candidates to observe the school, meet with faculty members and parents, preview the curriculum, and tour the community to match their expectations to reality. Additionally, principals and school hiring committees may consider conducting additional interviews, previewing teaching portfolio samples, or observing the candidate teaching in order to match the candidate to the needs of the vacant position. Many new teachers enter the field with great passion only to have it tempered by discouraging factors that information-poor hiring practices presented. Candidates would be better equipped to deal with discrepancies and problems if the job preview is realistic and reveals both positive and negative aspects (Liu & Johnson, 2006).

Finding a position in the right school that “fits” is important for both the principal and teacher. Matching new teachers to the right schools and open positions contribute to teacher effectiveness and retention (Kauffman, Johnson, Kardos, Liu, & Peske, 2002). Principals can take the lead in monitoring the hiring process so that it is information-rich and comprehensive enough to employ the right person for the position. After having found the right fit, principals may execute other retention strategies or inexpensive remedies to increase the probability of retention.

Motivations for Teaching

Incentives for Attracting and Retaining Quality Teachers

The teacher shortages are forcing school districts to try other ways of attracting new talent into the field: signing bonuses, relocation expenses, support to cover home loans, tuition reimbursement, loan forgiveness, differentiated salary structures and college scholarships (Goldberg & Proctor, 2000). Although monetary incentives may be out of the purview of the principal, the principal does have the opportunity to provide no-

cost or little-cost incentives to teachers. Scheduling non-instructional time for new teachers to observe and collaborate with master teachers is one example of the incentives at the principals' discretion.

Among other less expensive strategies that principals engage in to attract more teachers into the classroom are participation in teacher preparation institutes in the secondary schools, university partnerships, and teacher-in-training programs. Principals who encourage such partnerships build collegial relationships with teacher preparation institutions that align curriculum to state standards and produce readily certifiable candidates to fill teacher vacancies (The Florida Senate, 2009). Pre-service programs and in-service school site professional development departments can work together to design teacher-in-training programs to match the needs of the teacher candidate and the participating school site. Principals and schools can improve teacher retention by hiring these clinically trained, classroom ready teachers.

Time and money is spent on preparing and recruiting teachers, but perhaps the money would be more wisely spent on retaining good teachers already in the classroom. The "flat career" that is exemplified in the teaching profession is not as attractive to this new generation of teachers. Moore-Johnson's research (2004) supports that while 93% of first-career entrants say they will stay in education, only 43% say they will remain in the classroom. That means that as teachers gain the experience they need to conduct a successful, well-managed classroom, they will soon be leaving it for other varied fields in or out of education. This situation presents the following questions: Should principals take a leadership role in requesting additional funds be spent on offering incentives to qualified teachers who stay in the classroom and become models and mentors who can

offer continued support to novice teachers? Should principals voice an opinion that veteran teachers be compensated for taking on additional duties that help their school sites become active learning centers of the future? Or should school districts ignore the voice of the principals and continue to spend money recruiting rather than retaining good teachers?

Alternative Certification

The alternative route to certification makes it easier for career changers to enter the teaching field in areas such as mathematics, science, bi-lingual education, technology education and exceptional student education, filling the critical shortage caused by teacher vacancies, especially in the urban setting. Demographic changes in the education workforce brought about by alternative certification present new opportunities for principals to hire alternatively certified teachers. Candidates with a four year degree in a discipline can obtain alternative certification if they participate in additional training required by state and local school districts. However, these new teachers approach teaching tentatively and conditionally rather than as a life-long career (Liu & Johnson, 2006). Some job seekers interested in career surfing view teaching as a way to move away from a superficial corporate world (Olsen & Anderson, 2007). Some view career surfing as an opportunity to try something they believe will be less time consuming and less stressful. Others may be career surfing to find a new job due to corporate downsizing or for a job with more stability. Olsen and Anderson interviewed novice teachers who further substantiated how they view their long-term outlook in teaching:

In the business world, you can always become an ‘associate-this’ and then you become ‘vice-this’ and then ‘director’; in teaching, you’re just a teacher....I’m

going to teach for a few years and then I'll come out and get my doctorate and do something else. (p. 17)

Alternative routes to certification present school districts and principals with another avenue to address critical teacher shortage needs. While they offer a quick route into teaching, a college degree in a content area does not mean that a candidate is qualified to teach without support and continued professional development.

Few would ask cardiologists to deliver babies, real estate lawyers to defend criminal cases, chemical engineers to design bridges, or sociology professors to teach English. Likewise for high-skilled blue collar occupations, few would hire an electrician to solve a plumbing problem. The commonly held assumption is that traditional male dominated jobs require substantial expertise, and therefore that specialization is necessary (Ingersoll, 2005, p. 177).

Teaching is no different from any other professionally trained career. Alternatively certified teachers need support from principals through induction, mentoring, or participation in learning communities. Principals who provide support programs to supplement the alternatively certified teachers' content expertise with additional pedagogical knowledge help them cope with the demands of teaching and retain them as teachers (Liu, Johnson, & Peske, 2004).

Teacher Quality

Teacher quality is brought into question because NCLB requires every classroom to be staffed with highly qualified teachers (U.S. Department of Education, 2001).

Accountability standards are forcing principals to utilize assessment methods to evaluate teacher quality and school performance. The added pressures of accountability also put

more stress and emphasis on the principal in their ability to retain quality teachers (Hess & Kelly, 2007). “No movement in recent history has greater potential for improving [the quality of] teaching and learning than the push for rigorous and authentic standards linked to quality assessments. “But too much of even a good thing can be harmful” (Sergiovanni, 2006, p. 6). The goal of teaching and the assessment of teacher quality should not focus only on standardized test scores but rather by how well teachers help students acquire knowledge and learn to be productive citizens who are able to think critically and act in a socially responsible manner. “Mandated standards and tests provide a dangerously narrow approach to accountability” and teacher quality (Sergiovanni, 2006, p. 6). Quality teachers help others understand and find solutions to problems they face as well as live with the consequences of their decisions (Sergiovanni, 2005). Principals who address the teacher quality issue through professional development build learning capacity in their schools and produce quality teachers and students with the capacity to adapt to the changing needs in a global society.

Pre-service Teacher Quality

“The [education] policy challenges facing most countries at the beginning of the 21st century are the ones that have to do with quality rather than quantity” (Hanushek, 2005, p. 15). States are pushing for more rigorous teacher training. Principals have the opportunity to work with teacher education programs that offer pre-service teachers with ample opportunities to observe and interact with a variety of realistic school settings. Principals can provide real clinical education experience to help pre-service teachers fully understand and prepare for the realities of classroom teaching. Teaching requires commitment as well as knowledge of pedagogy to succeed. It further demands refining of

skills through continuous professional development, making life-long learning a byword in the profession. In 1987, National Board Certification was established to improve the quality of teaching and learning by adhering to high and rigorous standards for what master teachers should know and be able to carry out. Pre-service and novice teachers benefit from principals who provide the assistance and mentoring of National Board Certified teachers (The Florida Senate, 2009). Pre-service teachers that feel successful and competent become in-service teachers that are more confident; and a more confident teacher produces a more confident student (Bandura, 2001; Sergiovanni, 2004; Sergiovanni, 2005). Ultimately, improved teacher quality yields improved student achievement (Brown, 2003).

Principals have little control over the pre-service preparation that a teaching candidate has, but do have control over the clinical experience allowed at their school sites. Principals who encourage on-site experiences for pre-service teachers provide them with real classroom experiences and supervised clinical education assistance. Early clinical experience exposure in teacher preparation programs provides practical application of classroom management strategies and sufficient opportunity to test and refine teaching approaches to classroom problems (Greiner & Smith, 2006).

Student teaching is an important part of pre-service teacher preparation. Field experience and student teaching allows teacher candidates to identify areas of teacher stress early enough to examine root causes and work with principals and clinical educators to help them cope with those stressors under supervised conditions (Rieg et al., 2007). Principals benefit from a successful student teaching experience because it is strongly related to teacher retention (Greiner & Smith, 2006).

In-service Teacher Quality

Teacher quality can and should be improved through attrition and discharge of under-qualified candidates, as this type of turnover is healthy. Principals should exercise their right to eliminate dead-wood teachers and tired time-servers who bring down teacher morale. By doing so the principal allows an entry of dynamic new teachers who bring new life into the system. A balance between the two is essential. But principals should also be aware that too much attrition contributes to the decline of organizational stability, coherence, and morale (Smith & Ingersoll, 2008).

Studies are showing that it is difficult to staff public schools with qualified and adequately trained teachers (Shockley et al., 2008). Alternatively certified teachers are filling a void in the teacher shortage crisis. These novice teachers are usually placed in hard-to-staff schools and assignments. Even though NCLB makes it illegal to put under-qualified teachers in the classroom (Ingersoll, 2005), new teachers are sometimes assigned outside of their content knowledge expertise or given the assignments that are the most challenging. Shockley et al. reported the persistent use of novice teachers in hard-to-staff schools continues the erosion of student achievement and teacher quality; yet high poverty schools are usually filled with under-qualified teachers who are less prepared (Olson & Anderson, 2007). High-minority, low-socioeconomic, low-performing schools experience inconsistent staffing with poorly trained individuals due to teacher burnout and high teacher turnover (Acker-Hocevar & Touchton, 2002). Eighty-two percent of students in urban schools are taught by non-credentialed individuals and districts continue to fill vacancies with out-of-field teachers (Hirsch, 2001). Principals are forced to fill mounting urban vacancies with inexperienced teachers as experienced

teachers flee to high-performing schools located in wealthy white suburban areas (Easley, 2006). Low retention of teachers in hard-to-staff schools puts undue pressure on remaining faculty and principals.

Some school districts are supporting efforts to improve teacher quality through induction and mentoring programs (Roberson & Roberson, 2009). These professional development programs are meeting with success in addressing the quality and retention issue. What kind of program exists is received is left up to policy makers faced with the decisions about supporting such programs (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). However, how the programs are implemented is left up to the principal. Principals have the opportunity to invite teachers to take a more active role in designing their professional development if teacher quality is to improve. Nowocien's study (2005) demonstrated the need for continued professional development activities to strengthen teacher quality through ongoing collaboration and dialogue that focuses on authentic pedagogy, best practices and teacher efficacy. By sharing strengths and best practices, principals and colleagues improve teacher quality. Schools that lack a cohesive professional learning community are at risk of negatively impacting teacher quality and retention, thus creating a vicious cycle of recruitment and attrition problems (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004).

Impact of Teacher Turnover

Recruiting and retaining teachers is costly and time-consuming (Wynn, Carboni, & Patall, 2007; Johnson, 2009). Teacher turnover is generating critical shortages in many parts of the country. New teachers are fleeing the field at high rates, especially in urban areas. This revolving door is creating an excessive demand on the supply of newly prepared educators. The constant change hurts students. "Turnover is not only expensive

in terms of the cost to hire and train teachers, but it also hurts student performance, according to Deirdre Johnson, policy director for the Georgia Partnership” (Jones, 2007, p. A1). School districts are facing an uphill battle to staff classrooms (Liu, 2007). By the year 2010, nearly one-half of the current teaching force will leave the classroom (Moore-Johnson, 2004; Rieg et al., 2007; Reynolds, Ross, & Rakow, 2002). There exists a U-shaped pattern of attrition with respect to experience and age. The highest turnover and attrition rates usually occur in the first years of teaching and again near to retirement years (Guarino, Santibanez, & Daley, 2006).

Major Reasons for Teacher Turnover

Few studies identify what successful principals say they do to influence teachers’ decisions to stay at a school, but numerous studies list teacher characteristics of those who are most likely to remain or leave the field:

1. Math and science teachers are more likely to leave.
2. Very young or very experienced teachers nearing retirement are leaving.
3. Male teachers leave faster than females.
4. Teachers with higher measured academic ability on test scores leave.
5. Minority teachers in urban settings have lower attrition rates than whites.
6. Teachers working in urban and rural low-income, low-performing schools with higher proportions of minorities have higher attrition rates.
7. Participants in induction and mentoring programs are more likely to stay.
8. Higher salaries are associated with lower teacher attrition but also contribute to migration to other districts which means higher attrition to the leaving school.

9. More autonomy and administrative support promote lower levels of attrition and migration.
10. Poor working conditions contribute to attrition.
11. Dissatisfaction with administrative support and leadership, student behavior, school atmosphere, and lack of autonomy lead to attrition.

Many studies point out that 30% of teachers leave within the first year of teaching and by the fifth year, attrition is close to 50 % (Brown & Wynn, 2007; Budig, 2006; Holcombe 2009; The Florida Senate, 2009). Reasons for fleeing the field have included but are not limited to: low teacher pay rates; low teacher respect by students, parents, and administrators; too much paperwork; standardized testing stress; lack of attention to student discipline issues; increased presence of drugs, alcohol, guns, and violence in the classroom; too many non-teaching duties; outdated textbooks and lack of resources; dilapidated and deplorable physical conditions in some schools; failure or refusals by unions and administrators to weed out incompetent or burned out teachers; frustration over a growing tendency for non-qualified teachers instructing certain classes where teacher shortages seem chronic; and an increasing number of teachers not being appropriately prepared to enter classes at the start of each year (Johnson, Yarrow, Rochkind, & Ott, 2009). Another contributor is a general attitude of parents, administrators, and politicians who say that improving these and other problems that plague the teacher retention issue are not urgent (Mallory & Melton, 2009). Generally, a number of these working conditions are under the purview of the principal. Most of the reasons previously listed contribute to teacher dissatisfaction. The number of the above mentioned reasons that can be ameliorated by principals depends on the time and effort

they are willing to put forth as well as how much support they receive from the school district and the parents.

Teacher Salary

Job dissatisfaction, poor salary, a lack of administrative support, and student discipline problems are among the most common reasons teachers give for leaving the profession (Buckley et al., 2005; Tye & O'Brien, 2002). According to Tye & O'Brien, the leading cause of attrition is low wages considering the number of years required in higher education and state certification requirements. Little has been done to seriously address low wages; however, principals have little control over salaries offered to teachers. Signing bonuses and alternative certification alleviate the symptoms of the teacher retention issue but do not resolve the inherent problem. It is less expensive, as well as less politically charged, to offer signing bonuses to attract a few new teachers into critical shortage areas than to increase the overall salary structure for all educators. The problem is with the magnitude of increasing teacher salary. The magnitude of increasing teachers' salaries does not appeal to state legislators in budget crunch times because opponents do not believe there is conclusive proof that by increasing a teacher's salary student achievement will improve. However, this statement ignores the actual problem of low teacher salary and tries to focus attention on student learning outcomes rather than on the teacher retention problem. A teacher's salary is more than 20% less than other professionals (Darling-Hammond, 2003). Better salary and fringe benefits are worthwhile investments in improving teacher quality and retention. The Teacher Follow-up Survey (TSF) has reported five times during the period between 1980 and 1995 that teachers desired higher salaries and fringe benefits as well as improvements in professional

development activities, attention to student discipline, and more teacher autonomy to keep them in the field. The TFS says that school safety and student discipline are also areas of concern and could be addressed without extreme changes in budgetary allocations.

Job Dissatisfaction

Teachers have difficulty dealing with the low stature associated with teaching. Comments like: “Teaching seems to be losing joy and satisfaction” or “the love of my work is gone” are indicators of the severity of the problem (Tye & O’Brien, 2002, p. 24). These comments came not from new teachers or chronic complainers but rather master teachers with 5-10 years of experience. The low stature of the teaching profession is discouraging, even to the most seasoned educator. “Over 40% of the teachers studied reported that professional prestige was worse than they had expected by media and the larger community” (Inman & Marlow, 2004, p. 610). Teachers are feeling trapped in a career that is joyless and futureless - a profession that has the reputation in the media of being notoriously “flat” and held in low esteem.

It’s obviously a no-status career when Laura Bush goes on TV to recruit the best and brightest to teaching for two years. The implication is that, after two years, these people will have done their public service and can now go on to real jobs that pay decent wages! The other implication is that currently the best and brightest don’t choose teaching - that’s insulting (Tye & O’Brien, 2002, ¶ 35). “NCLB’s mandate of ensuring that all classrooms have qualified teachers will require more than increasing the recruitment and training of teachers. Ultimately, it will require

upgrading the status of teaching as an occupation” (Ingersoll, 2005, p. 177), and that upgrading can begin with principals recognizing and valuing their teachers.

Principals can take an active role in increasing teachers’ self-worth and job satisfaction. One of the easiest remedies to increase the stature of teaching that principals can regularly engage in is recognizing the accomplishments of their faculty (Ballou & Podgursky, 1996). In a newspaper article, Bernell M. Pewtier-Glaze, a principal from Texas said, “When they [teachers] figure out that their words and decisions are valued, when they have input, then they are committed” (Delisio, 2005 ¶ 9). Principals who recognize and develop talented educational professionals create opportunities that develop leadership skills and encourage a sense of belonging, both of which promote teacher retention.

Recognizing teacher accomplishments is an initial step principals make in communicating support for the teachers’ role in the school; but principals must continue to work with staff on policies and procedures that promote a model professional environment (Learning Point Newsletter, March, 2008a). Principals also have the opportunity to affect the professional life that new and veteran teachers experience and every effort should be made to positively impact the career development and retention of a school’s faculty. Positive feelings towards teaching and school climate increase teacher retention. “Teachers who gave low marks to their school for attending to their needs and providing access to critical supports were much more likely to plan to leave their position than teachers who felt well-supported” (Colgan, 2004, p. 24).

Chapter Summary

The review of the literature on teacher recruitment and retention in the United States indicates that there is a serious problem with recruiting and retaining highly qualified teachers in the public school system. Numerous studies indicate that more teachers are needed to staff schools in the next decade due to retiring “baby boomers,” the rising population of K-12 students, growing teacher shortages, or mandated educational initiatives such as reducing class size. School districts are straining their budgets in their efforts to recruit and retain teachers. The ability to attract and retain good teachers is an issue of concern to principals, educators, and policy makers. There is mounting evidence that the most able students are choosing not to pursue careers in teaching; and those that do are not remaining in the field. The data is bleak. The need for qualified teachers has never been more urgent. Recruitment is the first hurdle in the teacher retention issue. Hiring the right person for the right position is important to retain qualified teachers. Retention and teacher quality represent a dual challenge for the principal. They need to retain excellent teachers if school districts hope to meet the rigorous standards set to raise student achievement levels.

Teacher quality is an important topic among policy makers because various research studies report that teacher quality is the single most important variable affecting student achievement. Increased attention to accountability and student achievement has put more pressure on the principal to retain quality teachers. With the enactment of NCLB, teacher quality has risen to the top of the school reform agenda (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). There is no simple solution that will ensure that highly qualified teachers will be placed and retained in every classroom; thus research and development

of educational policy is needed to study the problem and possible solutions for schools and principals. A key first step in ensuring teacher quality is for principals to offer induction and mentoring programs that help novice teachers become successful in their new position. When new teachers feel more confident and supported in their job, they will be more likely to stay. Principals who support their teachers create a professional learning environment conducive to high teacher retention.

School districts are enticing career changers into education by offering alternative routes simply to fill vacant classrooms. These practices treat the symptoms but do not provide the cure. While alternative certification may address teacher shortages, it does not guarantee that the candidate is right for the open position. This further emphasizes the need for well-established induction and mentoring programs implemented by school principals. The need for teacher support and professional development is even greater in urban schools where most vacancies are filled with inadequately trained teachers. Without induction and mentoring programs in place, teacher turnover is inevitable.

Teacher attrition is a terrible loss not only in human capital but also in program capital and continuity. The loss of good teachers disrupts school improvement, hinders student achievement, and increases operating costs. Instead of looking at how many teachers were hired in past years, we should be looking at how many teachers left. Working conditions, low pay, low status, lack of resources and inadequate administrative support contribute to the retention problem. Simply hiring new teachers to fill the vacated positions does nothing to improve long-term retention. The cost of teacher turnover results in a draining of funds that would otherwise be used for educational programs. Again, addressing the symptom does not result in the cure.

Teaching in America has become a revolving door. This phenomenon undermines principals' efforts in developing a strong professional learning community. A review of this literature is reason to look at what school leaders are presently doing. More information is needed on how principals can effect change that will result in less teacher attrition. Current strategies focus on identifying teacher characteristics that are helpful in predicting whether teachers stay, move, or remain in teaching. Many concentrate on fixing some deficiency in teacher preparation or in-service practice. Some look at unsuccessful recruitment practices and others look at facility deficiencies. The idea of more recruiting to meet the teacher shortage crisis and the lack of attention to the teacher retention crisis is driving poor policy decisions because this causes school districts to hire replacements as quickly as others are lost (NCTAF, 2002). Since poor administration contributes to one-half of teacher dissatisfaction, attention to effective principals' practices is needed (Olsen & Anderson, 2007). Strategies are needed to hire appropriately, retain new hires, and keep current faculty. "More research is needed in order to determine what works and what does not work in relation to hiring and retaining of good teachers" (Watlington et al., 2004, p. 58).

To be successful, administrators need practical training to help them do their jobs more effectively from the start. They need ongoing professional development to keep them on top of innovations in education. Administrators also need continuous support from other school leaders, school staff, and community. (Hidalgo, n.d., p. 3.5)

Teacher retention literature describes several avenues through which teacher shortages are currently being addressed. The focus has been on the characteristics of

teachers and schools. Some schools have been successful in retaining good teachers; however, a closer look at school leadership may provide a key to increased success. The right principal influences a teacher's decision to remain at a particular school. Identifying what successful principals do on a regular basis to keep their faculty stable and content in their schools will inform school districts on ways to improve teacher retention. Present literature focuses on recruiting practices or fixing the teacher, but more attention must be placed on the role that leadership plays in teacher turnover and retention.

What are successful principal leaders doing to retain qualified teachers in their schools? What are effective principals doing to create a positive school culture where teachers are willing to stay? What are model principals doing to provide positive support needed to lessen isolation and strengthen teacher autonomy? What are the principal practices that influence job satisfaction and teacher retention?

This review demonstrates the need to study current practices of school leadership which may contribute to the retention of a quality teaching force. Research indicates that principals are direct influencers on the retention of highly qualified teachers (Mallory & Melton, 2009; Wood, 2005). Investigation into strategies of effective principals in schools with high teacher retention rates and high student success could inform future leaders on best practices. The possible contribution of this study is that it will provide insight into principal practices perceived to influence teacher retention and that may be modeled through professional development activities for novice as well as veteran principals wishing to positively influence and maintain committed teaching communities in their schools.

CHAPTER 3 – METHODOLOGY

Purpose

The purpose of this case study was to examine principals' perceptions of practices that influence high faculty retention in the principals' schools, compare their perceptions to teacher retention literature, and identify a consensus description of practices perceived to be most important in supporting teacher retention.

This chapter contains a description of the research paradigm used for the study and the qualitative methods and procedures used to obtain and analyze data for this study. It describes the rationale for the use of qualitative research utilized to select the sample and the methods used to gather data. A review of the literature on teacher retention was used as a basis for an interview protocol to examine these practices. In-depth interviews were conducted with principals with high teacher retention rates to identify practices that are perceived to influence teachers' decisions to remain teaching at their current school site. The practices identified were further analyzed by a focus group to arrive at a consensus description of the principals' practices that are perceived to be most important in supporting teacher retention and curbing teacher turnover.

Research Questions

The research questions investigated are:

1. What practices do principals with high teacher retention rates perceive to be the most important in teacher retention

2. How do principals perceive their role in teacher retention?
3. Are there commonalities across the principals' responses and the teacher retention literature?

Teacher attrition is a major problem for many school districts in the United States. The Florida Department of Education website (2008, January) stated that more than 200,000 teachers will be needed in the next ten years due to the teacher shortage caused by increased enrollment and teacher attrition. School districts are addressing the teacher shortage in multiple ways. Recruitment efforts, alternative routes to certification, and monetary incentives are among the strategies that school districts are employing to attract candidates into teaching. Vacant teaching positions are being filled, but teacher shortages continue due to various factors. Many teachers leave the profession because they are dissatisfied with some aspect of their careers, location, or because of personal reasons. Research indicates that school leadership also influences job satisfaction (Kersaint, Lewis, Potter, & Meisels, 2007). Principals who support, mentor, and create a positive learning environment for their teachers have less teacher turnover and more job satisfaction (Tye & O'Brien, 2002).

School leaders must demonstrate effective practices in order to create an atmosphere where teachers feel valued and experience a sense of belonging. It is essential that principals employ their instructional, operational, and school leadership skills to effectively lead their schools and create communities of teachers and learners who are content in their jobs. Research has indicated that effective teachers and principals are key to student achievement and school success. The success of a school is enhanced by

continuity of the learning environment and the continuity of the learning environment are enriched by a stable teaching faculty.

Research Design

A qualitative phenomenological case study approach was employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the principals' perceptions of their role and perceived influence on retaining teachers at their school sites. It was important to "focus ... on the essence or structure of an experience (phenomenon)" to better understand the common experiences and practices of high performing principals (Merriam, 1998, p. 15). This methodology was most appropriate because it allowed the researcher to study the individuals, gather their perceptions, report their experiences and report the data in the "lived and told stories of the individuals" involved (Creswell, 2007, p. 54).

The case study offers a means of investigating complex social units consisting of multiple variables of potential importance in understanding the phenomenon.

Anchored in real life situations, the case study results in a rich and holistic account of a phenomenon; it offers insights and illuminates meanings that expand its readers' experiences (Merriam, 2009, p. 50).

The principals represent a single bounded system of selected participants at schools with high teacher retention rates. The study investigated the perceived role that the principal plays in the teacher retention issue by describing the practices employed to support and retain teachers. A case study design allowed for a detailed description of the reported practices, strategies, and techniques. As cited in Creswell (2007, p. 76), "Yin (2003) comments, 'you would use the case study method because you deliberately wanted to cover contextual conditions - believing that they might be highly pertinent to your

phenomenon of study' (p. 13).” Interpretive research can help the reader understand the teacher retention problem because the data illustrated the influence personalities and opinions have on this complex problem. This design is most appropriate because this study sought to discover the viewpoints and practices of the participants related to the topic of teacher retention. This research study was inductive in nature and sought to “discover and understand a phenomenon, a process, or the perspectives and worldviews of the people involved....[the]....data are collected through interviews, observations, [focus group discussion]....resulting in the identification of recurring patterns” (Merriam, 1998, p. 11).

The key philosophical assumption ... upon which all types of qualitative research are based is the view that reality is constructed by individuals interacting with their social worlds. Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed; that is how they make sense of their worlds and the experiences they have in the world. (Merriam, 1998, p.6)

Data were collected through a basic qualitative design consisting of in-depth interviews, observations, document analysis of printed materials supplied by the participants, public records supplied by the school district, a review of the research literature on teacher retention, a comparison of literature to the principals' perceptions, and a focus group discussion. The triangulation of data collection methods through interviews, presentation of verbatim quotes, focus group discussion, rating list of principals' practices, and member checking supports the reliability and internal validity of the study. The data gained were analyzed and coded to determine practices that

emerged between and among the individual principals. From these practices, a list of categories that principals believe influence teacher retention at their schools was distilled.

Sampling Plan

Site

The study was conducted in a large school district located in southern Florida. Information from the county's school district website states that it is among the twelve largest school districts in the United States, with a K-12 population of more than 170,000 students in 186 schools, 12,615 teachers and 1,178 school and administrative personnel reported by the district in the 2009-10 school year. It is one of the five largest school districts in Florida. The district is as diverse as it is large with over 140 languages and nationalities represented in its school population. The beginning teacher salary is \$36,800, and the average teacher earns close to \$50,000. The school district has earned an "A" rating from the Florida Department of Education five years in a row based on the results earned on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT). Ninety-five percent of the schools earned grades of A, B, or C on FCAT (FLDOE, 2009). Florida has 13,281 Nationally Board Certified teachers and more than 700 of them are employed in this district. Three schools in this district have been named in the top 100 high schools in the nation in a *Newsweek* article in 2008. On the district website, the School Board mission statement says it is "committed to excellence in education and preparation of all our students with the knowledge, skills, and ethics required for responsible citizenship and productive employment" (p. 1). Despite the district information cited above, this school district is experiencing the same problem of retaining teachers as the rest of the country. The Florida Department of Education website (FLDOE, 2007) reported the

state's average retention rate as: "an analysis of first-year instructional staff reveals that the percentage of teachers remaining in the profession after several years is stagnant. The 1998-99, 1999-00, and 2000-01 cohorts each had 55 or 56 percent still teaching after six years" (FLDOE, 2007, ¶ 3). Data further revealed that this district's first year instructional staff cohorts still teaching in subsequent years between 2001 and 2007 averaged 61%.

Participants

A purposeful sample of elementary, middle school, and high school principals with a track record of high teacher retention rates was asked to participate in the study. The identification of these principals was important because it allowed the researcher to obtain information-rich experiences from individuals with similar low teacher turnover rates. By "selecting individuals with the same relative characteristics ... [there will be an] ... increased confidence in the analytic findings on the grounds of representativeness" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 28).

These principals were selected from schools that were not under district reconstruction. Out of the 186 schools in the district only 27 principals met the selection criteria:

1. Longevity - The principal has been at the school site for three or more years.
2. School grade - The school site earned an A or B grade on the FCAT data assessment test.
3. High teacher retention - The school had a high teacher retention rate of 90% or better under the leadership of this principal for three years or more.

In addition to the selection criteria listed above, special attention was given to selecting as diverse a population as possible with regard to school level, gender, and ethnicity. Furthermore, the representative sample contained principals from various locations throughout the county to include urban, suburban, and rural schools. The researcher obtained data from the public records department to help in the sample selection process. The school district publishes a list of possible schools from which researchers may choose to conduct research. Of the 186 schools in this school district, 98 schools are on the approved list. The sample was limited to schools that are currently not under “restructuring” and have been approved by the school district to conduct research. Although there are no set rules as to the number of participants required in a case study approach (Creswell, 2007), “the size of the sample ... is determined by a number of factors relevant to the study’s purpose” (Merriam, 1998, p. 66).

Data were obtained from public records to determine which principals had been at their present schools for three or more years, which schools had teacher retention rates of 90% or better, and which schools earned an A or B on the FCAT assessment test. Principal lists, school rating lists, retention rates, and school locations yielded a possible sample from which to select study participants. Comparing the data from the 98 approved schools with principals who met the study criteria, a list of 27 principals was made. Phone calls were made to all 27 principals inviting them to participate in this research study. The size of the sample was determined by how many participants met the selection criteria and voluntarily agreed to participate.

Special care was taken to select representative participants to ensure a diverse sample among the K-12 levels. First, the principals were grouped into school levels.

Phone calls were made to principals at elementary, middle school and high schools. As principals agreed to participate, the researcher obtained a balance among school level, gender, ethnicity and location. Once an elementary principal agreed to participate, the researcher went to the middle school principal list; when a middle school principal agreed, the researcher moved to the high school principal list. Each time a male agreed to participate, a female was asked to participate. Additionally, attention was paid to the location of the school and the ethnicity of accepted participants to obtain a representative but diverse a sample as possible. After contacting 27 possible participants, eleven principals agreed to be interviewed. However, due to reasons beyond the researcher's control, two of the principals later declined to participate. Table 1 illustrates the participant sample.

Table 1

Participant Sample (N = 9)

Gender	Female	3
	Male	6
Ethnicity	Black African American	2
	White/Caucasian	7
Highest degree earned	Masters degree	8
	Specialist degree	1
Years of experience in education	11-19 years	1
	20+ years	8
Years of experience as a principal	4-10 years	2
	11-19 years	5
	20+ years	2

As a result, the final sample consisted of nine principals who were interviewed.

Table 2 provides individual principal demographics.

Table 2

Principal Demographics

Principal #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Gender	M	F	M	M	M	F	M	F	M
Ethnicity	W	W	W	W	W	B	W	B	W
Highest Degree Earned	MA	MA	MA	MA	MA	SP	MA	MA	MA
Principal Yrs. – Total	9	19	13	19	20+	15	14	16	6
Principal Yrs. - District	9	19	19	3	13	15	14	16	6
Principal Yrs. - Current School	6	16	8	3	3	15	14	7	3
Educator Yrs. - Total	20+	20+	20+	20+	20+	20+	20+	20+	19
Educator Yrs. - District	20+	20+	20+	3	20+	20+	16	20+	19
School Level	MS	E	MS	E	HS	E	E	E	E
School Location	S	R	S	U	S	S	S	S	U
School Enrollment	1425	645	1344	629	2157	891	904	863	541
School Grade	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
Free/Reduced Lunch %	22	15	27	56	16	35	40	39	51
ELL/ESE	10	14	28	49	13	26	27	18	25
Current Faculty Employed	58	48	56	46	100	57	54	52	30
Teacher Attrition Last 3 Years	<10	<10	<10	<10	<10	<10	<10	<10	<10

Note. M = Male; F = Female. W = White; B = Black;
 MA = Masters degree; SP = Specialist degree;
 E = Elementary School; MS = Middle School; HS = High School;
 U = Urban; S = Suburban; R = Rural;
 ELL = English language learners; ESE = Exceptional student education.

Although the 27 principals in the potential subject pool were almost evenly split in gender, six of the study participants were male and three were female. Seven participants were White/Caucasians and two were Black/African Americans. All nine

participants had extensive leadership experience. The majority of participants had held a principalship for more than 11 years and all but one had been in education for more than 20 years. All principals had earned a master's degree in Educational Leadership and held a Professional Educator Certificate in the State of Florida. One principal had earned a Specialist degree.

School Demographics

All schools were located in one of the five largest school districts in Florida; this school district is one of the 12 largest school districts in the United States. The schools were located in urban (N = 2), suburban (N = 6), and rural areas (N = 1) throughout the county. The urban schools were characterized by high population and structural density, diversity in property values, cultural heterogeneity, and a free and reduced lunch population greater than 50%. The suburban schools were characterized by less dense populated residential areas within commuting proximity to a large city, more green areas, and free and reduced school populations of less than 50%. The rural school was characterized by location in an isolated area of open pastoral country and lower population density.

The school enrollments were representative of small-size schools with a student population between 401 and 700 students (N = 3), medium-size schools with a student population between 701 and 1100 (N = 3), and large-size schools with a student population over 1101 (N = 3).

The school district has earned an "A" rating from the Florida Department of Education five years in a row based on the results earned on the FCAT. Ninety-five percent of the county's schools earned grades of A, B, or C on FCAT. All participant

schools were high-performing schools that earned an “A” grade on the FCAT data assessment test. In addition to being a high-performing school, each school had a teacher retention rate of at least 90% over the past three or more years.

The majority of schools had more than 51 instructional staff and reported less than 5% of their teachers having taught for fewer than three years. All nine schools reported high teacher retention rates and had less than 10% teacher turnover in the last three years. Table 3 illustrates the school demographics.

Table 3

School Demographics (N =9)

School setting	Urban	2
	Suburban	6
	Rural	1
Student enrollment number	401-700	3
	701-1100	3
	1101+	3
Students receiving free/reduced lunch	11-25%	3
	26-50%	4
	51+%	2
Racial make-up averages	White	34% - 86%
	Black	1% - 44%
	Hispanic	9% - 46%
	Other	4% - 34%
Instructional staff	<50	3
	51-100	6
	100+	0

The district is as diverse as it is large, with over 140 languages and nationalities represented in its school population. Each school was diverse in ethnicity, instructional

needs, and socio-economic make-up. The racial make-up of the student population taken from the School Improvement Plans posted by each school on the district's website ranged from 34% to 86% white, 1% to 44% black, 9% to 46% Hispanic, and 4% to 34% other. The English Language Learner (ELL) and Exceptional Education Student (ESE) make-up ranged from 10% to 49% of the total population with an average of 23% for all study sites. The socio-economic make-up of the schools students receiving free and reduced lunch ranged from 11% to more than 51% with six of schools receiving more than 26 % aid.

Data Collection

Data were collected through personal interviews, document analysis, field observations, and a focus group discussion. Semi-structured, personal interviews were conducted with principals who had a record of high teacher retention rates. To collect comparable data, similar questions were asked regarding their educational background, school demographics, and their teacher retention practices. Documents obtained from public records regarding teacher retention rates as well as those found on the state, district, and school websites were analyzed. Field observation notes were taken at each school site noting the accessibility of the principals' offices and other site specific contextual data. Additional documents were collected from participants at the end of the interview and focus group. A focus group was convened to further elucidate common practices that emerged from the individual interviews. These methods of data collection were chosen because the researcher wanted to study teacher retention from the principals' point of view to better understand how leaders believe they can and do influence a teacher's decision to remain in teaching.

The interviews provided an in-depth accounting of the principals' views of their role in teacher retention, the strategies and practices they use to promote teacher retention, and their personal stories as they reflected on the topic. The researcher transcribed the data and sent a copy to the principal for member checking. Revisions were made as necessary. After each interview, the researcher identified significant passages that portrayed a practice described by the principal believed to encourage teacher retention. As each subsequent interview was transcribed, practices that emerged were identified, noted, and compared to previous transcripts and current teacher retention literature. In order to further compare the principals' stated practices to teacher retention literature, the principals were asked at the end of the interviews individually to rate a list of practices gleaned from research literature. Their personal ratings were also compared to their personal interviews to note similarities and possible differences.

After all interviews were completed a focus group was convened in order to share the data gathered. The focus group discussion provided an opportunity for the researcher to gather additional information and insights through conversational interaction among the principals. It also allowed the participants to discuss their views with other high performing principals

Individual Interview

Twenty-seven principals that met the study's criteria and were from schools that were identified by the district as being allowed to participate in research studies (those not under restructuring) were contacted personally via email, postal mail or telephone to ask if they would be willing to be a part of this study (Appendix A). Follow-up phone calls were made to secure a purposeful sample.

Proper consent forms were obtained prior to participation in the study according to IRB guidelines. Consent to participate in the interview process was obtained (Appendix B). Principals were informed that the interview was audio-taped. They were further informed that they may decline to answer any question or withdraw from the study at any time without any penalty. Demographic information concerning the principal's gender, ethnicity, educational background, and experience as a school leader as well as current school demographics was collected. During the interview process, the researcher sought to gather data to elucidate their perceived role in supporting teacher retention.

The interview protocol (Appendix C) took approximately one hour. The interview began with the collection of demographic data followed by solicitation of three of the most important strategies used by the principals believed to influence teacher retention at their school site. The research questions initiated the discussion of the role the principal plays in teacher retention.

1. What practices do principals with high teacher retention rates perceive to be the most important in teacher retention?
2. How do principals perceive their role in teacher retention?
3. Are there commonalities across the principals' responses and the teacher retention literature?

The interview protocol was followed in order to provide focus; however, the questions were open-ended to allow the principals to fully describe specific practices that they believe are effective in supporting teacher retention at their schools. The open-ended questions allowed the participants to reveal their personal experiences with regard to the

teacher retention issues they face. Some participants answered the questions before being asked additional ones. Additional probing techniques added to the richness of the data collected.

The interviews were transcribed and a copy of the interview was given to each participant to review. Member checking was employed to ensure the perceived reality and essence of the data obtained. Member checking is “the single most important way of ruling out the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what participants say and do” (Merriam, 2009, p. 217). Member checking allowed the researcher to clarify and refine the principals’ perceptions as well as make any necessary clarifications as suggested by the participants. A follow-up contact was made to ensure the accuracy of the transcript as well as corroborate the evidence gathered and reduce researcher bias. At the end of the interview, they were asked to rate a list of principal practices identified from the teacher retention literature.

Individual Principal Rating of List of Principal Practices

Following the interview, the principals individually rated a list of 42 principal practices gleaned from the literature (Appendix D). The individual rating list was matched up to the principals’ interviews to compare the practices discussed in the interview with the rating assigned by each principal. The principal rating results were tallied and placed in descending numerical order to yield a more concise compilation of essential practices deemed essential or most important that were further analyzed and compacted by the focus group.

Focus Group

Following the individual interview sessions, a focus group of the same principals was convened to address the commonalities distilled in the interview findings so that a consensus description of the principal practices that were perceived to be the most important in supporting teacher retention could be identified. Focus groups are beneficial when attempting to gain insights into complex problems. According to Merriam (1998), “focus groups are advantageous when the interaction among interviewees will likely yield the best information, [and] when interviewees are similar and cooperative with each other” (p. 133). The focus group discussion allowed this group of principals to share their successful teacher retention practices and for the researcher to gather data on the commonalities among the group. This technique provided an opportunity for the researcher to uncover additional practices used by principals to retain teachers. The researcher believed this format enriched the data that was collected from the individual interviews because the collective thought processes involved in a focus group provided a richer, more complete list of principal practices believed to support teacher retention.

Morgan (1988) suggests one of the simple tests to determine whether focus groups are appropriate is to determine if they are workable and preferable over other qualitative methods. This researcher expected the discussion to be rich with personal experiences. The data collected was meant to generate ideas and practices where different opinions could be valued and recorded. In this case, a focus group served several purposes: (a) provided a venue for principals to share their best teacher retention practices with fellow colleagues, (b) produced a more complete list of practices believed to support teacher retention, and (c) allowed for the rank ordering of the importance of

each practice by a panel of principals who lead schools where teacher retention is higher than most schools.

According to Morgan (1988), another reason to use focus groups was to combine the interview process with observation. Clearly, one potential benefit of the focus group was the ability to gather data from a number of interested stakeholders in less time. The added benefit of compact transcription yielded additional retention descriptors to consider when constructing a concise list of principal practices believed to address teacher attrition. Another advantage of using focus groups is that focus group discussions tend to be more open-ended and may yield additional practices not reported in previous research.

The purpose of the study, the time allotted for the discussion and the plan for reviewing the transcripts were reviewed. The study questions were posted on a discussion board to generate initial discussion. Only one question was revealed at a time:

1. What practices do principals with high teacher retention rates perceive to be the most important in teacher retention?
2. How do principals perceive their role in teacher retention?
3. Are there commonalities across the principals' responses and the teacher retention literature?

As the discussion progressed, the researcher listed the practices on chart paper. This activity allowed for common practices to surface and for rich discussion to take place. Many of the same practices mentioned in the interviews were listed and discussed at length. The focus group discussion provided additional insight into the meaning of the data gained from the individual interviews as well as provided an opportunity for the principals to further define their perceived influence on teacher retention.

Focus Group Ranking of Principal Practices

At the end of the group discussion, the participants were asked to review the identified practices gleaned from the individual interviews in order to rank each practice in order of importance from “1” (most important) to “10” (least important) to further distinguish the top 10 essential practices. A numerical value of “10” was assigned to practices rated as “1.” By assigning a value of 10 to their most important practice, the practice with the highest numerical score would rank as the number one choice among all of the principal practices. A numerical value of “9” was assigned to practice rated as their number “2” choice and would rank as the number two choice among all of the principal practices. This process was continued until the practice rated as “10” was reached with a value of “0,” which would rank as the number 10 choice among all of the principals. Any practice not ranked by any principal would also earn a value of “0.” This activity yielded a ranked list of the most important practices employed by these high performing principals believed to support teacher retention.

Member checking was employed after the audio-tape of the focus group was transcribed to ensure accuracy and essence of data obtained; a copy of the transcript was provided to each participant for review. Member checking “solicits participants’ views of the credibility of the findings and interpretations” (Creswell, 2007, p. 208). “Taking data and tentative interpretations back to the people from whom they were derived and asking them if the results are plausible” strengthens internal validity (Merriam, 1998, p. 204).

Validity

Internal Validity

Since understanding the phenomenon of the principals' perception of their influence on teacher retention was of primary importance, the study provided the reader with enough detail to illustrate that the findings make sense and that the reality of the situation matched the principal's perceptions and documents collected (Merriam, 1998).

Validity, then, must be assessed in terms of something other than reality itself (which can never be grasped). One of the assumptions underlying qualitative research is that reality is holistic, multidimensional, and ever-changing; it is not a single, fixed, objective phenomenon waiting to be discovered, observed, and measured as in quantitative research. (Merriam, p. 202)

Data were collected and recorded verbatim so that the essence of the participants' meaning was authentic and reported in their own words. Each interview was triangulated among the interview, observation, and analysis of documents supplied by the participant as well as the school district, field notes, and focus group discussion. The internal validity of the study was strengthened by:

1. Triangulation - using multiple sources of data collection. Interviews were compared to principal rating list, focus group discussion, and principal practice ranking. Triangulation allowed the researcher to corroborate evidence from a variety of sources (Merriam, 1998; Creswell, 2007).
2. Member checking - providing a copy of the interview and focus group transcripts to study participants to ensure the accuracy of the data collected

and the credibility of the findings and interpretation presented (Merriam, 1998; Creswell, 2007)).

3. Peer examination – reviewing codes and practices at several intervals. The first review was done by a code checker who compared and refined codes and emerging practices (Miles & Huberman, 1994); second by participants in a focus group discussion where they commented on emerging categories as well as adding personal insight to ones they held in common. Peer examination provided “an external check of the research process” (Creswell, 2007, p. 208) and allowed the researcher “to examine the process and product of the account, assessing their accuracy” (Creswell, p. 209).
4. Role of the researcher – being familiar with teacher preparation and the hiring process, the researcher was interested in understanding the principals’ point of view. This required the researcher to be sensitive in the data collecting process, actively listen to the participants, and accurately record the principals’ perceptions to avoid personal bias (Merriam, 1998; Creswell, 2007).

Qualitative research seeks to “describe and explain the world as those in the world experience it” (Merriam, 1998, p. 205). The validity of this study rests on the following questions: “Do the findings of this study make sense? Are they credible to the people we study and to our readers? Do we have an authentic portrait of what we were looking at?” (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 278).

External Validity

With regard to external validity, the researcher's purpose was to understand what these particular principals are doing rather than what is generally true of many principals. How these principals differ from others or what they all have in common that makes them different from others was not of primary importance. What was important was discovering what they believed worked with regard to retaining teachers and stemming the flood of educators leaving the field. This discovery may lead to descriptive behavior that the reader can compare to his/her situation to improve teacher retention. External validity was strengthened in three ways:

1. Purposeful sampling (Miles & Huberman, 1994)
2. Preservation of verbatim "narrative sequences" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 279)
3. External audits of the "process and product of the account, assessing their accuracy" (Creswell, 1007, p. 209)

First, great care was taken to choose as diverse a sample population as possible with regard to school level, gender, ethnicity, and school location in addition to the primary study selection criteria. By selecting principals of both genders and varying ethnicities from school locations and K-12 school levels throughout the county, the researcher insured diversity in the study participants. Second, interviews and focus group discussion was audio-taped, transcribed, and member-checked to ensure the accuracy of the data collected and verbatim narrative selections. Third, external audits were performed through code checking, peer review of transcribed data ensuring accuracy, and consensual validation from the focus group discussion. "Consensual validation sought the

opinion of others, and Eisner referred to ‘an agreement among competent others that the description, interpretation, and evaluation and thematic of an educational situation are right’ (p.112)” (As cited in Creswell, 2007, p. 204).

Utilizing a single case study of the phenomenon of principal practice as it related to teacher retention, the researcher provided “enough description so that the readers will be able to determine how closely their situations match the research situation” (Merriam, 1998, p. 211). By describing how the principals in this study describe the practices that are perceived to be important in teacher retention and the role they play in this complex issue, readers will be able to determine what can be applied to their own situation.

Reliability

The researcher sought to describe practices the participants utilized that were perceived to influence teacher retention. The participants were all principals working at schools that have enjoyed high teacher retention rates. Since the participants were selected according to the same criteria, the reliability of this study may rest on the identification of common practices between and among each case study. However, “simply because a number of people have experienced the same phenomenon does not make the observations more reliable” (Merriam, 1998, p. 206). The reliability was increased by the consistency of the results that were obtained from all sources of data collection. Data were collected through personal interviews where the principals responded open ended research questions which allowed them to share their views, perspectives and personal stories. Data were collected through researcher observation at the school site. Data were collected from public documents provided by the study participants and county and state records. Data were collected from focus group

discussion of study participants. “Triangulation strengthens reliability as well as internal validity” (Merriam, p. 207).

Another way to improve reliability is through the use of a code-checker (Creswell, 2007). A colleague experienced in teacher education and educational leadership agreed to act as a code-checker. In order to achieve agreement on codes and practices, she read through sample transcripts to label the principals’ practices believed to retain teachers. We met to examine the codes and transcript segments that were coded in order to come to an agreement on the list and description of the codes and emerging categories.

Additionally, the perceived reality of the principals was compared to the retention rates found in public documents, principal-rated essential practices, and focus group discussions. Analysis of what was observed, recorded, and substantiated by document analysis contributed to the reliability of the findings. The consistency of results obtained among the participants and the various data collection sources also increased the reliability of this study.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher is familiar with the teacher preparation process, teacher recruitment, and teacher retention issues as a university professor and supervisor of clinical education. My role consisted of capturing data through personal interviews, observation, document analysis, field notes, and focus group discussion. My main function was to “explicate the ways people in particular settings come to understand, account for, take action, and otherwise manage their day-to-day situations” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 7). As the researcher in this study, I identified a consensus

description of principal practices that the principals perceived to be most important in supporting teacher retention.

Being familiar with the teacher preparation and the hiring process, the researcher was interested in ways to prepare pre-service teachers for the challenges they would encounter when applying for and accepting a teaching position. Understanding the problems of teacher retention from the principal's point of view may suggest additional pre-service professional development that will prepare new teacher candidates for the realities of teaching. Every attempt was made to establish a comfortable rapport before beginning the interview. The researcher was sensitive to data obtained through the personal interview process and respected the ambiguity and open-endedness of qualitative inquiry (Merriam, 1998). Being sensitive in the data collecting phase required the interviewer to actively listen to the participants, to know when to just listen or to probe deeper into the participant's meaning.

The researcher realizes there are many factors that influence a teacher's decision to remain in the field. To avoid personal bias, data collected from study participants were recorded and transcribed verbatim, given to participants to ensure accuracy, peer reviewed, and compared to research found in the literature, document analysis, field notes and focus group discussion. To further ensure that the researcher's personal bias was minimized, frequency counts taken from principal rating lists were compared to individual interviews and focus group discussion. The triangulation and analysis of the data collected further lessened the effects of personal bias.

Ethics

A utilitarian ethical viewpoint was taken for this study with regards to confidentiality, informed consent, and avoidance of harm (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Safeguards of participant confidentiality included asking each participant to agree to a pseudonym, obtaining consent before beginning and tape recording the interview, and assuring the privacy and protection of each participant and informing the participant that no individually identifiable information will be reported in the research results.

Participants' confidentiality was protected by each participant agreeing to use a pseudonym. Each interview was coded with a pseudonym so that the researcher could access interviews, field notes, documents, and focus group discussion notes when needed during data analysis. The identifiable information gathered was assigned the pseudonym and all information was held confidential by the researchers. All data and results were referenced by pseudonyms without the use of names or other personally identifiable information. No identifiable information - individuals, schools, or sites - will be identified in the research report or in any other publication. Participants were informed that they may choose not to comment on or answer any question that makes them feel uncomfortable. They were informed that they may also choose to withdraw from the study at any point without any penalty of any type.

The privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity was further protected by keeping all data and results in a secure location and locked file cabinet by the principal researchers and only the researchers working on this study saw the research data. All tapes, transcripts and notes will be destroyed within one year of completion of the study. "The best a researcher can do is to be conscious of the ethical issues that pervaded the research

process and to examine his or her own philosophical orientation vis-à-vis these issues” (Merriam, 1998, p. 219).

Data Analysis

Individual Interview

The interviews were audio-taped, transcribed, and a copy of the transcript was provided to each participant to review. Member checking was employed to ensure the accuracy and essence of data obtained. After the interview was transcribed and checked, the data was reviewed to identify practices employed by the principal. The process began with the researcher reading each interview transcript, making notes in the margins, and identifying quotes that described some practice or perspective held by the principal that pertained to teacher retention. The researcher began by identifying a stated principal practice and coding the passage with a descriptive code.

Coding

Descriptive coding was utilized to reduce the data into smaller analytic units or categories. Descriptive codes are used when “attributing a class of phenomena to a segment of text” (Miles & Huberman, 1998, p. 57). Coding was used to organize the identified narratives of the data collected. “Coding is nothing more than assigning some sort of short-hand designation to various aspects of your data so that you can easily retrieve specific pieces of data” (Merriam, 1998, p. 164). A start list of codes was developed after reading four interview transcriptions. “Codes are efficient data-labeling and data-retrieval devices. They empower and speed up analysis” (Miles & Huberman, p. 65).

Constant comparison of identified narratives led to tentative categories. The researcher was looking for common threads that tied the data together. Narratives were selected from the interviews to illustrate the most dominant categories and findings. “Qualitative research depends heavily on ongoing analysis, and coding is a good device for supporting that analysis.” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 66) Sample transcripts were also read by a code checker. This reviewer also identified stated principal practices and coded those passages with a descriptive code.

After four interviews, the researcher started to develop a list of possible descriptive codes. A preliminary list of 24 codes was distilled from the initial interviews. Table 4 illustrates the first coding method used to understand the categories and patterns that were emerging from the interviews as the participants described their school environment and principal practices and strategies.

The researcher and code checker met to examine the coded segments in order to come to agreement on identified codes and emerging categories. Other codes emerged during data collection and codes changed as field work continued. Categories were coded, compared, and further analyzed. Coding and recoding ceased when categories were saturated.

The remaining transcripts were transcribed and coded. Practices were coded, compared, and further analyzed by the researcher and a code checker. This process served to test the clarity and reliability of these codes. The code checker created an initial code list illustrated in Table 5.

Table 4

Initial Code List of Practices Believed to Influence Teacher Retention Surfacing After

Four Interviews (N = 24)

Code description	
ACC	Makes accommodations with time, resources
COL	Provides continuity of leadership
COLLAB	Collaborates with staff and other professionals
COM	Communicates frequently, listens
FAC	Cares for facilities
F & E	Is fair and equitable, knows teacher contract, uses common sense
HE	Has high expectations
KS	Knows staff
ODP	Has open door policy
OOPC	Recognizes things out of principal control
PAS	Exhibits passion, enthusiasm
PD	Offers professional development
PER	Has personality, humor
RF	Hires right fit
RM	Is role model, life-long learner, self-directed learner, networks with other professionals
SC	Promotes school culture, happy place, what's best for kids, security, builds relationships
SDM	Shares decision making
SOB	Promotes sense of belonging, family, parental relationships
SUP	Is supportive, mentors, provides induction programs
TD	Makes tough decisions
TR	Builds trust
VAL	Values and respects teachers, recognizes teacher talents and contributions
V	Is highly visible
VIS	Has vision, sees global picture

Table 5

Code Checker Initial List

Code number	Description
1.	Is fair
2.	Encourages buy-in
3.	Collaborates
4.	Represents continuity
5.	Promotes goals for the school
6.	Helps staff work through conflicts
7.	Hires right person
8.	Allows job sharing
9.	Provides mentor
10.	Has personal qualities, humor/enthusiasm
11.	Promotes professional development
12.	Develops relationships
13.	Provides resources
14.	Seeks right fit for faculty
15.	Influenced by school population
16.	Promotes sense of belonging
17.	Supports faculty
18.	Knows teacher contract
19.	Is trustworthy

A colleague with a terminal graduate degree, experience in educational leadership, and more than 20 years of experience in teacher education agreed to serve as a code checker and to test the reliability of these codes. A sample of three transcripts from one elementary principal, one middle school principal and one high school principal were read and coded. The researcher and the code checker discussed the purpose of the study so that the code checker would follow a similar process of identifying participant quotes that were believed to influence teacher retention. Descriptive coding was used to reduce the data into more manageable units; codes were assigned to practices and emerging categories.

The researcher and code checker discussed each code list at length. Although the coding system differed between the researcher and code checker, the researcher discovered that most of the practices identified in the interview were coded and categorized similarly by the researcher and code checker. After discussion on the differences, there was agreement on the definition, application, and frequency of the codes. In general we agreed that some of the codes overlapped and could be combined. We also reread each of the sample transcripts to come to an agreement on the definition of the codes as well as to come to a consensus on a final code list.

The resulting list of 15 codes, represented in chapter four was agreed upon along with a description of the practices that were associated with each code. The definition of these codes came from the descriptions generated by the participants.

Individual Principal Rating of List of Principal Practices

The principals rated practices collected from the literature on teacher retention as “essential” to “not important.” This list of practices deemed “essential” by each of the principals was generated in order to compare the practices identified in the interview (reality) to those rated on the list (ideally). The rating of the list was done to validate the interview findings. This activity provided another source of data triangulation which strengthens internal validity. The stated practices distilled from the interviews were then compared to the essential practices rated by the principals in order to produce a more compact list that were reviewed by the focus group.

Focus Group

The interviewed principals were asked to participate in an hour long focus group discussion. The purpose of this focus group was to identify common among the principals

that arose from the individual interviews. “Focus groups are advantageous when the interaction among interviewees will likely yield the best information, when interviewees are similar and cooperative with each other, and when time to collect information is limited” (Creswell, 2007, p. 133).

They were asked to identify the most important practice believed to be essential in retaining teachers. As each practice was identified, the researcher listed it on chart paper. This allowed for a rich discussion of common practices. It also provided an opportunity to further identify any practice not previously mentioned. Any additional practices, if noted, would be added to the tentative categories. The discussion was transcribed and analyzed to reveal common practices among the principals believed to have a positive influence on teacher retention at their schools. Additional narrative quotes were selected to illustrate the most dominant categories and findings.

Focus Group Ranking of Principal Practices

At the end of the focus group discussion, participants were asked to individually rate the 10 most important practices generated from the interviews. This activity provided an opportunity for the group members to discuss the importance they placed on the practices stated as they related to retaining their faculty. Putting the self-assessment data in rank order allowed the researcher to identify essential practices the group believed to have the most influence on teacher retention. Each rank ordered list was then compared to the individual’s interview.

Chapter Summary

This study was designed to explore principal practices supportive of teacher retention from the perspective of the principal and what is perceived to be influential in

retaining faculty. A purposeful sample of principals at schools with a record of high teacher retention was identified from public records. Individual interviews were conducted to identify principal practices believed to influence teachers' decisions to remain teaching at their schools. The case study approach was employed to gain further understanding of the role that principals' play in teacher retention. The principals shared their perceptions, experiences, strategies, and stories that have helped shape their school culture and high teacher retention rates.

Data were collected through interviews, observations, document analysis, and focus group discussion. Data were collected, transcribed, and checked by participants at several points in the study. Data were coded and checked by a code checker. The limitations, delimitations, and possible biases of the researcher are noted. Although the purposeful sample size was small, the triangulation of data supports the reliability and validity of the findings. Chapter 4 will present the results of this research.

CHAPTER 4 - FINDINGS

The purpose of this case study was to examine principals' perceptions of practices that influence high faculty retention in their schools, compare their perceptions to teacher retention literature, and identify a consensus description of practices perceived to be most important in supporting teacher retention. This chapter contains a description of the findings of this investigation.

Results Emerging from Individual Interviews

Nine principals were interviewed to gather data on teacher retention strategies and the role that principals play in the teacher retention issue. The principals were asked to describe the most importance practices they engaged in perceived to influence high teacher retention at their schools. After each interview was transcribed, the researcher read and reread each transcript, identifying narratives and emerging categories that described actions taken by the principal that he or she perceived to influence teacher retention. As the interviews were transcribed, a copy of the interview was given to each participant to review. Member checking was employed to ensure the accuracy and essence of the data obtained.

Major Codes That Emerged From the Interview Data

After four interviews, a preliminary list of codes was distilled from the initial interviews as the principals described their practices. Three sample transcripts were given to a code checker to code descriptive principal practices: one from an elementary school,

one from a middle school, and one from a high school. The researcher and code checker met to read and reread the sample transcripts; discuss each code at length to test the clarity, validity, and reliability of the assigned codes, and agree upon a description of the practices that were associated with each code. The definitions of these codes came from the descriptions generated by the participants. The resulting list of 15 codes is represented in Table 6.

Representing continuity of leadership (COL) refers to the principals' experience and longevity at the school site. It further represents a stable administration and consistent leadership. *Enabling collaboration* (COLLAB) refers to those practices that encourage teamwork among the faculty and staff. The leadership facilitates common plan time and creates positive teaching teams that allow teachers to work together with a common sense of purpose. *Communicating* (COM) refers to the practice of two-way communication where active listening leads to clear understanding and constructive feedback. It also encompasses communicating high expectations and standards of behavior, working conditions, and physical environment. *Exercising fairness* (F & E) refers to those common sense practices that build trust. The principal knows the teacher contract and treats all staff members fairly and equitably. *Providing meaningful professional development* (PD) refers to those practices that provide beneficial learning opportunities that meet the needs of the teachers, school, and community. *Demonstrating positive personal practices and characteristics* (PER) refers to those principal practices that exhibit a passion for the job through enthusiastic role modeling. The principal models life-long learning, self-directed learning, and motivates others to do the same. The principal displays personal characteristics of honesty, openness, sense of humor, and

the ability to make tough decisions. *Maintaining facilities* (FAC) refers to those practices that provide and maintain good-quality physical environment. *Seeking the right fit* (RF) refers to those practices the principal uses in his role to be actively involved in the hiring process in order to hire the right person for the right position. The principal is able to hire teachers in a timely fashion as well as to release unfit faculty. *Building a positive school culture* (SC) refers to the practices that principals utilize to create a safe, secure, and caring environment that supports the best interests of the students, faculty, and staff. He or she nurtures a school culture that fosters positive relationships, facilitates manageable teacher schedules, and provides ample non-instructional time that makes accommodations for the teachers' needs, grade level, and necessary resources to be successful. They are those leadership qualities that cultivate and portray the school as a happy place to teach. *Fostering shared decision-making* (SDM) refers to those practices that encourage teachers to engage in goal-setting and decision making. *Building a sense of belonging* (SOB) refers to fostering positive relationships; the principal knows his or her staff and treats them as a family in the learning community. *Supporting teachers* (SUP) refers to the practices that provide mentors, induction programs, classroom visitations and peer coaching to new faculty members. This practice fosters cooperation and collaboration among the faculty. *Valuing teachers* (VAL) refers to those practices that validate respect for teachers and their work. It recognizes teacher's accomplishments and demonstrates an appreciation of the teachers' time and talents. *Being visible* (V) describes principals who are seen around the campus often and are accessible to the school community. It is where the principal's door is open to teachers and parents as opposed to where the door is open but do not allow easy access to the principal. *Seeing*

the big picture (VIS) refers to the principal being seen as a visionary, as someone with a grasp of the school mission and goal.

Table 6

Final Code List

Code	Practices	Description
COL	Continuity of leadership	Represents stable administration, experience and longevity
COLLAB	Enabling collaboration	Facilitates common plan time, balances teams, encourages team work
COM	Communication	Practices two-way communication, listens, provides feedback, communicates clearly communicates high expectations and standards, seeks to understand
FAC	Maintaining facilities	Provides and maintains good working conditions (physical environment)
F & E	Fairness and equity	Builds trust, knows teacher contract, uses common sense, treats all equitably
PD	Professional development	Supports a beneficial learning community, provides PD according to teacher and school needs
PER	Positive Personal Characteristics	Has sense of humor, is open, honest, passionate, enthusiastic, motivating, a role model, makes tough decisions, pursues life-long learning, models self-directed learning
RF	Right fit	Is highly involved in hiring process, interviews in a timely fashion, releases low-performing personnel, places teachers in-field, networks with other professionals to find right personnel fit
SC	School culture	Promotes positive, safe, and secure school culture, upholds caring environment, has best interest of kids, faculty and staff in mind, promotes positive relationships, facilitates manageable schedules, makes accommodations for teachers' grade level, and provides resources for success

Table 6 (continued) Final Code List

Code	Practices	Description
SDM	Shared decision-making	Encourages teachers to actively engage in decision-making process, involves teachers in goal setting
SOB	Sense of belonging	Knows staff, creates family atmosphere, fosters positive relationships
SUP	Supportive	Assigns mentors, provides induction programs, visits classrooms, encourages peer coaching, works cooperatively with faculty and staff
VAL	Values teachers	Recognizes faculty achievements, demonstrates respect for teachers, appreciates teachers' time and talents
V	Visibility	Practices open door policy, meets at teacher convenience, is available and visible on campus
VIS	Visionary	Sees global picture, is visionary.

Data Analysis

The evidence collected in this study suggests that principals play an important role in teacher retention. All nine of the study participants perceived that the teachers at their schools were influenced positively or negatively by the principals' leadership. Across the nine varied demographic school populations, the principals echoed similar practices that were perceived to be effective in maintaining a stable teaching faculty. The majority of principals highlighted the importance of hiring the right person, establishing a positive school culture, fostering a sense of belonging, valuing the faculty, communicating effectively, and supporting faculty and staff. The data was corroborated in several data collection methods.

Practices Identified in the Individual Interviews

In the first analysis of the interview data, the following practices were identified from the transcripts of the principals' narratives. The practices are discussed by the frequency they appeared in the interviews.

School Culture

The importance of promoting a positive, safe, and secure school culture was evidenced in all principal interviews. By creating an atmosphere where teachers felt that their personal and professional needs were being met, the principals were able to set teachers up for success. One principal described his administrative role as providing his teachers with the setting, the tools, and the mechanisms so that when they come to school on Monday, even if he is never seen, they have everything they need to be successful in the classroom. However, being visible was also an important aspect of developing a comfortable school culture. Most of the nine principals interviewed made it a point to be highly visible to the students, teachers, and parents. Many of them talked about assisting with car or bus duty. They saw this visibility as an opportunity to develop relationships within the school community. A middle school principal described his routine as follows:

I'm out and about. I'm in the hallways between every class change. I'm in the cafeteria every time there are lunches going on. I will be in the teachers' dining area most every day, every lunch period at least part of the time. I'll be in the faculty lounge at lunch time, before school, after school. I'm out and about at every class change. I'm out in the hall talking to teachers. I sit on the golf cart out front when teachers are coming in, kind of watching students, but I'm saying good morning to my teachers. (Principal #1)

Many of principals remarked that they tried to create a caring and safe environment for students, faculty, staff, and community. One principal stated that maintaining school facilities and the appearance of the campus made a difference in developing a positive school culture. “I want teachers to enjoy coming to work. I believe that if you like where you work, the way it looks, you’re going to like coming to work” (Principal #1). Another principal said it was the friendly atmosphere that made everyone who visited the campus feel comfortable. Almost all the principals described their schools as happy places. But Principal #2 summed it up very descriptively:

My whole campus is like that. When people come on campus they say, “You know, the minute we come here, you can feel the climate. There is a comfortable climate. This is a happy place.” They call this the happy place. The girls in the office - they are delightful, greeting people, greeting teachers and helping them so everybody has that feeling of comfortableness. So teachers can come in here and let their hair down and be silly and crazy and goofy because I’m the same way and I think that is real important. You know we are a family. A lot of us have been together over 20 years. I never have anyone come to me and say I want to transfer to another school because I’m not happy here. They just don’t do it. We have a special bond. We have created our own culture here. And that’s important.

Sense of Belonging

By creating a clean and functional workplace, the basic needs of safety and security were being met; however, these principals realized that more action was necessary in order to create a caring environment where the teachers experienced a sense

of belonging. In addition to providing teachers with the professional tools necessary for a good working environment, all nine principals highlighted the importance of meeting both the personal and professional needs of their teachers. They understood that their teachers needed to know that they are cared about as individuals. All nine of these principals referred to their teachers as part of their family - their school family. One principal said, “The good news is we’re just like a family. The bad news is we’re just like a family” (Principal #7). He commented that his teachers know that they are not just people that work with him but that they are people that he truly cares about. And he knows they truly care about him as well. He knows that relationships matter when dealing with his faculty and staff:

The essence of the organization is not the bricks and mortar. The essence of the organization is the people. And again everybody that comes to work here comes here knowing that they have ownership and that their opinions matter ... And I think that they appreciate that. You have to come to work feeling that you have ownership and that your opinion matters. And if you’re not happy about something, you know you can vent your spleen and you’re not going to wind up on permanent bus duty in the rain. (Principal # 7)

The general atmosphere of the school, the students, the faculty, the support staff, all of that is critical for people to be happy. Happy teachers are part of a snowball effect that creates a positive school culture where teacher retention is high.

The more experience you have, the better teachers I have. The better teachers I have, the more the kids like being here. The more the kids like being here, the

better the overall atmosphere. The better the atmosphere, the more the teachers want to be here. (Principal # 3).

The total school culture and sense of belonging is further enhanced by extending the familial relationship beyond the faculty to the parents.

I think there is a great responsibility on the part of the principal to sometimes in formal ways and many times in informal ways to encourage the parents as to how they can foster positive relationships with their teacher. And what that brings to bear in terms of positive outcomes for everyone in the atmosphere. The parents are told by me when they come to kindergarten orientation that their children will be treated as if they were our own. That's my number one goal with the teachers. That the children, that the decisions we make for them and the ways in which we treat them, we will treat them as if they were our own. And that they can feel comfortable and trust within that. And at the same time, we want you to treat us as you would like us to treat you. And that has worked very, very, very, well.

(Principal #4)

Communication

Communication was another common practice described as being important to teacher retention. All of them openly and freely shared their experience and strategies. All of them conveyed that communication is a valuable key when used properly to promote a positive school culture and sense of belonging. All of the principals noted that frequent and open communication is essential. All of them stated they have a true open door policy. All of them indicated that a teacher's schedule is not flexible and that time must be made available when the need arises.

And people who are not in education don't understand that. I understand that. And that is another reason why I open the door. They have to be able to come in here and tell me that. There are some teachers who I don't see on this campus unless I walk into their classrooms because they're so wrapped up in their own jobs. They're so busy. So unless they make an effort to come and see me or I make an effort to come and see them, I'm not going to see them. So it's important that they know that they can come in here and they can talk to me. (Principal #1)

These principals reported that teachers are very busy people who may have 15 minutes to discuss something that may be weighing heavily on their minds. And if left to fester, the problem may just compound their frustration and make problems worse. Most of the principals view their role first as a listener. Principal #1 said whenever a teacher has a question, he puts down whatever he is doing and asks, "How can I help you? How can I assist you in what it is that you want?" Being available and willing to engage at any time and about any topic allowed their teachers to feel comfortable about sharing their concerns with their principal.

I see my job as principal as a support role. It is no different than any other support position in the school. My job is to make their life easier - giving them advice, providing them with opportunities, or just sometimes listening. (Principal #9)

Open, honest, and transparent communication is appreciated by all stakeholders.

Principal # 7 sums it up this way:

It's all about making sure that everybody is communicating well. Everybody knows what's going on. You know that's today the essence of every successful

organization. So again we throw the doors open not only to my teachers but we throw the doors open to our parents.

Principal #7 further states:

I don't do a bit of paperwork during the day. I'm all about people during the day.

My teachers and my parents know they don't need an appointment to see me.

They just walk in. Especially the parents, they love that.

He keeps the information loop open by communicating with his people during the day. Figure 1 depicts Principal #7's description of how he communicates with his school community.

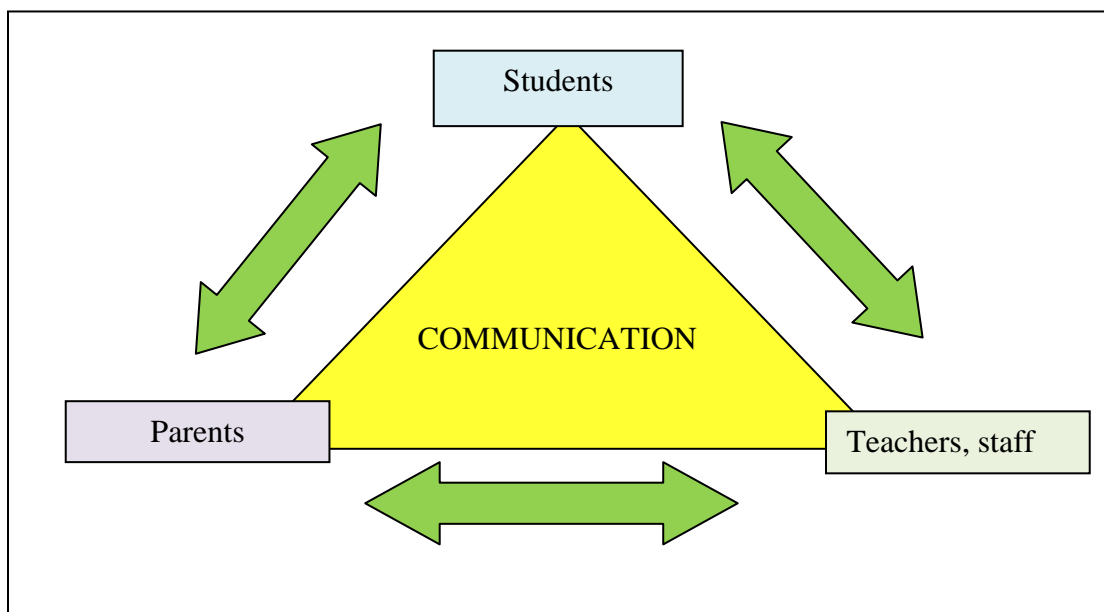


Figure 1. Communication loop as described by Principal # 7

Support

All of the principals believe that a high degree of support is essential in retaining teachers. "I think what is important for the teacher in order to retain them is that they have a feeling of support, a feeling of trust, and a feeling of cooperation" (Principal #4).

These comments were aligned with recommendations and findings from the literature. Establishing induction and mentoring programs is important to the continued success of any novice teacher (Inman & Marlow, 2004). Schools with strong professional communities are more effective in creating a strong learning environment for the teachers as well for the students (Nowocien, 2005). Educator support programs are as good as the principal wants to make them. All nine principals have established mentoring programs in place that they feel work well. They consider it their responsibility to let their teachers know that they are being supported in very valuable work. Their teachers are working in schools where they are supported and the job situation works for them. As one principal said, “We work real hard to make sure that they get paired up with a mentor who understands” (Principal # 1). These principals indicated that they knew their staff well enough that they were able to match new teacher’s needs to veteran teacher’s strengths based on the personalities and skills of the current faculty. The principals feel it is important for teachers to be able to have someone to go to for help. The mentoring teacher prepares the new teacher for the positive and negative aspects of the job. In that way, the new teacher learns how to cope with some of the negatives. Some teachers could not survive without that kind of support. “Providing survival skills is imperative to teacher retention” (Principal # 8). Providing coaching and personal support helps new teachers feel they are capable and that success is possible. At one school, the peer teacher or coach observes the new teacher. They have a conversation about the observation after the lesson. They discuss practices to continue and practices to decrease. The coach may even model a lesson presentation to demonstrate recommended strategies. And the cycle

continues. According to Principal # 8, this type of mentoring strengthens teacher capacity and improves teacher satisfaction.

It is absolutely a welcome support to know that I have a team of five or six people who are going to help them [new teachers] get through this first year. So for us, I think that's the strength. It's not me. But it is the way our school is organized and the way we provide that support to new teachers coming in, from the first week of school, all the way through their first year. But the minute we pull that support away from them, they're going. A teacher has to believe that the goals they set are achievable. Otherwise you can't continue to work in an environment where you know success is not possible. You're going to leave. (Principal #8)

New teachers are very moldable and very receptive to criticism. But they need protection from too much criticism. Too much negativism can drag a teacher down and Principal #9 protects his teachers from that: "You want them to feel like you're coming in there because first of all, you're the principal. You should be involved in the school. So, you know, going in a supportive role." The principals believed that support without criticism is powerful. Principal #7 stops by new teachers' classrooms three or four times a week the first half of the year simply to engage. He makes it clear that he's there just to make sure they are comfortable and have everything that they need. He views the teachers as the heart of the school. "The reality is principals are nothing more than gophers. You know, problem solvers. You know, you need paper. You need a discipline situation handled."

The team approach to support has proved to be effective at one school. This principal describes his approach as a coach would when leading a winning team. Novice teachers are teamed with a mentor either within their curriculum area or grade level.

We do another thing that I think is valuable with every new teacher to our school. We put up a team, a mentor, a buddy, or a staff member they can lean on...the department head and department people can help them [with] curriculum. But we are teamed at the sixth, seventh, or eighth grade and it is usually somebody on their team. It might be somebody that teaches the same subject and grade level as them and that maybe they have rooms that are right across the hall. But we team teachers to help give them support to feel comfortable. (Principal #3)

Support is provided in a number of ways, not always in the form of curriculum support. One principal commented that he supports his teachers 100% when it comes to discipline or parental intervention.

I will support the teacher to the parent as much as I can. I have to care about the kids enough that I will handle the teacher that's out of line. But I have to give them enough support that they will understand that I will always support them in what's going on. So it's a trust issue as well. (Principal #3)\

Professional Development

Schools are institutions of learning, and school districts routinely offer professional development to faculty and staff. Principals and teachers understand the importance of life-long learning. Teachers are in a profession in which it is advantageous to continually improve their skill set for the betterment of the children and school. One principal didn't believe in forcing the teachers to attend professional development

workshops. “If they are there because I want them to be there, it isn’t going to stick” (Principal # 2). So by going to training, modeling what she had learned, offering her reading and training materials, and enthusiastically sharing new teaching and learning strategies, she hoped that her teachers would see that training is a good thing and would willingly participate in the professional development opportunities offered to them. This practice was successful because when a new district professional development initiative was offered she said, “Everybody’s signing up like crazy....so it’s not just me modeling, it’s staff modeling how exciting their [professional development] experiences are.”

The principals’ comments indicated their belief that support is for every teacher, not just the novice. Mentoring is another practice utilized by all nine of the principals interviewed. These principals reported that veteran teachers need support at times too. One principal mentioned that he facilitated professional development for a 15 year veteran who suddenly wanted to try a new piece of technology. In this case, support meant getting the veteran teacher trained and providing the additional technical assistance needed. It became a learning process where the principal and the teacher worked together to successfully implement the new technique in the classroom.

So I brought them along slowly. The next time we got together, they typically worked in a small group preparing a lesson plan to implement that technique in their classroom. And then the next week we got together again. They debriefed on how well or how badly it went when they implemented it in their classroom. We just kept doing that pretty much like on a three week cycle. Introduce something. Give them time as a group to work on it with administrators and peer teachers available to help out. And then have them implement it in the classroom. Come

back and share their experiences. That was really pretty well-received even by veteran teachers. (Principal # 5)

Right Fit

The principals definitely saw hiring as a key component in the teacher retention issue. Increased attention to accountability and student achievement has put more emphasis on the quality of teachers being hired. Strategies are needed to retain new hires and keep current faculty (Watlington et al., 2004). They noted that an information-rich hiring process facilitates good matches between the teacher candidate and the hiring principal. Principal #9 stated that hiring the right person for the right job seemed like good common sense. The participants shared their ideas on what practices they use to hire and retain the right person. All of the principals interviewed were intricately involved in the hiring process. All nine principals felt that they knew their school needs and hired teachers that are best suited to their school culture, current faculty, curriculum needs, and over-all fit. The manner in which they went about this process differed from school to school. Many of the principals led committees made up of faculty with whom the new teacher would work. Principal #1 “will convene usually a committee depending on what their curricular area is ... we’ll just sit and informally interview the teacher to make sure they’re a good fit.” Even when using the committee strategy, Principal #2 said that she then invites the candidate in for a demonstration lesson.

Yeah, because I’ve made the mistake of hiring someone off an interview. If you have any bit of personality, then you can just excel at your interview, but you may really stink in the classroom. And that is the problem with the interview process. And I just started thinking about that and I said we’re going to audition teachers.

Usually what we do is when we find the one we like, and then I'll take it one more step further and I said, could you come back to us. We want to offer you the position. Could you come back to us and teach a class and we'll invite teachers to come watch. Would that be OK?

As intimidating as that may sound, using this strategy Principal #2 felt this would lessened the chance of hiring someone who may not meet the needs of the vacant position nor be able to handle the job once hired, thus contributing to teacher attrition.

Some principals screened for teachers whose personality and skill set best fit the school culture. "They could be the greatest thing since sliced bread. But if they haven't got a personality that I think is going to blend with the other personalities on their team, then it isn't going to work," commented Principal # 7. When hiring new faculty, another principal believed it is the teacher's personality that best suits the school culture that matters.

It's just finding the right person with the right personality that fits in...teachers are like actors or salesmen. They are either performing for their students and 80% of their teaching skill is attributed to their personality or they are selling a concept with skill and motivation. (Principal # 3)

The ideal teacher candidate for that principal is to be effective at both. "I surround myself with good people. My job gets easier." This principal believes that the more he is surrounded by the right fit, the lower the desire to leave the field and the higher his retention rate is. "Everything is easier. I retain them." Conversely, choosing a candidate solely on personality can lead to a poor choice by hiring a person that lacks the necessary skill to teach. Principal #3 had a bad experience this year. He hired an excessed teacher

who had been given a good evaluation from her prior principal. He described her as a kind, hardworking person who cared for the students but just didn't have the skill set to teach middle school math. She lacked the "with-it-ness," and the students took advantage of her ineptness. The principal felt that this teacher was better equipped to work with small groups of special needs students. This principal had to make a tough decision. He had to release her to find the right position for her teaching style and was left to locate the right person to fill his vacant position.

In another instance, Principal #5 was approached by the district's Director of Personnel and was asked if he would consider hiring a teacher who had not received a satisfactory evaluation. The principal met with the teacher, listened to her story, and agreed to hire her on temporary basis. Temporary turned into permanent. The outcome was so positive that several years later she was offered a \$10,000 bonus to leave that school for another position and turned it down. Apparently both the school and teacher benefited from having found the right job for the right person - the right fit.

In this school district where the study took place, it is common practice for teachers to be hired and randomly placed at schools with vacancies. None of the principals interviewed preferred this type of placement. Because of some incidences where forced placements have been very unsuccessful, Principal #8 avoids this dilemma by talking to her peers as soon as she has a vacancy. She begins screening the excess list first by asking her colleagues about each teacher on the list. She ascertains the skill set of each one and personally interviews the ones that have the most potential for the right fit. "I don't wait for the district to place a teacher because I already decided who I want."

Hiring the right fit applies to staff as well as faculty. Principal # 3 is “constantly looking to fill those seats on the bus with the people that will make it work.” This principal felt that employing suitable school staff for the entire school is critical for people to be happy. When speaking of his front office staff, he said that they are his best line of defense.

They answer the phone. They deal with parents. They deal with kids. They deal with emergencies. They deal with the paramedics that have to go into my clinic on critical situations. They deal with visitors coming into the school that are going to talk to the principal. They handle the irate parent in the first contact. They shield the principal from phone calls that ought to be going to the assistant principal or guidance counselor. I mean they are just excellent at what they do.

One lady up there does the attendance. I never have to worry about the attendance being done. She contacts the parents. She’s tough when she needs to be. She’s calm when she needs to be. She speaks Spanish. She’s the interpreter when I need that. So I hired a guidance secretary that does all the filing and all the paperwork. She’s meticulous. Everything has been perfect. Surrounding yourself with good people helps retain those teachers.

One principal with 35 years of experience won’t abrogate any hiring decisions to a committee because he feels totally responsible for his faculty and staff. He says he knows what teacher characteristics he is looking for, not only to maintain high teacher retention rates, but also to stimulate successful academic school performance. He said he enjoys the in-depth interviewing process at his school site. He wants to clearly communicate his school needs to the prospective teacher candidate. He seeks to

determine the teacher's needs. He believes this process establishes a bond of loyalty by knowing what his expectations are before the teacher accepts the position. Principal # 4 "believes that retention of teachers is more about their trust, cooperation, loyalty, and job satisfaction."

Principal #9 said it succinctly:

Whatever negative they want to say about us, the one thing they'll have to put on our tombstone is we definitely hired good people....because many of the people she and I hired together turned out to be real champs.

Positive Personal Characteristics

Demonstrating positive personal characteristics was another practice that was perceived to influence teacher retention. Walking into each school site, this researcher was greeted with warmth and a welcome that could put anyone at ease. Each of the participants had pleasant personalities that made collecting data for this research study interesting and entertaining. Principal #1 said he used humor to put people at ease. The stresses of teaching can sometimes be overwhelming, but this principal tried to lighten the mood in the serious business of teaching by using humor in his faculty meetings. "I use a lot of humor. That's something that somebody once said, we ought to tape your faculty meetings. Sometimes they're almost like a stand-up comedy routine." Humor creates a happy atmosphere. The better the atmosphere, the more the teachers want to remain. Principal # 3 thinks "the thing I bring is a personality. I get along with everybody." By modeling a positive demeanor, Principal # 4 hoped that his teachers would do the same with the children under their charge.

I have a responsibility to say good morning to them. Say goodbye to them. I have a responsibility to smile at them. There's no reason to mistreat them. I have a responsibility for them to know they're being supported in very valuable work. That work is so valuable that when we leave home and the stresses of life and we walk into this school, we need to get lost within the six and one-half hours here - into the world of motivation, happiness, knowledge and communication. Because there was so much happiness radiated from the children and expectation of happiness to them that you just get caught up in that ... And so you can't put that in a salary. You can't put it in a fringe benefit. And that is what retains people in a school.

Establishing good rapport with faculty is another practice that is perceived to retain teachers. Principal #6's secretary came into the office during the interview. The principal asked her why she thought teachers stayed at the school. The secretary replied: She's a confidante ... that friend role, that's supportive ... very intuitive ... she'll know when I'm having a bad day ... she knows ... so it's more than just the administrative part of it ... she made a difference in my life and [the lives of] a lot of other people here.

Fairness and Equity

Another practice that all nine of the principals talked about was balancing a sense of humor with compassion, honesty, and fairness. Treating people fairly and honestly was a common practice repeated by all of the principals.

I think people probably expect some really research-based technique or some big long winded thing, but honestly, I think a lot of it is really common sense stuff.

Probably if I were to say it in just a sentence, it would be just the way I treat teachers. I treat them how I would want to be treated. . . . At least from what I hear from teachers as far as wanting to work with me and my desire to work with them, I think is truly the key. (Principal #9)

Teachers need to feel that they are being treated fairly and with respect. Principal # 2 stated that “one of the things is, I’m fair. I think I’m fair. I try to treat everybody the same. I’m not a person who has favorite teachers and I just try to treat everybody equitably.” She further discussed how important it is for the principal to know the teacher contract. “That’s real important because when you know the teacher contract real well, you are less apt to break the contract and do things that are going to upset teachers.” Inconsistency and inequitable treatment frustrates teachers and contributes to teacher dissatisfaction and teacher turnover.

When Principal # 6 was asked what her teachers would say about her that kept them wanting to stay at their school, this principal responded, “I think they would say that I’m compassionate, that I’m fair, that I don’t show favoritism . . . They’ll tell you that I am very consistent.”

As far as the retention of teachers [is concerned], consistency is important. The fairness is important. Sitting down talking with the teachers not about other teachers, but sit down and talk with each individual teacher about them - what they have to offer to the school. Find out what their strengths and weaknesses are. And you can learn a lot about a person by you sitting and talking with them a whole lot more than from other people coming in and telling you, ‘you know, well you know such and such. She doesn’t do this or she doesn’t do that.’ And there

may be reasons why she doesn't. But if you sit down and talk with that person yourself one-on-one, you learn a lot about them and then you would know what direction to go in making that teacher a better teacher and of giving that teacher more opportunities to do things that they've always wanted to do. (Principal # 6)

Shared Decision-Making

Nearly all of the principals interviewed encouraged shared decision-making and collaboration as routine practices. One principal does not assign any non-instructional duties before or after school to allow faculty to engage in collaborative team meetings. Another principal set up leadership teams that helps acclimate new teachers with school routines and procedures to ensure their future success. One principal always leaves room to negotiate so that the teachers feel they can be trusted to use their best professional judgment. This becomes a win-win situation for the teacher and principal. He stated that finding that happy medium in leadership style, collaboration, and shared decision-making helps retain teachers.

Some leadership styles are 'everything is my way,' and that may very well be part of why some teachers leave, especially young teachers who have other options after they finish their three years. If they are not comfortable with that leadership style, if they don't feel as though they have a sense of belonging, if they have no power, no say as to what happens to their future, why stay there when you can leave? There is that sense of the grass is greener on the other side. (Principal # 8)

Teaming teachers by grade level, personal characteristics, or skill sets has proved to be an effective means to encourage collaboration among faculty members. Principal #8 discussed the inherent value of collaboration:

I try to team teachers together based on their abilities. I would never put two really quiet teachers together. I would never put two negative teachers together. I try to bounce them off each other. And I do the same in their grade levels. I try and put a variety of personalities within a grade level. And I think that's one of the reasons why all the grade levels seem to work very well.

Shared decision-making was portrayed in a number of ways throughout the interview process. Some principals continually solicited teacher input as Principal #4 stated:

I think that problems are best resolved at the lowest level...the teachers appreciated the fact that I trust them enough that the problem is turned over to them to be resolved...and ask them what their solutions are...and that I am here to be a problem solver with them.

This principal's practice allowed this teacher to retain dignity and self-respect.

Building a collaborative faculty takes time and effort. One principal, who assumed his principalship after a very autocratic principal, sat in his office for the first three months waiting for teachers to come in and ask him for things. They never came. They were so accustomed to top down leadership that they had grown used to offering and receiving little input. Principal # 7 was the antithesis of that style of leadership. He said he "had some serious work to do here." So for the first year, he "observed, took notes, got to know people, got to know the routines and drills and [discovered] what works and what doesn't." He used this knowledge to establish collaborative practices that allowed his faculty to become part of the decision making process.

In the work place, change is a dirty, dirty word. But in my experience, there are two ways to institute change. There's his way which is the mandated. But unfortunately, that doesn't come with a lot of Velcro. So generally it doesn't stick. What you get is a lot of lip service. Everybody nods and everybody smiles and they go back and do whatever they want to do. Or you can have collaborative change where you bring all the stakeholders together and you say, "Hey look, I have an idea on something. What do you think? Let's talk about it." And so you sit down. And you talk about it. And you come up with consensus...it's amazing how much you can accomplish when no one cares who gets the credit. That's the essence of team play. (Principal #7)

Continuity of Leadership

It takes time and effort to build a high level of trust with people. Since all of the study participants had longevity at their school site, it was possible for them to develop this trait as well. Many of them related stories about how they took time during their first years to get to know their school and staff before initiating change.

I didn't think they were really trusting me until I was probably wrapping up my third year....Trust is really important because sometimes you've got to ask people to do things that they don't really want to do or that they really don't have to do. (Principal # 7)

Trust building doesn't have to be fancy or elaborate. Principal #9 used a common sense approach to establish trust among his staff. He treats them the way he would like to be treated. He speaks to them as he would like others to speak to him. "It's so amazing to me how much of what we do, not just principals, but teachers as well, is

really basic common sense.” To him, it all boiled down to common sense and respect. He respects what his teachers do. Another principal said he respects his teachers because this is personal business. “This is intimate business. We’re talking about lives here” (Principal #7). Trust is built through one’s actions. “It’s one thing to say something with your mouth. It’s another thing to feel it with your heart,” commented Principal # 8.

Positive role modeling has served Principal # 4 well in establishing a high level of trust and respect. One piece of advice this individual received upon becoming a new principal was to always set an example of the type of behavior desired.

The way you treat people matters significantly about how they feel about themselves and how they feel about their work. I have not given up my philosophy which I think makes for happy professionals and dedicated professionals, by extending trust and cooperation. (Principal #4)

Valuing Teachers

The principals were keenly aware that both novice and veteran teachers alike need to be validated. The principals at the study sites commented frequently how much they value each teacher personally and appreciate the work that their teachers do. Each one of them shared numerous examples where they recognized their teachers professionally as very dedicated staff and personally as very good people.

You’ve got to look for other ways to retain people. It’s essential how you treat them. And how much loyalty, respect and trust that you extend to them. And it isn’t just cheerleading all the time. Don’t take me wrong. You know I think some principals only get to the cheerleading part. And it isn’t just cheerleading. It is being genuine with the people, about how you feel about the importance of their

work. I once had a principal that all he did was give notes and candy bars to the staff and other different kinds of things. And that principal was no more effective on a school effectiveness questionnaire feedback than a principal who didn't do that. So therefore, it's not about that either. I think it's about how they feel about themselves and your school and being at work there. (Principal # 4)

It is difficult to separate the sense of belonging theme from the valuing theme.

If teachers feel ... they are an important part of something, they are more likely to stay. If they feel ... they and their work are valued, they are more likely to stay. If they feel ... their contribution to the school is valuable, they are more likely to stay. If they feel ... they are being listened to, they are more likely to stay. The principals demonstrated their unique opportunity to influence a teacher's self-worth and efficacy by the way they recognized a teacher's contributions to the school. It varied from small recognitions like a note in a teacher's plan book or via email or as constructive feedback in a positive manner. It was illustrated by making a difference in a person's life by taking that extra personal interest. Or it was by listening to their suggestions for change and valuing their opinions. Principal # 5 makes it a habit of listening to his teachers.

I certainly listen to suggestions and, you know, if things get suggested and it looks [as if] we can do it, we'll try it. I'm not a believer that there's one right way to do something. It doesn't have to be done my way. It's never been my way or the highway kind of thing. I listen to them. I treat them respectfully. I don't let others abuse them. So I think they appreciate that.

Recognition by one's peers can be very satisfying, so one principal highlights his

teachers' accomplishments in a very formal way by documenting their accolades on the district's summative teacher evaluation form. He says he puts more thought into these evaluations than anything else. He believes that this is the one certified place that documents a teacher's proficiency in the teaching field and gives teachers their much-deserved recognition in a permanent and measurable manner. Another principal recognizes her teachers' accomplishments at every faculty meeting. At first teachers were shy about receiving public recognition from Principal # 8:

When I first started that it was like, "Oh, please don't call my name, don't call my name." But now they get it. I'm going to recognize performance. The first year I made sure I recognized every single teacher at least one time....Now I open the floor up for some more good news to share. And guess what's happening? There are a lot of things that teachers here do, wonderful things for the children and the community. And they get awards that I don't know about. So when I open that up, now it's the teachers who share with one another.

Sometimes, personal recognition matters more than professional recognition to teachers. It is recognizing the teachers' personal needs that makes the difference. One principal realized that one of his teachers had great difficulty with scheduling transportation for her pre-school child. So that principal arranged for that teacher to arrive later in the morning to accommodate her personal need. In return, the teacher volunteered to take on a duty after school and before she had to pick up her child so that both the school's and teacher's needs were being met. This easy accommodation let this teacher know that her principal cared about her and her family situation. Principal # 7 preferred a personal

approach, “I prefer to really let people know right up front and personal ... how much I value them, how much I care about them. And it’s all about that.”

At other times, principals involve the entire school in the recognition process. One principal stated that he didn’t feel any more important than any other member of his faculty or staff because they were all there for the same purpose. And when it came time to recognize and distribute a bonus for earning an A on FCAT, everyone got a part of that bonus. Principal #6 said that everyone earned a bonus. “It’s about everybody because everyone reaps the benefits when we get an A.” According to Principal #7, his school has one of the best end-of-the-year recognition events where former teachers, custodians, bus drivers, faculty, and staff are all invited. “My message to them is the same. You are just as important a part of this child’s life while they’re here as I am. You need to know that we support you. And we know what an important job you have.” Principal # 8 felt that the need to feel valued was influenced by the passion felt for one’s job.

When they feel good about what they do, I think that makes them want to stay.

You are so immersed in that job. You take those children in your heart and in your mind, in your soul, in your book bag home with you at night. And that becomes your life. Unless you have a real reason to stay and you believe in the people who are with you everyday, being with [those people] is less valuable ... than leaving. But if there are some other benefits that make them want to stay there, they will ... If they don’t have that value anymore, they leave.

The interview process yielded a number of common practices among the participants. These practices represented real-life strategies employed by the principals that created a school culture ripe for high teacher retention. These experienced leaders

made it a practice to hire the right person, support and value each faculty and staff member, and communicate openly with fairness and concern for the well-being of the school and its stakeholders. They practiced two-way communication. They encouraged team work among the faculty and staff. They used common sense ideas to build trust. They provided meaningful professional development. They exhibited passion for their job through their enthusiastic role modeling. They were highly visible and accessible to their teachers and school community. They maintained good-quality working conditions. And teachers remained at their school sites.

Results of Rating of the Principal Practices List

At the end of the interview, the principals were asked to individually rate the practices gleaned from the literature as “essential” to “not important” to determine which ones they believe are most important in retaining teachers (Appendix D).

The data from the rating list suggests that hiring the right person is the most essential practice followed by supporting newly hired faculty members. Nine of the principals rated this practice as essential. Twenty-three practices were rated as essential or important to retaining teachers. Any practices from the rating list a principal believed to be neutral or unimportant were not included in Table 7. The principal practice list results were tallied to yield a list of 23 principal practice practices representing nine identified categories that were considered either essential or important by all participants

Table 7

Rating of the Principal Practices List

#	Principal Practice Descriptor	Code	Essential 4 pts.	Important 3 pts.	Total pts.
34.	Interviews at school level	RF	9	0	36
1.	Assigns mentors	SUP	8	1	35
31.	Personally hires	RF	7	2	34
14.	Knows staff	SOB	6	3	33
25.	Assesses and conferences	COM	6	3	33
41.	Provides non-instructional time	SC	6	3	33
2.	Visits classrooms	SUP	5	4	32
3.	Provides frequent feedback	COM	5	4	32
12.	Shares decision making	SDM	5	4	32
39.	Communicates high expectations	COM	5	4	32
7.	Forms appropriate assignments	RF	4	5	31
15.	Recognizes teachers	VAL	4	5	31
38.	Communicates mission	COM	4	5	31
16.	Encourages peer coaching	SUP	3	6	30
17.	Encourages leadership roles	SDM	3	6	30
22.	Supports teacher roles	SDM	3	6	30
37.	Is seen as visionary	VIS	3	6	30
40.	Establishes SDM processes	SDM	3	6	30
36.	Hires early	RF	2	7	29
28.	Minimizes instructional disruption	SC	2	7	29
20.	Offers PD regularly	PD	1	8	28
8.	Trains new teachers	SUP	0	9	27
29.	Provides resources for PD	PD	0	9	27

Comments from the interviews supported the results of the ratings of the retention practices recommended in the literature. Principal #2 never interviews by herself. She always interviews with a team of teachers – especially teachers that are going to be on the team for which the new teacher is being hired. Support is the next essential practice. “Attempting to support teachers in all functions of their job” (Principal # 3) creates a “support system where teachers know who to go to for assistance” (Principal # 5). “Principals must use what research tells them about developing teachers early in their careers” (Watkins, 2005, p. 83). Supporting them professionally and personally encourages that sense of belonging necessary to create a positive school culture and learning environment. By “setting their teachers up for success” (Principal # 9), they are more apt to build teacher efficacy and skill, which promotes that sense of belonging necessary in retaining a stable teaching faculty. Higher feelings of efficacy will lead to greater teacher retention (Brown & Wynn, 2007).

Watkins further states, “Without a strong learning community that supports new teachers, the principal faces attrition rates that jeopardize student achievement and curriculum continuity” (p. 83). Most of the principals (N = 8) stated communicating the teachers’ value to the school also enhanced their sense of belonging. Other comments like, “I value their opinions” and “I respect my teachers” (Principal # 6) contributed to the sense of belonging felt by their faculty. The principals interviewed celebrated their teachers’ accomplishments whenever possible. Principal #6 said, “it’s just those little things that really make the difference. They’re little, but in their outlook, they’re big.” Haar (2007, p. 34) states that “principals can play a key role in recruiting teachers,

celebrating teachers' accomplishments, supporting teacher professional development and providing opportunities for teachers to share their expertise.”

In addition to the rating of principal practices, the principals were asked to make comments in an open-ended section to gain additional insight. The comments aligned similarly to the list results. Supporting new faculty was listed most often as one of the three most important practices that the principals engaged in to retain their teachers. Nine of the 18 comments related to supporting new teachers. Communication was listed as another influential practice engaged in to retain teachers. By “communicating loyalty, trust, support, and high expectations,” Principal # 4 believed he fostered an inviting school culture where teachers were comfortable and happy. Addressing problems through an “open-door policy” helped Principals # 5 and # 9 avoid conflict and “encourage ongoing constructive feedback and encouragement” for the teachers. These principals created a support system that “set [their] teachers up for success” (Principal #9). By hiring the right person and getting to know their teachers personally and professionally, they fostered a sense of belonging that enhanced their school culture as well as providing assistance to help them attain their goals (Principal #5). This sense of community was further enriched by getting teachers involved in school-wide activities which allowed them the opportunity to share in the decision-making process. Finally, treating each and every faculty member fairly and equitably fostered an atmosphere of trust necessary to maintain good working relationships.

Results Emerging From Focus Group Discussion

Following the individual interview sessions, all nine of the principals were invited to participate in a focus group discussion. Four of the principals met together to address

the commonalities and differences in the interview findings in order to identify a consensus description of the principal practices that are perceived to be the most important in supporting teacher retention. Although the focus group discussion allowed for any additional practices to be identified or removed, the group did not list any practices not previously mentioned. The focus group discussion provided additional insight into the meaning of the data gained from the individual interviews.

The focus group discussion began with the research question: What strategies do you perceive to be the most important in teacher retention at your school site? As the principals stated what they believed worked for them, the researcher listed the topics on chart paper. This allowed for further discussion on each topic. The focus group discussion centered on communication, positive school culture, personality, fairness and equity, and valuing their teachers as several main categories considered essential in keeping good teachers at their schools.

Communication was mentioned first as a common denominator among these principals. All of them felt that open two-way communication made their teachers comfortable in sharing ideas with their principal and other colleagues. Principal # 5 believed that “the better the communication, the more successful the organization is ... so I think communication is, to me, key.” An open-door policy allowed for numerous ways for the teachers to make their needs known. The teachers knew they could approach the principal at their convenience for whatever support they needed. These principals believed that their job was to support, mentor, counsel, and provide resources according to their teachers’ needs. They believed that the principal should be a person that teachers could go to when they have a problem; and, whatever it was, the principal would help

them solve it. Principal # 9 stated that not having an open-door policy “creates a delay in problem solving that sometimes compounds the problem. You know ... sometimes people just want to come in and vent.” Principal #7 began the focus group discussion with the comment:

You know it is so funny to be here with you guys. Because I’ve known all these guys for a number of years and they are all excellent communicators....And a common denominator in organizations is communication. The better the communication, the more successful the organization is....So I think communication is, to me, key.

This comment was clarified by Principal #9 to mean open two-way communication that made teachers feel comfortable sharing ideas with their principal and colleagues:

The more I talk about this issue with others, I’m amazed at the number of our colleagues who don’t have an open door - Who demand that teachers make an appointment to see them....And that creates a delay in problem solving that sometimes compounds the problem. (Principal #1)

But simply opening the door does not always ensure that teachers will feel comfortable with coming to the principal for their needs. Creating a positive school culture through relationship building was next on the list of essentials. Making sure that the teachers know they can trust the principal was seen as crucial as exercising honesty and sincerity and treating teachers with respect. Teachers must believe and trust that their principal has their best interest in mind. The way that Principal # 9 described how much he valued his teachers was “making sure that the teachers know that what they do is more important than anything else that happens in the school. And my job is to support them.

Facilitate them. Help them.” Principal # 7 said, “It’s like a marriage. You have to build that trusting relationship. People have to believe in you. They have to trust you ... so you really need that. It’s all about the relationships.” Trust can be displayed in other ways of support as well. The principals have the unique opportunity to demonstrate that they are deserving of a teacher’s trust by watching out for the novice teachers. Principal # 5 said that he thinks “that putting teachers in a position where they’ve got a really decent chance of being successful” is important to building trust in the principal-teacher relationship. Valuing and respect, trusting and believing, and knowing your staff help teachers know that you care about them as people. The whole idea of building relationships was evident in the discussion of this theme. By creating a safe atmosphere to vent when necessary, these principals acted as mentors or counselors when necessary. As Principal #7 stated:

I honestly think our entire definition of our job description is problem solver and cheerleader. That’s basically who we are. And it ties in with that whole open door policy thing. That’s what teachers really need from us. They need good communication. They need to know what’s going on. They don’t want to be the last one in the world to know what’s going on. And they want to know that we are the one person that they can go to when they have a problem, whatever it is, and we can help them solve it.

Principal #9 stated he tried to exercise honesty and fairness in the way he communicated with his faculty and staff. Principal #7 stated that open and honest communication is the first step in building trust that supports and values teachers as professionals.

Support comes in numerous ways besides being available to help solve problems. It is sometimes when the principal helps in the smallest ways, such as, “Hey, can you cover my classroom while I use the rest room? Or hey can you, I’m in a bind, can you run and make me a couple of copies?....but I don’t think there is anything more important, personally ... [than] building that relationship” (Principal #9). Principal #7 says that building relationships with his teachers is like working on a marriage. People need to know that you believe in them and they trust you that you have their best interest in mind: “the whole idea of building that and supporting that through everything we do.” The principals again noted in the focus group that novice teachers, especially, have to be cared for. Principal #5 carefully watches his new teachers. He knows the difficulties facing new teachers and takes precautions to make sure he sets them up for success.

I bet that’s why a lot of teachers leave the field, because they are not necessarily set up for success. You know sometimes, those new teachers, they get dumped on and you know you really have to look out for them and make sure that they have an opportunity for success and then build on that. (Principal #9)

The principals asserted that being visible and available to staff is another way of shaping community, positive school culture and a sense of belonging. Cultivating and maintaining connections with faculty and staff allows the principals to model positive personal qualities that they desire to engender in their faculty and staff.

Another practice perceived to make a difference in teacher retention was finding the right fit for vacant teaching positions. The leaders’ experience contributed to the principals’ expertise in this area. All of these principals have long careers as educators and leaders. All of the principals have clear ideas about who they need on their staff to

create a school culture conducive to high teacher retention. All of them look at potential candidates through a lens that helps them determine talent, skill, and right fit. Principal # 7 said he looked at two things, “I look at, obviously, have they got the ability, the academic background, experience, whatever it is we’re looking for to fit the bill. But I’m also trying to gauge, is this personality going to work in this school and with this particular team.” This assessment required the principals to know their current staffs well enough to balance the team needs. When a vacancy occurs at their school site, these experienced leaders know their staff well enough to find the right fit to meet the needs of the school and position. All of the principals agreed that the teacher must have the skill and desire to work well with people. “That’s the part you can’t teach” (Principal #5).

It could be Einstein, himself, teaching science and the kids aren’t going to hear what he has to say as opposed to somebody who has a relationship with the kids and maybe they’re not as strong in science but they are working their way up to being stronger in science. They’re willing to learn. That’s the person I’d rather have working in the school than the person who has all the knowledge in the world about that subject area but doesn’t know how to build a relationship or just doesn’t have the personality to build relationships with the kids. (Principal #9)

These principals emphasized that because building relationships was a vital part of their leadership style, finding the right fit for their school was possible. There may be plenty of teacher candidates that can fill a vacant position, but these principals were successful in determining whether candidates could do the job that needs to be done when hiring new faculty. All of the principals agreed that their teachers must have the skill and desire to work well with children and adults.

Other practices that emerged were those having to do with fostering a sense of belonging. Fostering a sense of belonging is intricately interwoven with communicating, relationship building, trust building, creating a positive school culture, and finding the right fit. How each principal went about creating a sense of belonging was similar in that each one of them valued their teachers as competent professionals. Each of them got to know their staffs personally and professionally through school-sponsored events. Each of them made the needs of their teachers a priority. Each of them was at a similar philosophical bus stop. Principal # 1 said, "I tell people that all the time. You don't work for me. You work for the school district, but you work with me. And I think we are probably all very, very, similar in that." That sense of belonging was strengthened through their observable actions in support of their teachers, and their humility and servant leadership create their notable lack of self-importance and self-promotion.

The focus group discussion provided an opportunity for these principals to communicate with each other about what they considered important in retaining a good teaching faculty; thus, communication was predominant in the discussion and could have led to that practice as being ranked as most important.

Results of Ranking Principal Practices From Focus Group

Following the focus group discussion, the participants were asked to review the identified practices from the individual interviews. Although only four principals attended the focus group discussion, all nine principals provided rank ordering of the practices emerging from the interviews. The list included 14 practices because some of the practices were combined to reflect the connectedness of the practices within category. They were asked to rank order from "1" (most important) to "10" (least important) to

further distinguish the top essential practices. The researcher assigned 10 points to each practice rated as “1”, nine points to each practice rated as “2”, eight points to each practice rated as “3” and so on down to no points assigned to any practice without any rating. This activity yielded a ranked list of the 10 most influential practices believed to support teacher retention.

Ultimately 10 principal practices (Table 8) emerged as categories of practices believed to influence teacher retention.

Table 8

Ranking Principal Practices From Focus Group (N = 9)

Principal practice descriptor	Ranking
Communicating	#1
Building a positive school culture	#2
Demonstrating positive personal practices	#3
Exercising fairness	#4
Valuing teachers	#5
Being visible	#6
Building a sense of belonging	#7
Seeking right fit for teachers	#8
Fostering shared decision-making	#9
Supporting teachers	#10

The results indicate these principals believed they were able to create a positive school culture where, as the school leader, they communicate to the teachers that they are valued and respected as professional colleagues in the business of education. Consideration of these beliefs in relation to how principals lead their school may serve to enhance teachers' decisions to remain at their school.

Chapter Summary

Chapter four began with a brief description of the codes that were associated with the descriptions of the stated practices generated from the participants. The chapter outlined the findings at each stage of the study beginning with the initial coding process to the final code list. Narratives collected supported the categories that emerged from the interviews, documents, and focus group discussion. All forms of data collection contributed to answering the research questions:

1. What practices do principals perceive to be the most important in teacher retention?
2. How do principals perceive their role in teacher retention?
3. Are there commonalities across the principals' responses and the teacher retention literature?

The major categories that emerged from this case study from all sources of data collection in response to the research questions regarding the practices that principals perceived to successfully influence teacher retention were those dealing with creating a positive school culture, valuing and supporting faculty, developing a sense of belonging, finding the right teacher for the job, and communicating clearly and frequently with staff.

The study participants agreed in general that the principal is a key player in setting the tone for everything that happens in the school.

CHAPTER 5 – CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this case study was to examine principals' perceptions of practices that influence high faculty retention in the principals' schools, compare their perceptions to teacher retention literature, and identify a consensus description of practices perceived to be most important in supporting teacher retention. This chapter briefly summarizes the research questions, findings, and subsequent conclusions derived from this study. The discussion outlines implications and recommendations for future study and practice.

The three research questions addressed by this study were:

1. What practices do principals perceive to be the most important in teacher retention?
2. How do principals perceive their role in teacher retention?
3. Are there commonalities across the principals' responses and the teacher retention literature?

Several important findings relative to principal practices and teacher retention emerged from this study. The high performing principals with high teacher retention rates consistently identified specific practices they believe are important in teacher retention. The analysis of findings from four data collection methods indicated that the practices principals consider to be most important in retaining teachers are: creating a positive school culture, hiring the right person, supporting and valuing teachers, creating a sense of belonging, enabling shared decision-making, demonstrating positive personal

characteristics, exercising fairness and equity, communicating, and being visible and approachable.

The principals perceived their practices were successful in retaining a stable teaching faculty and voiced the belief that retaining teachers is an important part of their role as the school's educational leader. They believe that the way they go about fulfilling this role has influence over teachers' decisions to remain at a particular school. Finally, the results of this study indicate that there is a commonality across the principals' responses and that the practices that they reported as important are aligned with the findings and recommendations from the teacher retention literature.

Conclusions and Discussion

One of the main contributions that this study adds to existing literature is the voice of the principal. Principals are responsible for the instructional leadership of their assigned schools. What they do matters. How they do it matters. The results of their actions matter, especially in retaining teachers (Johnson, 2006). However, few previous studies have examined principals' perceptions on teacher retention.

The major conclusions drawn from the voices of the principals in this study related to the congruence of the principals' responses, principal perceptions of their role in teacher retention, and the centrality of building a positive school culture.

Commonalities in the Principals' Perceptions of Practices Supporting Teacher Retention *Degree of Commonality Across Principals' Responses*

Comparisons between the interviews and rating list of principal practices, the interviews and the literature, and the comparisons between the focus group discussion and the final rating of principal practices revealed a consistency in the findings among the

data sources. As a result of this analysis of data, the researcher compiled a concise, compacted descriptive list in rank order of the practices considered to be essential in addressing the topic of teacher retention. When the rank ordering of the principal practices was compared to the principals' rating list and interviews, the sequencing of the practices differed; however, the same practices were considered important influencers of teacher retention. As a result of the social interaction among the principals during the focus group discussion, collaboration merged with shared decision-making and being visible was mentioned with more frequency and assigned more importance as a practice influencing teacher retention. Practices having to do with school culture (SC), right fit (RF), supporting (SUP) and valuing teachers (VAL), sense of belonging (SOB), shared decision-making (SDM), demonstrating positive personal characteristics (PER), fair and equitable treatment (F & E), communication (COM), and being visible (V) were the same practices identified in the focus group discussion and in the top 10 principal practices ranked by the focus group.

The congruence of results across the data collection methods, combined with the demonstrated success of the selected sample of principals with very high teacher retention rates, suggest that principals who are cognizant that their daily practices influence job satisfaction are successful at creating an environment that supports teacher retention. These experienced principals have a record of high teacher retention and the similarities with which they conduct business are substantiated in the similitude of the research findings. Principals who are focused on retention strategies as well as recruitment strategies are more likely to stem the flow of qualified teachers leaving the

field. Table 9 reflects the congruence of outcomes across the four different data collection approaches.

Table 9

Congruence of Principals' Practices Across Data Sources

Interview	List Ranking	Focus Group	Final Ranking
SC	RF	COM	COM
COM	SUP	SC	SC
SUP	SOB	VAL	PER
RF	COM	SUP	F & E
VAL	SC	RF	VAL
SOB	SDM	PER	V
PER	VAL	SDM	SOB
COLLAB	VIS	F& E	RF
F & E	PD	SOB	SDM
PD	COLLAB	V	SUP

Degree of Commonality of Principals' Responses with Previous Research

The principals in this study mirrored a number of practices found in the literature related to teacher retention research. Perceived lack of administrative support contributes to burnout and high teacher turnover. The flight of teachers from the classroom is well-documented by many studies (Kukla-Acvedo, 2009; Brown & Wynn, 2007; Colgan, 2004; Johnson, 2006; Jones, 2007; Moore-Johnson, 2004; Petress, 2007).

Leaders have the potential to help create a positive school culture where teachers want to teach. All of the principals stressed open and honest communication as key to a positive school culture. Many of the principals referred to their schools as a happy place to work. The principals considered hiring the right person for the school culture and vacant position to be of primary importance. “A strong match between employee and employer is critical to preventing high turnover; it is much more difficult to change the organization’s work or culture than to hire individuals whose skills and interests are appropriate for the job” (Learning Point Newsletter, 2009, December). All of the principals know that valuing the talents and accomplishments of their faculty and staff contributes to overall job satisfaction. Recent research by Greenlee and Brown (2009) corroborates this study’s findings regarding the importance of the principals’ ability to create a positive school culture, demonstrate positive personal characteristics by establishing a positive work environment, and treating faculty with fairness and equity. This aligns to Fleck’s (2008) research which reveals that when teachers were asked what principal behaviors were critical to teacher retention, they reported that they wanted to work for a principal who demonstrated integrity in personal interactions in a positive and constructive manner that assisted them in achieving their academic goals.

Centrality of Creating a Positive School Culture and Sense of Belonging

The principals agreed that creating a positive school culture was essential in retaining a stable teaching force. Their views were consistent with the findings of Rigsbee (2009), who stated that any visitor to a school campus led by a great principal felt the sense of community.

Synthesizing the outcomes of the four different data collection methods, it became evident that creating a positive school culture and sense of belonging encompass all the other principal practices that emerged from this study. The principals each described their school as a place where people wanted to work. Many of the principals reported that one of their main goals was to foster relationships between and among faculty, staff, and the larger school community. The principals reported that their teachers thrive and stayed in a safe environment where they felt a strong sense of belonging, much as they would in a familial relationship. The principals further believed that positive organizational relationships built strong bonds of ownership among their faculty and staff. When these bonds were cultivated by the principal, teachers felt valued and appreciated. Many of the principals stated that they worked hard at creating an atmosphere where teachers felt that their personal and professional needs were being met. The principals revealed that fostering a sense of belonging was essential in retaining a stable teaching faculty.

The principals reported practicing their personal strengths daily reflected an environment conducive to a positive school culture. They described ways in which they supported their staff by providing professional and personal resources through professional development, use of mentors, induction programs, and pleasant working conditions. They detailed strategies used to promote collegiality through their use of teams and common plan time, which enabled collaboration and shared decision-making. They described their personal style of communication, which influenced everything from hiring decisions to farewell activities at the end of the year. They emphasized that their communication was open, honest, and sincere so that the teachers know they are supported and valued in the important work they do. They described positive feedback

practices that supplied teachers with survival skills necessary for success and achievement of their academic and professional goals. Finally, they talked about common sense strategies that built relationships based on mutual respect, trust, and fair and equitable treatment to promote a total school community and sense of belonging. How each principal went about creating this positive school culture varied according to their personal strengths and characteristics.

For these principals, the major building block of creating a positive school culture that promotes teacher retention appears to be logically focused on valuing teachers: choosing, supporting and recognizing teachers, and enabling shared decision-making. The other highly rated principal practices not only have independent value in promoting a positive school culture and creating a sense of belonging, but also serve as tools to value teachers, boost morale, and increase teacher retention. The principals' personal characteristics, their fair and equitable treatment of faculty, open two-way communication, and their visibility and approachability serve as mediators for conveying the centrality of a positive school culture. All of these highly-rated principal practices are intertwined and vital to create an environment that cultivates teacher retention. Figure 2 illustrates the principals' perceptions of the most important strategies for teacher retention.

Choosing the Right Person

The emphasis the principals placed on hiring the appropriate person in a timely manner and guiding him or her through his or her career is essential in promoting a positive school culture. Hiring the right person creates an environment where new

teachers feel that they fit in and belong. It is one of the most strategic steps in creating a positive school culture because the principal is able to fill vacancies with teacher who complement the existing school culture. The principals knew their staff and school needs well enough to predict who would be successful and fit into their school family. Teachers who feel positive about their school site tend to stay. Knowing the school needs and choosing the right fit for the school environment is consistent with Watkin's (2005) findings, which state that the principal has an obligation to recruit and retain the best teachers available.

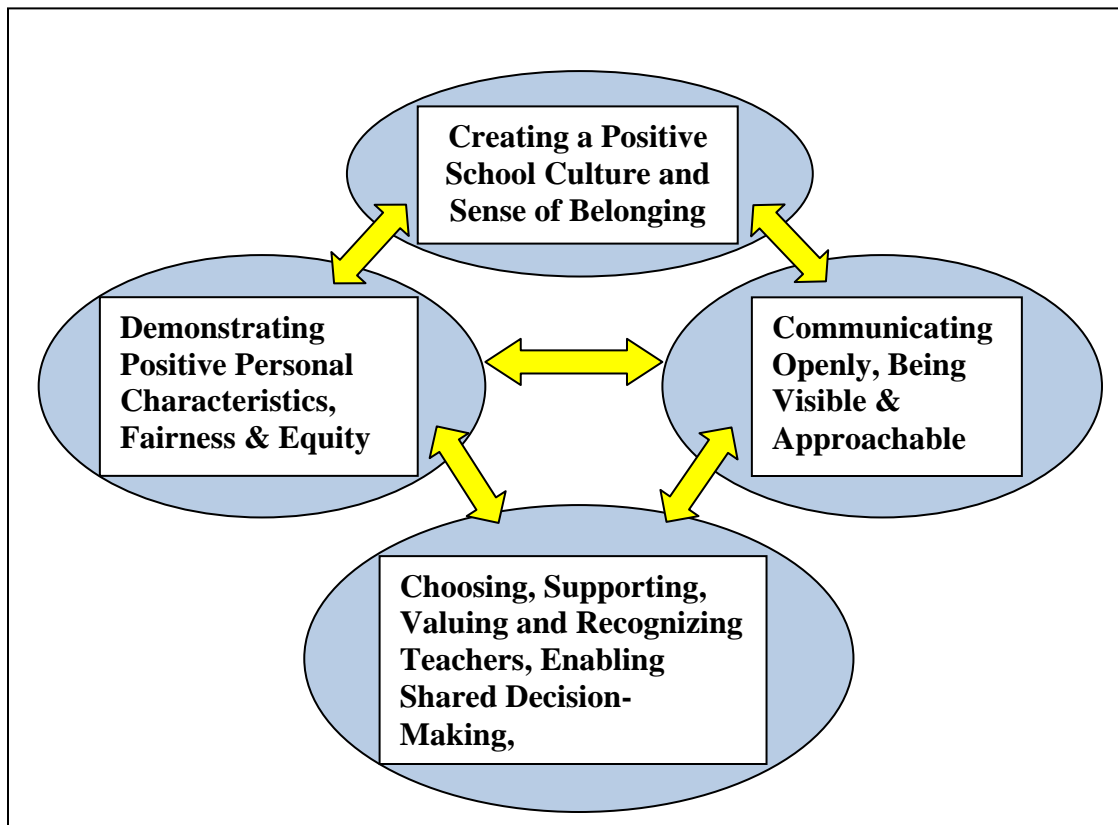


Figure 2. Principals' perceptions of most important strategies for teacher retention.

Supporting Teachers

Once the right person is hired, support becomes the next order of business in creating a positive school culture. The data strongly suggest principals with high teacher retention rates exhibit a strong commitment to mentoring and supporting their teachers. This finding is consistent with Brown and Wynn's (2007) findings that state induction and mentoring along with strong leadership is conducive to better classroom practice, stronger feelings of collegiality and sense of belonging, and high teacher retention. All of the principals had established mentoring programs for novice as well as veteran teachers. This practice set their teachers up for success. Mentoring strengthens teacher capacity and is believed to improve teacher satisfaction. Teachers who feel supported may then feel a sense of belonging to their school community. Brown and Wynn further say that common plan time with a mentor and collaboration with other professionals have a strong positive association with teacher retention. Their research supports the findings in this study where all retention practices work in conjunction with each other. A cohesive support system, adequate resources, positive working conditions, clear communication, respect, trust, and shared decision-making are all important factors in deciding whether to remain in or leave a teaching position.

Valuing [Recognizing] Teachers

All of these principals understood the need to recognize the time and talents of their teachers and the role valuing plays in promoting a positive school culture. Some of the principals held formal recognition events, but all of them found simple ways to convey to their teachers that they are recognized and respected as professionals. People enjoy being recognized, and the praise that is given for a job well-done is always

appreciated. The principals celebrated their teachers' enthusiasm for learning and were encouraged by those teachers who were excited about their own learning as well as that of their students. These principals built a stronger sense of belonging and teacher efficacy by valuing their teachers' time and talent as professionals and colleagues. This finding is congruent with Hodges' research (2007) on the importance of recognition of one's work as a means to communicate that your time and talent is valued. Recognizing, celebrating, and valuing teachers create a bond and a sense of belonging that contributes to a positive working environment and helps retain teachers.

Enabling Shared Decision-Making

When a faculty is stable and trust is established through a strong sense of belonging, principals are able to foster collaboration, demonstrate respect for teachers' experience and judgment by sharing the decision-making processes. The study participants continually encouraged teachers to take leadership roles and share in the decision-making process. Common plan time and teaching teams allowed teachers to collaborate on important goals for themselves, their students, and their schools. Haar (2007) said that principals are instrumental in developing teacher capacity by encouraging them to share their expertise with colleagues. Brown and Wynn (2007) state that when a principal provides opportunities for teachers to share their knowledge with others and have input into school decisions, job satisfaction increases. The principal's role in facilitating manageable schedules and creating ample non-instructional time for planning and professional development enabled faculty to engage in collaborative activities that fostered positive working relationships that enriched their teaching satisfaction. When job satisfaction increases, teachers tend to remain in that school.

When principals positively communicate their willingness to develop teacher talents and tap teachers' expertise, they contribute to overall job satisfaction. Evidence on principal behaviors conducted by Greenlee and Brown (2009) reported creating positive school cultures is critical in teacher retention. Positive principal characteristics facilitated the creation of a work environment where teachers have the opportunity to grow and work together.

Demonstrating Positive Personal Characteristics and Exercising Fairness and Equity

The principals believed that their positive personal characteristics assisted in creating a positive school culture and sense of belonging. All study participants were passionate about their work. All participants talked about pursuing life-long learning. All participants were easy to talk with and personable. During the interviews and focus group discussion, they exhibited a sense of humor, which made data collection interesting and entertaining for both the researcher and the study participant. The principals' individual personalities and personal characteristics were motivating and magnetic, which also contributed to their high teacher retention rates. Positive personal characteristics extend beyond the realm of just being personable and easy to get along with. Common sense tells us that another aspect of this trait is the ability to treat people as you would like them to treat you. By focusing attention on treating others fairly, honestly, and without bias, the principals enriched their relationships with their faculty, which in turn added to job satisfaction and ultimately teacher retention.

Treating all faculty members fairly and equitably supports a positive school culture. A relationship built on trust, fairness, and equity is essential to teacher retention. All of the principals mentioned the importance of establishing an honest, fair, and

trusting environment. Without exercising fairness towards each of their faculty members, all of the other principal practices become more difficult to maintain. A principal may be a great communicator, but if he or she doesn't treat teachers fairly, retention is impacted. A principal may hire the right person, but if the faculty can't trust the principal, then retention may be a problem. And finally, without fair and equitable treatment, faculty may never feel that sense of belonging that comes with remaining in a positive school culture conducive to high teacher retention. This practice is supported by Haar's (2007) research on supportive principals who provoke feelings of trust and respect. The treatment and support of the teacher plays an important role in the survival of the teacher and the challenges teaching presents.

Communicating and Being Visible

Communication is a key component to positive school culture. Communication is the way people connect with one another. It is a tool that demonstrates how we feel about everything we do in the environment in which we live and work. Positive personal communication was demonstrated through the principals' passion and commitment to their leadership role. Brown and Wynn's (2007) research states teachers gave high marks to principals who encouraged communication that allowed for the opportunity to engage in discussions and decisions that affected the teacher's job and teaching satisfaction. Clear two-way communication and positive feedback established a positive school culture where teachers felt safe and secure in their environment. The principals modeled positive personal characteristics that made teachers feel as though they could seek assistance when the need arose. They opened the doors of two-way communication by

being visible and easily accessible when teachers needed to share their beliefs and concerns.

The principals described their use of an open-door policy that made them available at convenient times for the teachers. Not only were their doors open, but the principals were visible before, during, and after school around the campus to make it easier for the teachers to discuss their needs. This practice was useful in communicating the principals' willingness to listen, collaborate, and establish a positive working relationship with the entire staff.

When principals were easily approachable and available to teachers, teachers were able to communicate their needs at convenient times according to their schedules. The principals were also actively involved in school events and modeling that sense of belonging they wished to engender in their teachers. This finding is corroborated by the research studies conducted by the Public Education network that highlighted the principal's accessibility as making a difference to teachers' job satisfaction (Brown & Wynn, 2007).

Principals' Role in Teacher Retention

This study found that the principals believed they played a vital role in establishing a school culture that is conducive to teacher job satisfaction and teacher retention. Even though the principals interviewed did not take full credit for their high retention rates, they realized that they were instrumental in creating a positive school environment where teachers felt that they were valued and supported, had a sense of belonging and wanted to remain teaching at the school site. The principals prided themselves on open and clear two-way communication. These principals put into practice

several strategies that made teachers feel valued and respected. Teaching is a people profession. These principals paid particular attention to hiring and retaining the right talent for their school sites. Identifying the leadership practices of principals who lead schools with high teacher retention highlights the principals' role in retaining qualified teachers.

The principal's job focuses on communicating fairly and openly with faculty and staff, creating a positive school environment where a sense of belonging is prevalent. These high-performing principals believe that teachers at their schools need to feel valued, trusted, and recognized for their talents. They made every effort to hire the right person to fit their school culture. These principals believed they provided the necessary support and were readily visible and available to their faculty and school needs. Their past experiences formed their desire to train future educators that would remain in teaching. When describing the influence - positive or negative - past experiences had on the impact of retaining teachers, one principal said that as a principal, he wanted his teachers to know that they didn't work "for" him but "with" him in order for that teacher to feel supported by the collegial relationship.

Additionally, these principals realized how tough their job is when dealing with the needs and desires of their faculty. On the one hand, the principal wants to keep people happy; but on the other hand, the principal needs to strike the right balance between fiscal and academic responsibility. Teachers who are not successful in helping students achieve must be removed from the classroom. A final comment on the perceived role principals played in the teacher retention was that ignoring the needs of the teacher will result in them seeking work in other school, districts, or other careers.

Ultimately, 10 critically important principal practices believed to influence teacher retention emerged from this study. Common strategies utilized by the study participants may serve as possible constructs for a professional development model for principals who want to improve their teacher retention.

Recommendations for Further Research

The findings of this study raise some questions and possibilities for further research. First, would the findings be similar if all school principals were surveyed regardless of their teacher retention rates? Would additional interviews of principals with low teacher retention rates yield similar data? Would the principal practices work in one case but not in others? Second, do the findings hold true when tested with other school district populations? Third, how do the principals' perceptions of the school culture and practices compare to those of the teachers? Finally, what would the content and presentation of a professional development model look like that would prepare or improve novice or veteran principals' ways of conducting school business and be conducive to high teacher retention?

Further Research with Existing Data

There are several opportunities to extend the research by adding to the existing data. First, because this study was focused on principals with high teacher retention rates, one possibility is to interview additional principals in the district regardless of their retention rate status, school grade, or FCAT score and do a cross case analysis. This possibility allows the researcher to expand the sample to compare the practices of principals at schools of all retention rates. Would the data reveal the same findings and would the principals say they are currently utilizing successful practices without

obtaining the same success? Would the data suggest that other factors beyond the principals' control adversely affect teacher retention rates? The principals in this study believed there were other factors that were out of their control which influence teachers' decisions to remain in teaching. One of the most obvious ones is salary and benefits. But others that were mentioned were: district budgetary issues, involuntary transfers, class size [increases or reductions], and mandates from above that constantly frustrate teachers.

Further research might include sending out the principal practice rating list to all school principals in the district regardless of retention rates. The researcher could compile frequency rates from schools where the teacher retention is low, compile frequency rates from schools where teacher retention is high, and compare the two to determine if there are similarities or differences in the findings.

The possibility of following up with the existing sample was brought up by one of the participants. Additional interviewing was suggested to investigate the background of each participant to make comparisons in educational background and leadership experience because the participants utilized similar practices and agreed upon which ones were most essential when retaining teachers. This would allow them to share and discuss findings, and to further collect data not revealed in this preliminary study. A second possibility would be to sample teachers at each of the participants' school sites to compare the principals' perceptions to the teachers' perceptions. A third possibility would be to conduct further interviews to explore the interactions of successful practices that work in one case but not another. And a final possibility would be to explore what practices are used to cull undesirable teachers from the field.

Replication with New Samples

Conducting similar studies in other parts of the state or country to expand the generalizability of the findings is feasible. Electronic surveys could be distributed and other researchers could be employed to gather qualitative data.

Recommendations for Practice

Several important points relative to principal practices and teacher retention emerged from this study. First, the principal plays an important role in teacher retention. Second, the principals' perceptions of the most important practices for teacher retention guide their leadership practices. A leader who supports, mentors, and models effective practices creates an atmosphere ripe for a successful teaching career. Finally, the degree of commonality across principals' responses provides new insight into best practices that could be incorporated into principal preparation and professional development programs. The following recommendations for practice are suggested as a result of this study:

Increase Emphasis on Teacher Retention Practices in Principal Preparation Programs

The first recommendation is to strengthen principal preparation by redesigning educational leadership programs to place more emphasis on teacher retention. Since current principal preparation coursework devotes inadequate time to human resource practices, more focus should be placed on hiring, inducting, and terminating unqualified personnel. Principals play a crucial role in the management of the entire school community; they must be skillful in addressing the needs of their faculty and school district. They must be supplied with survival skills to address the demands placed upon them due to increased attention on improvement of teacher quality and student achievement. An emphasis should be placed on more practical experience in the field to

provide them with more opportunity to practice newly attained skills. For example, universities could require a full year internship where successful veteran principals with high student achievement and high teacher retention rates offer continued support and assistance to novice principals. Such clinical experiences in varied and diverse settings could better prepare a novice principal for the demanding duties of principalship, including developing a school culture and sense of belonging that can lead to higher teacher retention and student success.

Design a Professional Development Model Focused on Teacher Retention

The second recommendation is to design a professional development program that supports leadership development focusing on identified strategies practiced by principals who have consistently maintained high teacher retention rates. The study's emergent findings comprise the research base for a proposed professional development model for school leaders wishing to improve teacher retention. This study identified common categorical practices. The structure of this model should be designed in conjunction with high performing principals who are successful in retaining teachers. The content and composition should be consistent with adult learning theory, inviting the participants to discuss ways to improve teacher retention focusing on the best practices that emerged from this study.

Chapter Summary

The study's participating principals perceived they play a vital role in establishing a positive school culture that is conducive to retaining teachers. The practices employed by these principals are perceived to make a difference in maintaining a stable teaching faculty. The findings provided insight into the leadership strategies that curbed job

dissatisfaction and teacher attrition. While it is interesting to note that these principals enjoy high teacher retention rates at their schools, there is a need for greater knowledge about the practices that support teacher retention and how they work in order to stop the flow of qualified educators leaving the teaching field. By listening to the voices of high-performing principals who have met with success at retaining a stable teaching faculty, we might learn what professional development is needed to assist principals to better promote teacher retention. “There is a pressing need to support principals in addressing these challenges so that they can cultivate schools to be learning centers” and schools where teachers want to remain (Drago-Severson, 2007, p. 71).

The results of this study suggest developing a positive school culture and creating a sense of belonging where teachers are valued and supported is enriched by hiring the right person for that culture. Demonstrating positive personal characteristics and relationships, fostering shared decision-making through collaboration and communicating fair and equitable practices helped these highly visible principals maintain a stable faculty and are among the top 10 practices that the study participants engaged in to retain a qualified teaching faculty. A comprehensive description of the principal practices believed to support teacher retention was synthesized from the data gathered from the literature review, individual interviews, focus group discussion, and the ranked list of perceived essential principal behaviors.

Through the voices of effective principals at schools with high teacher retention, this study provided insight and possible strategies to explore and include in a professional development model for school leaders. There is a need to provide school leaders with

necessary and on-going professional development to clearly understand the complex problems associated with retaining quality teachers in our schools.

Closing Thoughts

The principals in this study modeled principal practices that were effective in retaining teachers. Effective principals actively engage in and respond to the unique culture of the school to create a stable working environment. Their success was documented by their high teacher retention rates and corroborated by their reported experiences.

Principals need support and professional development to be the educational leaders necessary to maintain a vibrant, stable learning community. Initial and continuing professional development programs for principals could be designed to include identified successful principal practices that enhance teacher retention.

APPENDIX A

Individual Interview Cover Letter

Date

Dear Principal.

I would like to invite you to participate in an interview on principal practices that influence teacher retention. The purpose of this interview is to obtain information on practices principals employ on a daily basis that influence teacher retention. Recruiting and retaining quality teachers is a goal of all school districts, and many factors influence a teacher's decision to remain in teaching. There is a great deal of research that describes the characteristics of teachers who remain in the field, that lists the reasons teachers leave and stay in the field, and that indicates that school culture impacts teacher retention; but there is little research that invites principals to describe the practices that they employ that directly influence the problem of teacher attrition.

Participation in this study is strictly voluntary. In addition, you as a participant are not required to answer every question. Responses will be collected in a personal interview where I hope to capture the essence of your beliefs and practices regarding ways in which principals positively influence teacher retention. All responses will be kept with the strictest confidence. You can be assured of complete confidentiality. No individually-identifiable data will be included in any report. Your responses will be collected only in aggregate form and no identifying data will be associated to your name or school.

The potential benefits that you may attain from participation in this research study are that, through you, the principal's voice will be heard; and you will have the satisfaction of knowing that you contributed to compiling knowledge that may ultimately assist other principals to increase their teacher retention rates. For questions regarding your rights as a research volunteer, you may contact the Division of Research of Florida Atlantic University at (561) 297-0777. For questions regarding this study, please do not hesitate to contact me at (561)803-2371 or via email: jcornell@fau.edu.

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration in completing the questionnaire. I shall follow up with a phone call to schedule an interview appointment. Your time and participation will be greatly appreciated. Please complete the survey and consent form and return it in the self-addressed envelope.

Sincerely,
Janet Cornella
Doctoral Candidate
Florida Atlantic University
Jcornell@fau.edu

APPENDIX B

Individual Interview Consent Form

1) Title of Research Study: *Principals' Leadership: The Missing Link in Teacher Retention*

2) Investigator(s):

Dr. Lucy Guglielmino, Faculty, Educational Leadership, Florida Atlantic University
Janet Cornella, Doctoral Student, Educational Leadership, Florida Atlantic University

3) Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to examine what school principals do on a regular basis and what influence those practices have on job satisfaction and retention of a qualified teaching faculty in their schools.

4) Procedures:

Principals will purposefully be selected to participate in this study. You, as a participant, will be asked to describe and rank-order common practices used in your daily routines that you believe influence teacher retention at your school. The interview will take no more than one hour at a convenient location and time to accommodate your schedule to gain qualitative data to better inform the topic of study. Permission to tape-record and take notes during the interview will be secured prior to commencement to ensure accuracy. You will be informed that your participation is strictly voluntary and your responses will be kept confidential. You will be instructed that you may choose not to answer interview question which makes you feel uncomfortable. Pseudonyms will be used on all recordings, interview notes, transcripts and other materials to further ensure confidentiality. You may be contacted by the researcher following the interview session to provide clarification and assure accuracy.

5) Risks

There are no anticipated risks or benefits from participating in this study beyond that of normal daily activities. Risk to you will be minimized by the opportunity to respond only to questions you wish to answer and measures to assure confidentiality. You may freely decline to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without penalty of any type.

Interview Consent Form page 1 of 2: Participant initials: _____

6) Benefits:

It is anticipated that the participants will gain insight into common effective practices dealing with the problem of teacher attrition. This study will also provide educational leaders with a more comprehensive perspective on organizational culture and suggest strategies for retaining quality teachers, thus contributing toward more effective leadership. There is no compensation for participating in the study.

7) Data Collection & Storage:

The identifiable information gathered will be coded and all information will be held confidential by the researchers and not used in the final publication. All data and results will be referenced by pseudonym or codes, with no use of names or other personally identifiable information. All data and results will be kept in a secure location and locked file cabinet by the principal researcher and only the researchers working with this study will see the research data, unless required by law. All tapes, transcripts and notes will be destroyed within one year of completion of the study. No individuals, schools, or sites will be identified in the research report or in any other publication.

8) Contact Information:

For related problems or questions regarding your rights as a subject, the Office of Sponsored Research of Florida Atlantic University can be contacted at (561) 297-0777. For other questions about the study, you should call the principal investigator, Dr. Lucy Guglielmino, at (772) 973-3348 or the principal researcher, Janet Cornella at (561) 803-2371.

9) Consent Statement:

I have read the preceding information describing this study. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I am 18 years of age or older and freely consent to participate. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time. I have received a copy of this consent form.

Audio taping of the interview will be used to ensure accuracy.

I agree _____ I do not agree _____ to be audio taped as a part of this research study.

Signature of Subject: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Investigator: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX C

Individual Interview Protocol

Broad Research Questions

1. What practices do principals with high teacher retention rates perceive to be the most important in teacher retention?
2. How do principals perceive their role in teacher retention?
3. Are there commonalities across the principals' responses and the teacher retention literature?

Preliminary Information

1. Describe study and review assurances stated in IRB application.
2. Request permission to tape record and take notes during interview.
3. Review and ask for signing of Consent Form.
4. Reinforce that participant beliefs, perceptions and practices, both positive and negative, are valuable and will contribute to the process.
5. The purpose of this interview is to generate a list of principal practices that are believed to positively influence teacher retention.

Overview of Research Needed Regarding Teacher Retention issues

Recruiting and retaining quality teachers is a goal of all school districts. Many factors influence a teacher's decision to remain in teaching. There is a great deal of research that describes the characteristics of teachers who remain in the field, that lists the reasons teachers leave and stay in the field, and that indicates that school culture impacts teacher retention; but there is little research that invites principals to describe the

practices that they employ that directly influence the problem of teacher attrition. The purpose of this interview is to obtain information on what practices principals employ on a daily basis that positively influence teacher retention.

Participation in this study is strictly voluntary. In addition, you as a participant are not required to answer every question if it makes you uncomfortable. There are no anticipated risks or benefits from participating in this study. As a participant, your responses will be collected through a personal interview where I hope to capture the essence of the participant's beliefs and practices regarding ways in which principals influence teacher retention. All responses will be kept with the strictest confidence. You may be assured of complete anonymity. No individually-identifiable data will be included in the statistical reports. Your responses will be collected only in aggregate form and no identifying data will be associated to your name or school.

The potential benefits that participants may attain from participation in this research study is that the principal's voice will be heard and you will have contributed to compiling additional knowledge about the best practices being employed by other educational professionals.

Discussion Questions

1. What are the most important strategies and practices you utilize to support teacher retention at your school?
2. What role do you play in retaining teachers at your school?
3. What do you do to initiate and maintain a professional learning community?

- a. What do you do to lessen the isolation felt by (new) teachers to your school?
 - b. What do you do to strengthen the autonomy desired by your teachers?
4. What do you think your teachers would say is the thing that keeps them working at your school under your leadership?
5. Can you think of a story that, to you, illustrates the most successful practice you've used to influence a teacher to remain at your school?
6. Please rate the following principal practices found in teacher retention literature as : essential, important, neutral, or not important

Conclusion

After I transcribe this interview, I may need to review some of the highlights with you to be sure I have captured the essence of our conversation. If I have any questions, may I contact you for clarification?

APPENDIX D

Interview Rating of Principal Practices

Pseudonym : _____

Directions: Fill in the demographic information

- Gender: Female male
- Indicate your ethnicity White Black/African American
 Hispanic Asian or Pacific Islander
 American Indian Mixed Ethnicity
- Highest degree earned: Bachelor's degree Master's degree
 Doctorate Other _____
- Total years employed as a principal?
 20+ years 11-19 years 4-10 years 0-3 years
- Total years employed as a principal in this district?
 20+ years 11-19 years 4-10 years 0-3 years
- Total years employed as a principal in this school?
 20+ years 11-19 years 4-10 years 0-3 years
- Total years employed as an educator?
 20+ years 11-19 years 4-10 years 0-3 years
- Total years employed as an educator in this district?
 20+ years 11-19 years 4-10 years 0-3 years
- Current school is considered
 Urban (east of I-95) suburban (west I-95) rural
- Current school enrollment is
 fewer than 400 401 to 700 701 to 1100 1101 or more
- Current school grade is
 A B C Other
- Percentage of free and reduced lunch students
 less than 10% 11-25 % 26-50% 51+%
- Current instructional staff employed
 fewer than 50 51 to 100 101 to 150 151 or more

Percentage of teachers with less than 3 years experience

- less than 5% 6-15 % 16-25% 26+%

Percentage of teachers that did not return to your school this current year

- less than 10% 11-20 % 21-25% 26+%

Percentage of teachers that did not return to your school in the past 3 years

- less than 10% 11-20 % 21-25% 26+%

Please respond to the following open ended questions:

List three of the most important practices you engage in to retain teachers at your school

1.

2.

3.

One factor pertaining to teacher retention that is out of my control is:

Additional Comments:

Please rate how important this practice is in teacher retention	4 Essential	3 Important	2 Neutral	1 Not important
1. Assign new teachers mentors.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Visit classrooms of new teachers often.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Provide frequent feedback to all faculty.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. Allow new teacher to teach the same grade level for at least two years.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. Reduce the number of students with discipline issues when classes are assigned to new teachers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. Give teachers manageable schedules.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. Consider appropriate teaching assignments (in-field and experience)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. Put in place training programs for new teachers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. Provide adequate non-instructional time for teachers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. Schedule common plan time for teachers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. Disperse leadership among the teachers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. Allow teachers to assist in the decision making process regarding educational issues at the school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13. Arrange release time for teachers to observe and be observed by colleagues.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14. Get to know teachers personally	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
15. Recognize teachers for their achievements frequently.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
16. Encourage peer coaching.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
17. Encourage teachers to take leadership roles.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
18. Decide what professional development is necessary for faculty.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please rate how important this practice is in teacher retention	4 Essential	3 Important	2 Neutral	1 Not important
19. Tailor professional development to meet the needs of the school and its faculty.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
21. Allow teachers to play a large role in selecting instructional materials and resources.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
22. Allow teachers to play a large role in setting grading and student assessment practices.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
23. Allow teachers to play a large role in selecting professional development activities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
24. Perform formative evaluations of new teachers often, followed by conferences.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
25. Perform summative (end of year) assessments on all teachers, followed by conferences.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
26. Make sure office equipment and supplies are sufficient to meet demand.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
27. Make available adequate curriculum to teachers for all subject areas.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
28. Ensure minimal disruptions to teachers during instructional time.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
29. Provide sufficient resources for professional development.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
30. Provide incentives to retain teachers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
31. Play a large role in hiring teachers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
32. Allow teachers to play a large role in hiring teachers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
33. Involve teachers in developing and reviewing the school's mission and goals.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
34. Interview teacher candidates at the school level.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please rate how important this practice is in teacher retention	4 Essential	3 Important	2 Neutral	1 Not important
35. Interview teacher candidates at the district level personnel.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
36. Complete hiring well in advance of the school year.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
37. Be seen as a visionary.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
38. Effectively and clearly communicate the school's mission and vision to faculty, parents, and students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
39. Communicate high expectations to faculty, support staff, students and parents.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
40. Establish an effective process for group decision making and problem solving.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
41. The amount of non-instructional time allowed per week for teachers is:	<input type="radio"/> 6+ hrs	<input type="radio"/> 3-5 hrs.	<input type="radio"/> 1-2 hrs	<input type="radio"/> None
42. On the average, how many hours do teachers spend on professional development per month.	+7 hrs <input type="radio"/>	4-6 hrs <input type="radio"/>	1-3 hrs <input type="radio"/>	<1 hr <input type="radio"/>

APPENDIX E

Focus Group Cover Letter

Date

Dear Principal.

I would like to invite you to participate in a focus group discussion on principal practices and techniques that are believed to influence teacher retention. There is a great deal of research that describes the characteristics of teachers who remain in the field, that lists the reasons teachers leave and stay in the field, and that indicates that school culture impacts teacher retention; but there is little research that invites principals to describe the practices that they employ that directly influence the problem of teacher attrition.

The purpose of this focus group study is to obtain information on what practices principals employ on a regular basis that influence teacher retention. Recruiting and retaining quality teachers is a goal of all school districts, and many factors influence a teacher's decision to remain in teaching.

Participation in this focus group is strictly voluntary. Focus group participants may choose not to comment on any part of the discussion. Your responses will be collected in two ways: (a) hand-written notes of the focus group discussion and (b) audio tape of the discussion to ensure the accuracy of the discussion notes. All responses will be kept with the strictest confidence. Focus group participants will assume a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality. No individually-identifiable data will be included in the statistical reports. Your responses will be collected only in aggregate form and no identifying data will be associated to your name or school. Your responses will be collected and transposed into sample indicators that may be included in a larger written survey.

The potential benefits that you may attain from participation in this research study are that, through you, the principal's voice will be heard; and you will have the satisfaction of knowing that you contributed to compiling knowledge that may ultimately assist other principals to increase their teacher retention rates.

For questions regarding your rights as a research volunteer, you may contact the Division of Research of Florida Atlantic University at (561)297-0777. For questions regarding this study, please do not hesitate to contact me at (561)803-2371 or via email: jcornell@fau.edu.

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration in agreeing to be part of the focus group. Your time and participation will be greatly appreciated. Please return the enclosed consent form in the self-addressed envelope.

Sincerely,

Janet Cornella
Doctoral Candidate
Florida Atlantic University
Jcornell@fau.edu

APPENDIX F

Focus Group Consent Form

1) Title of Research Study: *Principals' Leadership: The Missing Link in Teacher Retention*

2) Investigator(s):

Dr. Lucy Guglielmino, Faculty, Educational Leadership, Florida Atlantic University
Janet Cornella, Doctoral Student, Educational Leadership, Florida Atlantic University

3) Purpose: The purpose of this study is to examine what school principals do on a regular basis and what influence those practices have on job satisfaction and retention of a qualified teaching faculty in their schools.

4) Procedures:

As a Focus Group participant in this study, you will be asked to respond to a series of open-ended interview questions regarding your perceptions, beliefs, and experiences related to your daily practices that affect the retention of teachers at your school site. Responses will be analyzed and aggregated into common themes that address the successful retention strategies utilized. Permission to tape-record and take notes during the Focus Group will be secured prior to commencement to ensure accuracy. You will be informed that your participation is strictly voluntary and your responses will be kept confidential. You may choose not to comment on any part of the discussion which makes you feel uncomfortable. Pseudonyms will be used on all recordings, interview notes, transcripts and other materials to further ensure confidentiality. You may be contacted by the researcher following the group interview to provide clarification and assure accuracy.

5) Risks

There are no anticipated risks or benefits from participating in this Focus Group beyond that of normal daily activities. Risk to you will be minimized by the opportunity to respond only to questions you wish to answer and measures to assure confidentiality. You may freely decline to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without penalty of any type

Focus Group Consent Form page 1 of 2: Participant initials: _____

6) Benefits:

It is anticipated that the participants will gain insight into common effective practices dealing with the problem of teacher attrition. This study will also provide educational leaders with a more comprehensive perspective on organizational culture and suggest strategies for retaining quality teachers, thus contributing toward more effective leadership. There is no compensation for participating in the study.

7) Data Collection & Storage:

The identifiable information gathered will be coded and all information will be held confidential by the researchers and not used in the final publication. All data and results will be referenced by pseudonym or codes, with no use of names or other personally identifiable information. All data and results will be kept in a secure location and locked file cabinet by the principal researcher and only the researchers working with this study will see the research data, unless required by law. All tapes, transcripts and notes will be destroyed within one year of completion of the study. No individuals, schools, or sites will be identified in the research report or in any other publication.

8) Contact Information:

For related problems or questions regarding your rights as a subject, the Office of Sponsored Research of Florida Atlantic University can be contacted at (561) 297-0777. For other questions about the study, you should call the principal investigator, Lucy Guglielmino, at 772 973-3348 or the principal researcher, Janet Cornella, at (561)-803-2371.

9) Consent Statement:

I have read the preceding information describing this focus group. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I am 18 years of age or older and freely consent to participate. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time. I have received a copy of this consent form.

Audio taping of the focus group will be used to ensure accuracy.

I agree _____ I do not agree _____ to be audio taped as a part of this research study.

Signature of Subject: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Investigator: _____ Date: _____

Focus Group Consent Form page 2 of 2

APPENDIX G

Focus Group Protocol

Broad Research Questions

1. What practices do principals perceive to be the most important in teacher retention?
2. How do principals perceive their role in teacher retention?
3. Are there commonalities across individual responses and the teacher retention literature?

Preliminary Information

4. Describe study and review assurances stated in IRB application.
5. Request permission to tape record and take notes during session
6. Review and ask for signing of Consent Form.
7. Reinforce that participant beliefs, perceptions and practices, both positive and negative, are valuable and will contribute to the process.
8. The purpose of this focus group is to develop a list of practices that principals believe positively influence teacher retention.

Overview of why focus group discussion is needed relating to Teacher Retention issue

Recruiting and retaining quality teachers is a goal of all school districts. Many factors influence a teacher's decision to remain in teaching. There is a great deal of research that describes the characteristics of teachers who remain in the field, that lists the reasons teachers leave and stay in the field, and that indicates that school culture impacts teacher retention; but there is little research that invites principals to describe the practices that they employ that directly influence the problem of teacher attrition. The

purpose of this focus group is to discuss, refine and rate the findings identified in the individual interviews.

Participation in this focus group is strictly voluntary. You, as a focus group participant, may choose not to comment on any part of the discussion. There are no anticipated risks from participating in this the focus group. All responses will be kept with the strictest confidence. No individually-identifiable data will be included in the reports. No identifying data will be associated to your name or school. Your responses will be collected and transposed into sample indicators that may be included in a future professional development model for principals wishing to improve teacher retention at their school site.

The potential benefit that participants may attain from participation in this focus group is that the discussion will serve as a resource to participants on what practices other principals use to influence teacher retention issues at their school site.

Discussion Questions

Begin with introductions and background information about each principal participant.

1. Name, school, # years in education, # years as principal, # years at school site, # teachers at your school, teacher retention rate.
2. Considering the following factors, are there any that you consider essential to add to our list of retention strategies?
 - a. Teacher support
 - b. School culture
 - c. Collaboration

- d. Learning community
- e. Vision
- f. Professional development
- g. Use of data and assessment
- h. Self-directed learning
- i. Problem solving
- j. Commitment
- k. Vision
- l. Facilities
- m. Hiring
- n. Firing

3. Please rate the top 10 practices you now feel are essential to addressing the teacher_retention problem from “1” (most important) to “10” (least important).

Conclusion

After I transcribe this group session, if I have any questions, may I contact you for clarification?

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